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Dunkirk



Synopsis

The epic true story of Dunkirk - now a major motion picture written and directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Kenneth Branagh, Tom Hardy, and Mark Rylance. The Battle of Dunkirk, in May/June 1940, is remembered as a stunning defeat yet a major victory as well. The Nazis had beaten back the Allies and pushed them across France to the northern port of Dunkirk. In the ultimate race against time, more than 300,000 Allied soldiers were daringly evacuated across the Channel. This moment of German aggression was used by Winston Churchill as a call to Franklin Roosevelt to enter the war. Now historian Joshua Levine explores the real lives of those soldiers, bombed and strafed on the beaches for days on end, without food or ammunition; the civilians whose boats were overloaded; the airmen who risked their lives to buy their companions on the ground precious time; and those who did not escape.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Christopher Nolan, the creative genius behind The Dark Knight (Batman), Inception and Memento turns his eye next to Dunkirk, which tells the true story of a major British military evacuation off the coast of Belgium during WWII. Dunkirk is based on a book of the same name by historian Joshua Levine. Levine's 2011 book has been updated for the upcoming movie release, and it is bookended with an interview between Levine and Nolan at the beginning of the book about why Nolan chose this project, and a chapter at the end of the book discussing the process of making the movie, including comments from members of the production team. Movie buffs will love these extra chapters, giving them a fascinating insight into the process of moviemaking. History buffs will love the actual story of Operation Dynamo itself. I confess to not being a big military history reader, so

the sections of the book I found most intriguing had to do with the historical perspective of the events that led up to Britain's involvement in WWII. Great Britain was still reeling from the effects of WWI, fought nearly twenty years prior. They lost an entire generation of men in WWI, and the thought of losing another generation to a war with Germany was not one that many people wanted to contemplate. The worldwide depression severely impacted Great Britain, with unemployment high. With no system of welfare, there was tension between the classes, and extreme political parties were able to gain a foothold exploiting this. One can see echoes of this in today's world events as well. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain believed that he could work with Hitler's Nazi government to avoid war. He was accused of appeasement, and this led to the election of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister of Great Britain during the most trying time in history. Churchill approved the plans for Operation Dynamo, which called for the evacuation of as many as 40,000 British troops from Dunkirk. The Germans were about to surround the British and French troops, and in order to save the troops from a certain slaughter or capture, they must arrange for an evacuation. Failure to save these troops would mean that the Allies would most likely lose the war, and the world today would be a much different place if that had happened. The book goes into great detail about the actual logistics of the evacuation, a monumental task. Every available military and private ship and boat was recruited to make the trip to Dunkirk to ferry the soldiers back to England. There are many remembrances from people who make that voyage, and they are so interesting. The troops were sent to the beach, and with tens of thousands of soldiers along the beach, some for many days, it became a little city of its own. Men played cards, built small shelters, and waited and waited until it was their turn to wade out in to the sea to be rescued, all while being attacked from the sky by German airplanes. Levine compared this scene to the one of refugees from war and poverty who are taking any form of floating apparatus to get to the shores of Greece and Italy, an apt comparison. Dunkirk is a fascinating look at a historical event that many people don't know about. While some people felt that this event was a story of a failed battle, Levine looks at it as an incredible story of survival. The goal was to save 40,000 troops, and the reality was that over 260,000 troops were rescued from the shores of Dunkirk, an astonishing number. England used Dunkirk as a rallying cry and people in England today still speak of the "Dunkirk Spirit" when talking about bucking up and working together to achieve a goal that seems unattainable. I highly recommend Dunkirk for movie fans, history and military history buffs.

Great book. It covers the events of what was happening before the war. Also, it covers the battle of Dunkirk and how they fought off the advance of the Nazis.

The movie was better, but the book prepared me for it.

Dunkirk: The History Behind the Major Motion Picture by Joshua Levine is a companion history book to the movie, Dunkirk, coming out. Mr. Levine's 2001 book was the basis for the movie, this edition is an updated one. I have to admit that I did not know much about Dunkirk until Christopher Nolan's movie came out. The trailer looked great and a five minute single take tracking shot, all done as a single shot, floored me. As someone who takes an interest in the Second World War, I immediately jumped on the opportunity to read Dunkirk: The History Behind the Major Motion Picture by Joshua Levine. Mr. Levine's 2011 book was the basis for the motion picture, but this edition has interviews with Mr. Nolan at the beginning with much insight into the project, as well as a chapter at the end discussing the process of making the movie. Several people from the production team (which I can only guess would have been enormous), are also interviewed with gives the reader a fascinating look into the hard work and dedication it takes to re-create history. The author takes a fascinating look about the logistics of the evacuation, which is no small feat. Every ship the English could get their hands on (fishing boats, pleasure boats, etc.) that could have possibly made the ride was recruited. The film even features a few of the original ships that were restored. The scale and enormity of the operation is simply difficult to comprehend. There were tens of thousands of soldiers on the beach, evading German air attacks and waiting to be evacuated. The author also tells the stories of the soldier who were arranged in an ever shrinking circle around Dunkirk, protecting the shores and the men from constant attacks by the German army trying to break through. This is a fascinating book on an amazing historical event which, if you are outside of England, rarely gets mentioned. While it may look like a huge loss, the "Dunkirk Spirit" was used as a rallying cry for the English, and still does from my understanding, to work hard as a team and achieve a hard earned goal.

Great book. Just a little tedious in parts but overall a very good read. It's a very good companion to the motion picture. I happen to have read it before seeing the motion picture and it made the experience much better. Although seeing the movie first would not spoil the book. They compliment each other no matter which one was seen or read first.

Mr. Levine succeeds in both presenting an accurate historical account of the events leading up to, including, and following the evacuation, while giving us a backstage pass into the making of the film.

As I write this I am 3 days away from seeing the movie and the book has certainly whetted my appetite.

While many Americans have heard of Dunkirk, This book clearly explains the significance of the siege and rescue of the BEF. Failure would have had disastrous consequences for the free world and the world as we know it. Great insight for those of us interested in 20th century history.

I saw this movie and was thus drawn to read the book. I wish I had done this in reverse order, as I would have had a deeper appreciation of the movie. I have read several books about Dunkirk, but this narrative is the best I have experienced. It deals with circumstances that seem insurmountable, but have been addressed

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