

Blood and Thunder: The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West

By Hampton Sides

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In the summer of 1846, the Army of the West marched through Santa Fe, en route to invade and occupy the Western territories claimed by Mexico. Fueled by the new ideology of “Manifest Destiny,” this land grab would lead to a decades-long battle between the United States and the Navajos, the fiercely resistant rulers of a huge swath of mountainous desert wilderness.In *Blood and Thunder*, Hampton Sides gives us a magnificent history of the American conquest of the West. At the center of this sweeping tale is Kit Carson, the trapper, scout, and soldier whose adventures made him a legend. Sides shows us how this illiterate mountain man understood and respected the Western tribes better than any other American, yet willingly followed orders that would ultimately devastate the Navajo nation. Rich in detail and spanning more than three decades, this is an essential addition to our understanding of how the West was really won.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Although delivering little in the way of new information, Sides, an *Outside* magazine editor-at-large and bestselling author (*Ghost Soldiers*), eloquently paints the landscape and history of the 19th-century Southwest, combining Larry McMurtry's lyricism with the historian's attachment to facts. Inevitably, Sides's main focus is the virtual decimation of the Navajo nation from the 1820s to the late 1860s. Sides depicts the complex role of whites in the subjugation of the Navajos through his portrait of Kit Carson—an illiterate trapper, soldier and scout who knew the Native Americans intimately, married two of them and, without blinking, participated in the Indians' slaughter. Books about Carson have been numerous, but Sides is better than most Carson biographers in setting his exploits against a larger backdrop: the unstoppable idea of manifest destiny. Of course, as counterpoint to the progress of Carson and other whites, Sides details the fierce but doomed defense mounted by the Navajos over long decades. This culminated in their final, desperate "stand" during 1863 at Canyon de Chelly, more than a decade after a contingent of federal troops—operating under a commander whose last name of "Washington" seems ironic in this context—killed their great leader, Narbona. *(Oct. 3)*
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Hampton Sides's *Blood and Thunder* is more ambitious in its sweep than his acclaimed *Ghost Wars* (2001), a World War II history. His recounting of harsh frontier life and the violent clashes among the Navajo, the Spanish (Mexican), and the U.S. Army offers a gripping epic while enlivening many of the era's remarkable figures, from soldiers to trappers, farmers, Indians, and pioneer women. Critics especially praised Sides's nuanced discussions of the Navajo and other Native American tribes, as well as his inclusion of maps that chart key routes and conquests. A few critics cited some factual errors, tangential discussions, and omissions of some key historical figures, but overall it's clear that "Sides knows how to tell a good story" (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*).

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From Booklist
The American conquest and settlement of the Southwest and California were the opening salvos in the drive to fufill our "manifest destiny" to dominate the continent. Sides, a magazine editor and historian who lives in New Mexico, has written an enthralling account that concentrates on the period that begins with the Mexican War and ends with the forced "roundup" of the Navajo at the Canyon de Chelly. This is not a straight narrative history. Rather, Sides advances this epic story by providing wonderful portraits of some of the key participants in the saga, including Stephen Kearny, John Fremont, the Navajo warrior Narbona, and Senator Thomas Hart Benton. But at the center of this chronicle is the famed mountain man, scout, and entrepreneur, Kit Carson. As portrayed by Sides, Carson was a study in contradictions. Illiterate but extremely intelligent, Carson respected Indians and took two Indian wives, but he could act as a cold-blooded killer when government policy required action against Indians. This work will be an excellent addition to collections on western history. *Jay Freeman*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Hill:

Blood and Thunder: The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West can be one of your basic books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to get every word into pleasure arrangement in writing Blood and Thunder: The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West however doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource information that maybe you can be one among it. This great information can drawn you into brand new stage of crucial imagining.

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Harry Keller:

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