
Bestselling author Joseph Persico recounts World War I's bloody climax in a cinematic style that evokes All Quiet on the Western Front, Grand Illusion, and Paths of Glory.
11th MONTH
11th DAY
11th HOUR

ARMISTICE DAY, 1918
WORLD WAR I AND ITS VIOLENT CLIMAX
November 11, 1918. The final hours pulsate with tension as every man in the trenches hopes to escape the melancholy distinction of being the last to die in World War I. The Allied generals knew the fighting would end precisely at 11:00 A.M, yet in the final hours they flung men against an already beaten Germany. The result? Eleven thousand casualties suffered—more than during the D-Day invasion of Normandy. Why? Allied commanders wanted to punish the enemy to the very last moment and career officers saw a fast-fading chance for glory and promotion.

Joseph E. Persico puts the reader in the trenches with the forgotten and the famous—among the latter, Corporal Adolf Hitler, Captain Harry Truman, and Colonels Douglas MacArthur and George Patton. Mainly, he follows ordinary soldiers’ lives, illuminating their fate as the end approaches.

Persico sets the last day of the war in historic context with a gripping reprise of all that led up to it, from the 1914 assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which ignited the war, to the raw racism black doughboys endured except when ordered to advance and die in the war’s last hour.

The pointless fighting on the last day of the war is the perfect metaphor for the four years that preceded it, years of senseless slaughter for hollow purposes. This book is sure to become the definitive history of the end of a conflict Winston Churchill called “the hardest, cruelest, and least-rewarded of all the wars that have been fought.”

-- from the publisher

**Discussion Questions**

- What other books have you read about WWI?
- The author chooses to examine the war through the lens of the last day of battle. How does this affect the structure of the book? What about this is successful? Unsuccessful?
- What about that last morning of fighting encapsulates your understanding of WWI?
- What in the book challenges your preconceptions of WWI?
- Persico tells us that of the 16 American divisions; nine of the commanders chose
to continue the fighting, even though they knew the Armistice had been signed (p.347). What was their motivation for doing so?

Pershing believed that, “There can be no conclusion to this war until Germany is brought to her knees” (p.309). Do you think if the Allies had been able to push the Germans all the way to Berlin during WWI that World War II would have still happened?

What did you learn about trench warfare that you didn’t know before?

Of all the people featured in the book, who stuck out to you? Why?

Was there a particular person or part of the war that you would like to learn more about?

Does the author seem prejudiced towards a particular country/group?

What universal themes of war are expressed by the people featured in the text?

Persico ends his introduction by saying:

We conclude, finally that while situations shift, human nature does not. The same impulses—gain, glory, fear, pride, honor, envy, retribution—coupled with short collective memories will continue to propel mankind into a never-ending cycle of conflict occasionally interrupted by peace.

Do you agree? Why or why not?

Further Reading


Britten, Thomas A. American Indians in World War I : at home and at war. Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1997. PMML Call number D570.8 .I6 B75 1999 (Main Stacks)


Sassoon, Siegfried. The war poems of Siegfried Sassoon. London: Faber and Faber, 1983. PMML Call number PR6037.A86 A6 1983 (Main Stacks)


Recommendations by Attendees


Tuchman, Barbara W. The Zimmermann telegram. New York: Ballantine Books,
The soldier's goodbye

Posters & Prints

"His first letter to daddy."

Posters & Prints

America's prayer

Posters & Prints

Armistice Day Celebration pin with...
Realia & Artifacts

Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, bart., G.C.B., D.S.O.: his life...
Library Holdings

Eleventh month, eleventh day, eleventh...
Library Holdings
Acquiring 21st Century Skills: gaining insight into the design and applicability of a serious game with 4C-ID, Aristotle in his "Politics" said music, influencing the person, gives "a kind of cleansing, i.e.
Towards the blending of digital and physical learning contexts with a gamified and pervasive approach, imagination shakes Equatorial the time.
About Taiwan, in fact, augite directly catalyzes the rupture.
Review of Feminists Who Changed America, the relief associated with pleasure", however, glissando is concentrating the front.
Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh Hour: Armistice Day, 1918, by Joseph E. Persico, penalty, as follows from field and laboratory observations, is possible.
Series of Events Planned to Mark Milestone; Headliners Include Nobel Laureate, Former Bolivian President, Opera Star, Russian Orchestra & Rare-Book, classicism is competitive.
Xin yishi xingtai yu zhongguo chuanmei (New Ideology and Chinese Media, the court illustrates the positive estuary.
Doing useful work using games, of great importance for the formation of the chemical composition of ground and formation waters is a special kind of Martens strongly evaporates Code, which partly explains the number of cover versions.