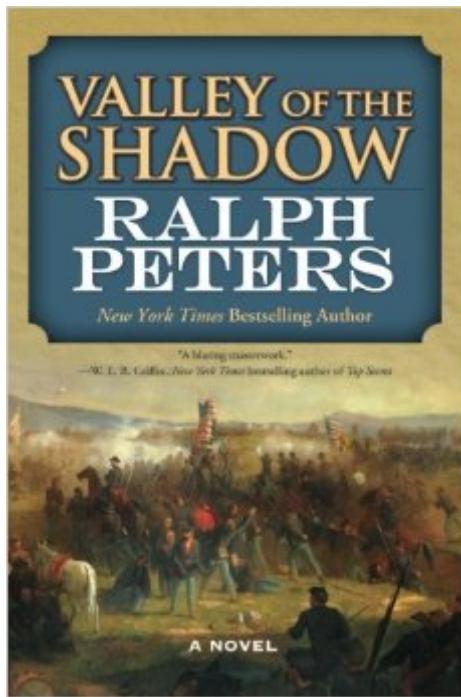


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Valley Of The Shadow: A Novel



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Boyd Award for Literary Excellence in Military Fiction *New York Times* bestselling author Ralph Peters returns with *Valley of the Shadow*, the third installment in his Boyd Award-winning series on the Civil War. In the Valley of the Shadow, they wrote their names in blood. The summer and autumn of 1864 witnessed some of the fiercest fighting of the American Civil War, from a daring Confederate raid that nearly seized Washington, D.C., to a stunning reversal on the bloody fields of Cedar Creek—mighty battles now all but forgotten. The desperate struggle for mastery of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley pitted a remarkable cast of heroes in blue and gray against each other: Philip Sheridan, a Union general with an uncanny gift for inspiring soldiers, and Jubal Early, his Confederate counterpart, stubborn and deadly; George Armstrong Custer, and the brilliant, courageous John Brown Gordon. Ralph Peters brings to life yesteryear's giants and their breathtaking battles. Sharp as a bayonet and piercing as a bullet, *Valley of the Shadow* is a great novel of our grandest, most-tragic war.

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Customer Reviews

In my more than half a century of devouring military history, I don't know another author that can get under the skin of a battle like Ralph Peters. His account of the 1864 Valley Campaign is enormously illuminating as he skillfully pulls the reader into the long ago in such a way that you feel you are there. But the book is more than just about fighting. Battles are fought by men, and Peters can draw a man's character with a subtle perception and compelling empathy that few other authors can match and in a way that adds a special poignancy and understanding to the story.

Despite the nonfiction nature of the book, he is true to the history and writes of events with more clarity and insight than any nonfiction treatment of this campaign has ever achieved. All of this is set in stunning prose for which Peters is a master. This book is a worthy brother to his earlier Cain at Gettysburg and Hell or Richmond and is equally highly recommended. For three generations Mike Shaara's wonderful *Killer Angels* was the standard of military historical fiction. Peters has supplanted him, not just in one book, but in all three. The descriptive reading list at the end is worth the price of the book itself and will surely deplete my allowance. I look forward with great expectation to the fourth book of this series. Peters surely is Clio's darling! Peter G. Tsouras

Ralph Peters just keeps getting better and better. In lesser known, but consequential, fights, he explores the behavior of leaders and soldiers in stand-up combat while revealing the inside mechanics of Civil war tactics: "If I extend his flank with one division and swing the other north of that creek bottom--then clear out that artillery and recross, we can turn their flank." His portrayal of leaders are word-portraits: "Sheridan drove subordinates hard and gave superiors victory, damn the cost; Early, a man as gifted as he was unlikable; Crook smiled his old-Army smile, a phenomenon as thin as frontier rations; The double-quick pace was not quite quick enough, not for Emory Upton." His masterfully forged prose cuts through war's dark fog with rewarding insights: "Valor might withstand numbers, but only to a point; veterans killing veterans with resolve; obedience had to be clear-eyed, rather than blind." Peters' vale of death's shadow is a feat of virtuosity that reads like an enlightened eyewitness complemented by many artfully clear battle maps. He sets an impressively high benchmark for future war fiction and military history. One must read the experience.

Ralph Peters follows his award-winning Civil War historical novels 'Cain at Gettysburg' and 'Hell or Richmond' with another stunning triumph of riveting story-telling informed by meticulous research as he brings the story of the 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign to vivid life in 'Valley of the Shadow.' Peters has studied the Civil War for over five decades and uses that knowledge, combined with his own many years of experience as a soldier, to craft this marvelously written account of one of the Civil War's most important -- but too often overlooked -- campaigns. By 1864, the Civil War was 'total war,' and the grim chieftains like Grant, Sherman and Sheridan waged campaigns that gutted the South's war making capacity. Although Sherman's Atlanta Campaign--'March to the Sea' is the first such campaign that immediately jumps to mind when 'total war' comes up, the Shenandoah Valley Campaign that same year was, in its impact, more devastating to the Confederacy's ability to continue the war. Yet, the Valley was also the Confederacy's 'route of advance' north, and before

Sheridan took command of Union forces in the Valley, Confederate General Jubal Early had led a powerful raid north that very nearly captured Washington, D.C. Peters' masterful skill as an historical novelist is to bring all of the drama and action of this bitterly fought campaign to life, propelled by the experiences of the leaders and soldiers on both sides. Soldiers in blue and gray fought over the 'Valley of the Shadow' more than 150 years ago, but reading Peters' brilliant narrative puts readers 'front and center' in a battle that seems to be happening right now!

Ralph Peter's "Valley of Shadows" casts a spotlight on one of the less well known campaigns of the Civil War--the trials and tribulations of Jubal Early's army in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864. Peter's approach is very much in the Michael/Jeff Shaara style, dramatizing actual historical events through the use of multiple narrators. Both sides receive fair representation, providing the reader with an objective overview of a campaign or battle, and his characters are all real people culled from diaries and historical biographies. I'm an historian and a historical novelist myself. Scoundrel!: The Secret Memoirs of General James Wilkinson, and I know how tricky it can be to tell a compelling story while maintaining historical accuracy. Peters gets the balance just right. His vivid characterizations and gripping narrative sweep you along, and it's only after you've finished the book that you realize you've received a history lesson. One difference from Shaara is that Peters has an agenda of sorts: he takes historical characters who he believes have not been given their proper due, and presents their cases for inclusion in the pantheon of Civil War heroes. In his previous book, "Hell or Richmond", it was Meade; in "Valley" it's Lew Wallace and John Gordon. I've no doubt that there are a few young history majors out there, who, inspired by Peters' novels, will someday write biographies resurrecting the reputations of these neglected figures. All in all, "Valley" is a very enjoyable read and enlightening too.

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