



American Dreams: The United States Since 1945

By H.W. Brands

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The story of our nation from the A-bomb to the iPhone—from bestselling historian H.W. Brands

With keen insight and an impeccable sense of the spirit of the times, H. W. Brands, one of today's preeminent historians, captures the American experience through the last six decades. As he chronicles politics, pop culture, and everything in between, Brands traces the changes we have gone through as a nation, recounting the great themes and events that have driven America- from the Yalta conference to the fall of the Berlin Wall, Apollo 11 to 9/11, My Lai to "shock and awe." In his adroit hands, movements and trends unfold through a character- driven narrative that shines a brilliant light on America's watershed moments and reveals a still unfolding legacy of dreams.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Though this crisp, informal narrative overview of the last half-century of American history is long on story and short on analysis, it does its job well. Bringing his trademark clarity to the tales he tells, bestselling historian Brands (*The First American*) opens in post-Hiroshima days and closes in our own. He covers everything important, from politics and war to culture and society—civil rights, music, the baby boom, and the middle class. But it's hard to swallow the sappy conceit of Americans as dreamers with which Brands tries to thread the book together. [T]he heart of America's dreams was the act of dreaming itself... it was encoded in the country's DNA from the beginning. But what has dreaming to do with the cold war or the embarrassments of the Nixon and Clinton administrations or with the Great Recession? Americans' collective dramas may be on hold for the moment, Brands concludes, but individually, they are as ambitious as ever. Despite its thematic weakness, Brands's book is a fast-moving, reasonably comprehensive history of more than half a century of American history. (*May*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Brands' reputation as a prolific author of American history should attract attention to his survey of post-WWII America. With so much material to cover in one volume, Brands must condense events; still, he succeeds in linking a chronicle with important themes to deliver a comprehensible presentation of our country's major political and cultural changes since 1945. The national confidence and social unity of that year, compared with present cultural antagonisms and political polarity, bracket Brands' presentation of cold war foreign policy; the civil rights movement; LBJ's escalation in Vietnam and expansion of the welfare state; the collapse of liberalism and rise of conservatism; and American history's directions since 1989. In all this, the baby boomers loom influential in Brands' historical appreciation, which weaves in their upbringing in unprecedented prosperity; their questioning of parental attitudes; and their coming to power in the Bill Clinton years. Because his accounts of such social trends are interwoven with those about presidencies up to Barack Obama, Brands delivers a history well modulated for readers seeking an introduction to American history of their living memory. --Gilbert Taylor

About the Author

H.W. Brands taught at Texas A&M University for sixteen years before joining the faculty at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is the Dickson Allen Anderson Centennial Professor of History. His books include *Traitor to His Class*, *Andrew Jackson*, *The Age of Gold*, *The First American*, and *TR. Traitor to His Class* and *The First American* were finalists for the Pulitzer Prize.

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