



# American Gun: A History of the U.S. in Ten Firearms (P.S.)

*Chris Kyle*

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## **American Gun: A History of the U.S. in Ten Firearms (P.S.)** Chris Kyle

Chris Kyle—fallen hero and #1 bestselling author of *American Sniper*—reveals how ten legendary guns forever changed U.S. history.

At the time of his tragic death in February 2013, former Navy SEAL Chris Kyle, the top sniper in U.S. military history, was finishing one of the most exciting missions of his life: a remarkable book that retold American history through the lens of a hand-selected list of firearms. Kyle masterfully shows how guns have played a fascinating, indispensable, and often underappreciated role in our national story.

"Perhaps more than any other nation in the world," Kyle writes, "the history of the United States has been shaped by the gun. Firearms secured the first Europeans' hold on the continent, opened the frontier, helped win our independence, settled the West, kept law and order, and defeated tyranny across the world."

Drawing on his unmatched firearms knowledge and combat experience, Kyle carefully chose ten guns to help tell his story: the American long rifle, Spencer repeater, Colt .45 revolver, Winchester rifle, Springfield 1903 rifle, Thompson sub-machine gun, 1911 pistol, M1 Garand, .38 Special police revolver, and the M-16 rifle platform Kyle himself used as a SEAL. Through them, he revisits thrilling turning points in American history, including the single sniper shot that turned the tide of the Revolutionary War, the firearms designs that proved decisive at Gettysburg, the "gun that won the West," and the weapons that gave U.S. soldiers an edge in the world wars and beyond. This is also the story of how firearms innovation, creativity, and industrial genius has constantly pushed American history—and power—forward.

Filled with an unforgettable cast of characters, Chris Kyle's *American Gun* is a sweeping epic of bravery, adventure, invention, and sacrifice.

## **American Gun: A History of the U.S. in Ten Firearms (P.S.) Details**

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# **From Reader Review American Gun: A History of the U.S. in Ten Firearms (P.S.) for online ebook**

## **Mike (the Paladin) says**

Okay, full disclosure here. While history buffs will enjoy this book, history buffs who are also gun buffs with "really" enjoy this book.

I read American Sniper and found it a good, straight forward account. This is the same. The writing is more business like than anything else. it's easy to read, holds the interest and simply relates the narrative....

Straight from the hip as it were.

The book simply looks at a sort of running account of "some of the events" in American history based on 10 of Mr. Kyle's favorite firearms. Of course as he himself notes we won't all agree on our favorite firearms. I agree on some and have an "I'd rather have this than that" reaction to a couple. Still it's an interesting book.

So, the book is told in an interesting manner, the action of history is related in an interesting manner. He has his facts right (though opinion of course is another matter, LOL).

We lost a lot in Mr. Kyle. I can recommend this one.

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## **Jim says**

This offering was a vast improvement over Mr Kyle's first book. Even so, it's hard to tell what niche he was trying to fill here; the book is not detailed enough to be a technical manual, and the subject matter far too broad to be covered in such a thin volume. One gets the impression he was writing about a subject he knew and understood in order to cash in on the laurels he garnered as a sniper in Iraq. There is no question that he loves the spotlight: whether he is discussing the kentucky long rifle or the M16 he somehow manages to mention that he, Chris Kyle, was a sniper in Iraq. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but he already covered that in his first book.

This volume isn't a bad read - Mr Kyle has a homey style that most readers will be comfortable with - and I can't quibble much about his choice of the 10 firearms that most affected the course of history in the USA. The only change I might have considered would be the inclusion of the Winchester 1897 shotgun, which was produced in vast quantities and used by US forces in several conflicts. It would have been nice to see one scattergun in the lineup, but hey, this is Kyle's show and not mine.

People who are really interested in guns will probably not find anything new here, but this book is recommended for those with only a basic exposure to firearms and wanting to expand their knowledge.

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## **Heather says**

As a person who thinks that we need tighter gun control and who does not own a gun I was a little

apprehensive about reading a book about guns. I won this book in a good-reads give away and thought well I would give it a shot (yes, yes, pun intended.) I love history, and alternative perspectives on history. As an American I can not displace the impact that guns have had on our history and our society. As much as I think we no longer need guns, I still believe in the right to bear arms, I just think that you don't need an assault rifle or a tank to "bear arms." I was ready for a "preachy" book about the necessity of guns, but I was surprised that the authors writing was more about the impact of each evolution of firearm.

The author clearly has/had a great understanding of guns from a personal experience and a great understanding of the historical significance of wielding this weapons. I think that both sides of the gun issue could benefit from reading this book. Those that do not understand and learn from history are doomed to repeat it's mistakes.

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## Clay says

*American Gun* is a book that's right up my alley. It's about History, guns and America. What's not to like? To top it off, it's authored by an American legend. Chris Kyle was our nation's deadliest sniper prior to his unfortunate murder in early 2013 by a disturbed fellow veteran whom Kyle was attempting to help. This book was his second, *American Sniper* - an autobiography - being his first. *American Gun* was in it's final stages and was finished by Kyle's friends and wife in order that this project might see the light of day even after Chris' passing.

*American Gun* is written in an extremely informal, casual style. Think of it as almost a conversation with its author. The vocabulary is light and fairly mundane which lends itself well to Chris Kyle's narrative style. It become clear early on that Mr. Kyle was a firearms enthusiast and a genuine lover of American history. It's easy to see why he was so psyched about this project. *American Gun* combines both of those subjects in a unique history that spans the early days of Colonial America to the dawning of the 21st century.

The history of America, it seems, tends to owe some of its vibrancy to the firearm. In *American Gun*, Chris Kyle recounts many aspects of critical moments in America's history while detailing particular firearms which helped shape those events. From the 18th century Kentucky long rifle to the 1903 Springfield, the Colt Peacemaker to the 1911 .45 and the Thompson sub-machine-gun to the venerable M-16; the amount of my country's history which has been influenced by firearms technology is intriguing in the least and outright fascinating if I do say so myself. Between these pages you will relearn history about such iconic individuals as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt and George Patton, Wyatt Earp and Alvin York - not to mention many, many more.

My only complaints were that I was hoping for a little more detail about the firearms themselves. The history of their conception, manufacture and use was wonderful, but some detail behind the thought processes and concepts surrounding their initial design and function would have been more than welcome. Also, there were a few minor factual errors (such as referring to the 1911 as a revolver) which I am sure were made in final drafts after Mr. Kyle's unfortunate passing.

All in all *American Gun* was a highly readable, thoroughly enjoyable account of martial American history and the men and guns which paved the way for our future. If you're a gun guy (like I am) you may not learn a whole lot about these classic firearms that you didn't already know, but the detailed historical accounts and the conversational style made the journey a delightful one. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in America's history and who has always been curious about why America's "gun culture" seems so devoted to their hobby. 4 stars - with ease. An excellent, enjoyable ride.

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## **Richard says**

The genie is out of the bottle.... trying to understand the west's relationship to guns I thought this book might be interesting and it is at least from the perspective of the angle of the stories behind the making of the 10 guns highlighted in this narrative. The authors' bias is clear from the start that guns were designed to solve problems between individuals and nations and they continue to fill that role today. As a former Navy SEAL his fascination with the mechanics and utility of the gun is understandable although sadly he didn't live to see the book published, ironically done in by a gun wielded by a deranged former soldier he was seeking to aid at the gun range.

In the chapter on the Thompson Submachine gun, Kyle relates the story about the inventor of what was known as the Maxim (machine) gun in 1884. While visiting the Paris Electrical Exhibition in 1881, Maxim ran into a friend who told him "...there was good money in war. 'Hang your chemistry and electricity' said the friend. 'If you want to make a pile of money, invent something that will enable these Europeans to cut each other's throats with greater efficiency.'" And so he did... the genie is out of the bottle and there appears to be no way to put it back in.

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## **Checkman says**

Solid, well written book about ten famous American firearms. Written by a decorated Navy SEAL veteran who was a firearms enthusiast. This is not a technical history. Chris Kyle set out to show the role that the ten (profiled) firearms played in the history of the United States as well as personal experience with those firearms, be it his experience, friends or others in the past.

There is some technical detail, but just enough to grab the interest of those who are laymen. Mr. Kyle isn't writing for those who have a background with firearms (though it's a very good book for those folks as well), but for those who aren't familiar with firearms. The book has a comfortable relaxed feeling to it. Almost as if you were sitting in a neighborhood diner just chatting with him. There is no sense of arrogance or superiority in the writing. Mr. Kyle also brings a welcomed sense of balance to his descriptions of the various firearms. He looks at their weaknesses and strengths and acknowledges that nothing made by Humans is perfect.

Mr. Kyle wrote a good book here. Sadly he's gone now - far to soon. I believe based on what I've read here that he had a bright future ahead of him as a writer - especially in the world of firearms and hunting.

"American Gun" is a good book for those who are unfamiliar with firearms. The material is handled well and will draw in those who are slightly curious, but have no intention of going to the range. Sort of like me reading a book about golf. Mildly interested, but I'm not going to my local golf course. For those who have experience with firearms it will still make a nice addition to one's library. It will especially serve as a good reference when trying to educate those who aren't firearm enthusiasts.

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## **Sharon Chance says**

Earlier this year, the U.S. lost a genuine American hero when former Navy Seal sniper Chris Kyle was killed

in a tragic accident. At the time of his death, Kyle was near to finishing his second book on a subject that was near and dear to him – the history of influential guns that affected U.S. history. “American Gun: A History of the U.S. In Ten Firearms” is that book.

Kyle was recognized as the top sniper in U.S. military, but he was also a student of the history of firearms through the ages. He drew upon that love of the history to present what he consider the top ten guns that were influential in turning points in American history. Those guns include the American long rifle, Spencer repeater, Colt .45 revolver, Winchester rifle, Springfield M1903 rifle, the Thomspon sub-machine gun, the M1911 pistol, the M1 Garand, the .38 special police revolver, and the M-16 rifle platform. In examining each gun and presenting the background of it’s making, Kyle tells the story of how these guns changed the world. From the Revolutionary War up through to the current actions in the Afghanistan/Iraq War, Kyle shows how these guns gave American soldiers the advantage they needed to make a difference in their world.

Written in Kyle’s first-person voice, this book is filled with stories and observances that are presented in a way that the reader feels like he has sat down with Chris himself to talk about guns and history. This is an extremely well done book, and it is a fitting tribute to a true hero – the author Chris Kyle.

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### **Steven Jr. says**

The entire special operations community, and those affiliated with or following it, remembers a tragic day in February of this year. The news that Chris Kyle, the Navy SEAL sniper who holds the record for most confirmed kills in American history, was gunned down was heart-wrenching, particularly to those who knew him personally. In the time leading to his death, Kyle had been working on a unique and interesting project called American Gun: A History of the US in Ten Firearms. After his death, Jim DeFelice and William Doyle picked up where Kyle left off and made sure to see the book to its completion, as Kyle would have wanted. I am personally glad they did, as American Gun is a fascinating and thoughtful read.

I have said this for a while: firearms are a part of the American identity. Unlike most other nations, the United States was a nation born through the barrel of a rifle. Chris Kyle believed that as well, and set out to find ten iconic weapons that defined American history, as well as the men who wielded them. The book opens up with a moving foreword from Kyle’s widow, Taya, who declares that Kyle was a man who tended to downplay his intellect, but who possessed much of it, particularly in terms of history and firearms.

He had been shooting firearms since he was a child, and was also enamored with the history of the nation that he spent his life defending in some fashion or another. As soon as I moved past the foreword and launched into the chapter on the first weapon on Kyle’s list, it was apparent that Taya’s assessment of her husband was right on the money. The prose reads with a straightforward tone, absent of pomp or arrogance but abundant in confidence knowledge of the subject matter. It is also lock and step with Kyle’s background as a special operator, a quiet professional who knows his stuff.

The ten weapons that Kyle covers are:

The Kentucky rifle

The Spencer Repeater

The Colt Single Action Army

The Winchester 1873 rifle

The Colt M1911

The Springfield M1903

The Thompson submachine gun

The M1 Garand

The .38 Special Police revolver

The M16 rifle

Rather than bore the casual reader with technical details of each rifle, Kyle gives just enough of a layman's explanation to each weapon so that said casual reader will understand what's going on. More interestingly, he finds historical examples of where each weapon was used and how it was a defining moment in American history. The weapons truly do span the breadth of the American legacy, from Revolutionary War marksman Sergeant Timothy Murphy with his Kentucky rifle, to Abraham Lincoln testing a Spencer Repeater on his private Presidential shooting range, to Theodore Roosevelt taking lessons learned from the Spanish-American War and pushing for the adoption of the Springfield M1903 as the standard battle rifle, to the likes of Baby Face Nelson and Machine Gun Kelly wielding Tommy Guns in their battles against the law, and even to LZ X-Ray with LTC Hal Moore and his soldiers of the 7th Cavalry, going toe-to-toe with the North Vietnamese. Each weapon has at least a couple stories to be told, and Kyle did a fantastic job doing the research and explaining his choices.

Personally, the best story for me in the book was during the section on the M1911. A B-24 pilot by the name of Owen J. Baggett was flying combat sorties in the Pacific theater of World War II. His plane was shot down and he bailed with a parachute. During his descent, Baggett sustained several injuries from enemy fire. One Japanese pilot flew in for a closer look before administering the coup de grace. Baggett played dead, then when the pilot was close enough, he drew his 1911 and fired multiple rounds into the cockpit. The plane veered off and Baggett thought nothing more of it until he was on the ground. Upon capture by the Japanese, Baggett noticed that his captors treated him with a certain deference they did not afford other POWs. When meeting with another POW, it was explained to Baggett that a Japanese pilot had crashed his plane and they had found a .45ACP round buried in the pilot's head. The fact that an injured pilot parachuting had downed an airplane with his sidearm had earned him instant respect with the Japanese. It's stories like this which make American Gun such an entertaining and informative read.

The book is not without its flaws. The biggest one that comes to mind is the chapter on the .38 Special Police Revolver. Most of this chapter was spent explaining how the police eventually abandoned their revolvers for the likes of the Glock and how peace officers do not get enough trigger time on the range. I felt more time could have been spent explaining how that particular choice made an impact on American history, or that perhaps another firearm should have been chosen. That is not to say that the stories detailed in that chapter are not interesting or well written, however. It starts off with an attempted presidential assassination and rolls from there.

American Gun is definitely a fitting legacy for Chris Kyle, who was a passionate firearms advocate. It's



written with the authority of a subject matter expert and the straight-talking voice of a warrior. From the onset, Kyle acknowledges that not everybody will agree with his choices, but it is indisputable that the research put into justifying his choices is educational, to say the least. This is definitely a read for history buffs, firearms enthusiasts, and anybody looking to learn a little more about either category. The United States is a nation that was born through the barrel of a gun, and has repeatedly continued to exist through the same. American Gun, simply put, is this nation's identity summarized through the tools that shaped it.

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## **Robyn says**

Let's just file this under "Books I Read to Challenge Myself to Get Outside My Comfort Zone."

Kyle's non-fiction American firearm history is less dry than many non-fiction titles and it's an interesting perspective on American history itself: how firearms have shaped U.S. history and how that history has, in turn, shaped modern attitudes towards firearms.

While I certainly learned a lot about firearms and specific types of firearms, the ideal audience for Kyle's book would be someone familiar with guns already (which I am not). There is a lot of lingo and jargon thrown around that is challenging to understand (and tedious to try to figure out). This made some passages very difficult to wade through.

What I found most interesting, however, was that the firearms Kyle chooses to discuss are those used for military purposes or ones used by frontier settlers as tools to survive. For better or worse, guns are interwoven into American culture because of the country's history. But again, even as Kyle asserts in the Epilogue, the guns are tools. They are not for pure sport or recreation (though Kyle alludes or makes offhand comments about using the guns he profiles in non-combat or non-hunting situations, he deftly sidesteps the hot-button political debate of civilian gun ownership).

Also, while I found Kyle's non-academic voice refreshing in a book full of facts and research, there were passages when his personal quips became grating. (Seriously, only someone from Texas would suggest so frequently how awesome the state is. No one else cares that much.) Also, because of Kyle's military background (he was a decorated SEAL sniper who fought in Iraq), he is very pro-military--well, pro-soldier at least, as he doesn't give a lot of credence to those in charge of the military bureaucracy--and writes about killing enemy combatants with a bit too much casualness. For those opposed to warfare (yes, I admit to being such a one), it comes off a bit cold. (To be clear, I admire soldiers and veterans greatly. But I feel that the least the U.S. can do to thank those who volunteer to serve is to keep them out of unnecessary conflicts.)

Anyway, I'm glad that read the book and have a better sense as to this specific element of American cultural history.

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## **Bandit says**

I very much enjoy reading social histories. Last year I read an excellent History of Britain in Thirty Six Postage Stamps. It stands to reason that a great empire like Britain would tell its story in stamps, while the US's history would be told in guns. I'm not antigun per se, I have a certain from far away fascination with

them, but there are some seriously alarming statistics regarding guns in this country and the amount of gun violence and murders that are undeniable to anyone capable of using logic and basic reasoning. This is pretty much a book for those who would ignore these facts in favor of exercising their constitutional rights as guaranteed by second amendment, exercise them determinedly with or without a good reason. So, I was reluctant to read this book and for the most part it ended up being just as I expected. According to Wikipedia, the author, Chis Kyle, was a United States Navy SEAL whose autobiography calls him the most lethal sniper in American military history with 160 confirmed kills out of 255 claimed kills, although these statistics have not been released by the Pentagon. He was shot and killed at a shooting range by a fellow veteran on February 2, 2013, near Chalk Mountain, Texas. Genuine case of live by a gun, die by a gun. He did, unlike his wife, took care present a gun as a tool, not a guiding principle in his fore and afterword and not play up the glamorization (if that's the right word for it) or weapons and war. Glamorization of Texas is another matter entirely, apparently the state doesn't have a concept of modesty, there is an ever prevalent arrogance that passes for national pride. But it was somewhat strange to be reading a book written by a man who ended that many lives. The edition of the book was very well done, finally a nonfiction with the right amount of photographs and artwork. To its credit, the book not uninformative and was written in a very accessible (almost homespun, country colloquialisms included) style, but it was very much a book about guns with some history thrown in and not the other way around. While this country may be obsessed with guns, history does seem to be a more interesting subject to explore.

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### **Jeremy says**

This book is amazing. It is not a book for gun nuts, however, if you are a gun nut, you will enjoy it. This is simply a book of American history, told by an American patriot, about how our right to bear arms has shaped this wonderful country. I admire Chris Kyle as a man, as a warrior, and as a storyteller. Reading American Gun, I felt like I was on a campout, sitting about a campfire, and listening to Kyle rattle off some fascinating stories of bravery and ingenuity. Whether you are a shooter or not, there's a lot to learn from this book. Highly recommended.

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### **Bjoern says**

If you like to share the views of a fellow gun enthusiast about his favorite toys and have nothing against nationalistic-patriotic worldviews, then this probably is your book. From aficionado to aficionado. If you were looking for an in depth picture of history, strategic importance and objective description of combat capabilities and negative properties this probably will disappoint you as much as it did disappoint me.

Not bad per se, but for my taste extremely superficial and subjectively tinted. It's not the ultimate reasoning why these are the American guns & weapons that formed a nation, but more the love confession by a man definitely adoring his shooting range times and proud of having killed a lot of opposition.

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### **Graham Crawford says**

This book was a bit difficult for me to review as I picked it up blind without knowing anything about the author. If I'd been aware he was someone with 255 kills (160 officially confirmed!!), I suspect "American

Gun" wouldn't be on my Kindle. I wandered into this one, and when I glanced up from the page, I realized I was in the middle of a battlefield not wearing a bulletproof vest.

I am reasonably neutral on the gun question - Growing up on a farm, I have family members who shoot and eat animals and occasionally turn the leftover furry bits into odd wall decorations & I also have city friends who go postal if their tofu comes within 2 meters of a BBQ tainted with "*death*". Like most Australians I think The American Gun Culture is more than a little insane.

My star ratings here reflect my personal taste and I recognise this book has a lot of appeal to certain demographics. There are a lot of 5 star reviews on Goodreads for this one.

If your dad is a proud patriot of God's own United States of America, supports Bush & The NRA, is an armchair general, a holiday hunter, and he can read, this just might be the PERFECT Father's day present. It has lots of photos of guns and people using them, and a fine selection of heroic oils that look like they were painted by Norman Rockwell if he'd taken up a position as the government's official War Artist, (though there's just a touch of the uncanny valley to the Neo-Classical perspectives).

There is a stack of technical history about each of the ten featured guns, though I often found myself wanting more detail, and heading over to Wikipedia for a fuller story. I always enjoy hands on history and experimental archaeology, so I was hoping for Chris' "shooter's" perspective. A couple of paragraphs are dedicated to how each weapon handles & their relative strengths and weaknesses. I felt that this was perhaps a lost opportunity, more could have been made of as this, as it was really Chris' strongest area of expertise.

The prose throughout is conversational tending to a blokey muscular colloquial voice, which thankfully stopped short of cuss words. The writing revs up when we get to the Wild West, where Chris Kyle takes an exuberant delight in describing the shootouts. In a kinder universe, he would have been born in an earlier time, and made a killing writing *Cowboy & Outlaw* paperbacks. There's a good deal more POV action in following chapters, with manly dialogue and blood pumping action quoted from period sources, with Chris filling in the details when history fails to record:

"Across the way, the German reached his weapon and started getting it ready to fire. Koons pressed his trigger.

*Bam!*

The M1 jerked against his shoulder.

It felt good.

The man he'd aimed at was down.

Another was running to take his place.

*Bam!* Koons fired again. *Bam!"*

In a kinder universe Chris would have lived to see his book turned into a popular History Channel documentary, with shoot outs rendered as (closely cropped) "*dramatic re-enactments*" and Chris' Texan drawl as voice-over. Ten Half hour episodes with ad break recaps. I'd subscribe!

Alas, *Boys' Own Adventures* aren't a genre that grace my bedside table. I've recently worked my way through Gore Vidal's American Empire series, and just put down the wonderful "The Son" by Philipp Meyer, which chronicle a darker and far more complex side of American History than the (literally) **Old Abe & Remember the Alamo!** brand Kyle and his followers favour. It's really just a war cry touting a right wing myth of American supremacy. If this is the sort of history winners write, I prefer underdog's tales.

The book concludes with a rousing plea by Chris' widow, for good folk not be afraid to take up arms against evildoers.

I applaud her efforts and Chris' friends in completing his manuscript after his tragic death. That was certainly an act of love and they have created a monument to their lost friend that many American patriots will get a lot of pleasure from.

And I will learn to Google books *before* I read them.

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## **BAM The Bibliomaniac says**

A call to arms!

If one likes history and LOVES guns, this is the book to read. Brief histories of each gun discussed along with a lesson on its construction and usage round out the chapter. It's really in support of the Constitution. We are America; here are our greatest guns! Hear us roar!

Lenten Buddy Reading Challenge book # 9

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## **Carmen says**

This book was an entertaining history lesson about different guns that shaped America. And I'm saying that as a person who is about as far from a "gun-nut" as you can get.

William Doyle, who underwrote this, is scads better than whoever underwrote American Sniper, which - as I mentioned in my review - was very poorly written. This book is much smoother and more cohesive than American Sniper. However, I liked American Sniper better. It was a more interesting story. This is nothing more than a series of history lessons and listening to Kyle gush enthusiastically about guns.

My favorite part of the book was the part about Teddy Roosevelt. I also really liked the picture of Winston Churchill holding a Tommy gun. The section on Abraham Lincoln was very exciting.

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