Reflections on Reading

John E. Jackson
Reflections on Reading

Professor John E. Jackson is the Naval War College’s manager for the Navy Professional Reading Program.

On the Navy Professional Reading Program (NPRP) website, www.navycorps.navy.mil, you will find a complete list of the sixty titles in the primary library, as well as a brief synopsis of each book. The program includes works by some of the most celebrated authors in the world, as well as excellent books by less-well-known writers. Among the authors of note are these.

Stephen Ambrose was largely unknown outside of academic circles until 1994, when he published *D-Day: June 6, 1944—The Climactic Battle of World War II* on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the invasion. In addition to his highly regarded books on World War II, Ambrose has written on many other aspects of American history, including multivolume biographies of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon. He also founded the Eisenhower Center and was president of the National D-Day Museum, in New Orleans, until his death in October 2002.

James Bradley is the fourth child of Iwo Jima flag-raiser John “Doc” Bradley. Bradley has had significant experience writing and producing corporate films and corporate meetings; he has traveled the world, living and working in more than forty countries for nearly a decade. His book *Flags of Our Fathers*, about the battle for Iwo Jima, spent forty-six weeks on the New York Times best-seller list and was made into a film directed by Clint Eastwood.

Winston Churchill, the former British prime minister, was a prolific author whose highly acclaimed six-volume history of the First World War (*The World Crisis*) was published in 1923–31. His six-volume work *The Second World War* was published from 1948 to 1953. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953 for his lifetime body of work. The NPRP includes his *The Second World War*, volume 1, *The Gathering Storm*, a unique first-person account of the
actions leading from the end of the First World War until May 1940, the end of what he called the “Twilight War.” All six volumes are masterful expositions.

Thomas L. Friedman is a widely respected author and journalist and a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner. He has traveled extensively reporting on the Middle East, U.S. domestic politics and foreign policy, international economics, and the worldwide impact of terrorism. He is the only author to have two books in the NPRP. From Beirut to Jerusalem won both the National Book Award and the Overseas Press Club Award in 1989 and was on the New York Times best-seller list for nearly twelve months. The World Is Flat earned the Financial Times and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award, and Friedman was named one of America’s Best Leaders by U.S. News & World Report.

Malcolm Gladwell has been a staff writer with The New Yorker since 1996. In 2005 he was named one of Time magazine’s “100 Most Influential People.” He is the author of four books, including The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference (2000) and Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking (2005), both of which were number-one New York Times best sellers. From 1987 to 1996, he was a business and science reporter with the Washington Post.

Robert Heinlein, known as the “dean of modern science fiction,” graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1929 and served on the revolutionary new aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV 2) in 1931. His commanding officer was Ernest J. King, who was later to serve as the Chief of Naval Operations during the Second World War. Heinlein published over three dozen novels and scores of short stories. His Starship Troopers won the Hugo Award in 1959; it has been praised for capturing the feel of military service and the ordeal of young people moving from recruits to battle-hardened soldiers.

David McCullough won the Pulitzer Prize on two occasions and the National Book Award twice. In December 2006 he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award. His book 1776 was a New York Times national best seller in both hardcover and paperback; it has been called “brilliant . . . powerful,” and “a classic.” He is a frequent contributor to and narrator of historical television and film projects.

Herman Wouk, who studied at Columbia University, wrote radio scripts and served in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific in World War II. He drew on his combat experience for his classic war novel The Caine Mutiny, which won a Pulitzer Prize and became a successful play and film. Other books include The Winds of War (1971) and War and Remembrance (1975).
All of these authors, in their own particular ways, paint a picture of the world in which they lived or the world as it might have been or may someday become. You are encouraged to go with them on their literary journeys. You will be well rewarded for your investment!

JOHN E. JACKSON