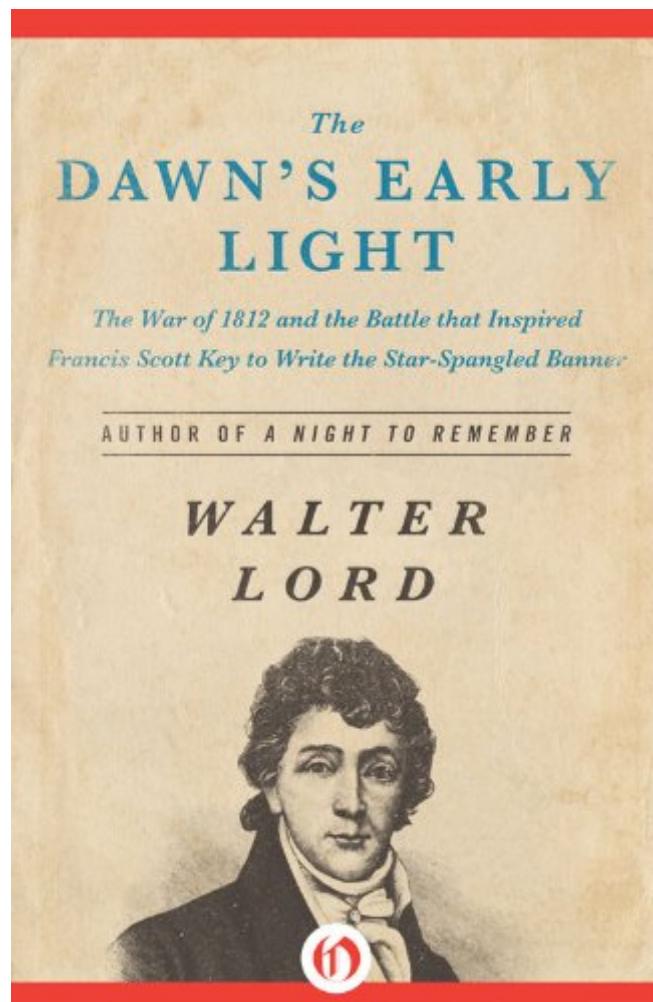


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# The Dawn's Early Light (Maryland Paperback Bookshelf)



## Synopsis

It took more than a revolution to win true independence: The story of the War of 1812, the United States' second war on England, by a New York Times' "bestselling historian. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the great powers of Western Europe treated the United States like a disobedient child. Great Britain blocked American trade, seized its vessels, and impressed its sailors to serve in the Royal Navy. America's complaints were ignored, and the humiliation continued until James Madison, the country's fourth president, declared a second war on Great Britain. British forces would descend on the young United States, shattering its armies and burning its capital, but America rallied, and survived the conflict with its sovereignty intact. With stunning detail on land and naval battles, the role Native Americans played in the hostilities, and the larger backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars, this is the story of the turning points of this strange conflict, which inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner" and led to the Era of Good Feelings that all but erased partisan politics in America for almost a decade. It was in 1812 that America found its identity and first assumed its place on the world stage. By the author of *A Night to Remember*, the classic account of the sinking of the *Titanic* which was not only made into a 1958 movie but also led director James Cameron to use Lord as a consultant on his epic 1997 film as well as acclaimed volumes on Pearl Harbor (Day of Infamy) and the Battle of Midway (Incredible Victory), this is a fascinating look at an oft-forgotten chapter in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have read "Dawn's Early Light" several times and have found it to be the single most readable and understandable writing on a subject that is surprisingly not well known to most American readers. Lord uses numerous primary sources- diaries, letters, and memoirs of the participants, as well as thorough research and a tightly written narrative to tell the story of the British invasion of 1814. Especially effective are his characterizations of the British and American leadership. Walter Lord has managed to convey effectively the professionalism and cockiness of the British forces and the hopelessly chaotic and desperate American defense. It reads very much like a novel.

This book is a venerable classic. Walter Lord was the premier writer of popular history in the mid 20th century, much as David McCullough is in the second half of the century. This book describes the 1814 capture and burning of Washington DC by the British and the subsequent successful defense of Baltimore and New Orleans. As with all of Lord's books (and those of McCullough) great scholarship and original research is presented with the skill of a great novelist. The result is an exciting but true story. An otherwise dry history is given great life and vitality. The characters come alive and the reader gets to appreciate the history in a most entertaining manner. The title led me to believe that the book was primarily about the writing of the Star Spangled Banner. While the author Francis Scott Key is a minor character and the writing of the American national anthem is discussed, it comprises only a minor sub-plot in a much larger and complex story. If I have one complaint it is that not enough space has been allocated to the causes of the war and the events of 1812 and 1813. Some of these are mentioned in a three-page forward. In my opinion, the history would have been greatly enriched by a little more background. Of particular importance was the burning of the city of York (modern day Toronto) by American forces in April 1813. Most histories of the war of 1812 cite this as a reason why the British burned Washington 16 months later. Lord never even mentions the burning of York, leaving the question as to the extent to which this influenced subsequent actions not even raised. This was very puzzling to me. Was Lord implying that the British forces did not know of this (which seems to be virtually impossible) or did it not influence their actions (also very hard to believe). Even a brief sentence would have clarified this for me. While I deem this a significant deficiency, it was not enough of one for me to reduce my five star

recommendation.

This is the first book I have read on the War of 1812 and I found it to be an excellent refresher. The book presents the battles and troop movements with striking detail. The author manages to avoid boring the reader with cumbersome details. His mixture of personal accounts & interesting details results in an enjoyable read. For a history book, it is rather exciting. I highly recommend this book to any history buff.

This book is the first I have read concerning the War of 1812. In this book the author covers the period from August 1814 with the British marching onto Washington. Walter Lord offers a splendid account of the fighting at Bladensburg, the burning of Washington and the subsequent campaign against the British. The use of first hand account offers a splendid insight into the people, soldiers, sailors and politicians caught up during this period of history. A well researched and finely told account of this dramatic time in America's past. An excellent story!

Most of us are taught to believe that the War of 1812 was an American fiasco. Walter Lord's *The Dawn's Early Light* is an exceptionally well written work which depicts just how America sent the Brits packing for a second time and along the way earned not only international respect but also forged a sense of true national identity. This is quite a fine work. Starting with the British burning of Washington, DC, Lord follows through to the defeat of the same army at Baltimore and the subsequent annihilation of the Duke of Wellington's finest troops, those that defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, at the Battle of New Orleans. While the battle sequences are extremely well done, the behind the scene negotiations are covered equally well. This book delivers what most historians often forget. By defeating Great Britain twice, a very young nation, one whose ideas of self government were so uncertain that some of its own citizens thought it would not work, developed a sense of self, one that was to set the tone for the rest of the world to follow. This is a remarkably well written and structured work, sure to please all but the British!

Until very recently this was THE book to read on The War of 1812, given the publication of several new works on the subject, this may no longer be the case, but for my money, there's no better storyteller than Walter Lord. That said, this is not one of his best works, but it's still a worthwhile read, especially for dedicated fans. His prose is most effective when he's describing the actual battles, his minute-by minute account of the burning of Washington is the highlight of the book. The

non-combat portions just seem to drag in comparison.

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