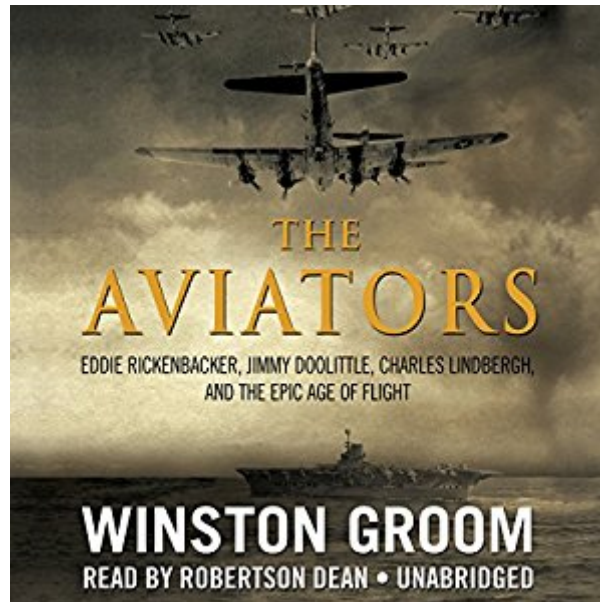


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The Aviators: Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle, Charles Lindbergh, And The Epic Age Of Flight



Synopsis

Gifted storyteller Winston Groom, the best-selling author of *Forrest Gump*, has written the fascinating story of three extraordinary heroes who defined aviation during the great age of flight: Charles Lindbergh, Eddie Rickenbacker, and Jimmy Doolittle. These cleverly interwoven tales of their heart-stopping adventures take us from the feats of World War I through the heroism of World War II and beyond, including daring military raids and survival at sea, and will appeal to fans of *Unbroken*, *The Greatest Generation*, and *Flyboys*. With the world in peril during World War II, each man set aside great success and comfort to return to the skies for his most daring mission yet. Doolittle, a brilliant aviation innovator, would lead the Tokyo Raid to retaliate for Pearl Harbor; Lindbergh, hero of the first solo flight across the Atlantic, would fly combat missions in the South Pacific; and Rickenbacker, World War I flying ace, would bravely hold his crew together while facing near-starvation and circling sharks after his plane went down in a remote part of the Pacific. Groom's rich narrative tells the intertwined stories - from broken homes to Medals of Honor (all three would receive one), barnstorming to the greatest raid of World War II, front-page triumph to anguished tragedy, and near-death to ultimate survival - of these three men who took to the sky, time and again, to become exemplars of the spirit of the "greatest generation."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had high hopes for this book, but I ended up being a little disappointed and questioning of the author's credibility. While giving an overview of German conquests early in WWII, he includes the

assertion that Finland and Sweden were conquered by Nazi armies. First, Finland was a German ally throughout the war, and second, Sweden was famously neutral throughout the war! It's such an egregious factual error that it made me question the credibility of the rest of the book. He later asserts that a "significant portion of the American Army...including the 101st Airborne Division" was surrounded by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. Again, this is just plain dead wrong...the 101st was the ONLY division (of nearly 50) of the American Army in Europe surrounded by the Germans during that battle...or any battle, for that matter. These are issues of the most basic military history that he gets absurdly wrong. I didn't keep notes, so those are the ones that stood out in particular, but there were others that weren't as patently obvious. He also seems to exaggerate the influence of the three Aviators at several points. For instance, he claims one was directed to inform air corps personnel during speeches in N. Africa and the Mediterranean theaters that their minimum tours had been extended. I highly doubt a visiting civilian would be tasked with personally informing thousands of airmen of a MAJOR policy change in their assignments. I suppose it's possible in the remotest sense, but I rolled my eyes at the likelihood of it. He also claims the Doolittle raid essentially led to what ultimately became the Japanese defeat. Hmmm, every other historian and war leaders at the time agreed it's only real value was a morale boost...and nothing more.

For me this is like a Paul Harvey radio broadcast where he liked to enlighten listeners to "the rest of the story" as it were. Now I'm sure true historians and history buffs will not be shocked or surprised by the contents of this book. There are plenty of large volume bios and autobiographies available like Lindbergh, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again: An Autobiography of James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle* with Carroll V. Glines and *Rickenbacker: An Autobiography*. The three aviators featured are Eddie Rickenbacker, first fame as a champion race car driver and world war I hero, Charles Lindbergh, he of the first non stop flight across the Atlantic in 1927 and Jimmy Doolittle who pioneered flying without the aid of visuals, just by instruments in 1929. This reader was familiar with the highlights only of each of these great aviators/men and so this book which touched on their early career heroics and then followed through with lesser known but not lesser interesting or lesser important involvements in WWII all in a snappy 400 plus pages was a very enlightening read and just the right length.

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