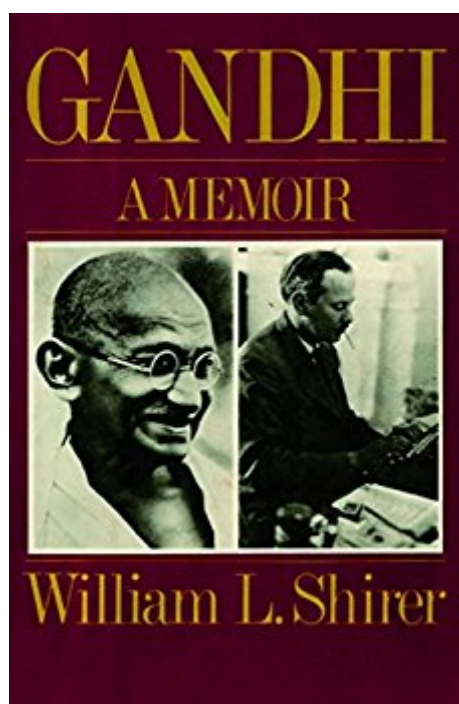


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Gandhi: A Memoir



Synopsis

Recalling his friendship and conversations with the late Indian leader, William Shirer presents a portrait of Gandhi that spotlights his frailties as well as his accomplishments. As a young foreign correspondent, William Shirer reported briefly on Gandhi "but the year was 1931, when India's struggle for independence peaked and Gandhi scored perhaps his greatest political success. The year before, he had led a 200-mile march to the sea to pick up a lump of salt—a violation of the British salt tax; and this symbolic act (like "he reminds Shirer "the Boston Tea Party) had propelled the Indian masses into nonviolent civil disobedience on a large scale. To check its spread, Gandhi had been arbitrarily imprisoned. Now he was out of prison and negotiating with the British viceroy: if Gandhi would call off the civil-disobedience campaign and attend an upcoming London conference, the British would make concessions too. These, however, were so limited and vague that many Indian nationalists regarded Gandhi's agreement as a sell-out; but Shirer underlines history's judgment of its wisdom with Gandhi's own words. More importantly, he notes, the British had finally been forced "to deal with an Indian leader as an equal." Along these lines, Shirer also witnessed British discomfiture at Gandhi's arrival— "complete with loin cloth, spinning wheel, and goat's milk; he saw the sensation Gandhi caused in London— "and heard him address Lancashire millhands thrown out of work by the Indian boycott of British cotton. And he saw him at home, subsisting on four-hours' sleep and "frenzied acclaim." This book is sure to press upon readers the worldwide force of Gandhi's example. "Kirkus Reviews

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Customer Reviews

This is not a biography of Mahatma Gandhi (1869- 1948), but William Shirer's memoirs of Gandhi who he met in 1931. Fortunately for the young Shirer, he was the only American journalist sent by an American newspaper to cover the story. Gandhi, the saint, was shrewd in allowing interviews to publicize his cause. This gave Shirer one of the great stories of the century. Shirer's most powerful personal statement is that "Gandhi was my greatest teacher, not only by what he said and wrote and did, but by the example he set." To his credit the author does not shield the reader from Gandhi's "fads, peculiarities and prejudices". Many readers will find these failings more interesting than Gandhi's accomplishments and lower their estimations of Gandhi. This account is involving, with many quotations, the sure hand of the master journalist Shirer telling the story and his thoughts at the time. The index adds to the book's reference value. Although Shirer will always be remembered for *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* and *Berlin Diary*, this book is a fine effort.

Because Shirer writes about Gandhi from the point of view of a young modest middle class American involved for the first time in a culture totally unlike his own, he makes Gandhi and his thought accessible to many of us, with the same middle-class, middle-America background.

It gave a first person account of Gandhi and his thinking.

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