

War Books



My question of the week - Do women read war novels? I don't mean to ask this in a polarizing and dramatic way, but out of genuine interest.

I recently finished the excellent *Matterhorn* by Karl Marlantes, a novelization about the Vietnam War. Marlantes is a highly decorated Marine who served in Vietnam and this 600 page book was 30 years in the making. The book is technical and almost solely set in Vietnam. There isn't room for families, girlfriends, or real life. This book is intense - filled with racial tensions, horrifying wounds, tigers, leeches, jungle rot, thirst, hunger, diarrhea, boredom, bad language and inept military structure. I probably lost some of the technicalities of the military maneuvers, but in the end you really care about the characters. At times, reading this was stressful but the pain and longing seems universal and touching.

At least to me. Would this appeal to other female historical fiction readers? I don't know. Some of my favorite novels are war novels, including *City of Thieves*, *Regeneration*, *Going After Cacciato*, and *A Very Long Engagement*. I took a very informal poll of female readers to ask about war books and had a pretty uninterested response - except for a hearty recommendation of *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara (which is now on my reading list). I think a well written war novel - like any novel - can provide insight to the human condition, morality, destiny and questions of right and wrong. If you are interested in a big thick book and don't mind the grab-you-by-the-collar intensity, check out *Matterhorn* or maybe even Marlantes' *memoir* too.

Posted by sbowman on March 21, 2012

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[World War I](#)

[World War II](#)

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[Matterhorn : a novel of the Vietnam War](#)

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[10] <https://mcpl.info/category/blog/information-answers-reviews>
[11] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subject/civil-war>
[12] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subject/fiction>
[13] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subject/historical>
[14] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subject/war-military>
[15] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subject/world-war-i>
[16] <https://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subject/world-war-ii>
[17] <https://mcpl.info/reviews-8tes1426>