This beautifully written trilogy of books on the American Civil War is not only a piece of first-rate history, but also a marvelous work of literature. Shelby Foote brings a skilled novelists narrative power to this great epic. Many know Foote for his prominent role as a commentator on Ken Burnss PBS series about the Civil War. These three books, however, are his legacy. His southern sympathies are apparent: the first volume opens by introducing Confederate President Jefferson Davis, rather than Abraham Lincoln. But they hardly get in the way of the great story Foote tells. This hefty three volume set should be on the bookshelf of any Civil War buff. -- John Miller

My Personal Review:
I became a fan of the Civil War, to the extent any person can become a fan of a war, after watching Ken Burns excellent series on PBS. I then set out to learn more about the war, and read, over the course of a couple of years, the three volume masterpiece of Shelby Foote. I can state without reservation it was one of the most enriching reading experiences of my life. In Footes talented hands, the characters of the conflict, North and South, come alive. He doesnt ignore the war out west, and treats battles such as Vicksburg, Shiloh, New Orleans and countless others with precision and attention.
He has somewhat of a Southerners slant, but he is not so opinionated as to ignore gallantry by the North, and he rightfully rips Confederates when it is called for. Lincoln comes off much more sympathetically then Jeff Davis in my opinion, and he recounts various blunders by Confederate generals including Ewells failure to act at Gettysburg, the disappearance of JEB Stuart when Lee needed him most, Joe Johnstons hesitancy and Hoods uncontrolled aggression in Georgia, etc.
Some reviewers here at Amazon criticized his lack of footnotes and a few missed details (ie who got in the last word in a series of letters between Grant and Lee, etc.) Come on, anyone reviewing the bibliography knows that Foote has done his research, I would expect anyone writing a 2800
page chronicle of a 4 year war to get a fact wrong here and there. 135 years after the war, details still pop up in archives and newly discovered letters which make people question prior assumptions. This is no historical novel as some have suggested - he doesn't invent dialogue and guess about the personal lives of characters like the Shaara books - this is history. And if anyone wants a fuller understanding of characters such as Grant, well than read Grant's Autobiography, as I did, and get the complete picture.

Perhaps Footes trilogy is not for everyone. He leaves out some statistical data favored by historians such as MacPherson, who spent much more time on the events leading up to the war and who attempted to put the conflict in more of a historical context, although quite frankly those are omissions I didn't miss at all. I think for most general readers, who are simply motivated by a desire to learn about the battles, the great personalities, and the heroic struggles of the North and the South fought on soil familiar to all of us, the Foote books are a striking success. I haven't found a better single source of the history of the war, including detailed battle plans, maps, personal histories, etc. Buy the books, and come back to them here and there while reading other material in between. This is not a reading assignment to tackle in a single season. You'll find Footes writing to be polished, lively, informative but not overwhelming, like coming back to an old storyteller friend.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Civil War: A Narrative (3 Vol. Set) by Shelby Foote - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!