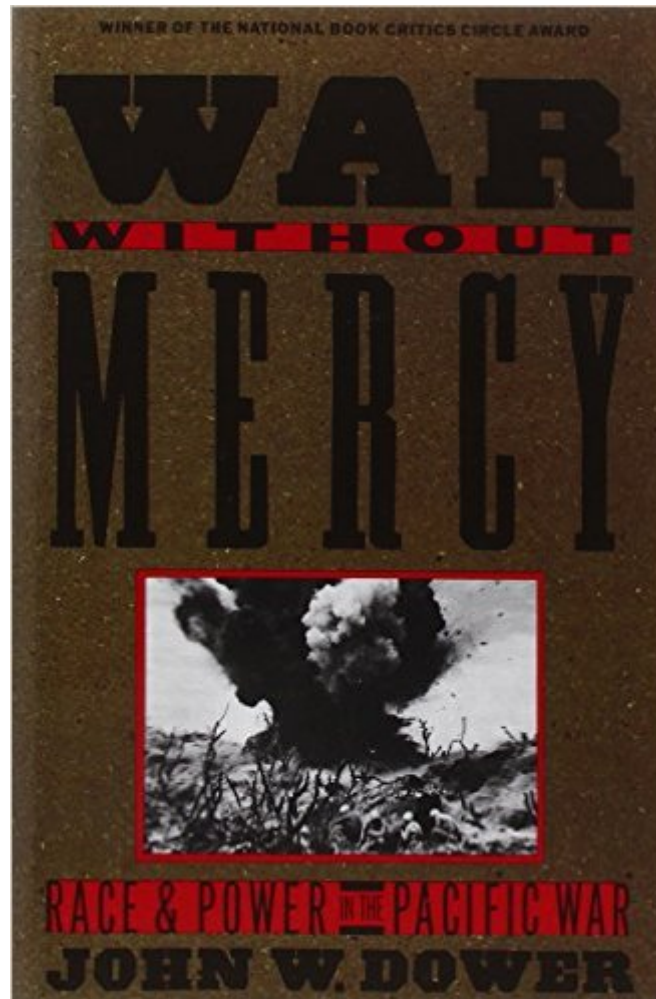


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War Without Mercy: Race And Power In The Pacific War



Synopsis

WINNER OF THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD • AN AMERICAN BOOK AWARD FINALIST • Now in paperback, *War Without Mercy* has been hailed by The New York Times as "one of the most original and important books to be written about the war between Japan and the United States." In this monumental history, Professor John Dower reveals a hidden, explosive dimension of the Pacific War "while writing what John Toland has called "a landmark book . . . a powerful, moving, and evenhanded history that is sorely needed in both America and Japan." Drawing on American and Japanese songs, slogans, cartoons, propaganda films, secret reports, and a wealth of other documents of the time, Dower opens up a whole new way of looking at that bitter struggle of four and a half decades ago and its ramifications in our lives today. As Edwin O. Reischauer, former ambassador to Japan, has pointed out, this book offers "a lesson that the postwar generations need most . . . with eloquence, crushing detail, and power."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Overall, this book presents a side of the Second World War with which most Americans are unfamiliar and may find shocking. It does a valuable service in exposing many of the prejudices of the time and especially in showing how those prejudices were at least partly responsible for the string of debacles endured by U.S. and other allied forces in the war's opening stages. It also does a very good job of giving the reader a glimpse of the kind of thinking that was prevalent in Japanese society prior to and during the war. In this sense it is an extremely important work and is highly

recommended to anyone with a serious interest in the Pacific Theater. However, having said that, I will also say that the author overplays his hand and puts far too much emphasis on the role of racism, portraying it as the primary cause of the war and of the evils that transpired during its execution. As a result, it has a tendency to explain away a good many complex issues that deserve a fuller treatment. It also falls prey to one of the great pitfalls of almost all modern analyses of relations between Japan and America, namely the idea that in order to be balanced one must give equal weight to both sides in any argument. As a result, one might come away from reading this book with the idea that Japan and the United States were essentially of equivalent culpability and that their respective leaders were of a moral kind. This is an absolutely absurd notion, and one that seems to have taken root in more and more of the academic work that is being published recently. Nowhere is Dower's judgment with regard to the impacts of racism more questionable than in his conclusion, where he tries to explain away contemporary (1980's) trade frictions as the result of race hatreds.

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