



Winston S. Churchill: Youth, 1874-1900 (Volume I)

Randolph S. Churchill, Martin Gilbert (Introduction)

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The first volume of the official biography of Winston S. Churchill, covering the years from Churchill's birth to the beginning of his political career. The book contains Churchill's letters written as a child, as a boy at Harrow, as a cadet at Sandhurst, and later as a subaltern in India.

Winston S. Churchill: Youth, 1874-1900 (Volume I) Details

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From Reader Review Winston S. Churchill: Youth, 1874-1900 (Volume I) for online ebook

Morgan says

I thoroughly enjoyed the format of this book; letters written by Winston and his close friends and family, with explanations and strategic gap-filling by the author. I was a bit skeptical that the author would be biased, being that he's Churchill's son, but I found him refreshingly candid. And, of course, you get gems like this: "He always described polo to his son as the 'emperor of games' and encouraged him to take it up. Extravagant though his son was he did not feel that the slender income which was all that Churchill could allow him would justify such an extravagance." A jab at his measly allowance right in the middle of a biography? Fantastic.

I was also surprised to find how itinerant my feelings about Winston were. They ranged from awe to distaste to eye-rolling (an emotion in my book). He was a terrible student, as his housemaster mentions in a letter to Mrs. Churchill, his mother, "I do not think, nor does Mr Somervell, that he is in any way wilfully troublesome: but his forgetfulness, carelessness, unpunctuality, and irregularity in every way, have been really so serious, that I write to ask you, when he is at home to speak very gravely to him on the subject." His marks are grievous, and yet he asks for everything and expects it. As he matures, however, there is absolutely nothing to match his drive and he makes up for the dismal grades in sheer dedication to glory and politics. Glory mostly.

If anyone wants to read a history of Churchill's youth, but doesn't want to be bogged down by fastidious details and pedantic theories, read this. You are given a chance to see his actual interactions and some of his deeper thoughts that he might not have been as keen to release to the public. You get to see through a somewhat troubled child to what made him such an incredibly influential man later in life.

Josh says

Very worthwhile. The level of detail in this biography, made up mostly of Churchill's letters, is pretty great. It had its tedious stretches, but some really good stuff nonetheless. I'm lately a huge fan of collections of letters, though.

Chris Steeden says

An interesting concept where this is set-up through a series of letters to and from different people to give a sense of Churchill's first 26 years and it works really well.

Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace on 30-NOV-1874. His father was Lord Randolph Churchill and mother was Jennie Jerome from New York.

The book goes into a little detail about his father and mother and there was one curious incident where Lord Randolph's brother, George Charles Marquess of Blandford, had eloped with the wife of the Earl of Aylesford, who was a close friend of the Prince of Wales. Lord Randolph threatened to publicly expose an

alleged romance between the Prince of Wales and Lady Aylesford. As you can imagine the Prince of Wales was not happy and Lord Randolph became persona non grata and he ended up having to move the family to Ireland for some years until things in England calmed down which they did and when they eventually moved back Winston went to school in Brighton and then onto Harrow. His father had gone to Eaton. He had a younger brother John who everyone called Jack.

It took Churchill three attempts to get into the army and managed enough in the exam to get a cavalry cadetship at Sandhurst. He really enjoyed riding.

Lord Randolph dies in 1894.

In 1895 he joins the 4th Hussars. With his friend he decides to go to visit New York and then onto volatile Cuba. He was only 21 years of age when out in Cuba and had his first journalistic assignment sending despatches back to the Daily Graphic. He was reporting from the Spanish side who were fighting against Cuban rebels who wanted rid of Spanish administration.

On 11-SEP-1896 he sailed to India on the SS Britannia with the 4th Hussars. In India he meets Pamela Plowden whose father was in the Indian Civil service. India bored him and he volunteers to go the northwest frontier and the siege of Malakand where the British faced a force of Pakistani tribesmen. He was second lieutenant in the cavalry but was again writing for newspapers, mainly the Daily Telegraph. From this he wrote 'The Story of the Malakand Force'.

In 1899 he wrote 'The River War' after going to Egypt and joining up with Kitchener's forces. A few miles short of Khartoum in Sudan was the Mahdist War between Britain and the Dervish. He was there for the Battle of Omdurman.

In 1857 the Transvaal (province in north-east South Africa) was a Boer Republic but Britain's annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 led to the Boer Wars. The Morning Post offered a lucrative contract for Churchill to be their war correspondent. on 15-NOV-1899 he was on an armoured train ambushed by the Boers, they had put a boulder on the track to stop the train, but Churchill assisted courageously but two were killed, ten wounded and 56 captured including Churchill. The captives were taken to Pretoria, the Boer capital. There he was imprisoned in a converted school. After 4 weeks he escaped. Jumped over a wall and waited for other prisoners who eventually did not make it and he went on his way.

Vaivaswatha Manu says

Astonishing life of WSC told in an illustrative way....I admire such a personality....Thanks to his son for bringing out such a life history....

Marissa Sobel says

I enjoyed reading about Churchill's early life as told through letters to family and friends. I thought that the author did a good job at providing interpretation without interjecting too much of his own opinion. Greatly enjoyed reading this book! Now I'll have to read the other volumes.

Jens Hansen says

A familiar subject described in detail and with companion volumes containing all the sources. But it is vast and requires a lot of time and energy if you are to maintain momentum right through to volume VII

Kevin Trainor says

An excellent biography of the great Prime Minister, written by his son Randolph and containing tons of letters by Churchill's parents and contemporaries.

Rhonda Sue says

This took me a long time read on my kindle, however, I'm finally done. As a history buff and big fan of Winston Churchill, and having read many other books about him, this one was extremely slow going and detailed. I liked it, but it did not sustain my interest enough to get back to it and finish it timely. I am reading other books at the same time, so this was not an easy read. But, that said, I plan to move on to the next volume.

Adam Gossman says

What an awesome book!

Zachary Guthrie says**Great**

I wish the editors lived in the 21st century. But, I thoroughly enjoyed the book. Definitely worth reading in your spare time.

John A says

For the serious history buff. More detail than you thought you could learn about this Titan of the 20th Century. This multi-volume biography takes the reader through the stages of Churchill's life. This volume establishes the character of the man by examining his home life, education and early career in the military and as a journalist war reporter.

Oma Eagle says

1972 ed.

James says

This book (and series) I snapped up when I saw for free for the kindle. Seems superbly researched, exhaustively, and as a result is exhausting.

Needs a way to filter everything by topic and let us jump to the bits of interest - you can't just read through it, though I tried.

Katherine says

Top-notch. The chance to read Churchill's own letters was a real treat and served to illustrate the forceful personality and intelligence possessed by him from an almost shockingly young age. I'm very much looking forward to continuing this series of books.

Commonplace entries:

"When once I suggested that I might help his private secretary to write some of his letters, he [Winston's father] froze me into stone. I know now that this would have been only a passing phase. Had he lived another four or five years, he could not have done without me. But there were no four or five years! Just as friendly relations were ripening into an Entente, and an alliance or at least a military agreement seemed to my mind not beyond the bounds of reasonable endeavour, he vanished for ever" (206).

"It is said,' Winston was to write nearly forty years later in his Life of Marlborough, 'that famous men are usually the product of an unhappy childhood. The stern compression of circumstances, the twinges of adversity, the spur of slights and taunts in early years, are needed to evoke that ruthless fixity of purpose and tenacious mother-wit without which great actions are seldom accomplished'" (232).

"Picture to yourself the American people as a great lusty youth - who treads on all your sensibilities, perpetrates every possible horror of ill manners - whom neither age nor just tradition inspire with reverence - but who moves about his affairs with a good hearted freshness which may well be the envy of older nations of the earth. Of course there are here charming people who are just as refined and cultured as the best in any country in the world - but I believe my impressions of the nation are broadly speaking correct" (261).

"Dear Mr de Souza,

I do not concede that your Government was justified in holding me, a press correspondent and a non-combatant, a prisoner and I have consequently resolved to escape. The arrangements I have succeeded in making [in] conjunction with my friends outside are such to give me every confidence" (478).

David Werner says

Ambitious Youth

Winston, like many a youth at a young age, just prodded along, not knowing what important role awaited him. But he was never satisfied with mediocrity. He eventually realized that only his best efforts would lead to momentous applause. After leaving school, he did all in his power to make a name for himself, a name that would stand out in everyone's mind. His service in the Queen's military led to many bold and dangerous episodes. As a war correspondent, his literary prowess got him the attention he was so looking for. Parliament was just around the corner.
