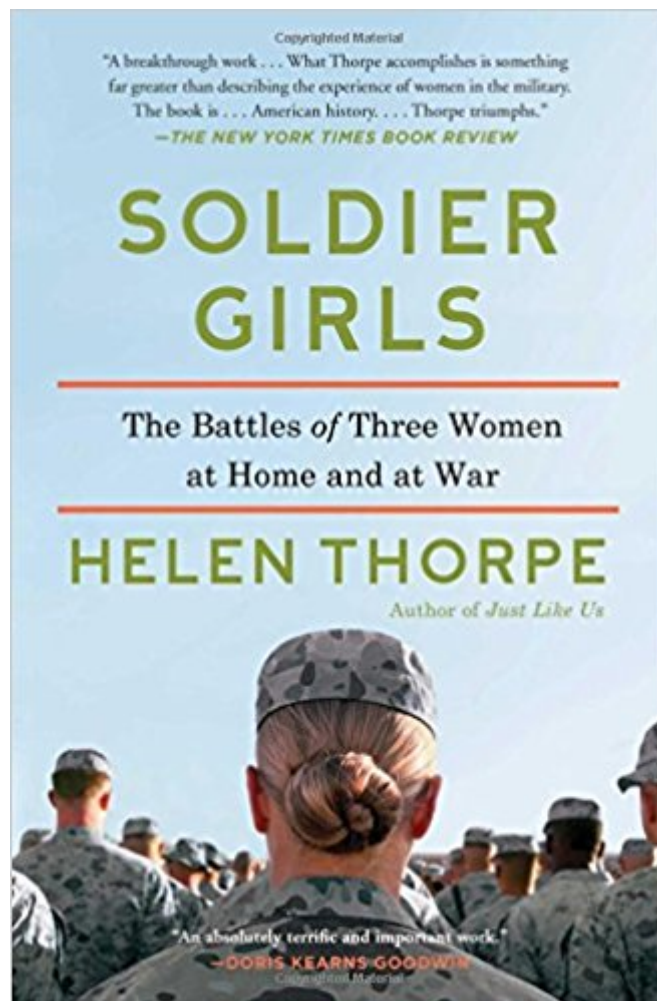




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# Soldier Girls: The Battles Of Three Women At Home And At War



## Synopsis

“A raw, intimate look at the impact of combat and the healing power of friendship (People): the lives of three women deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, and the effect of their military service on their personal lives and families” • named a best book of the year by Publishers Weekly. “In the tradition of Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, Richard Rhodes, and other masters of literary journalism, *Soldier Girls* is utterly absorbing, gorgeously written, and unforgettable” (The Boston Globe). Helen Thorpe follows the lives of three women over twelve years on their paths to the military, overseas to combat, and back home—and then overseas again for two of them. These women, who are quite different in every way, become friends, and we watch their interaction and also what happens when they are separated. We see their families, their lovers, their spouses, their children. We see them work extremely hard, deal with the attentions of men on base and in war zones, and struggle to stay connected to their families back home. We see some of them drink too much, have affairs, and react to the deaths of fellow soldiers. And we see what happens to one of them when the truck she is driving hits an explosive in the road, blowing it up. She survives, but her life may never be the same again. Deeply reported, beautifully written, and powerfully moving, *Soldier Girls* is “a breakthrough work...What Thorpe accomplishes in *Soldier Girls* is something far greater than describing the experience of women in the military. The book is a solid chunk of American history...Thorpe triumphs” (The New York Times Book Review).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A breakthrough work... What Thorpe accomplishes in SOLDIER GIRLS is something far greater than describing the experience of women in the military. The book is a solid chunk of American history -- detailing the culture's failing, resilience and progress... Thorpe triumphs." (The New York Times Book Review)"In the tradition of Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, Richard Rhodes, and other masters of literary journalism, SOLDIER GIRLS is utterly absorbing, gorgeously written, and unforgettable." (Boston Globe)"A dynamic understanding of what it's been like for Guard members who unexpectedly found themselves shipped off to the front lines of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq... highly complex matters are all made palpably real through the prism of this book's three heroines' lives." (The New York Times)"With a novelist's perception of character, drama, and telling detail, Helen Thorpe magically weaves together the stories of three very different but equally compelling women soldiers. Taken together, their stories provide an intimate window on life in the military, the impact of war, and the difficult transition to home. This is an absolutely terrific and important work." (Doris Kearns Goodwin)"Thorpe follows three women, tracking their ups and downs with faithful detail in a brilliant tableau of their overlapping lives for 12 years as they do multiple tours in Afghanistan and Iraq and readjust to civilian life... Soldier Girls raises important questions about how men and women serve together and the differences in how they experience war, enabling us to see the subtle challenges female soldiers face -- the hardships that don't make easy headlines." (The Washington Post)"A thoughtful, fascinating and often heartbreaking account... Thorpe manages to burrow deeply into the lives of these women... incredibly intimate." (Miami Herald)"A nuanced look at the lives of female soldiers that is as intimate as it is groundbreaking." (O Magazine)"A raw, intimate look at the impact of combat and the healing power of friendship." (People magazine)"A vivid and intensely personal account of the lives of three women whose only common denominator had been that they joined the Indiana National Guard never imagining they might end up in a war zone... Thorpe's matter-of-fact tone and clear and concise prose make the book all the more riveting... a captivating read, an important book and a stunning accomplishment." (Lorraine Dusky, Military History magazine)"Heart-breaking... absorbing, funny... a cry worth attending, sounded by a band of sisters put in harm's way." (Newsday)"Tracking a trio in an Indiana battalion, Thorpe movingly captures how unexpected deployments rocked women's lives... she unravels the women's complex relations--and how they sustain one another." (Elle Magazine)"Moving... Highlighting how profoundly military service changed their lives--and the lives of their families--this visceral narrative illuminates the role of women in the military, the burdens placed on the National Guard, and the

disproportionate burden of these wars borne by the poor." (Publishers Weekly, STARRED review)"The absorbing story of how wartime experiences shaped the lives and friendships of three female soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan... Intensely immersive reading." (Kirkus, STARRED review)"Laudable for its clear focus on individuals and their idiosyncratic life stories... Soldier Girls is a worthy addition to the literature of our most recent wars. The three women at the heart of Thorpe's story share a tender, familial bond that, like so much else in war literature, is generally ascribed to men... an eloquent reminder of how women's experiences are transforming military lore." (Bookforum)"Thorpe fills this gripping tale with the women's own words, texts, and letters (from friends and their children, as well), and the story is engrossing and heartbreaking at once." (Booklist)

Helen Thorpe was born in London and grew up in New Jersey. Her journalism has appeared in The New York Times Magazine, New York magazine, The New Yorker, Slate, and Harper's Bazaar. Her radio stories have aired on This American Life and Sound Print. She is the author of Just Like Us, Soldier Girls, and The Newcomers and lives in Denver.

Chilling look into the consequences of war in general and of women warriors in particular. While it is easy for the politicians to stand in front of the cameras and talk about how inspired they are by our troops and their sacrifice, it's entirely another to take responsibility for the incalculable disruption and damage done to their lives and their families. As a society, we will be paying for these ill considered and poorly managed military actions for decades to come. This book is a disturbing peek under the hood of what happened on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq through the eyes of three women who did what most of cannot even imagine and would never attempt.

Soldier Girls presents a very interesting perspective on three women from the Indiana serving in the military in Afghanistan and Iraq. The cultures and the roles of women in the two countries are totally different. The profiles of the three main characters and their backgrounds, thoughts and friendships add to the story. From reading the book, I feel like I know the women personally and appreciate their service. They sacrificed so much to be there like leaving families, friends and jobs to serve on the frontline of a war. I am glad that the women who served in are being recognized through this book. I liked the book.

Soldier Girls is a rich, amazingly researched and wonderfully *intimate* and *intimately*

is a well-written tale. The story is at least what its title states. In addition it is a balanced, tastefully developed, profound discussion of the flesh of military service. It does not shy from presenting the shameful components of our distinctive National engagements with both Iran and Afghanistan, where our Government's conduct, supported and funded by both Congressional Parties, as well as initiated by the usually blamed then Office of the President, and Foreign Relations, did enormous harm to a foreign nation, as well as to its own troops (both in battle and at home). While the word "girls," of the title, is appropriately chosen, the experience of the reader is to personally be with a depth of women human-beings. It's a gift of the actual women that they engage in sharing the substance and conduct of their lives. One academic colleague once had a fixation of regaling her governing Board of Trustees with the comment, "Women are not human-beings." Her point appeared to be that "Women are victims," though, shockingly, no one ever asked this self-proclaimed feminist to explain her choice of language. In serious contrast, the women-human-beings of Helen Thorpe's book, are not "victims." Being with the flesh of their lives, their courages, is a privilege for which I am greatly thankful. They become friends.

I stopped reading this book about halfway through. This is the story of three different women who joined the National Guard before September 11, 2001 for various reasons (such as free college tuition), and never thought they would see combat, but did end up in or near combat. The book tells how they coped with separation from their families, harsh weather conditions, uncertainty about the goals of the war, and other pressures and hardships. I stopped reading because I just didn't care enough about any of the three women to keep slogging through endless details describing their misfortunes and small triumphs. The writer has a narrative style that carries you forward inexorably. But toward what? Another challenge. More transfers. More drinking. More affairs. In a way the book succeeded because it depicted military life as so awful that I didn't want to have anymore to do with it. If the book had been a long article in a magazine about just one woman, I might have finished the article. But I actually started to get the women mixed up, I'm kind of ashamed to say. I wanted to feel as if I knew the interior life of the women, like you do in fiction, and I wasn't getting that. If you have a good memory for details, and are interested in the history and politics of the time and want to know what it's like to be stationed in Afghanistan (I think that's where they were), you probably will like the book.

The book gave me new insight to lives of young women whom I would have otherwise known

nothing about. These are women from difficult backgrounds, who sign up for the National Guard as a way of earning money for college and building skills that will help them improve their lot. What they walk into are the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their relationships are, for the most part and with the exception of their relationships with each other, are tawdry, alcohol-drenched and unfulfilling. I found the topic interesting, but the writing very mediocre.....sort of a long laundry list of "she did that and then this and then that." For that reason, I found the book hard to finish.

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