

Example of book  
review on preview:  
the last lion: winston  
spencer churchill:  
defe...

[War, World War 2](#)



Spanning the years from 1940 to 1965, the story in the last lion commences shortly after Winston Spencer Churchill became the prime minister. This is the time when his tiny island nation stood in solitude against the overwhelming power of the Nazi Germany. As conjured up by William Manchester and Paul Reid, Churchill was a man of lightning fast intellect, indomitable courage, and an irresistible will to action. The thesis of the author is built around the brilliant recount of how Churchill organized his nation's military response and defense, and personified the so called never surrender ethos. He compelled the FDR to support America's besieged cousins while at the same time adapting himself together with his country to an inevitable shift of world power to the United States from the British Empire.

With More than twenty years in the making, the book, THE LAST LION, makes a presentation of a revelatory and incomparable portrait of this flawed but brilliant and dynamic leader. This is the most stirring and popular history where the author breaks some new ground through the impressive job of synthesizing the information from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources used by Reid were published diaries, self-serving memoirs, magazines and documentaries.

Although Reid could not use deep archival research, he carried out interviews from various people which included both the disparaging and admiring remarks of contemporaries and colleagues of Churchill, and he presented everyone's take with equability. From these sources, Reid makes it clear that Japanese had developed some carrier tactics years before, and frankly ascribes to Churchill's shortsightedness to racism. Reid makes it clear

that Churchill embraced the new ideology when the facts demanded, although he could not bring himself to entirely giving up the old.

In his two previous volumes, *Visions of Glory 1874-1932* and *Alone, 1932-1940*, the prose and the history were thorough, well written and reasonably balanced. There is no doubt that 'the last lion: defender of the realms' mostly follows the pattern. Though the book tends to get overinvolved in minutia, Paul Reid did an impressive job of finishing the work that was started by William Manchester. The book gives a detailed account of the two terms of Churchill as the prime minister and a leader during World War II. Reid had a reputation of being a Red Sox fan, as was the case with Manchester. In terms of balance, Reid tried to maintain the spirit of the initial two volumes. Although some critics found the initial two volumes an overlong, Reid passes a kind of some test by writing the book at similarly great length.

Reid vividly uses his journalistic eye to pick up on some small points of color that illustrate a broad truth. For instance, he colorfully retells a story about a game of poker involving Harry Truman and Churchill. In this story, the president had given a warning to his playing cronies to be on the watch because the former premier had more than 40 years of experience playing poker, and such, was obviously an experienced player. It did not take long before the president's cronies realized that the former prime minister was indeed a wolf among lambs. At the tail end, Harry Truman had to rescue Churchill by pleading with others to go easy on him. This effect, Reid was trying to balance his work and at the same time come clear with this metaphor trying to bring out the relationship between president Harry

Truman and Winston Churchill.

Although Reid tries to follow the previous balanced volumes of William Manchester, his conventional nature of analysis is reflected in the text's imbalance. The considerable length of Reid's writing is about the wartime government of 1940-45, with more than 900 pages given to this central period Churchill's life. The issue is that a rich literature was still available concerning these years, besides the story being told by other writers in a better way. May be it is not fair to criticize the balance of a more than 1000 page book claiming it is not long enough, but by giving little attention to a less travelled historical period from 1945, Reid has obviously missed an opportunity.

Of 25 years to which this book is devoted, the last 15 pages are dispatched in just 61 pages. Those people who admire this book could claim it reminds them of the earlier times spent in the company of William Manchester.

However, it is difficult for critical analyzers of this book to conclude that the legacy and reputation of Paul Reid would have been better served if he was left standing alongside Winston Churchill, for the approach of that finest hour in May 1940.

While throwing the weight behind the unbalanced nature of this boo, it has been argued that this volume did not come close to the two previous volumes that preceded it. The reason behind the argument is that the book focused far too much on the details of the war and far too little on the twenty years that followed the war. While Manchester spent a huge part of volume two setting the stage for Winston Churchill to burst forth and save the civilized world, Reid concentrates on giving a bunch of facts, dates of events

and the events without capturing the essence of his subject or the leader's imagination at the least. The effort of Reid is serviceable, but it is far from being the masterpiece as was the first two volumes.

This work was important because many people were wondering how the publication of the third volume from Manchester would stand up since Manchester was ailing. Those people who had enjoyed the earlier two volumes were wondering how the writing of this third volume could stand to the test. However, considering some well written passages, it could be argued that the volume far surpasses the simply serviceable. For instance, the author notes the events done by Churchill in a summary that satisfy the reader when he writes about Churchill: Churchill assembled British Patriotism, British resilience and British optimism. In that process, Churchill helped in ensuring the democracy in a world filled with tyrannical threats. The authors, William Manchester and Paul Reid further burnish the luminous reputation of Churchill in this volume. They portray him as being there with people as he was for civilization, for liberty and for humanity, although he was over-bundled with his Royal Airforce overcoat and the responsibilities that were coming with it

However, Reid is on a less sure ground about British history and politics. While some mistakes could count for little in the work of prose, it matters that it was not Neville Chamberlain who was the prime minister that appointed Antony Eden as foreign secretary in 1935 as indicated by Reid, but Stanley Baldwin. The administrator of the National Health Service was not Aneurin Bevan as indicated. Reid records an explanation giving the reason for Churchill's loathed left-wing of intellectual at what Reid would call

Winchester University. While it is actually Winchester College and not university, the intellectuals were educated at an elite private boarding rivaling Eton and nearly similar to the United States of America's Groton. As these solecisms and other errors pile up, the reader of the book is left with the perturbed sense of the author who has a skin deep command of the British politics and society.

Although faced with the above discussed controversies in Paul Reid's completion of the work that was started by Manchester, the study likes the book because it works well and completes the sequence very well. This volume covers the life of Churchill from 1940 until his death in 1965. In this book, Churchill is named the prime minister to achieve the goal of his lifetime. Besides, one of the hallmarks of this book is the graphically depicted manner of idiosyncrasies of Churchill and how hard he could get toward his aides. Over time, the book makes clear and the power shift from Great Britain to the United States, and the tensions that were created as a result. In this book, the story of the Role of Churchill in World War II is well told. Also told well is the stunning fall from power as a result of German's defeat, the years of Churchill while in the wilderness, and his following re-succession as a prime minister. The family problems and his years of declining period were also well told.

While his critics may tell him off over some imbalance in his work, the book is depicted with palpable enthusiasm, portraying imagination about this iconic figure that Churchill was. Reid has vividly noted other important step in development of the story when he writes about how Britain forces repelled an invasion from German with Churchill infusing the war efforts with his way

of keeping bugging on. With this state of balancing the main events as they unfolded, Reid well completes the work that was started by Manchester.

Although the author has been commended for doing admirable job in trying to assess the military strategy and leadership style of Churchill, history students would find a deficiency in the leadership prowess and the life of Churchill. Nevertheless, the volume is worthy finale to readers who are seeking for a more general assessment of Churchill as one of the true titans of the last century.

## **Reference**

Manchester, W., and Reid, P. (2012). *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill: Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965*. Little: Brown.