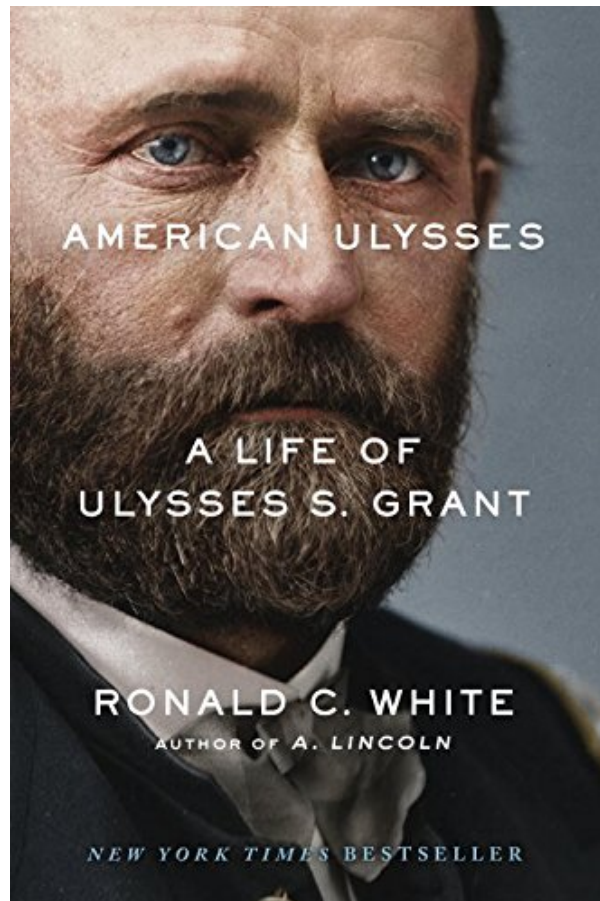
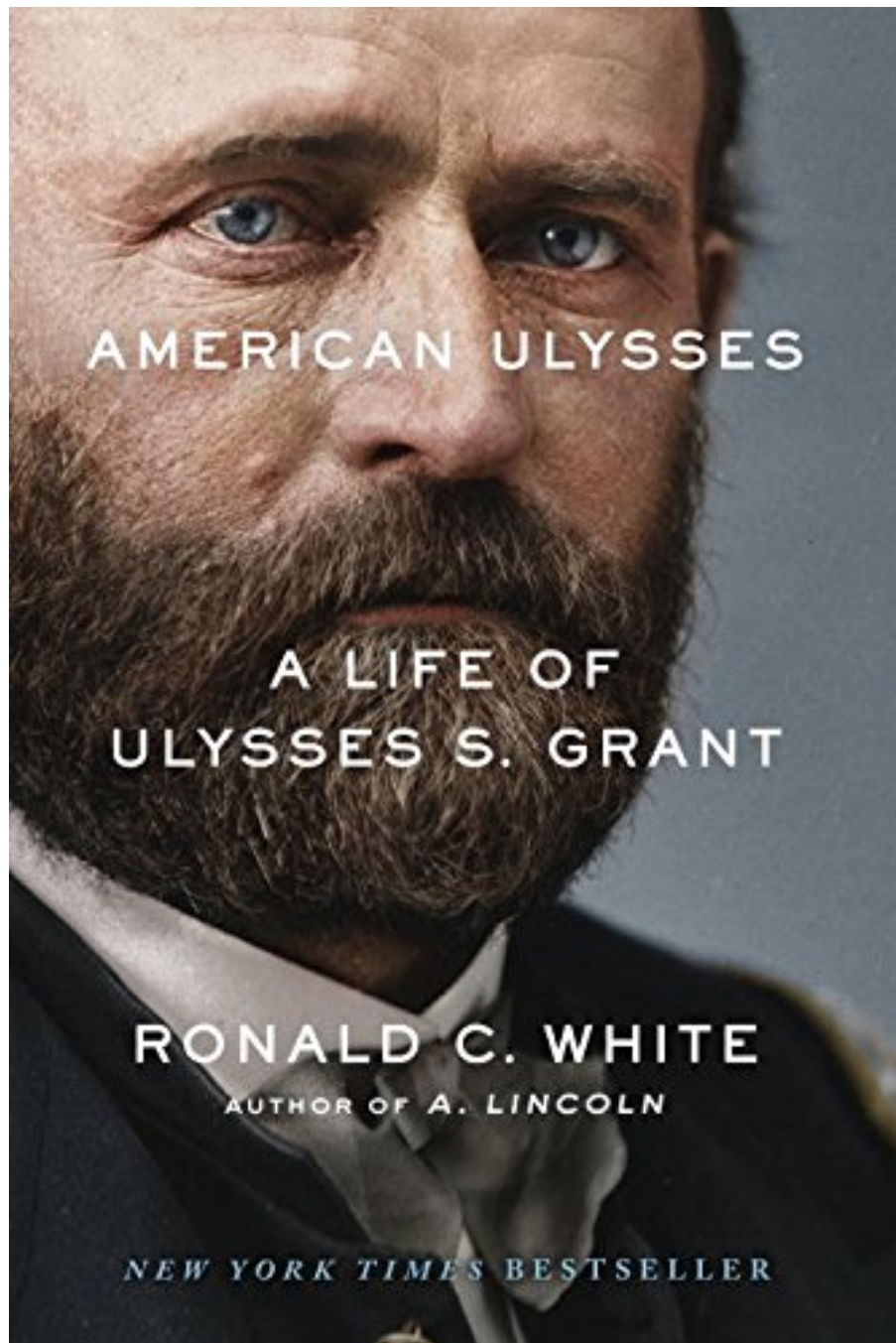


AMERICAN ULYSSES: A LIFE OF ULYSSES S. GRANT BY RONALD C. WHITE



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An Amazon Best Book of October 2016: So who is buried in Grant's tomb, anyway? That's an old and insipid joke, of course, but considering what we think we know about the 18th President of the United States, a question worth asking might be hiding in there. With *American Ulysses: A Life of Ulysses S. Grant*, Ronald C. White endeavors over 800 pages (over 100 them being notes referencing primary and secondary sources) to shed light on one of our most influential yet enigmatic figures. This isn't a revisionist biography; Grant already got that treatment in the early 20th century, when he transformed from a respected Civil War general and public servant into a craven opportunist and failed president, drunk and penniless at his death (just try imagining a destitute former POTUS in this era). White, author of the award-winning bestseller, *A. Lincoln: A Biography*, first redresses criticisms of his martial prowess—primarily that he exploited a huge numbers advantage by needlessly sacrificing troops in exchange for victory—with detailed accounts, maps, and illustrations of his conflicts, limning a battlefield acumen previously diminished through ad hominem barbs. White resuscitates Grant's career as a public servant through his presidency and beyond—he was a defender of equal rights and an enemy of the Ku Klux Klan--by placing in the context of the complex postbellum landscape, where the war may have been won but the country was hardly whole. Serious, exhaustive, and likely definitive, *American Ulysses* is a tricky meld of comprehensive research and readable narrative, worthy of the pantheon of monumental presidential biographies. —Jon Foro, *The Amazon Book Review*

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • From the author of *A. Lincoln*, a major new biography of one of America's greatest generals—and most misunderstood presidents

Winner of the William Henry Seward Award for Excellence in Civil War Biography • Finalist for the Gilder-Lehrman Military History Book Prize

In his time, Ulysses S. Grant was routinely grouped with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in the “Trinity of Great American Leaders.” But the battlefield commander—turned—commander-in-chief fell out of favor in the twentieth century. In *American Ulysses*, Ronald C. White argues that we need to once more revise our estimates of him in the twenty-first.

Based on seven years of research with primary documents—some of them never examined by previous Grant scholars—this is destined to become the Grant biography of our time. White, a biographer exceptionally skilled at writing momentous history from the inside out, shows Grant to be a generous, curious, introspective man and leader—a willing delegator with a natural gift for managing the rampaging egos of his fellow officers. His wife, Julia Dent Grant, long marginalized in the historic record, emerges in her own right as a spirited and influential partner.

Grant was not only a brilliant general but also a passionate defender of equal rights in post-Civil War America. After winning election to the White House in 1868, he used the power of the federal government to battle the Ku Klux Klan. He was the first president to state that the government's policy toward American Indians was immoral, and the first ex-president to embark on a world tour, and he cemented his reputation for courage by racing against death to complete his *Personal Memoirs*. Published by Mark Twain, it is widely considered to be the greatest autobiography by an American leader, but its place in Grant's life story has never been fully explored—until now.

One of those rare books that successfully recast our impression of an iconic historical figure, *American Ulysses* gives us a finely honed, three-dimensional portrait of Grant the man—husband, father, leader, writer—that should set the standard by which all future biographies of him will be measured.

Praise for *American Ulysses*

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- Sales Rank: #23382 in Books
- Brand: Ronald C Jr White
- Published on: 2016-10-04
- Released on: 2016-10-04
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.55" h x 1.68" w x 6.64" l, 1.25 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 826 pages

Features

- American Ulysses A Life of Ulysses S Grant

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Most helpful customer reviews

157 of 160 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating Biography. A MUST Read!

By Sasha Q.

"American Ulysses" is a captivating and thorough biography of one of America's greatest and often forgotten heroes. As an amateur, Civil War historian, I appreciate the author's vivid detail and the historical accuracy of Grant's accomplishments during the war. Going beyond simple prose, the book is packed with informative maps, period pictures, and illustrations. However, for myself, the real treasure of this biography is found in the details of Grant's personal life, and the periods both before and directly after the Civil War.

Ronald C. White Jr. based this biography, in a large part, on all 33 volumes of "The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant". Even though I have read countless other Grant biographies, and Grant's own wonderful memoirs several times over, "American Ulysses" was full of surprises and new insights. Grant's relationship with his wife, Julia, and his entire family, is depicted in great detail. The author's in-depth treatment clearly reveals that Grant's marriage, family, and loyal friends were his anchor during the personal and professional challenges he weathered.

Mr. White's description of Grant's accomplishments (and frustrations) while serving under President Andrew Johnson was eye-opening. And both terms of Grant's presidency are given vivid, accurate, and (thankfully) unbiased detail. Likewise, the section on Grant's world tour was a treasure, and I found myself grateful that fate had finally given this untiring servant of the people a gift for himself.

Near the end of the book, there were tears in my eyes when reading about Grant's last day. Mr. White not only brought Ulysses alive for me, but, more than that, helped me to see him as if he was my own friend. For that, I am extremely grateful. Surely, however, the author's greatest accomplishment is that he has given present and future generations of historians and scholars the definitive tome on the life of Ulysses S. Grant. And for that, the world is extremely grateful.

79 of 83 people found the following review helpful.

An excellent biography on all scores - readable, detailed and epic

By Nathan Webster

It's funny - in elementary school I remember learning that Robert E. Lee was the spit-and-polished military mastermind who simply ran out of men in his dignified leadership of the noble yet flawed Confederacy, while U.S. Grant was the grumpy idiot savant who smoked and drank and basically threw men at the problem until blundering into victory. And I went to school in Massachusetts!

While I've learned the real history since then, I probably had not learned it in such an in-depth way that Ronald White presents here.

This is of course a Grant-focused biography. Gettysburg gets a sentence or two, while the Vicksburg campaign gets a chapter - but that gives a deep look into aspects of the Civil War I barely knew or had long forgotten. White does a great job giving lots of details while never feeling overwhelming the reader.

White's narrative is totally readable and engaging. This is not a "dry and academic" history (not that there's anything wrong with that in proper setting) but an exciting and poignant and epic biography of an overlooked giant of American history. The "revisionist historians" of yesteryear marginalized Grant - because they were motivated to present a racist and white supremacist worldview - and a biography like this is a chance to revise it back.

In school, I had also "learned" that Grant was essentially an accidental president, put up by the era's

powerbrokers as someone they successfully manipulated - again, not a true version of history. While Grant's presidential administration had its share of scandals, both personal and professional, White gives enough context so they make sense in the 1870s standards of behavior. More importantly, Grant's consistent attempts at supporting the freedmen were often stymied by the Democratic politicians of the time (including the odious Andrew Johnson), and while he did his general best, the people of the US weren't up to it - the choices made in the 1870-90s represents our nation's darkest hour, and it's no wonder revisionists try to hide that era's evil. But Grant was always big, it's the country that was small.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Engaging and insightful. A great read.

By STS

It wasn't so long ago that in my junior high and high school history classes we learned about gallantry and genius of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson while Grant was almost an afterthought. We'd learn how Andrew Johnson had stood up to Radical Republicans to save the constitution. Then finally we'd read in our textbooks about how Grant's Presidency was in most ways a failure and ushered in the gilded age. It was interesting reading to me at the time but of course I eventually found out it was materially false account in many aspects. This book follows many other books over recent decades that help set the record straight and allows readers to appreciate Grant's rise from obscurity and failure to become a dynamic military and political leader. The author delves into Grant's campaigns in a manner that is engaging and insightful while demonstrating his military genius. The author also spends time outlining how Grant's principled actions he took as President, some he took without popular support, to ensure former slaves civil rights were protected and the union stabilised after the civil war and divisive, failed presidency of Andrew Johnson. The most interesting part of the book for me though was Grant's pre-civil war life. He came from humble beginnings to attend West Point and become an army officer only to resign in disgrace and fail as a farmer and businessman when he was almost 40. I find it interesting how much he grew in terms of his leadership abilities as a man approaching middle age. This book helped me gain a greater appreciation for Grant as a person and great American leader. I fully recommend this book to anyone who loves American history or reading about great historical figures.

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"Magisterial . . . Grant's esteem in the eyes of historians has increased significantly in the last generation. . . . [American Ulysses] is the newest heavyweight champion in this movement."—The Boston Globe

"A game-changing biography . . . of one of the most consequential figures in American history."—The Christian Science Monitor

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About the Author

Ronald C. White is the author of three bestselling books on Abraham Lincoln, including most recently *A. Lincoln*. White earned his Ph.D. at Princeton and has lectured on Lincoln at hundreds of universities and other organizations, and at Gettysburg and the White House. He is a Fellow at the Huntington Library and a Senior Fellow of the Trinity Forum of Washington, D.C. He lives with his wife, Cynthia, in La Cañada, California.

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