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HIST202.OAON
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Book Review

Ambrose, Stephen. Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne From Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1992.

Stephen E. Ambrose was an American historian and author famous for his literary accounts of historical events in American History. He credits his writing, as well as his staunch interest in history, to his professor, William B. Hesselstine. His career as an author took off after he was commissioned to write the official biography of Dwight D. Eisenhower. In total, Ambrose has 28 works in his arsenal of nonfiction literature, including *Band of Brothers*. This book centers around Easy company of the 101st airborne in the events following the D-Day invasion, which marked the beginning of Germany's end. It has lived on in infamy, featuring the single largest invasion force the world has ever seen. It proved to be an incredible feat of planning, cooperation, logistics, and courage. As Ambrose Highlights in this book, the members of Easy Company played a huge part in this Allied offensive as part of the elite Airborne infantry. The Easy Company was an all-volunteer group of soldiers who underwent grueling training and an elite selection process. In his story, Ambrose demonstrates their brotherhood mindset that carried the Allies from the beaches of Normandy to the end of the war in Europe.

In a few of Ambrose's works, such as *Band of Brothers* and *D-Day*, he builds his stories upon individual accounts of what happened from real people who experienced it. This gives a much more personalized and emotional approach to major historical events than something like a history book could ever accomplish. The use of direct interviews brings authenticity that readers

might otherwise never encounter. However, this method has inherent faults, like personal biases, subjective experiences, and repetitiveness. Such as the stories of different wounded soldiers who would bend the rules just to get back to fight with their brothers in Easy Company. The first story seemed compelling, but the next few seemed repetitive and slowed the pace. Ambrose used other sources like diaries, books, and documentaries to support the story. For the most part, this added a lot of great content and emotional depth throughout the story. However, sometimes it felt misplaced or could have been better executed. For example in chapter 7, Ambrose includes well-written descriptions of company soldiers by utilizing Webster's letters back home, which was very clever, as Webster was an exceptional writer. This was a great addition, but it would have been a much better decision to add it earlier on in the story or even a chapter back to give more life to the characters. Up until then, the story lacked any detailed, well-written descriptions other than a few quotes from different soldiers placed here and there.

Ambrose's writing style is very fluid and engaging overall. He manages to keep the story progressing at a good linear pace, although occasionally, it is bogged down by the sudden name-dropping of numerous soldiers who do not appear in the scene. However, the text is more of a telling and informative experience than a descriptive scene constructor. Ambrose doesn't use much flowery language, and that's not necessarily bad, especially for a historical novel like this. He instead relies more on the first-person accounts of all variety to immerse you into the scenes. It reads similar to watching a history documentary where multiple different people are coming in to narrate what is happening at different times while a scene plays in front of the watcher. However, The accessibility is mixed. Without knowledge of Military hierarchy, a reader could miss some significance. A better understanding of military structure, strategy, or even geography can benefit the reader. Chapter six describes the exact route taken before the battle for Carentan

without much broader context to where they were. Without a map of France or intimate knowledge of French geography, it could be unnecessarily confusing for the reader. However, the magic of this book is its unique point of view.

Ambrose writes in the third person from the point of view of the entirety of Easy Company of the 101st. This gives the reader a unique and interesting perspective on a well-known historical event and E company's role in the Allied offensive. Telling this story from a company's point of view rather than an entire army or even one man comes with some benefits. Of course, the company's camaraderie is held in focus throughout the book, so the soldier's emotions and progressive mindsets during the war are intimately held at the forefront of the writing, but focusing in on a single company also presents an opportunity to zero in on specific battles and moments within that are generally not acknowledged and also do address the training, tactics, and leadership that made the company excel in combat. This also leads to small 'micro-stories' like Guarnier's latrine incident in chapter four. While this is a compelling point of view in the grand scheme of WWII, it could have been much more engaging storywise to follow the point of view of a single soldier in E company to become more familiar with their character and to raise the stakes within some of the battles.

Overall, Ambrose's book *Band of Brothers* presents a unique and authentic WWII experience worth reading. It is yet another reminder of the death and destruction of this war and the brutal challenges these men and men alike faced to put it to an end. This book not only provides deep insight into Easy Company of the 101st's pivotal role in the Allied offensive but leaves a lasting reminder that war is not something to be romanticized. It leaves a lasting legacy for all those who fought.