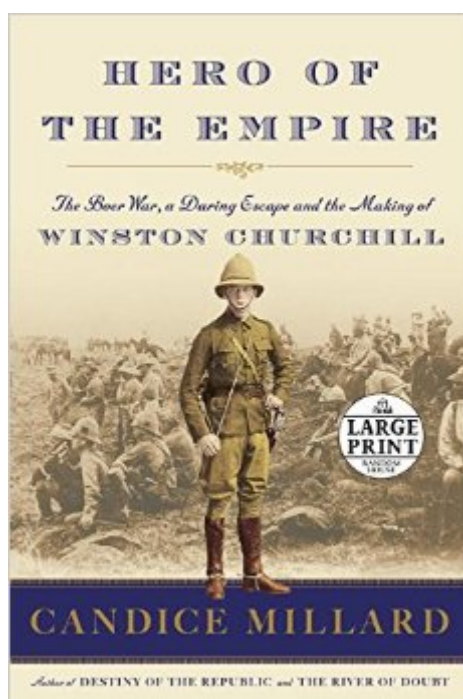


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Hero Of The Empire: The Boer War, A Daring Escape, And The Making Of Winston Churchill (Random House Large Print)



Synopsis

From New York Times bestselling author of *Destiny of the Republic* and *The River of Doubt*, a thrilling narrative of Winston Churchill's extraordinary and little-known exploits during the Boer War

At age twenty-four, Winston Churchill was utterly convinced it was his destiny to become prime minister of England one day, despite the fact he had just lost his first election campaign for Parliament. He believed that to achieve his goal he must do something spectacular on the battlefield. Despite deliberately putting himself in extreme danger as a British Army officer in colonial wars in India and Sudan, and as a journalist covering a Cuban uprising against the Spanish, glory and fame had eluded him.

Churchill arrived in South Africa in 1899, valet and crates of vintage wine in tow, there to cover the brutal colonial war the British were fighting with Boer rebels. But just two weeks after his arrival, the soldiers he was accompanying on an armored train were ambushed, and Churchill was taken prisoner. Remarkably, he pulled off a daring escape--but then had to traverse hundreds of miles of enemy territory, alone, with nothing but a crumpled wad of cash, four slabs of chocolate, and his wits to guide him.

The story of his escape is incredible enough, but then Churchill enlisted, returned to South Africa, fought in several battles, and ultimately liberated the men with whom he had been imprisoned.

Churchill would later remark that this period, "could I have seen my future, was to lay the foundations of my later life." Millard spins an epic story of bravery, savagery, and chance encounters with a cast of historical characters—including Rudyard Kipling, Lord Kitchener, and Mohandas Gandhi—with whom he would later share the world stage. But *Hero of the Empire* is more than an adventure story, for the lessons Churchill took from the Boer War would profoundly affect 20th century history.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

What an enjoyable read. Both the character of Winston Churchill and the Boer War come to life in this narrative. Candice Millard is a talented journalist. She can write a gripping narrative from any historical event. Using diaries and biographies from the era, Millard creates a setting and paces the plot just fast enough to make this story engaging. Credit should also go to Winston Churchill himself, who was also a gifted writer sometimes prone to embellishment, who left all his journals, diaries and letters behind for public use. I have had co-workers and history teachers tell me that the Boer War was England's practice ground for World War I. Millard's story seems to justify this claim. But she also gives reason to the claims of English arrogance and snobbery. The English Empire had grossly miscalculated the perseverance of the Boers and figured a war with the natives would be a quick and decisive victory. That was England's first mistake. The second mistake was not arming their soldiers well enough. Add in Winston Churchill and his air of superiority (his father, Lord Randolph, was a popular politician and related to the Dukes of Marlborough) and one sees through Millard's gift of connecting tidbits here and there across literature that Winston Churchill became the man of his legacy because of his experiences during the Boer War and his captivity. His natural leadership qualities shine through, albeit with some flaws that Millard does not overlook. Millard introduces the reader first to some background on South Africa and the Boers, the Zulus, and England's demands of the region's natural resources (re: diamonds!).

In *Hero of the Empire*, Millard focuses on the period of Winston Churchill's life in which he is captured as a prisoner of war and his subsequent escape. I'm sorry to say that I am - or was - woefully ignorant regarding much of Churchill's life and history, but he is one of the many figures that I have been wanting to read more about. Suffice to say, I had absolutely no idea that he was once captured as a prisoner of war. Millard writes in an incredibly fluid manner that makes it easy to follow along with the current political and social issues occurring at the time of the story. Rather than dumping the reader into a setting and time period in which they may or may not know its history, she takes time and great care to make sure that the background of any conflicts, struggles, and political happenings are clearly explained and allow the subsequent events to make sense. At times, it almost starts to feel as if Millard is going off on a tangent about a topic that is only slightly relevant,

but right when you think it's gone too far, she brings everything right back around to Churchill and his journey and it all suddenly makes sense. Millard's description of Churchill is, in my opinion, perfectly well-rounded. She doesn't paint him in a black and white manner as being a solely a 'great man' or a 'bad man,' but instead provides an unbiased look at his qualities and personality traits - positive and negative. Churchill initially comes off as a rather arrogant man, and I had never liked that aspect of him. I felt how he treated people was often rather rude and inappropriate, but Hero of the Empire gave me a much more well-rounded look.

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