

# Gods and Generals: A Novel of the Civil War (Civil War Trilogy)

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## The New York Times bestselling prequel to the Pulitzer Prize-winning classic *The Killer Angels*

In this brilliantly written epic novel, Jeff Shaara traces the lives, passions, and careers of the great military leaders from the first gathering clouds of the Civil War. Here is Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, a hopelessly by-the-book military instructor and devout Christian who becomes the greatest commander of the Civil War; Winfield Scott Hancock, a captain of quartermasters who quickly establishes himself as one of the finest leaders of the Union army; Joshua Chamberlain, who gives up his promising academic career and goes on to become one of the most heroic soldiers in American history; and Robert E. Lee, never believing until too late that a civil war would ever truly come to pass. Profound in its insights into the minds and hearts of those who fought in the war, *Gods and Generals* creates a vivid portrait of the soldiers, the battlefields, and the tumultuous times that forever shaped the nation.

In a prequel of sorts to his father Michael Shaara's 1974 epic novel *The Killer Angels*, Jeff Shaara explores the lives of Generals Lee, Hancock, Jackson and Chamberlain as the pivotal Battle of Gettysburg approaches. Shaara captures the disillusionment of both Lee and Hancock early in their careers, Lee's conflict with loyalty, Jackson's overwhelming Christian ethic and Chamberlain's total lack of experience, while illustrating how each compensated for shortcomings and failures when put to the test. The perspectives of the four men, particularly concerning the battles at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, make vivid the realities of war. I arrived at Ballantine shortly before then-publisher Clare Ferraro dropped a 1,200 page doorstop on my desk, practically causing it to bow in the middle. This was the original version of *GODS AND GENERALS* by Jeff Shaara. I quickly read *THE KILLER ANGELS* to get a feel for the subject, and then started plowing through *G&G*. After about 400 pages, Jeff began to find a comfortable style and method of telling the story of Lee, Hancock, Armistead, Chamberlain, Longstreet, and Stonewall Jackson before the battle of Gettysburg. And the book kept getting better. After beating out Turner Books (which has since gone out of business) for the right to publish *GODS AND GENERALS*, I met Jeff, and we began to get to work. He and I hit it off right from the beginning. Strangely enough, he was born exactly ten years to the day before my best friend, so perhaps it was in the stars that we would work well together.

The biggest challenge of editing *GODS AND GENERALS* was cutting it down. It was actually easier than one might think, because Jeff had made a typical first-time novelist's mistake--he started his story too early. When Jeff came into my office, he started out by saying "Now one thing we can't do is cut this manuscript . . ." After getting over the initial shock of my suggestion of cutting the first 400 pages of the book, within fifteen minutes he was completely turned around, saying, "We can't publish this book unless we cut the first 400 pages!"

Jeff had started writing about his characters in the Mexican War, and in the peacetime army of the 1850s. While the Mexican War chapters were exciting, they didn't belong in *GODS AND GENERALS*. And nothing happened in the 1850s, militarily speaking. So Jeff compressed a lot of information into a small number of pages, and began *GODS AND GENERALS* in 1858, with Lee's return home to execute the estate of his late father-in-law.

and then with John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry.

As an interesting footnote, Jeff's next book will be about the Mexican War. But I've already told him he can't recycle scenes from the 400 pages we cut. He's a much better writer now!

Doug Grad, Editor

Other Books

Deeper Learning, Practical strategies to take your students' understanding from "So what?" to "Wow!" Based on current brain research and information about differentiated learning, this book for Grades 4-12 outlines the Deeper Learning Cycle (DELC), a teaching model that applies learning and content processing techniques to everyday instruction. This resource features: Chapters explaining the cycle's seven stages, including standards and curriculum, building a positive learning culture, acquiring new knowledge, processing learning, and evaluating student learning A lesson plan template to apply to daily instruction Strategies to help students process content in meaningful ways Reflection questions to help teachers apply the material to their own practice

❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ . They might come up with books such as The Civil War Trilogy ... Students might pick two movies to rent from Blockbuster or Netflix such as Glory and Gods and Generals . Students can work in pairs and divide up the movies."