



Churchill: A Biography

By Roy Jenkins

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“Far and away Churchill’s best one-volume biography.”—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

From acclaimed historian Roy Jenkins, a comprehensive portrait of Winston Churchill, an icon of modern history, from his childhood to the critical World War II period and beyond, in this definitive volume. A member of the House of Lords, Jenkins combines unparalleled command of British political history and his own high-level government experience in a narrative account of Churchill's astounding career that is unmatched in its shrewd insights, its unforgettable anecdotes, the clarity of its overarching themes, and the author's nuanced appreciation of his extraordinary subject.

Exceptional in its breadth of knowledge and distinguished in its stylish wit and penetrating intelligence, *Churchill* is one of the finest political biographies of our time.

“Wryly astute... shrewd.”—*The Washington Post*

“Jenkins catches Churchill’s studied self-inspection with the sure-shot sharpness of an expert portraitist.”—Simon Schama, *The New York Review of Books*

“Churchill stands forth with Shakespearean bravura as the necessary hero for the most testing moment of national (and world) crisis. A satisfying summation of an unsurpassed life.”—*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Winston Churchill was querulous, childish, self-indulgent, and difficult, writes English historian Roy Jenkins. But he was also brilliant, tenacious, and capable--in short, "the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street." Jenkins's book stands as the best single-volume biography of Churchill in recent years.

Marked by the author's wide experience writing on British leaders such as Balfour and Gladstone and his tenure as a member of Parliament, his book adds much to the vast library of works on Churchill. While acknowledging his subject's prickly nature, Jenkins credits Churchill for, among other things, recognizing far earlier than his peers the dangers of Hitler's regime. He praises Churchill for his leadership during the war years, especially at the outset, when England stood alone and in imminent danger of defeat. He also examines Churchill's struggle to forge political consensus to meet that desperate crisis, and he sheds new light on Churchill's postwar decline. --*Gregory McNamee*

From Publishers Weekly

Winner of the Whitbread Prize for Gladstone (1997), Jenkins offers a bloated yet idiosyncratic and accessible life of England's greatest modern prime minister. Jenkins's wry wit and judgments of great men, untainted by awe, partly offset the fact that, as he admits, he has few new facts to add to an already exhaustively recorded life. Jenkins has a propensity for unnecessary French and curious adverbs (unfriendly), adjectives (spistolatory) and nouns (peripherist) and is at his best exploring Churchill's three out-of-office "wilderness" periods and his writing jobs (requiring a staff of loyal, ill-paid researchers and secretaries to take his clangorous dictation), which helped support his expensive lifestyle. ("I lived in fact from mouth to hand," Churchill confessed.) But as the statesman's many decades wind down, the biographer himself seems to tire, resorting to a litany of itineraries. American audiences may be drawn to Jenkins's revisionist views of Churchill's relationships with Roosevelt, with whom he sees "more a partnership of circumstance and convenience than a friendship of individuals," and with Eisenhower, a "political general" who was "always a little cold for Churchill's taste, with the famous smile barely skin-deep." Jenkins is hard on Churchill for being soft on alleged mountebanks like Lord Beaverbrook. He dwells only briefly on Churchill's family affairs, aside from expressing skepticism about his reputedly warm marriage to Clementine; she often advised her husband wisely, but "managed to be absent at nearly all the most important moments of Churchill's life." Jenkins's judgments and the fact that he has boiled this eventful life down to a single volume will attract many readers to this entertaining, though often exasperating study. 32 pages of photos and maps not seen by PW. (Nov.) Forecast: A main selection of both BOMC and the History Book Club, with a respected author, who will tour New York and Washington, D.C., and an iconic subject, the biography is guaranteed media attention and sales.

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From Library Journal

A British politician and author of over a dozen books, Jenkins (Gladstone) begins with an important question: given the extensive literature on Winston Churchill, is there anything left to add? Although Jenkins admits that he has not discovered any new factual information, this does not disqualify him from supplying useful insights into Churchill's career. As a veteran politician and administrator, Jenkins is well placed to evaluate Churchill's strengths and weaknesses as a cabinet-level official. For example, Jenkins asserts that Churchill's micro-management at the admiralty during the early months of World War I contributed to

disaster, while his leadership at the Ministry of Munitions near the end of the war helped maintain a high level of production. Jenkins's coverage of World War II eschews facile generalizations and provides a detailed picture of Churchill's role as wartime leader, in particular his ability to hold things together during the period of 1940-41, when less confident men would have given up. Churchill fans will enjoy reading this book, while academics will likely stick to Norman Rose's *Winston Churchill: The Unruly Giant* (LJ 6/15/95). Recommended for larger libraries. Fred Krome, Jacob Rader Marcus Ctr. of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati

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