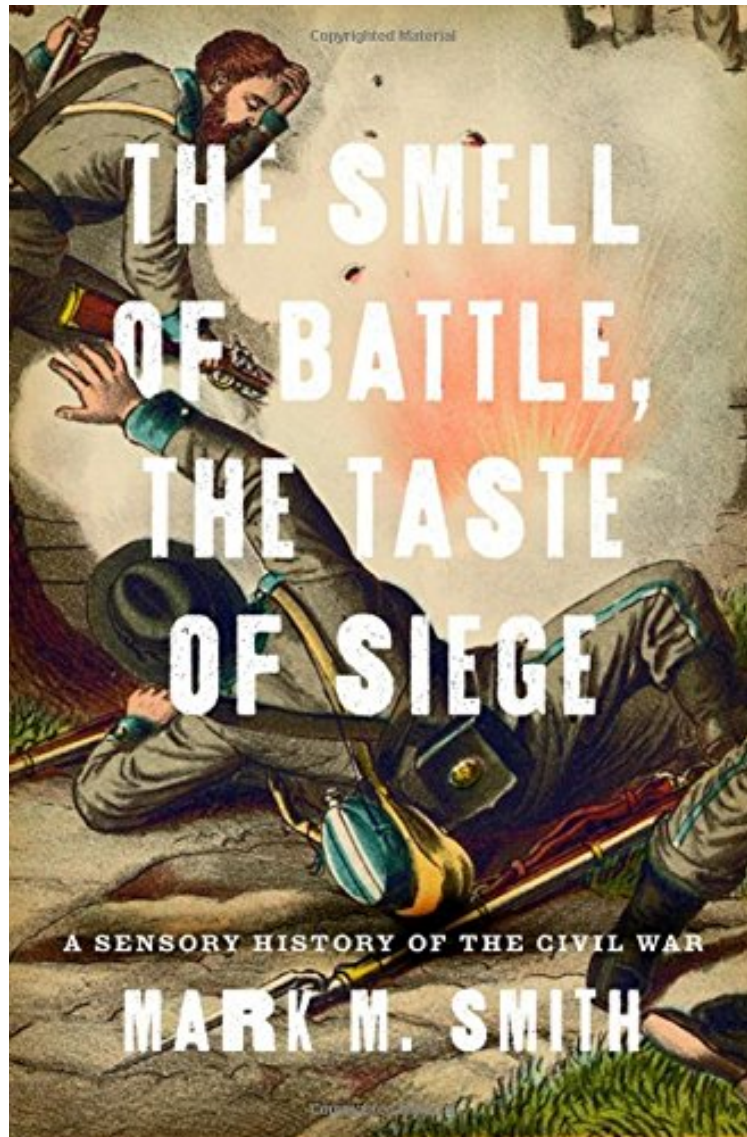


[Library ebook] The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War

The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War

Mark M. Smith

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Mark M. Smith : The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. GoodBy MarthaGreat book to learn about the civil war. It was foe

my history project, I thought it was going to be boring but it was a good piece to read. 6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A terrific read. By Ravematic101 I have had an abiding interest in the War between the States since I was a child. My roots go back to General Wade Hampton of South Carolina, so my interest is constant. This short book does an amazing job of capturing the sights and smells of the Civil War. I was impressed with the background work done by Mr. Smith and how it was translated in the book as something you could almost taste. From the shelling of Fort Sumter to the siege of Vicksburg, it is a difficult book to put down. I give it 5 stars for sure! 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This book was interesting but it felt like the author struggled to find enough to write about... By Iceland Spar This book was interesting but it felt like the author struggled to find enough to write about and the examples needed fleshing out. I realize however that in our modern world with the sanitation many of us enjoy it is not easy to elaborate on the sensory experiences of the past. All in all an enjoyable book but a little disappointing.

Historical accounts of major events have almost always relied upon what those who were there witnessed. Nowhere is this truer than in the nerve-shattering chaos of warfare, where sight seems to confer objective truth and acts as the basis of reconstruction. In *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege*, historian Mark M. Smith considers how all five senses, including sight, shaped the experience of the Civil War and thus its memory, exploring its full sensory impact on everyone from the soldiers on the field to the civilians waiting at home. From the eardrum-shattering barrage of shells announcing the outbreak of war at Fort Sumter; to the stench produced by the corpses lying in the mid-summer sun at Gettysburg; to the siege of Vicksburg, once a center of Southern culinary aesthetics and starved into submission, Smith recreates how Civil War was felt and lived. Relying on first-hand accounts, Smith focuses on specific senses, one for each event, offering a wholly new perspective. At Bull Run, the similarities between the colors of the Union and Confederate uniforms created concern over what later would be called "friendly fire" and helped decide the outcome of the first major battle, simply because no one was quite sure they could believe their eyes. He evokes what it might have felt like to be in the *HL Hunley* submarine, in which eight men worked cheek by jowl in near-total darkness in a space 48 inches high, 42 inches wide. Often argued to be the first "total war," the Civil War overwhelmed the senses because of its unprecedented nature and scope, rendering sight less reliable and, Smith shows, forcefully engaging the nonvisual senses. Sherman's March was little less than a full-blown assault on Southern sense and sensibility, leaving nothing untouched and no one unaffected. Unique, compelling, and fascinating, *The Smell of Battle, The Taste of Siege*, offers readers way to experience the Civil War with fresh eyes.

"'The real war will never get in the books.' This may be the most famous sentence ever written about the Civil War... Even before its official start in 2011, the Civil War sesquicentennial has brought many attempts to prove [Walt] Whitman wrong... [P]erhaps most striking is the surge of books that belong to what might be called the school of gore-- exemplified most recently by Mark M. Smith's *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War*--books that almost seem to savor the range of ways in which living bodies were converted into corpses by fire or disease, in mud or in bed, quickly enough to block awareness of death's arrival, or slowly enough to taunt the dying with false promises of reprieve."--*The New York Times* "Even for jaded Civil War readers who think they have explored the war from every conceivable angle, this is fresh material compellingly explored... Mr. Smith is onto something original and important, and his relentless intensity, rigorous attention to detail and dazzling vocabulary make for a beguiling, if occasionally numbing, read."--*Wall Street Journal* "Eminently readable... *The Smell of Battle* is an unconventional history of the Civil War, written with special attention to olfaction, touch, taste, sight, and hearing. It joins other recent histories of the war--Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*; Michael C.C. Adams' *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War* -- in trying to represent the war's massive levels of death and disruption so that 21st-century readers will really feel the history, deep in their bones... Sensory history, *The Smell of Battle* makes clear, is more than just an exercise in providing colorful detail... A book like Smith's, which tries to put reports of sights, sounds, and tastes in context, is a powerful argument for the importance of reading original historical sources while trying to understand the social mores of the time."--*Slate* "The *Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege* is an incredible book, one not only to read but also to be felt. Using diaries and letters, it provides us with a look at what it must have been like to be there--how it sounded, smelled, tasted and felt. Well-written and moving at times, it provides readers with an aspect of the war that has been neglected by historians."--*Bowling Green Daily News* "[T]his book is a vital first step in making sense of the Civil War's sensate past. It will sharpen historians' sensibilities of how combatants processed 'the smells of battle, the tastes of sieges, the traumatic pain of injury, the sights of engagement, and the sounds of strife, loss, and victory.' It will encourage historians to subject other events to similar analysis--to turn up the volume, to make the whiffs smell, the caresses touch."--*Chronicle* "Historians often ask readers to imagine the intense sights, sounds, and smells of battle. Smith goes one step further and explores how such sensory assaults affect the conduct of war itself... Smith gets into these gritty details by narrating some of the most important encounters of the American Civil War: the noise of the shelling of Fort Sumter; the confusion caused by the proliferation of different uniforms and badges at the First Battle of Bull Run; the stench of death at Gettysburg, which lingered from July to October; the hunger caused by the siege of Vicksburg; and the

claustrophobic conditions faced by the crew of a crude Confederate submarine."--Foreign Affairs"Turning his historical eye (and ear and nose...) to the sensory experience of war provides Smith the opportunity to write more evocatively than most historians, to bring to life the individualized experience of war--the howl of the cannons, the smell of burning horses, the taste of mule meat--in ways other histories cannot."--Failure Magazine "With *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege* Smith braids his interest in the senses and Civil War history into a burnished gem of a book that bracingly defamiliarizes intensively worked terrain...Graceful, insightful, and forceful in its brevity, this book should earn a place as a touchstone of contemporary Civil War historiography."--Journal of American History"Many Americans experienced their Civil War as a cacophony of exploding shells, the sight of burning buildings, the stench of rotting corpses, the taste of spoiled rations in the armies or mule meat in starving cities under siege, and the touch of unwashed bodies crowded in small spaces. A pioneer in the field of 'sensory history,' Mark Smith re-creates these unpleasant experiences as closely as possible through the medium of the printed word."--James McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize"Recovering the human experience of the Civil War is difficult with even the best literary sources--which makes Mark M. Smith's exploration of the conflict's sensory landscape especially valuable. From the cramped interior of the submarine *Hunley* to the grim living conditions among the besieged population of Vicksburg, Smith brings readers into a world of sights, smells, and sounds that add texture to our understanding of the nation's transformative trauma."--Gary W. Gallagher, author of *The Union War*"Smith, one of the most imaginative and creative of historians of the United States and a pioneer in the *History of the Senses*, evokes the immediacy of war, calling forth the feelings of battle by eliciting the use of the senses. More than an eye-witness account, this book arouses the ear, the taste, the feel, and the smell of war. Smith fuses overwhelming sights as they mingle with discordant sounds, rancid tastes, foul odors, and close feel. No mere intellectual exercise, this study presents a sensory perspective on Civil War history as it was experienced and shows how the senses affect war's outcomes. Introducing the senses as forces and factors relevant to making war and to the suffering caused by battle, Smith has written a work that is an essential contribution to the study of the Civil War and to war in general."--Orville Vernon Burton, author *The Age of Lincoln*About the AuthorMark M. Smith is Carolina Distinguished Professor of History at the University of South Carolina and author or editor of a dozen books, including *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History and How Race Is Made: Slavery, the Senses, and Segregation*.