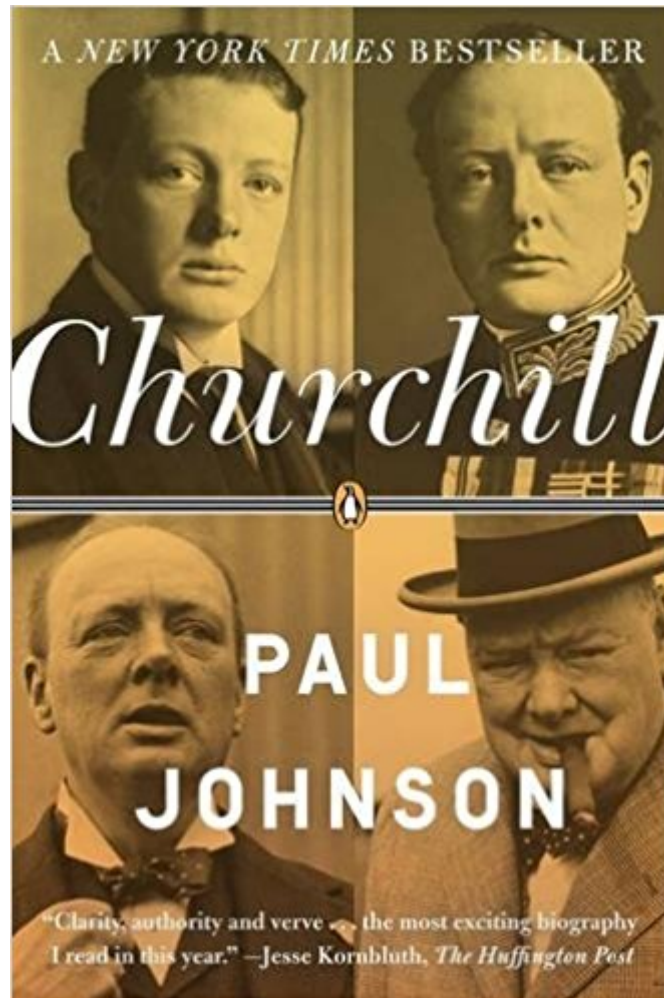




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Churchill



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Synopsis

From the “most celebrated and best-loved British historian in America” (Wall Street Journal), an elegant, concise, and revealing portrait of Winston Churchill. In Churchill, eminent historian Paul Johnson offers a lively, succinct exploration of one of the most complex and fascinating personalities in history. Winston Churchill’s hold on contemporary readers has never slackened, and Johnson’s analysis casts new light on his extraordinary life and times. Johnson illuminates the various phases of Churchill’s career—from his adventures as a young cavalry officer in the service of the empire to his role as an elder statesman prophesying the advent of the Cold War—and shows how Churchill’s immense adaptability and innate pugnacity made him a formidable leader for the better part of a century. Johnson’s narration of Churchill’s many triumphs and setbacks, rich with anecdote and quotation, illustrates the man’s humor, resilience, courage, and eccentricity as no other biography before, and is sure to appeal to historians and general nonfiction readers alike.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this enthusiastic yet first-rate biography, veteran British historian Johnson (Modern Times) asserts that Winston Churchill (1874–1965) was the 20th century’s most valuable figure: No man did more to preserve freedom and democracy.... An ambitious, world-traveling soldier and bestselling author, Churchill was already famous on entering Parliament in 1899 and within a decade was working with Lloyd George to pass the great reforms of

1908–1911. As First Lord of the Admiralty, he performed brilliantly in preparing the navy for WWI, but blame was undeserved according to Johnson for the catastrophic 1915 Dardanelles invasion drove him from office. Within two years, he was back at the top, where he remained until the Depression. Johnson delivers an adulatory account of Churchill's prescient denunciations of Hitler and heroics during the early days of WWII, and views later missteps less critically than other historians. He concludes that Churchill was a thoroughly likable great man with many irritating flaws but no nasty ones: he lacked malice, avoided grudges, vendettas and blame shifting, and quickly replaced enmity with friendship. Biographers in love with their subjects usually produce mediocre history, but Johnson, always self-assured as well as scholarly, has written another highly opinionated, entertaining work. B&w photos. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Praise for Churchill by Paul Johnson: "Johnson . . . give[s] the reader the definite sense of having known Churchill, or at least of having hung out with him for a bit . . . Churchill lets you spend some time in the man's company, and who wouldn't want that?" *New York Times Book Review* Johnson's distillation of life lessons from Churchill's stories career [is written in] . . . vivid prose and [with] consistent intelligence and urbanity. *Jon Meacham, Slate.com* "[If] you appreciate clarity, authority, and verve in historical writing, you will understand why I gulped down [Churchill] and now declare it the most exciting biography I read in 2009." *Jesse Kornbluth, Huffington Post* Johnson clearly shares and revels in Churchill's generosity of spirit and limitless intellectual energy. He has produced a book that is a joy and a worthy tribute to both of them." *Washington Times* "You read Johnson to be provoked and entertained, and on both these scores his biography, like its subject, succeeds wonderfully." *The American Conservative* "With deft narrative skill and keen insight, Johnson masterfully sketches the phases of Churchill's life . . . Along the way, Johnson gives us wonderful insights into Churchill's character . . . Rich with anecdote and quotation, Paul Johnson's Churchill illustrates the man's humor, resilience, courage, and eccentricity as no other biography before." *National Review* "Paul Johnson is the most celebrated and best-loved British historian in America." *Wall Street Journal*

We're pretty North American-centric here in the U.S. Watching the Winter Olympics reminds us that we Yanks are hardly the center of the universe. Plus, I've always felt a tad guilty that my reading list

had never included anything on Winston Churchill. No more guilt. Paul Johnson's 166-page chronicle of Churchill's amazing life and leadership has received excellent reviews. The page count also works. The author's masterful scan of Churchill's 90 years (1874 to 1965) includes insightful detail, laugh-out-loud sidebars and absolutely relevant commentary on leadership and politics, war, success and failure (lots of failure). If you're under 40, don't skip this book--thinking it irrelevant to our Twitter times. Churchill was a member of Parliament for 55 years, 31 years as a government minister, and almost nine years as prime minister. He served in the trenches of (and reported from) 15 battles, was awarded 14 campaign medals, "had been a prominent figure in the First World War, and a dominant one in the Second." And get this: he published nearly 10 million words, including his 880-page book, *The World Crisis: 1911-1918*. His five-volume *War Memoirs* book deal in 1947 paid him \$2.23 million (\$50 million in today's dollars). And in his spare time, Churchill painted over 500 canvases. In 1953, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. He overcame family challenges. His cousin noted, "Few fathers had done less for their sons. Few sons had done more for their fathers." Yet the author writes, "Among all the twentieth-century ruling elites, the Churchills must be judged to have had the most successful marriage." In the epilogue, the author includes five specific ways that leaders can learn from Churchill. Number 2: "There is no substitute for hard work." Yet, this giant of a world leader "also manifestly enjoyed his leisure activities," including his painting, which created a sanctuary-like retreat for his mind and body. He worked 16-hour days (often with full working mornings in bed--to conserve energy). "The balance he maintained between flat-out work and creative restorative leisure is worth study by anyone holding a top position." He knew the value of face time. He forced himself "to travel long distances, often in acute discomfort and danger, to meet the top statesmen face-to-face where his persuasive charm could work best." Speaking of charm, the writing enticed me page after page. Churchill's famed oratory: 111 words per minute, "with Gladstone's 100 as the standard." After touring Africa, he wrote *My African Journey* (completed on his honeymoon): "...full of schemes for industrializing Africa and harnessing the Nile." His politics: "Churchill was carried forward by intellectual conviction, but his reverence for tradition acted as a brake." He ribbed others, including the Labour Party leader, Clement Attlee. "Yes, he is a modest man, but then he has so much to be modest about." And this: "An empty taxi drew up outside the House of Commons, and Mr. Attlee got out." He popularized (if not invented) the terms "cold war" and "iron curtain." Dependent on U.S. help to win World War II, he became a student of FDR and wrote more than 1,000 letters to him. With pen and cigar (up to 12 a day) he was a brute force writing factory. He documented all verbal orders in writing, and his results-driven memos began with the famous headline, "Action This Day." "So did the endless series of brief, urgent queries: 'Pray

inform me on one half-sheet of paper, why...' Answers had to be given, fast." (This from Johnson's insightful list of 10 ways that Churchill saved Britain. Number 4: "a personal example of furious and productive activity.") All of this, and more, in just 166 action-packed pages. This is a fantastic book!

Thank God for Paul Johnson. Having read several of his great works over the years, I was excited to delve into his examination of Churchill, whom I admire above almost all people, living and dead. I was not disappointed. Mr. Johnson has a way of being so intimate with a subject that you feel he grew up around it--in this case, him. Not a full-fledged biography, the book hits on the important and most revealing events of Mr. Churchill's life and times, and makes great sense of them, weaving a terrific essay, really, about the particular importance of the man. It is not hagiography--the author exposes plenty of alleged warts--for example, certain military adventures in wars I and II. It is the perfect appetizer for a deeper look into Churchill's life. Mr. Johnson is a great English-language resource; we should pray he sticks around for a good long time yet, to make sense of so much craziness in our era.

Relatively quick read of one of the most fascinating and influential characters of the 20th century. Johnson's book hits the highlights of Churchill's development as a politician and statesman, and gives us a personal insight into a man both erudite in his understanding and appreciation for history, culture and politics, and endearingly quixotic personal qualities (down-to-earth in his touch with the common man but able to skewer his Parliamentary opposition with bon mots, sybarite in his personal tastes for food and drink but indefatigable in his productive work and free time - spent bricklaying and landscaping before turning to painting in later years). Churchill's force of personality shines in stark contrast to the bureaucrats and hack politicians of the present era. I would have preferred to read more of Churchill's own words, but that would have required a much longer book.

This is a nice, well written summary of Churchill's life. If you already know a bit about Churchill you might want to read something more advanced.

Your initial response may be that the title of my review is an oxymoron! But this outstanding "brief" but "thorough" text is indeed a "condensed comprehensive" biography. Arguably the most quoted man of the 20th century, Churchill's legend begs us to learn about him. This book is an excellent starting point in that journey. For me it was perfect. It satisfied my craving to expand my knowledge base without being bogged down in detail. Churchill lived 90 years. The most diverse and

course-altering in world history. From my American viewpoint, I found it interesting that as a young man in his twenties, he converses with Teddy Roosevelt, and as an octogenarian, Richard Nixon! Here is a unique perspective; Churchill was born less than a decade after Lincoln was assassinated, yet died a couple of years after Kennedy's assassination! This book is a "keeper" and a very satisfying read.

Every page, indeed every sentence has purpose and effect. I learned more about Churchill in 152 pages than in ANY other book on same subject. Paul Johnson is known as a giant in history writing; but he is new to me. This book is an example of the way words well placed convey so much without blather, Mr. Johnson has several other smaller books that are also gems; think Presidents Washington & Eisenhower as his other short masterpieces. This book is a keeper in my library. This small book arrived in excellent condition; there is so much material here...the read is wonderful.

Was very good & I learned a lot about this great man. I would highly recommend this book to someone who likes history but doesn't have time to read long, detailed biographies.

This is my first Churchill biography and I felt the book did a great job to introducing who he was. Sometimes I felt some depth was missing, but again I don't think is the aim of the book. I enjoyed it a lot.

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