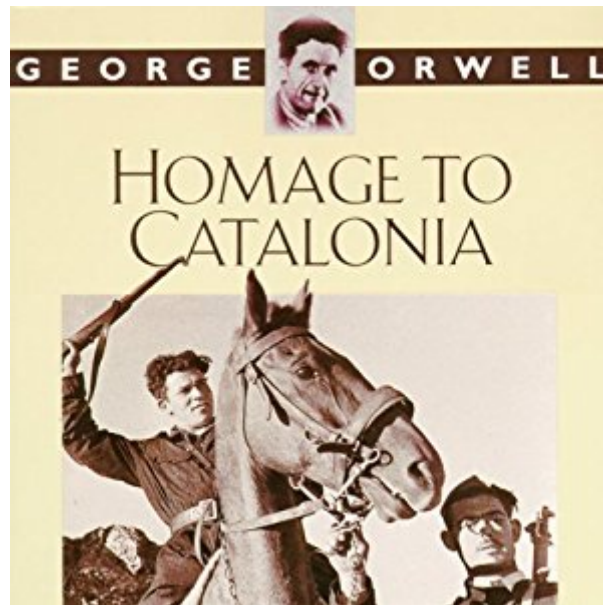


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# Homage To Catalonia



## Synopsis

Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism as I understand it'. Thus wrote Orwell following his experiences as a militiaman in the Spanish Civil War, chronicled in *Homage to Catalonia*. Here he brings to bear all the force of his humanity, passion and clarity, describing with bitter intensity the bright hopes and cynical betrayals of that chaotic episode: the revolutionary euphoria of Barcelona, the courage of ordinary Spanish men and women he fought alongside, the terror and confusion of the front, his near-fatal bullet wound and the vicious treachery of his supposed allies. A firsthand account of the brutal conditions of the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* includes an introduction by Julian Symons in Penguin Modern Classics. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Generalissimo Francisco Franco's fascist troops invaded Spain in July 1936 in order to overthrow the newly established Republic headed by the Popular Front, (composed of liberal democrats, socialists, anarchists, trade unionists, communists and secularists). The country was basically divided into Red Spain - the Republicans, and Black Spain, represented by the landed elite, committed to a feudal system and Franco's cause, Fascists, the urban bourgeoisie, the Roman Catholic Church, and other conservative sectors. The number of casualties is only an estimate, but suggests that between 500,000 and 1,000,000 people were killed. Many of these deaths, however, were not the results of military battles, but the outcome of brutal mass executions perpetrated by

both sides. During the war in Spain, approximately 38,000 non-Spanish, anti-fascist volunteers from fifty-two countries, took up arms to defend the Republican cause against Franco, who was aided by Hitler and Mussolini. Twenty-eight hundred Americans, in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, fought here alongside their Spanish and international comrades-in-arms from 1937 through 1938. These men and women believed the defense of the Republic represented the last hope of stopping the spread of international fascism. Most of the volunteers were not political, but idealists who were determined to "make Madrid the tomb of fascism." English novelist, essayist, and critic, George Orwell was one of them. Orwell was not just a writer, he was a partisan and he was a political idealist. A revolutionary Socialist, not a Communist, he was affiliated with the Independent Labor Party (I.L.P.). Orwell originally traveled to Spain in 1937 to observe and to write, but he almost immediately enlisted in the militia as a private.

It's been said that George Orwell is every conservative's favorite liberal and every liberal's favorite conservative. This book likely did more to create that sentiment than any of Orwell's other works. "Homage to Catalonia" is the story of Orwell's experience fighting in Spain, during 1936 and 1937, against Franco's forces that were seeking to overthrow the Spanish government. Orwell originally traveled to Spain simply to report on the war as a journalist, but falling in love with the people of Catalonia and their revolutionary, honestly egalitarian spirit, Orwell joined the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (POUM) militia. Once enlisted, Orwell traveled to the front lines of the fight in Catalonia. His observations of life on the front-line and the daily struggles for a soldier during war are at times funny, fascinating, and depressing. Remarking on war, especially the politics of war, Orwell writes, "I believe that on such an issue as this no one is or can be completely truthful;" yet Orwell seems supernaturally honest throughout this book. After risking his life for the socialist cause he believed in, even being shot in the neck, Orwell eventually realized that many people he once assumed were fighting for the same anti-Fascist cause as he were really no different than the enemy he was fighting. The anti-Fascist soldiers were generally divided into Anarchists (who believed that a Marxist revolution should be the immediate goal) and Communists (who believed that the Fascists must be defeated first and the Marxist revolution addressed after that).

Ever wonder what it is like be shot right through the neck? Ever wonder what it is like to stare over open sights at an enemy soldier with his pants down (literally) relieving himself? Would you shoot? Ever wonder what it is like to fight with allies that may be as worse than the common enemy? Orwell experienced all of this and more as a member of one of the more obscure Spanish militias fighting

for the Spanish Republic during the bloody internecine Spanish Civil War. He also became incredibly disillusioned in the process. Finding his beliefs in revolutionary socialism, he was already jaded by communism and the cynical use it was put to serve Stalin's interests. He opted for a more loose organisation and therefore choose to enroll with the Anarcho-Syndicalists as a foreign volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. His particular group was called the POUMists (an acronym that I need not summarize here). Ill-equipped and with no training, they showed what raw idealism can do against Franco and his fascist oppression -- they stopped fascism cold on the battle field and were never found wanting in terms of courage. What did defeat them was the United Front launched by the Comintern against International Fascism. For those that did not tow the line, Stalin's advisors and compadours inside the Spanish Communist Party sacrificed. Denied weapons, ammunition and food, the coalition --- made up a broad spectrum of liberal-democrats, progressives, socialists, communists, anarchists (and every shade between) --- were defeated in piece-meal battles. Orwell was shaped and scarred by the experience. Although always a social progressive, he realised that idealism in its most extreme forms could be as bad as the fascism one was fighting against.

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