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# Born Fighting: How The Scots-Irish Shaped America

**BORN**  
**FIGHTING**  
HOW THE SCOTS-IRISH SHAPED AMERICA  
"A BOMBSHELL - or else the most brilliant battle flare ever launched by a book."  
—TOM WOLFE **JIM WEBB**  
UNITED STATES SENATOR, VIRGINIA  
READ BY ALLAN ROBERTSON • UNABRIDGED



## Synopsis

The Scots-Irish comprised 40 percent of the Revolutionary War army. They were pioneers like Daniel Boone, Lewis and Clark, Davy Crockett, and Sam Houston. They were the writers Edgar Allan Poe and Mark Twain. And they have given America numerous military leaders, including Stonewall Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, Audie Murphy, and George S. Patton. *Born Fighting* illustrates how the Scots-Irish redefined American politics, creating the populist movement and giving the country a dozen presidents, including Andrew Jackson, Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. And it explores how the Scots-Irish culture of isolation, hard luck, stubbornness, and mistrust of the nation's elite formed and still dominates blue-collar America, the military services, the Bible Belt, and country music. Both a distinguished work of cultural history and a human drama that speaks straight to the heart of contemporary America, *Born Fighting* reintroduces America to its most powerful, patriotic, and individualistic cultural group--one too often ignored or taken for granted.

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## Customer Reviews

Former navy secretary Webb (*Fields of Fire*; etc.) wants not only to offer a history of the Scots-Irish but to redeem them from their redneck, hillbilly stereotype and place them at the center of American history and culture. As Webb relates, the Scots-Irish first emigrated to the U.S., 200,000 to 400,000 strong, in four waves during the 18th century, settling primarily in Appalachia before spreading west and south. Webb's thesis is that the Scots-Irish, with their rugged individualism, warrior culture built on extended familial groups (the "kind of people who would die in place rather than retreat") and an

instinctive mistrust of authority, created an American culture that mirrors these traits. Webb has a genuine flair for describing the battles the Scots-Irish fought during their history, but his analysis of their role in America's social and political history is, ironically for someone trying to crush stereotypes, fixated on what he sees, in almost Manichaeian terms, as a class conflict between the Scots-Irish and America's "paternalistic Ivy League-centered, media-connected, politically correct power centers." He even excuses resistance to the "Northern-dominated" Civil Rights movement. Another glaring weakness is the virtual absence of women from the sociological narrative. Webb interweaves his own Scots-Irish family history throughout the book with some success, but by and large his writing and analysis are overwhelmed by romanticism. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** In telling the story of the Scots-Irish in America as a robust and passionate tale, novelist Webb writes straightforward, no-nonsense, readable history that clips right along while it is also very personal and highly idiosyncratic about a people who, he claims, are largely invisible--taken for granted--to the general public and who, seldom thinking of themselves in ethnic identity terms, mostly don't know their culture. Webb maintains that Scots-Irish attitudes form the bedrock of American society, especially among the working class. Scots-Irish culture has produced American presidents from Andrew Jackson to Bill Clinton, soldiers from Ulysses S. Grant to George Patton, pioneers, preachers, and others whose most common characteristics may be described as fierce individualism, persistent egalitarianism, and a strong sense of personal honor. Perhaps the most visible examples of broad and ongoing Scots-Irish legacy are the fundamentalist Christianity (a potent combination of Scottish Calvinism and headstrong populism) of America's Bible Belt and country music. Webb begins the Scots-Irish saga in Scotland, where, he says, the Scots-Irish character was formed, moves on to the Ulster Scots of what is now Northern Ireland, and follows them to the Appalachians and points beyond as well as through the American Revolution, the Civil War, and up to the present day. Popular history at its finest. June Sawyers Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

From Hadrian's Wall to William Wallace to Robert the Bruce to the Roundheads and Cavaliers of the English Civil War -- the American experience began centuries before and has carried on since the Jamestown Colony (1607) was founded in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The modern day education of the South is still rampant with myths that every white person owned

slaves; Senator Webb dispels this and other myths of Southern States Americans and does so with a compelling argument backed up with facts of history to statistics of the modern day. The Scots-Irish clearly were as poor as their African American counterparts; sharecropping didn't only affect the minorities of the South but many whites as well. The independent spirit learned during the border war battles of Scotland/England north of Hadrian's Wall engrained a character that relied totally on self-determination. This self-determination and self-reliance was in effect a matter of character (maybe even genetically passed through DNA) that transcended generations who later fought for both the Americans in the Revolutionary War and then less than a century later formed the ranks of the Gray and Blue in the American Civil War. In this book we come to truths of the American Civil War based on a New England and Northeast retribution to the Southern States during Reconstruction. It is within the pages of Reconstruction that I have believed and will until my dying day that this period of time did not conclude until 7 December 1941. Senator Webb falls just short of stating this within his book but it is clear that the supporting facts hold true to form in this sense. It wasn't until the FDR Administration that we see a full consideration of concern by the Government on what was actually happening in the South. There is a little bit of something for everyone to possibly dislike within this book and this is the main reason why more people should read this book. There are many interesting historical facts in this book all well referenced and sources are clear and concise. The hundreds of thousands of deaths that became a tragedy is nearly succeeded in pure numbers by the Scots of the First World War and the Germans of the Second World War. I am not from the American Southern States; I am from Southern California and as a first generation on my Father's side here in the USA I have always found it strange that Americans of the modern age are always more willing to look at the Confederacy as a Nazified entity of old. Comparisons are usually made with the emotional argument that the reason for the Civil War was so that the South could own slaves. Senator Webb puts this argument to rest when he shows that after the Emancipation Proclamation President Lincoln allowed slaves to be owned in the Border Union States of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky. So, while the Southerner who fought in nearly every battle didn't own a slave, the northern counterpart wasn't asked to give theirs up. Slaves held in Union States were "Slaves" until the end of the war. African Americans wearing Confederate Uniforms of descendants arriving to the opening of the African American Civil War Memorial Museum in Washington DC were turned away and asked not return. This is History. History is as it is and cannot be changed merely because of "political correctness" desires in the communities at large throughout the nation.

I picked this up from BookBub for an obscenely low price, having had it recommended to me by my friend Keith. I'm half Irish (Potato Irish not Scots-Irish), but my maternal grandmother came from County Antrim in North Ireland and believe you me she hated the English, so there's some commonality, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Mr. Webb's thesis is that is that many U.S. citizens are descendants of the Scots-Irish, which originated in Scotland, marked by intense tribal loyalty and a willingness to fight against big government of any sort. So to quote Mr. Webb: (The) journey (of the Scots-Irish) has been not simply one of hardship or disappointment, but of frequent and bitter conflict. These conflicts, from which they have never in two thousand years of history retreated, have followed a historically consistent cycle of, among other things, a values-based combativeness, an insistent egalitarianism, and a refusal to be dominated from above, no matter the cost. The history of these people dates back to the times when the Celtic tribes resisted the power of the Roman Empire, and eventually centered in Scotland. The prominence and importance of William Wallace (Braveheart) and Robert the Bruce in the development of the Scottish people is certainly given credit. The joining of four intense and bellicose independent tribal peoples to fight the English seems a daunting task, but it was accomplished. Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai's attempts to bring the country's fourteen tribal groups together certainly seems apropos in this context. Many of the Scottish people immigrated to Ulster, in Northern Ireland, where they differentiated themselves from both the Potato Irish Catholics and the English Protestants, becoming fundamentalist Calvinists, and fighting against religious persecution and England's futile and violent attempts to bring this group into the fold. Those who left Ireland for America ended up not going to the large commerce centers but instead sought out the primitive and dangerous frontier of the remote Appalachians. Many of them made their way to the American South, also challenging both the Government and the frontier. Daniel Boone, among others, is set up as an example of such a person of Scotch-Irish lineage. Again due to their willingness to fight for individuality, Mr. Webb indicates that up to 40% of the American militia during the Revolutionary War was made up of Scots-Irish. Many were also soldiers for the South during the Civil War. And, considering the recent conflict over the symbolism of the Confederate flag, Mr. Webb's contention that what is now pejoratively termed Redneck is a continuation of the anti-government, tribal mentality that made the Scots-Irish survive. To quote Mr. Webb: Blamed for slavery although only a minute percentage actually owned slaves, they suffered for generations after the Civil War due to the twin calamities of Reconstruction and an

ever-increasing seclusion of the Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains. But it didn't stop there: Many Scots-Irish have been members of the Military through every armed conflict the U.S. has had. And for their motivation, well, Mr. Webb describes it as related to Celtic ties of kinship: "From the earliest known history of the Celts, military service was viewed not simply as an obligation but as a high honor. Fighting for and alongside the tribal leader (or, later, the Great Captain, or as now, one's branch of service) brought one into the family." Mr. Webb spends an entire chapter on Andrew Jackson, military man and President, as not only an example of the Scots-Irish culture but as a person who influenced the more populist movements in America. Mr. Webb quotes historian Walter Russell Mead: "(the Jacksonians believe) that the government should do everything in its power to promote the well-being political, moral, economic of the folk community." This summary only scratches the surface of the rich and complex history of this hardy people, and certainly helps explain Mr. Webb's pride in his family history of military service and political service, as well as some of his more controversial outlooks as a contemporary Presidential candidate. I greatly enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it heartily, no matter your ethnic background or political leanings.

James Webb and the Philosophical Fairies Now, I have special loving feelings toward James Webb. I elected him to the U. S. Senate with my \$100, the only time I have sent money out of state to a political candidate for anything but the highest office. I read and re-read BORN FIGHTING in the little room next to my computer room, understanding, sympathizing, and a very few times envying (the times when he hears stories from his older kinfolks). I know how risky he was in describing Reconstruction, and I sympathize, because I have lived through the fierce self-righteousness of fanatical Political Correctness in the academy. But something seemed wrong on 244--apparently the same page in the hardback and the paperback, if .com is right--seemed nasty, cheap. Something did not seem to jibe with the Jim Webb I admire: THE OCCUPIERS, THE POLITICAL REEDUCATORS WHO THIS TIME CALLED THEMSELVES RADICAL RECONSTRUCTIONISTS, THE PHILOSOPHICAL FAIRIES, THE CARPETBAGGER BUSINESSPEOPLE WITH THEIR GRAND PLANS AND SPECIAL DEALS . . . Now, my James Webb would never have said "the philosophical fairies." What James Webb must have written or meant to write was "the philosophical Pharisees." I know exactly what he meant, and he did not mean fairies, folks. He meant Pharisees.

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