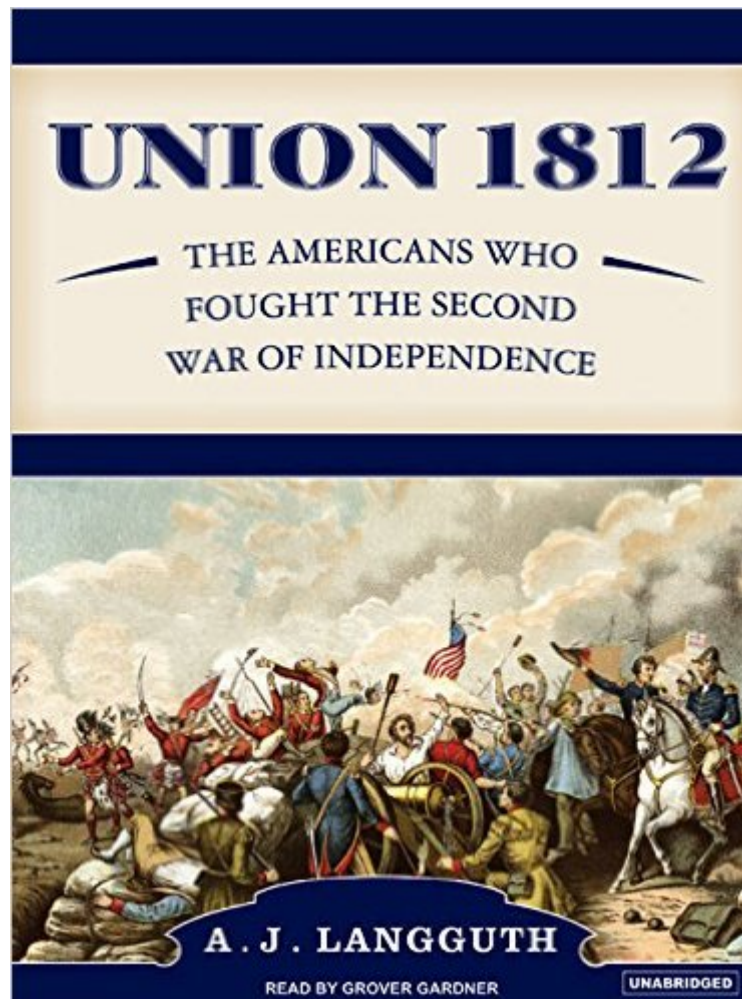


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Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought The Second War Of Independence



Synopsis

A gripping narrative of the second and final war of independence that secured the nation's permanence and established its claim to the entire continent, by the author of the enormously successful and acclaimed *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution*. This dramatic account of the War of 1812 fills a surprising gap in the popular literature of the nation's formative years. It is this war, followed closely on the War of Independence, that established the young nation as a permanent power and proved its claim to Manifest Destiny. Full of fascinating characters-Presidents Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, James Madison, James Monroe, and the future President Andrew Jackson, as well as Dolley Madison, Sam Houston, the great Indian chieftain Tecumseh, Francis Scott Key, Davey Crockett, and Oliver Perry, among others-Langguth's riveting account covers a vast panorama of battles, from the American sacking of Toronto and the British burning of the White House and the Capitol, to the thrilling war at sea and on the Great Lakes and the final spectacular American victory at New Orleans. *Union 1812* will take its place on the history shelf of essential books on the young nation, alongside Langguth's *Patriots*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I just finished A. J. Langguth's *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence*. This is the sequel to Langguth's excellent 1991 *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution*, and is written in the same style. Instead of being a solid historical narrative, it instead focuses on individuals and their contributions to the subject. In this instance, it addresses the American politicians and soldiers who brought about and fought the War of 1812. While this is

an interesting and novel approach, it means that there are large gaps in the coverage of the conflict. As just one example, there is no coverage of some of the important land battles such as Lundy's Lane. Langguth focuses on the great Indian leader Tecumseh, who played a critical role in the War of 1812, and was killed in battle while fighting alongside the British. Tecumseh was a born and charismatic leader who earned the respect of friend and foe, including his arch enemy, William Henry Harrison. While I've read a few books on the War of 1812 over the years, I've never seen one that addresses it from the perspective of the political and military leaders of the United States. The focus on Tecumseh, who was definitely an American legend, is particularly interesting because it focuses on the role that the Indians played, and the fact that they entered into a marriage of convenience with the British in the hope of regaining the lands that they lost to the white settlers. Langguth is a journalist by training, and he's a terrific writer. The book is very well written, with an easy, flowing style. At the same time, I did find the fact that the book jumps around quite a bit to be a bit frustrating and disconcerting, as it emphasizes the gaps in the coverage of the book.

I was looking forward to this book since I was not conversant with the War of 1812. Unfortunately, close to half of the book is not about the War. The first 160 pages are thumbnail rehashes of American history from Washington's retirement after the Revolution through the Constitutional Convention, through the administrations of Washington, Adams and Jefferson and the early life of Tecumseh. Suddenly, we're following an invasion into Canada led by an American named Hull and learn four pages into that description that Madison had signed a declaration of war against England and there was a plan, in fact, to invade Canada. Where either of those points came from was not described in detail as other facets of the war would be. The relevant points of the first 160 pages could have been summed up in 10 pages - our first three presidents, given the opportunity, avoided foreign wars. Instead, it read like a survey book that was going to cover 100 years in 400 pages. For those who are mildly conversant with American history, these pages were needless. The 38 page Afterword was interminable and went into the next few presidential elections - long after the War of 1812. On the other hand, the accounts of the battles, on land and on sea, are terrific. After Mr. Langguth got into the war, the book improved tremendously, although I thought it a bit thin on the dissent of the New England states. If these two hundred pages had comprised the entire book, it would have been absolutely wonderful and a five star beauty. In addition to the battle scenes, he describes the participants and their motivations well. Mr. Langguth is obviously a good writer and it really shows through in his battle accounts. He obviously knows his stuff.

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