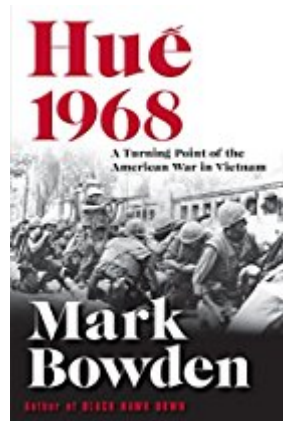


# Ebook Hue 1968: A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam By Mark Bowden



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From "a master of narrative journalism" (New York Times Book Review), a riveting history of the biggest and bloodiest battle of the Vietnam War

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Review Praise for Hue 1968 An Amazon Best Book of the Month in historyAn Amazon best history book of the year so far "An extraordinary feat of journalism . . . Through his scrupulous day-by-day reconstruction of this battle, Bowden encapsulates the essential lessons of the Vietnam War . . . Hue 1968 is also an exploration of what is common to all wars: humankind's capacity for violence, cruelty, self-sacrifice, bravery, cowardice and love. Mr. Bowden undertakes this task with the talent and sensibility of a master journalist who is also a humanist and an honest man . . . the book is full of emotion and color . . . You will find the reading gripping." "Karl Marlantes, Wall Street Journal "A remarkable book." "Dave Davies, NPR's Fresh Air "[A] magnificent and meticulous history, which tells, with excruciating detail, a story that is both inspiring and infuriating . . . Bowden's interviews, almost half a century on, with those who fought, on both sides, have produced unexampled descriptions of small-unit combat." "George F. Will, Washington Post "Bowden . . . applies his signature blend of deep reportage and character-driven storytelling to bring readers a fresh look at the 1968 battle in the Vietnamese city of Hue . . . [A] compelling and highly readable

narrative . . . A meticulous and vivid retelling of an important battle." *Linda Robinson, New York Times Book Review* "An instantly recognizable classic of military history . . . Bowden tells this story with a power and a wealth of detail that no previous history of this offensive has approached." *Steve Donoghue, Christian Science Monitor* "A gripping, and timely, history . . . powerful . . . [Hue 1968] is likely to claim a place on the shelf of essential books about the Vietnam War. Based on hundreds of interviews, news accounts, histories and military archives, the book combines intensive research with Bowden's propulsive narrative style and insightful analysis . . . What sets Bowden's account of the battle apart is his skill at moving from the macro—the history of the war, the politics surrounding it, the tactics of the battle—to the micro: the individuals, American and Vietnamese, who fought it and tried to survive it." *Colette Bancroft, Tampa Bay Times* "Bowden is one of the great journalists of our generation, and with this book he provides a captivating account of the pivotal battle that did so much to alter the trajectories of not just the Vietnam War, but also American politics and our nation's global posture. With its capacious research that includes the perspectives of combatants and civilians, Vietnamese and Americans, presidents and privates, it epitomizes what a definitive account should be." *Foreign Policy* "A masterful blood-and-guts account of the decisive battle in the Vietnam War . . . The heart and soul of Hue 1968 lies with its vivid and often wrenching descriptions of the storm of war? as soldiers and South Vietnamese citizens experienced it." *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* "Bowden's excellent Hue 1968 . . . gives us the clearest picture yet of what happened in Vietnam and in Hue, where today tourists casually shoot pictures where murderous shots once were fired." *George Petras, USA Today*, 4 out of 4 stars "Mark Bowden's book Hue 1968 is a must-read. Many lessons, including how government can lie and [the] role of an effective media in finding truth. Timely." *Michael Morell, former acting director of the CIA* "For readers who enjoy learning about battle tactics and bloody encounters, Bowden delivers, as he did in *Black Hawk Down*. The book offers so much more than that, however. For readers who care little about military strategy or precisely how each combatant died, Bowden offers copious context about why it matters what occurred in Vietnam at the beginning of 1968?why it mattered so much then, and why it matters so much in 2017 . . . Bowden is masterful in introducing characters whose names have often never appeared in the news but whose actions help explain the complications for the United States of becoming involved in faraway wars involving nearly invisible enemies." *Steve Weinberg, Philadelphia Inquirer* "Dazzling . . . Bowden's account of the battle delivers gut punches from start to finish . . . Most impressive of all, Bowden deftly blends clear descriptions of complex troop movements with careful attention to the human impact of the fighting . . . Bowden deserves enormous credit for calling new attention to an often-overlooked battle and especially for recovering the experiences of those who fought amid otherworldly horrors." *Mark Atwood Lawrence, Boston Globe* "Searing . . . Bowden revisits the historic battle with the same character-driven, grunt-level reporting style that made *Black Hawk Down* a bestseller. He lends a sympathetic ear to surviving soldiers on both sides, as well as guerrillas and civilians, and gives a vivid account of courage and cowardice, heroism and slaughter." *Bob Drogen, Los Angeles Times* "Nearly 50 years after the battle for the city of Hue, this history reads as fresh as today's news . . . every page merits reading." *Military Times* "Hue 1968 pulls off a rare feat: it takes a conflict of terrible scale and consequence, and allows us to see it unfold at the street level, through the eyes of Vietnamese and American soldiers engaged in the struggle, journalists and activists observing the chaos, and the civilians caught in the crossfire . . . His emphasis on firsthand accounts gives a vital heart to the unfolding events . . . Not only are the personal stories Bowden uncovers at turns deeply moving and horrifying, but they also pose uncomfortable parallels with current events in the Middle East and Afghanistan." *Sebastien Roblin, National Interest* "Thoroughly researched and compelling . . . This is as much a book about what happens to peoples' hearts, minds, and bodies in the swirling chaos of urban combat as it is a history of a specific battle and an assessment of its strategic significance. We come to know a fair number of the participants quite well by the end of the story—one source of the book's unusual power and authenticity . . . With a novelist's eye

for evoking the grim atmospherics of a hellish locale and the characters within it, Bowden reconstructs dozens of scenes of heart-pounding combat . . . Bowden's coverage of the 'other side' . . . gives this book a richer texture, and more balance, than any of the earlier books on Hue . . . Anyone looking to understand what Vietnam was all about would do well to read *Hue 1968*. Without a doubt, it's one of the very best books to be written about Vietnam in the last decade." *James A. Warren, Daily Beast* "Bowden confronts head-on the horrific senselessness of battle and the toll it takes on people, and he grants Hue the regard it deserves as a defining moment in a war that continues to influence how America views its role in the world." *Publishers Weekly* (starred review) "This Vietnam story reads like a movie but it's all true." *Courier-Journal* (Louisville) "An extraordinary account of the most important and costly battle of the Vietnam War." *Don McCullin*, legendary photojournalist who covered the Battle of Hue "In this meticulous retelling of one critical battle, Mark Bowden captures the nuanced and often invisible threads of America's political, military and cultural blindness in Vietnam. *Hue 1968* is the new classic about America's Vietnam War." *Elizabeth Becker*, author of *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* "A detailed, multifaceted account." *Tirdad Derakhsani, Philadelphia Inquirer* "[A] master storyteller." *John David, Decatur Daily* "A stirring history of the 1968 battle that definitively turned the Vietnam War into an American defeat . . . Building on portraits of combatants on all sides, Bowden delivers an anecdotally rich, careful account of the complex campaign to take the city. One of the best books on a single action in Vietnam, written by a tough, seasoned journalist who brings the events of a half-century past into sharp relief." *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review) "An epic masterpiece of heroism and sacrifice, and a testament to the tragic futility of the American experience in Vietnam." *Booklist* (starred review) "Excellent . . . Bowden has done a superb job of telling the story as he did with *Black Hawk Down*." *Washington Times* "In his monumental new book, Bowden . . . gives voice to dozens, including Nguyen Quang Ha, whose five-man team emerged from underground caves to strike the first blow for North Vietnamese forces, Bob Thompson, a career marine officer charged with taking back the US stronghold at the Citadel, President Lyndon Johnson and General William Westmoreland in Washington, DC and reporters David Halberstam, Michael Herr, Gene Roberts, Walter Cronkite and others who changed the way Americans perceived the war." *Jane Ciabattari, BBC.com* "Hue 1968 unravels one of the great mysteries of our time—how a puny force of North Vietnam regulars and local sympathizers could without warning occupy South Vietnam's second largest city, hold it for a month, then disappear into the mountains, beyond reach and largely unbloodied. It turns out the force wasn't puny, but fanatical warriors who gripped their prey by the throat and wouldn't let go. They were unfazed by waves of counter-attackers, Vietnamese and American soldiers, but mostly Marines rushed in to defeat them. *Hue 1968* shows the enormous challenges facing both sides and how they overcame them, or tried to. Did the Battle of Hue end up as a victory or defeat? The answer depends on who's asking and who's telling. Bowden takes on both roles and does it well." *Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Krohn (ret.)*, author of *The Lost Battalion of Tet* "Hue 1968 is, by far, the most comprehensive (and balanced) coverage on this battle I've seen. Like never before, I've come to realize how narrow a perspective we low-level participants unavoidably had. While giving due respect to the abilities, actions and fighting spirit of the U.S. and ARVN Marines and soldiers who participated, Mark Bowden brought clarity to the larger intelligence, political and strategic shortcomings that made the prosecution of this battle so much more challenging and costly than it needed to be." *Brigadier General Mike Downs, USMC (ret.)* "The longest and fiercest fighting of the Tet Offensive took place in and around Hue in early 1968 where Communist North Vietnam suffered a terrible military defeat. Yet the fight for Hue became a political victory for the leaders of North Vietnam and a turning point for US involvement and support for the war. Through searing personal accounts of many on both sides who were there, Mark Bowden reveals the intensity of the fighting. Relying on archival documents now available after 50 years, he also examines the considerations and decisions of political and military leaders at the highest levels. This book is a tragic tale of misunderstanding but also one of great heroism and

sacrifice by those who fought in the streets of Hue and in the nearby rice paddies and villages." "Brigadier General Howard T. Prince II, USA (ret.), Commanding Officer, Bravo Company, 5/7 Cavalry, 1968 "Mark Bowden uniquely describes the battle from both sides of the front lines and vividly captures the remarkable courage and valor of those that participated in the crucible of war that was Hue City in January to March 1968. Surely to be an historical standard for the recollection of that Tet 1968 battle." "Colonel Chuck Meadows, USMC (ret.), Former Commanding Officer of Golf Company 2ndBn 5thMar "I am a US Marine Vietnam veteran who participated as a tank crewmen in the Tet 1968 battle for Hue City. I have read just about every written account of the month-long battle, and I have to say that all of the other well-written, well-documented accounts of the battle pale in comparison to Mark Bowden's Hue 1968. There is no more complete, accurate and detailed book. It reads like a novel even though is it made up almost exclusively of very personal accounts." "John Wear, president of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association "Powerfully told, and a vivid depiction of individual courage and national hubris." "William J. Burns, President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace "A masterpiece of intensely dramatic nonfiction . . . The brilliance of Bowden's narrative, the achievement of interviewing hundreds of people on all sides and making the foundation their human stories, is why Hue 1968 rises to the emotional power and universality of For Whom The Bell Tolls and All Quiet On The Western Front." "Michael Mann About the Author Mark Bowden is the author of thirteen books, including the #1 New York Times bestseller Black Hawk Down. He reported at the Philadelphia Inquirer for twenty years and now writes for the Atlantic, Vanity Fair, and other magazines. He is also the writer in residence at the University of Delaware. His most recent book is The Three Battles of Wanat: And Other True Stories. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Word passed quickly from foxhole to foxhole that they were going. DiLeo felt ? what? ?Relief? wasn't a strong enough word. He felt a stab of hope, of exhilarating hope. He had seen so much in the past two days. He had helped carry the shattered bodies of the wounded to the helicopters for evacuation. He had seen the man whose warmth comforted him in his hole through a freezing wet night lying stiff and dead. He had seen two men, one of them his good friend, simply erased from existence in an instant. He had been shot, albeit not badly. It had made him feel, not imagine or think, but feel how temporary was his life, and how, from one breath to the next, it could end. This shift in his thinking was subtle but profound. It moved him from fear to acceptance. At a certain point he stopped fearing death or horrible maiming, he just expected it. And now came this: They might get away! It was the first glimmer of hope in two days. He knew that any attempt to move would be dangerous, probably fatal, but that was okay with him. He had come to grips with that. This was a chance. Anything was better than waiting in that hole trying to figure out what to think about in his last moments on earth. He'd rather die trying to live. \*\*\* On the appointed day, early in January, Quang left the city with Ngu to supervise the loading. Into the bottom went piles of AK47s, bazooka tubes, and grenades. The egg baskets were planted with ammo. He stayed behind as Ngu set off. Quang could see how nervous he was, so he suggested that he drink some of the moonshine. "Not enough to get drunk," he said, "but enough to look drunk." Ngu's face flushed whenever he drank even a little alcohol. So he looked the part as he approached the checkpoints, and played it up. He staggered and bellowed and waved to the guards, offering them his presents, and pleading with them to let him pass quickly, "Because I am drunk and I'm worried I'm not going to get to Hue on time, and my wife will kill me." Quang waited back in Kim Do through that entire day. He did not learn until the following afternoon that his "Uncle" had made the trip safely, and that his men had picked up the shipment. His force now was ready, armed. He could hardly believe it. As he saw it, the miracle proved the truth of Ho's teachings, that the Party and the army were not enough. Real victory could only come from the people.

Customer Reviews Most helpful customer reviews 204 of 209 people found the following review helpful. the book is painfully accurate about what it was like to be in Vietnam By Tommy Witcher Reading this book made me uncomfortable for a lot of reasons. I was a young marine and part of the

volunteer group that first went into Hue at the beginning of the battle. My outfit was 2/1, then at Con Thien, so I was only in Hue at the beginning and took no part in the serious fighting that came later. I thought the book was carefully researched, and well written, and as honest as he could be. My criticism is only that the author glosses over the fact that journalists did have a staggering effect on the fighting, and often their stories did fuel the anti-war movement back home. It occurs to me that if journalists had written about the Battle of the Bulge in the same tone that Walter Cronkite and others portrayed Hue, we would have sued for peace with Germany. However, the book is painfully accurate about what it was like to be in Vietnam, in the Tet of 1968, and what it was like to be in a firefight. I took no exception to his portrayal of those in leadership as being both competent and incompetent because it's true of any organization. And I appreciate the portrayal of marines and soldiers who might not have ever gotten a thank-you back home, but who proved themselves hero's every day. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of the battle. 271 of 287 people found the following review helpful. If You Only Ever Read One Book About Vietnam By Chip Auger 5 Stars If you only ever read one book about Vietnam, you could do a lot worse than Bowden's "Hue 1968." Other good choices would be Karnow's "Vietnam: A History" and Sheehan's "A Bright and Shining Lie." However, Hue 1968 delivers not only the facts of the American tragedy in Vietnam, or even a particular point of view of the facts, but it also accurately depicts the feelings of the Americans serving in Vietnam, as well as those of Americans at home, and the Vietnamese who could not escape the war. I was a young marine in Vietnam at the time of the Tet offensive in 1968. I was not an officer and had no strategic view of the conflict. I didn't even have a clear tactical view of the events in which I was directly involved. That said, Mr. Bowden's book is such a profound telling of the events that I can almost smell the rice paddies. It is exactly this ability of Mr. Bowden that allows us the readers to either relive events from our own past or experience them, as nearly as possible, as events that are worlds apart from our experience. He did it in "Black Hawk Down" and again in "Guests of the Ayatollah." And now he may have written the best book of his lifetime.

Recommended: Absolutely. 106 of 113 people found the following review helpful. Excellent By Thomas Reiter This is an excellent book about a decisive battle in the Vietnam war that I had never really known much about despite reading several books about the war. If you've read any of the author's other books, you'll know what to expect--excellent research, good writing, accounts of both the macro and the micro issues. In this book, while the author provides some coverage of both the North Vietnamese and US (as well as civilians), most of the book concentrates on the US, in particular the Marines. The book is pretty even-handed between the sides, although there are few accounts of the actual fighting from the Vietnamese side. The author also provides in epilogue in which the subsequent fates of the many of the people is described, which is always nice. While the author paints a very sympathetic portrait of most of the marines and soldiers caught in the fighting, he generally has a very unflattering view of US higher commanders, who simply wouldn't believe that the North Vietnamese could take and hold a major city, because it did not conform to their preconceptions of what the enemy was capable of, or what strategy they would adopt. As a result, for several days after the city had fallen, US commanders sent laughably small contingents--individual companies of a couple of hundred men--to retake the city, occupied by up to 10,000 enemy troops. Commanders on the ground were ridiculed for their incompetence and timidity for their failures to retake the city, and ordered again and again into futile attacks. Westmoreland in particular comes in for withering criticism; he seems to have been so completely hoodwinked by the North Vietnamese that they were planning a major attack on Khe Sanh (which never came), that he dismissed the rest of the Tet offensive, and the battle in Hue in particular, as diversions by the crafty enemy to distract the Americans from the impending battle at Khe Sanh. I wanted to mention a few minor criticisms which didn't detract much from the book for me, but maybe more important to others: --the book includes too many characters which are mentioned a couple of times in the book, but that's it. This is particularly true for many of the civilians trapped in the city, but also for many of the soldiers, such as a Marine captain who was there from the first day of the battle and then rejoined the ARVN unit he advised in the citadel for the second half of the fighting--what was his

experience with the ARVN troops like? Generally, it would have been interesting to find out more about the experiences of more people mentioned in the book. --speaking of ARVN, for some reason the author does not really cover them at all; --the author focuses almost exclusively on infantry, marines, and tankers, but it might be been interesting to hear from some of the sailors on the Mike boats, the helicopter pilots, etc. --while the book includes some maps, I think that more maps would have been helpful. See all 646 customer reviews...

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