



Better Times Than These

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An extraordinary first novel, hailed as one of the great, authentic novels of the Vietnam War, from the bestselling author of *Forrest Gump*. 1966: Billy Kahn finds himself Executive Officer of Bravo Company, responsible for leading over 100 young men into combat--and drawn into an impassable moral quagmire that could mean his downfall . . . or his redemption.

Better Times Than These Details

Date : Published December 1st 1994 by Pocket Books (first published 1978)

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Author : Winston Groom

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From Reader Review Better Times Than These for online ebook

Horace Derwent says

master winston grooms' first novel

a magicomic mirror of hell

Timm says

After reading Forrest Gump, I wanted to read another book by Winston Groom. This book is a very good fictional depiction of the war in Vietnam from the soldiers perspective. Anyone having a desire to understand how the war affected the American soldier will enjoy this read.

Kim says

This book is so well written, it was really worth the effort . At times I found myself wondering what possessed me to read a book about the war in Vietnam, but in the end I am so glad I did.

Michael says

I read this years ago and really enjoyed it. I can't speak to how historically accurate it was. The characters were engaging and the story top notch.

J.E. Barrett says

I thought the character development and plot development in this book were phenomenal. My only issue was that I felt the end was rather abrupt. However, I still think that Winston Groom is an amazing writer and I have thoroughly enjoyed everything I've read of his.

Joshua Bowe says

Winston Groom is a master storyteller. Published in 1978, a very early Vietnam novel, his work of fiction was actually inspired in large part by his own experience in Vietnam, particularly regarding his own voyage on the USNS Gaffey in 1966 as it sailed to Vietnam with an entire battalion of what were mostly infantrymen during the build-up of American forces there. His story follows the fictional 4th Battalion, 7th Cavalry (though I believe it was inspired by the non-fictional 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry) from their voyage to Vietnam and through their many battles fought there. His characters are rich and well-developed, and his

vivid descriptions of the Vietnamese landscape effectively put you there as the reader. He also has a great sense of humor that comes through well in his writing. The author is most famous for another book he wrote approximately a decade later, *Forest Gump*, but in my opinion, this is his best work (can't say for sure as there are other books of his that I have not read). Even though it is fiction, much of it was based upon, or at least inspired by, real events and real soldiers. It is, therefore, very informative while entertaining.

Pop says

I have read several historical/fiction accounts of the Vietnam War and several supposedly actual historical books on the subject. My favorites previous to *Better Times Than These* "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien" and "Matterhorn" by Karl Marlantes". This being a first book by Groom, I wasn't expecting much even though I knew he was a Vietnam Vet. Boy was I ever surprised. If you are willing to read this book, you might be able understand a little of the the mood and emotions the Vietnam War had on its Soldiers and its Civilians. The book definitely captured the nightmare that was the American experience of that War.

Phu Bai, Vietnam (1966-1967)

Welcome Home Brothers and Sisters

Jerome Peterson says

The best book about the war in Vietnam that I have read. Groom does an excellent job depicting the life of a soldier from the time he is transported to serving. Eye opening at times, sordid, wretched, and deeply profound. A must read for readers who desire to have their perception educated.

Sam Reaves says

This is the debut novel by Winston Groom, best known for writing *Forrest Gump*. Groom served a tour as an infantry officer in Vietnam, so presumably he knows whereof he speaks. The novel focuses mainly on the officers of a battalion of the Seventh Cavalry, following them from stateside to the Ia Drang valley, where things do not go well. (This is a fictionalized unit in a fictionalized Ia Drang campaign, not the real-life Ia Drang battle depicted in *We Were Soldiers*).

It's more character study than stirring military adventure, with nicely drawn portraits that avoid stereotypes. There's a WASP from a rich New York family whose college girlfriend ditches him for an anti-war professor; there's a Jewish striver from Georgia who finds himself commanding a rifle company as he begins to glimpse the appalling dimensions of the endeavor he has committed to. There's the usual obtuse brass (though again, well-delineated individuals rather than stereotypes), a thoroughly sinister rogue platoon commander, and of course an array of grunts, convincingly human. Beyond the wire are the Vietnamese, alien and ominous in their passivity. The novel depicts the creeping callousness and brutality among the Americans as the VC hiding among the populace start to take their toll with mines and ambushes. It all leads up to the inevitable atrocity.

Familiar stuff, maybe; reasonably well done though there's nothing especially distinguished about the prose. Perhaps not the greatest novel to come out of the Vietnam war, but a decent one.

Nan Williams says

Outstanding!

Tommy Belt says

Very worthy read about Vietnam!

Peter DeSilvey says

Great book. Probably not 100% realistic but of course most books aren't.

The fact that the author Groom actually did serve in Vietnam make the book alot more believable though. Keep in mind also this book was only written some 10 years after the high point of the Vietnam war so for being an early work of fiction Id say its a damn good example of a the beginning of a great author. I recommend this books towards the end it gets to the point where you do not what to put it down. Enjoy

Mark Robertson says

This book should be required reading for policy makers considering sending young men and women into harm's way. Groom's descriptions of days-long battles and of the daily struggles of an occupying army emphasize the dehumanizing effects of war. He shares his hard-earned insights in a compelling story featuring several players that are, one knows from the outset, likely to die before the tale is told. This was a great book.

I did not know until I saw the cover of the edition on this site that Groom wrote Forrest Gump, a movie that I found hard to sit through. I wonder if this book was ever optioned by Hollywood.

C.J. Hatch says

Groom is a natural storyteller and his experiences in Vietnam surely helped bring about a realistic interpretation of fictional events in this novel. This should have been a movie before FG.

Bigpoison says

The book is entertaining enough to keep you turning pages. It's a quick read because of the, relatively, simple language.

An interesting perspective from an officer, if you can stand an officer's perspective.

Justin Roberts says

Why is this not made into a movie yet?

Lawyer says

Better Times Than These, *Winston Groom's novel of young men at war*

Review in progress...

Carlos Arsenio Garcia says

Quite draggy save for a few good parts in the story.

Kw says

Plodded through this, for some reason. Authentic, probably. Gruesome at times, and sometimes just dull.

Kevin says

Being a post-Vietnam-era Infantryman, and I mean just after Vietnam when there were more of them and fewer like me, I found it easy to relate to the characters in the book as they are so much like the veterans with whom I served and from whom I learned so much. That meant, also, that I could really relate to the pain and the emotions of that era. It is not necessarily a pleasant book, but I put it down with a feeling of empathy for the characters and for their real-life counterparts. That made it a worthwhile read.
