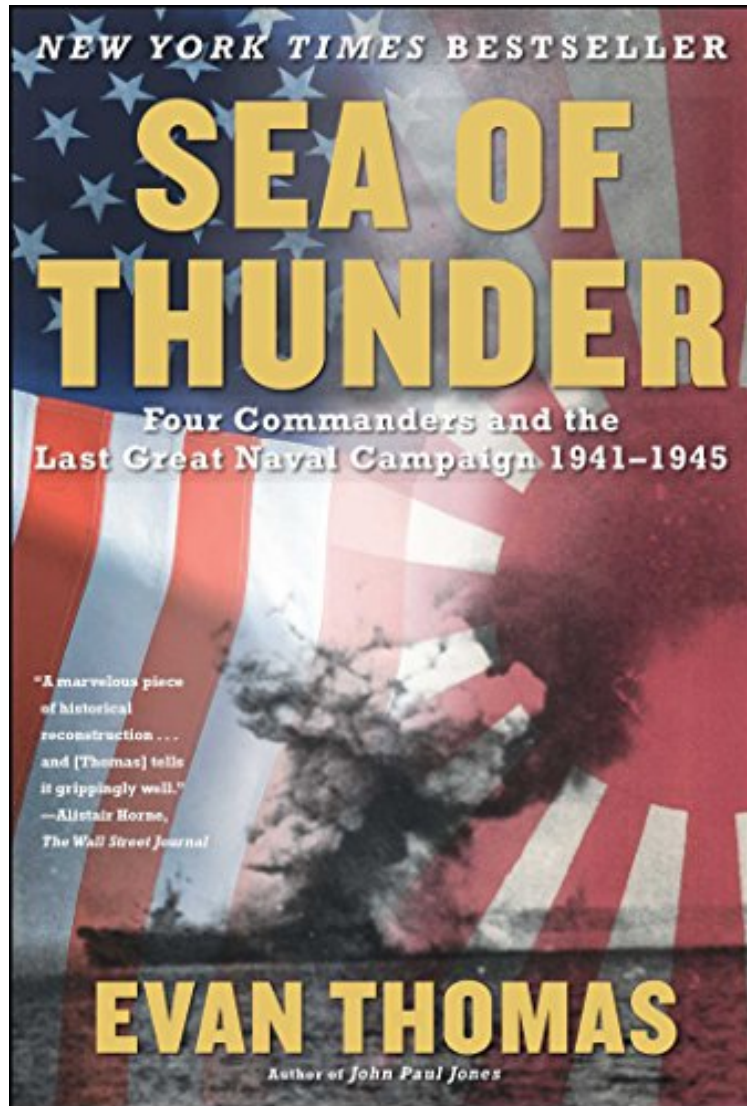


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# Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1941-1945

*Evan Thomas*

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**Evan Thomas : Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1941-1945** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1941-1945:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Incredible Historical Viewpoint By Martin Q. As an avid historical reader of the history of events, battles, and stories of the war's participants, this was the first book I've read about the

personalities of the admirals who were the dominant figures in the war at sea. It highlights the factors of personal as well as equipment flaws, and luckily, the Japanese admirals often erred on the side of caution, and if not for their mistakes, Admiral Halsey might have cost the allies far more than his desire to "kill Japs" might have. It is a brilliant study of the personalities of the admirals as well as some of their staffs, and I don't believe I've ever read a book of this sort before. I highly recommend it to any student of the history of WWII. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the most accessible naval histories ever. Great for gurus and beginners alike. By John Stewart. One of the most accessible naval histories ever. I loved this book, but two things set this book apart: #1 - the diligent job Evan Thomas did researching the Japanese perspective--one that's typically overlooked given language barriers and that so many Japanese soldiers on the front lines did not survive to tell their stories. #2 - how accessible this is for readers that are relatively unfamiliar with naval tactics, the nuances of battleship design, dense naval terminology, and references to tactics from other naval battles--both famous and obscure. If I was going to wrap this down to one liner, it would be: "The best military history for someone that has never read a military history before." In short, this book stands apart by its ability to tell the evolution of carrier-based warfare through the perspectives of four commanders, two Japanese and two American. It's an easy read that reads like a novel without sacrificing grit and is accessible for anyone with an interest in naval warfare--with no previous experience required. I read a lot of naval histories and have since I was in middle school. As a result, I have no problem wading through dense tomes with lots of detailed terminology with references to obscure battles. The problem is that while some of my friends/family may have that knowledge base to read most military histories, few of them have the patience to wade through something that's either very dense or takes 100 pages to get started. *Sea of Thunder* draws the reader in quickly, provides historical context, and educates the reader on terminology as the book unfolds. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *The Human Side of the War*. By Customer. Admiral Bill Halsey was an American hero, but he was also subject to all our human foibles. He was certainly brave, and never fled from a fight. But at the Battle of Leyte Gulf, he did make a terrible mistake. He wanted one thing above all else, he wanted to sink Japanese carriers. That was his undoing in that battle, he was blinded by Admiral Ozawa's empty carriers, and almost created a military disaster. But for Japanese indecision, it could have been a disaster. Admiral Takeo Kurita unwittingly helped to save Admiral Halsey from his own mistake. He could have won a great victory over the US forces at Leyte Gulf, but for unknown reasons he turned his ships around, when they were in sight of victory. No acceptable reason was ever given for his retreat. Admiral Ugaki, served in the shadow of fleet Admiral Yamamoto, until his death in 1943. He was very angry with Admiral Kurita's abrupt retreat at Leyte Gulf. He finally achieved the desire of all Samurai, when he died in a Kamakaze raid. He definitely showed the Samurai spirit in his actions. Commander Ernest Evans may well have been the most patriotic and the bravest of all four commanders. The selfless decision to confront Admiral Kurita's powerful fleet, knowing that he would not survive the battle, was the bravest act of all. He could have retreated, as Admiral Kurita did, but instead he chose the danger. I can't help but feel incredible respect for this brave man. JRV

*Sea of Thunder* is a taut, fast-paced, suspenseful narrative of the Pacific War that culminates in the battle of Leyte Gulf, the greatest naval battle ever fought. Told from both the American and Japanese sides, through the eyes of commanders and sailors of both navies, Thomas's history adds an important new dimension to our understanding of World War II. Drawing on oral histories, diaries, correspondence, postwar testimony from both American and Japanese participants, and interviews with survivors, Thomas provides an account not only of the great sea battle and Pacific naval war, but of the contrasting cultures pitted against each other.

From Publishers Weekly. Starred. Thomas, Newsweek's assistant managing editor, turns his considerable narrative and research talents to Leyte Gulf, history's largest and most complex naval battle. He addresses the subject from the perspectives of four officers: William Halsey, who commanded the U.S. 3rd Fleet; Adm. Takeo Kurita, his Japanese counterpart; Adm. Matome Ugaki, Kurita's senior subordinate and a "true believer" in Japan's destiny; and Cdr. Ernest Evans, captain of a lowly destroyer, the U.S.S. Johnston. The Americans believed the Japanese incapable of great military feats, while the Japanese believed the Americans were incapable of paying the price of war. Both were tragically wrong. Halsey steamed north in pursuit of a what turned out to be a decoy, while Kurita's main force was positioned to destroy the American landing force in the Philippines. Evans repeatedly took the Johnston into harm's way against what seemed overwhelming odds. His heroism, matched by a dozen other captains and crews, convinced Kurita to break off the action. With Halsey's battleships and carriers just over the horizon, Kurita refused to sacrifice his men at the end of a war already lost. Ugaki bitterly denounced the lack of "fighting spirit and promptitude" that kept him from an honorable death. Evans fought and died like a true samurai. As Thomas skillfully reminds us, war is above all the province of irony. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist. The biographer of John Paul Jones adds another valuable book to naval historiography with this study of the Pacific Campaign of World War II, the greatest naval campaign in history. He relates its events through the actions of four naval officers, Americans Admiral William Halsey and Commander Ernest Evans and Japanese admirals Takeo Kurita and Matome Ugaki. As their stories unfold, Thomas discloses the development and

corporate cultures of two navies openly preparing to fight and finally getting down to it in 1941. The climax comes at Leyte Gulf, where Halsey's overaggressive tactics exposed the invasion fleet off Leyte to Kurita's surface force, which Evans' destroyer Johnston helped repel (see James D. Hornfischer's *Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors*, 2004), and where Ugaki's Kamikaze Corps debuted. Thomas has a notable knack for researching and writing tales of the sea that are entirely accessible to comparative landlubbers yet also enthralling for readers weaned on Samuel Eliot Morison and C. S. Forester. Heads up, WWII maritime collections, in particular. Roland Green

Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Thomas's prose keeps pace with the fight and captures its eerie quality...The result is both a naval adventure story and a striking meditation on the nature of military courage." -- *The New Yorker* With this exemplary book, Evan Thomas has set a benchmark for historical writing -- and analysis -- against which subsequent work will be measured." -- Michael J. Bonafield, *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis) "One of the most insightful analyses yet written of personalities and military cultures at war...An exciting read...Thomas draws the battle scenes with exquisite precision...Those who would direct military strategy and policy should be well warned -- and should have Thomas's book, well-worn, at their bedsides." -- Wesley K. Clark, *The Washington Post Book World* "A riveting tale of character and war by one of our most graceful writers. With impressive scholarship and a brilliant eye for detail, Evan Thomas tells the extraordinary story of Leyte Gulf without ever losing sight of the men in the maelstrom." -- Rick Atkinson, author of *An Army at Dawn* "This is a wonderful book; thoughtful and riveting all at the same time, and it's good history -- you're never quite sure things are going to turn out the way you know they did!" -- Ken Burns, filmmaker of *The War*