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Rick Atkinson
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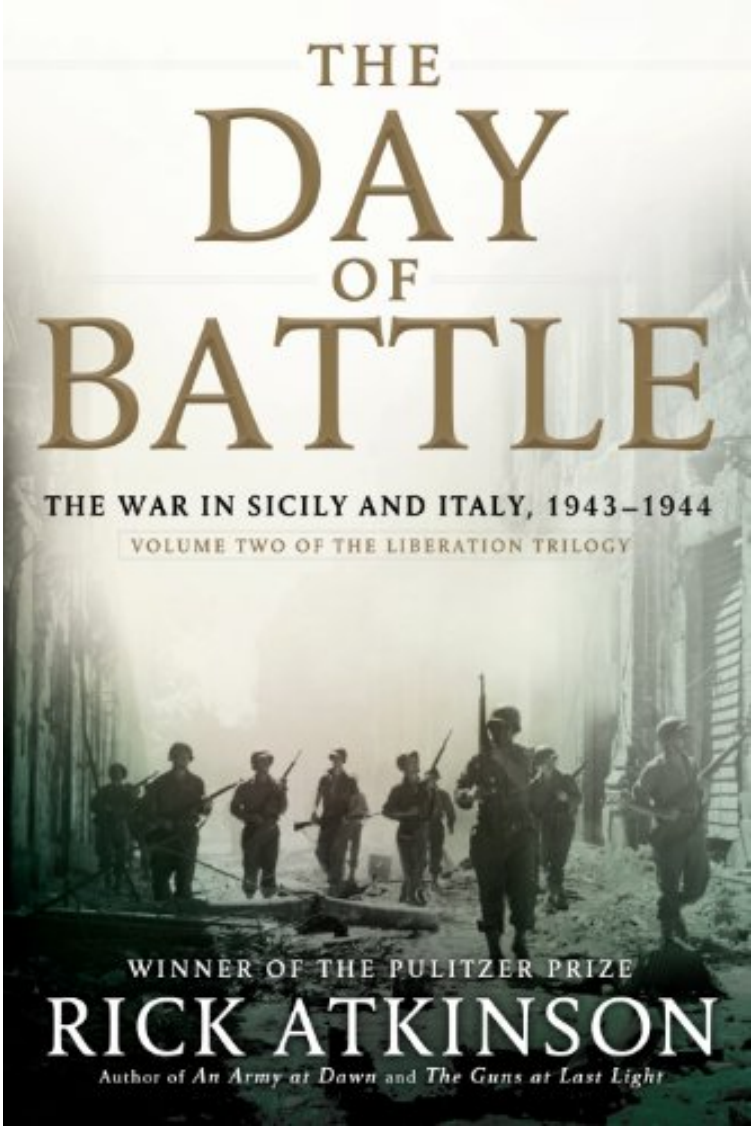

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Rick Atkinson : The Day Of Battle (The Liberation Trilogy) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Day Of Battle (The Liberation Trilogy):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A masterpieceBy William EricksonI'm about halfway through THE DAY OF BATTLE: THE WAR IN SICILY AND ITALY, 1943-44, the second volume of Rick Atkinson's masterpiece, THE LIBERATION TRILOGY, about the American army and air force in Europe in World War II. (I've already read the other two excellent volumes of his trilogy, AN ARMY AT DAWN, which is about the North African campaign -- a fiasco generally -- for which Atkinson won a well-deserved Pulitzer, and GUNS AT LAST LIGHT,

which describes the final year of the war, post D-Day, when my Dad served over there in a rifle company.)I am utterly in awe of Atkinson's writing, but I am infinitely more in awe and in admiration of the gallant men he writes about, men of my Dad's generation.Italy in 1943-44 was hell on earth. The combat there was as bad or worse than any fighting in the American Civil War or in either World War.Here is a shocking and particularly moving passage from this book, pp. 343-345:"Off they went, trudging like men sent to the scaffold. A soldier stumping down a sunken road toward the Rapido [River] observed, 'There was a dead man every ten yards, just like they were in formation.' Close to the river, the formation thickened. Another soldier, carrying a rubber boat, later wrote, 'It didn't seem what were walking on was dirt and rock. We soon found out it was dead GIs'"On the division left, the 143rd Infantry [Regiment] crossed more adroitly on Friday afternoon than it had on Thursday evening. [A full-strength regiment had about 2000 men; none of those in Italy by this time were full strength after months of combat.] Confusion delayed the attack for two hours, but at four PM, beneath a vast, choking smoke bank, the 3rd Battalion [800 men, give or take] began to paddle west. By 6:30 all rifle companies had found the far shore, and Colonel Martin ordered his 2nd Battalion to follow in train late that night. A quarter mile upstream, the 1st Battalion also crossed at dusk, although the laconic battalion commander, Major Frazior, radioed, 'I had a couple of fingers shot off.' Three battalions crowded a bridgehead only five hundred yards deep and six hundred yards wide. 'When twilight turned to darkness,' one soldier later wrote, 'I was thinking this is my last old day on earth.'"On the division right, delay begat delay in the 141st Infantry. Not least, engineers neglected to bring an air compressor to inflate fifty rubber boats, and Colonel Wyatt, the regimental commander, postponed the attack until nine PM, without telling Walker. By two AM on Saturday, a pair of footbridges had been laid, and six rifle companies [about 200 men each] from two battalions soon crossed. They found no survivors from the previous night's combat. Engineers wondered whether the Germans had left the catwalks intact 'to draw more of our troops over.' Some soldiers balked at crossing the river, or deliberately tumbled into the water. Others displayed uncommon valor. Company E of the 2nd Battalion -- the unit roster boasted mostly Spanish surnames, Trevino and Gonzales, Rivera and Hernandez -- advanced with bayonets fixed through sleeting fire from three sides. 'Fire wholeheartedly, men, fire wholeheartedly!' cried their commander, Captain John L. Chapin, before a bullet killed him. Corraled by minefields and barbed wire, the 141st held twenty-five acres of bottomland that grew bloodier by the hour. 'Well, I guess this is it,' a major told a fellow officer. 'May I shake your hand?' Moments later a shard from a panzer shell tore open his chest. He dragged himself to safety across a submerged bridge, and medics saved him. 'It was the only time,' one witness said, 'I ever say a man's heart flopping in his chest.'"[German] Artillery and Nebelwerfer drumfire methodically searched both bridgeheads, while machine guns opened on every sound, human and inhuman. GIs inched forward, feeling for trip wires and listening to German gun crews reload. 'Get out of your holes, you yellow bellies!' an angry voice cried above the din, but to stand or even to kneel was to die. A sergeant in the 143rd Infantry described 'one kid being hit by a machine gun -- the bullets hitting pushed his body along like a tin can.' Another sergeant wounded in the same battalion later wrote, 'I could hear my bones cracking every time I moved. My right leg was so mangled I couldn't get my boot off, on account of it was pointed to the rear.' German surgeons would remove the boot for him, along with both legs."A private sobbed as wounded comrades were dragged on shelter halves up the mud-slick east bank. Ambulances hauled them to a dressing station in a dank ravine behind Trocchio. Crowded tents 'smelled like a slaughter-house,' wrote the reporter Frank Gervasi. Outside a small cave in the hillside, a crudely printed sign read: PIECES. Inside, stacked burlap bags held the limbs of dismembered boys. On average, soldiers wounded on the Rapido received 'definitive treatment' nine hours and forty-one minutes after they were hit, a medical study later found: nearly six hours to reach an aid station, followed by another three hours to a clearing station, and another hour to an evacuation hospital. The dead were easier: they were buried fully clothed without further examination."Certainly the doctors were busy enough with the living. Only five physicians manned the clearing station of the 111th Medical Battalion. They treated more than three hundred battle casualties on Friday, often struggling to mend the unmendable, and they would handle nearly as many on Saturday. A wounded sergeant undergoing surgery with only local anesthesia later reported, 'The doctor stopped in the middle of the operation to smoke a cigarette and he gave me one too.' Another sergeant from the same company told a medic, 'Patch up these holes and give me a gun. I'm going to kill every son of a bitch in Germany.'"Well, what can one say after reading that?0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A forgotten campaignBy StilrunngJust as Korea is the forgotten war, North Africa and Italy seem to be the forgotten campaigns in the European theatre of WWII. Atkinson's highly readable account helps us remember that even if a case could be made that Sicily and Italy were deemed a sideshow by some, the sacrifices these men made were no less immense than those made by Allied warriors at Normandy and other higher profile battles. Atkinson's erudition and painstaking research revealed not only the high level squabbles between and among the heads of state and the generals who made the big (and oftentimes fatally flawed) decisions, but also the heartrending innermost thoughts and fears of the enlisted GIs who obeyed their orders and who, together with their brothers elsewhere in Europe and the Pacific, displayed such (now almost unfathomable) valor in doing so and saved the world from tyranny. The book never flags; Atkinson has an immense talent for writing that is a pleasure to read. His painstaking research provided a number of surprise sidebars about life among men in combat that at times had me laughing out loud and at other times made me wonder in amazement at the unbelievable bravery those men

displayed day after day after day. This is a great book about history we must never forget; we owe those men a debt we can never fully repay but what we must do, now that they are almost all gone, is remember and honor them.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Allied Ground Forces Play Game of Attrition in ItalyBy GreenyEarly in this history we are told that Napoleon had said that the way to conquer Italy was to invade from the top and go down, since the mountains favored a northern invasion. The mountains taper lower as you make your way down the boot. The allies in World War II did the opposite out of necessity and timing.Churchill's strategy was to spread out German forces to assist the pending D-Day invasion. The tragedy for the allies in implementing this strategy included many failed assaults on the seemingly impenetrable mountain top site called Cassino. Wave after wave of doomed assaults on Cassino The maxim that it's better to be a non-front line top military leader than a brave young soldier was as true as ever during the long assault on Cassino.Things were better for the Allies along the coast, where additional firepower gave them the upper hand in this brutal stage of World War II. The overall Italian campaign was noted for its ferocity and high rates of attrition. The Germans could not be everywhere at once and could not afford such losses indefinitely.Atkinson, a Pulitzer Prize winner, captures the brutality of this campaign and exposes the reality that real war is not glorious. He also demonstrates the phenomenon that many call the fog of war, as leaders were often unable to make informed decisions and many thousands died as a result of that alone. This is a compelling story narrated by the author himself.

A New York Times Bestseller -- A Pulitzer Prize–winning AuthorAfter his Pulitzer Prize–winning history of the Allied triumph in North Africa, Rick Atkinson follows the strengthening armies as they invade Sicily in July 1943 and, mile by bloody mile, fight their way north. The decision to invade Europe's so-called soft underbelly was controversial, but once under way the commitment never wavered. And with the liberation of Rome from the Nazis in June 1944, victory at last began to seem inevitable.

.com Best of the Month, November 2007: Topping a Pulitzer Prize-winning effort is tough; finding originality in a World War II narrative is even tougher. Yet Rick Atkinson accomplishes both with The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944. His previous work, An Army at Dawn, won the 2003 Pulitzer in history, but Atkinson has managed to set the bar even higher with his second installment in "The Liberation Trilogy." He descends upon each battlefield with rich historical perspective, tactical analysis, and chilling frontline observations. Cocksure Hollywood bravado is sparse, as Atkinson depicts soldiers fighting for honor, not glory. "We did it because we could not bear the shame of being less than the man beside us," explains one soldier's diary. "We fought because he fought; we died because he died." The result is an incredible portrayal of the courage, sorrow, and determination that came to define our greatest generation. --Dave CallananFrom Publishers WeeklyStarred . Atkinson surpasses his Pulitzer-winning An Army at Dawn in this empathetic, perceptive analysis of the second stage in the U.S. Army's grassroots development from well-intentioned amateurs to the most formidable fighting force of World War II. The battles in Sicily and Italy developed the combat effectiveness and the emotional hardness of a U.S. Army increasingly constrained to bear the brunt of the Western allies' war effort, he argues. Demanding terrain, harsh climate and a formidable opponent confirmed the lesson of North Africa: the only way home was through the Germans: kill or be killed. Atkinson is pitilessly accurate demonstrating the errors and misjudgments of senior officers, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, Gen. Mark Clark and their subordinates commanding corps and divisions. The price was paid in blood by the men at the sharp end: British and French, Indians and North Africans—above all, Americans. All that remained of the crew of one burned-out tank were the fillings of their teeth, for one example. The Mediterranean campaign is frequently dismissed by soldiers and scholars as a distraction from the essential objective of invading northern Europe. Atkinson makes a convincing case that it played a decisive role in breaking German power, forcing the Wehrmacht onto a defensive it could never abandon. (Oct. 2) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From Bookmarks MagazineThe Day of Battle continues the story Rick Atkinson told in An Army at Dawn; a future volume, about the Normandy invasion, will complete Atkinsonâ€™s Liberation Trilogy. Day of Battle, like Army at Dawn, excels at presenting the complexities of war to a popular audience. Notably, Atkinson puts a human face on the carnage with three-dimensional depictions of Churchill, FDR, and General Pattonâ€"as well as lesser-known leaders and common soldiers. Exceptionally well researched and compellingly written, the book offers gripping accounts of high-level strategizing and on-the-ground fighting. A few critics cited thin analyses of command decisions, a bias toward the Americansâ€™ experience, and some florid writing. Overall, however, Day of Battle is "a fitting testament to the GIs of the Fifth Army and the Italian campaign" (Washington Post).Copyright © 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.