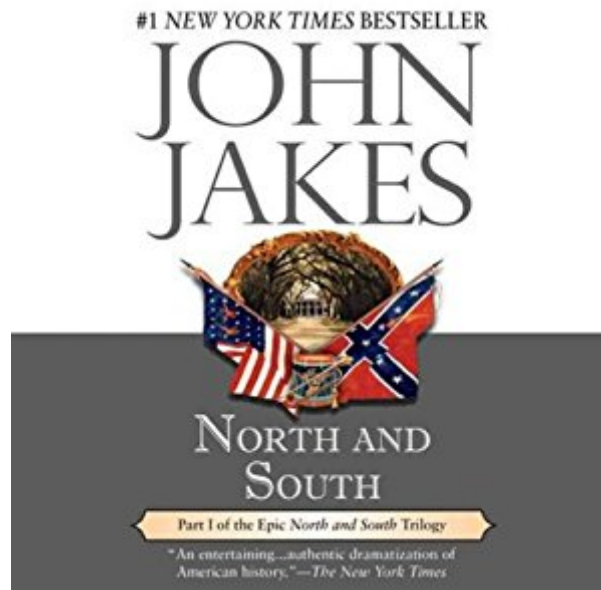




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North And South: North And South Trilogy, Book 1



Synopsis

Two strangers, young men from Pennsylvania and South Carolina, meet on the way to West Point.... Thus begins this brilliant novel of antebellum America, spanning three generations and chronicling the lives and loves of two great family dynasties. The Hazards and the Mains are brought together in bonds of friendship and affection that neither jealousy nor violence can shatter - until a storm of events sunders the nation and brings the cataclysm of war!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

North and South is the first novel in a trilogy dealing with the American Civil War, and it is truly a remarkable work; well worth reading. I myself have read the novel many times over the past twenty years. The novel focuses on two families--the Hazards of Pennsylvania, and the Mains of South Carolina--during the period from approximately 1840 through the beginning of the Civil War. These two families, bound by close ties of friendship (the sons of each are best friends at West Point and serve in the Army together during the Mexican War) and marriage, find these ties tested by the powerful forces of political and social strife that rocked the country during this period, ultimately leading to civil war. This is a great story. Author John Jakes does a tremendous job of transporting the reader into the period immediately before the Civil War. The country was torn by political strife that could not be resolved by the ordinary institutions of civil government, and Jakes does a masterful job of explaining this within the format of a novel, and showing how this atmosphere affected ordinary people, and their friendships and relationships. The Hazards and the Mains are

unforgettable. Jakes shows how decent people (as well as people not so decent) interacted with the institution of slavery on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. One of the best parts of the novel deals with the period during the 1840s when the two main protagonists are classmates together at West Point. This is a well-researched tale that is very insightful as regards life and strife at the military academy during a pivotal period of American history. It helps the reader understand the important role that West Point played in the nation's history during the Mexican War and, of course, the Civil War. And perhaps today.

I was happy to discover that the first book of Jakes's Civil War trilogy, *North and South*, is cast very much in the same mold as *The Kent Family Chronicles*. The book follows the story of two friends who enter West Point in 1842. Orry Main is a tall, skinny son of a South Carolina rice planter. George Hazard is the tough, stocky scion of a Pennsylvania iron fortune. Bound together by the common trials and tribulations of cadets, they become fast friends. Little do "Stick" and "Stump" suspect that the forces that will tear apart their boyish friendship and the nation they're both sworn to serve. *North and South* is all about conflict. Jakes does not rely solely on the onrush of the Civil War and the sectional conflict over slavery to provide the juice, but sets up innumerable flashpoints in both and between both families. Both men come from large families with troubles of their own, and a number of family members are major characters in this big fat novel. Both loving romance and sexual obsession have their roles to play, as well as matters of honor and questions of loyalty to friends, lovers, principles, and country. Memorably, both men are afflicted with evil sisters, one a fanatical abolitionist who ends up joining John Brown's violent attempt to overthrow the government, the other a scheming sex-crazed witch obsessed with power. But the main villain is Elkanah Bent, a repulsive fellow officer who swears eternal enmity to Orry and George back in their West Point days, and continues to plague them through the Mexican War and right up to the outbreak of the Civil War, where this volume ends.

I frantically devoured John Jakes' opening salvo on the American Civil War, a behemoth 735-page hardcover entitled *NORTH AND SOUTH* (published in 1982). Its sequel, *LOVE AND WAR*, clocks in at 1,078 pages and I've already started it. Not since Elizabeth Chadwick's *LORDS OF THE WHITE CASTLE* have I found a book so unputdownable as Jakes' *NORTH AND SOUTH*. Deftly weaving factual events and people in American History with fictional characters and storylines, this astutely impartial novel sets the stage for the Civil War (1861-1865). Our tale here begins on June 1842 when two youngsters from opposing regions and contrasting opulent families (one family from the

industrial north, the other from the plantation south) commence their turbulent friendship at West Point, and climaxes on April 12, 1861 when Confederate soldiers led by Brigadier General Beauregard opened fire on Union-held Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, marking the onset of a bloody American Civil War which claimed over 620,000 lives (more than all the wars in American history combined). John Jakes balances factual events and people, fictional families, friendships, poignant characterizations, love, lust, extremist fanaticism, and politics all under the shadow of slavery and racism which ripple even to this day. This book's primary intent? Entertainment. Although factually bloodier and darker than Bernard Cornwell's Arthurian Warlord trilogy, a glibly melodramatic fictional plotting characterizes Jakes' NORTH AND SOUTH, and this book definitely seemed lighter (than Cornwell's Warlord trilogy). Although consisting of some tense episodic plotting, all of our fictitious protagonists survive in this opening installment, albeit with some wear and tear. I actually wanted Charles Main to die.

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