



When Books Went to War: The Stories That Helped Us Win World War II

Molly Guptill Manning

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When America entered World War II in 1941, we faced an enemy that had banned and burned 100 million books. Outraged librarians launched a campaign to send free books to American troops and gathered 20 million hardcover donations. In 1943, the War Department and the publishing industry stepped in with an extraordinary program: 120 million small, lightweight paperbacks for troops to carry in their pockets and rucksacks in every theater of war. These Armed Services Editions were beloved by the troops and are still fondly remembered today. Soldiers read them while waiting to land at Normandy, in hellish trenches in the midst of battles in the Pacific, in field hospitals, and on long bombing flights. They helped rescue *The Great Gatsby* from obscurity and made Betty Smith, author of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, into a national icon. *When Books Went to War* is the inspiring story of the Armed Services Editions, and a treasure for history buffs and book lovers alike.

“A thoroughly engaging, enlightening, and often uplifting account . . . I was enthralled and moved.” — **Tim O’Brien, author of *The Things They Carried***

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