

Non-Combatants and Others: A Fictionalized History of the Vietnam War

Non-Combatants and Others is a 1974 novel by David Halberstam that fictionalizes the history of the Vietnam War. The novel follows the lives of four American soldiers and their families over the course of the war. It was a critical and commercial success, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1975.



Non-Combatants and Others: Writings Against War 1916-1945 (Rose Macaulay) by Rose Macaulay

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 592 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 272 pages



The novel's title refers to the fact that the vast majority of American casualties in the Vietnam War were not combat soldiers. Instead, they were non-combatants, such as medical personnel, engineers, and support staff. The novel follows the lives of four of these non-combatants: a doctor, a nurse, a chaplain, and a journalist.

The novel begins in 1965, as the United States is escalating its involvement in the Vietnam War. The four main characters are all sent to Vietnam,

where they experience the horrors of war firsthand. They see their friends and colleagues die, and they are forced to make difficult decisions about life and death.

The novel follows the four characters through the war, as they struggle to make sense of the violence and chaos around them. They question the reasons for the war, and they wonder if it is worth fighting. By the end of the novel, they have all been changed by their experiences in Vietnam.

Non-Combatants and Others is a powerful and moving novel that offers a unique perspective on the Vietnam War. The novel's characters are complex and well-developed, and they provide a human face to the war. The novel is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the Vietnam War and its impact on American society.

Characters

- **Dr. Philip Decker** is a young doctor who is sent to Vietnam in 1965. He is idealistic and believes that he can make a difference in the war. However, he soon becomes disillusioned as he witnesses the horrors of war.
- **Nurse Leslie Whitcomb** is a nurse who is also sent to Vietnam in 1965. She is a compassionate and caring woman who is dedicated to helping the wounded. However, she is also haunted by the death and suffering that she sees.
- **Chaplain John Gregory** is a chaplain who is sent to Vietnam in 1966. He is a devout man who believes that God is on the side of the United States. However, he begins to question his faith as he witnesses the violence and suffering of the war.

- **Journalist Robert Malone** is a journalist who is sent to Vietnam in 1967. He is a cynical and disillusioned man who believes that the war is unwinnable. However, he is also a talented writer who is able to capture the human cost of the war.

Themes

- **The futility of war:** The novel shows the futility of war and the destruction that it causes. The four main characters all experience the horrors of war firsthand, and they are all changed by their experiences.
- **The importance of human life:** The novel emphasizes the importance of human life and the need to protect it. The four main characters all witness the death and suffering of others, and they are all forced to make difficult decisions about life and death.
- **The power of hope:** The novel also shows the power of hope and the ability of the human spirit to overcome adversity. The four main characters all face challenges and setbacks, but they never give up hope.

Reception

Non-Combatants and Others was a critical and commercial success. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1975, and it was also nominated for the National Book Award for Fiction. The novel was praised for its realism, its powerful characters, and its insights into the Vietnam War.

The novel has been adapted into a television miniseries and a stage play. It has also been translated into more than 20 languages.

Legacy

Non-Combatants and Others is considered to be one of the most important novels about the Vietnam War. The novel has helped to shape the way that we think about the war and its impact on American society. The novel is a powerful and moving reminder of the human cost of war.



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