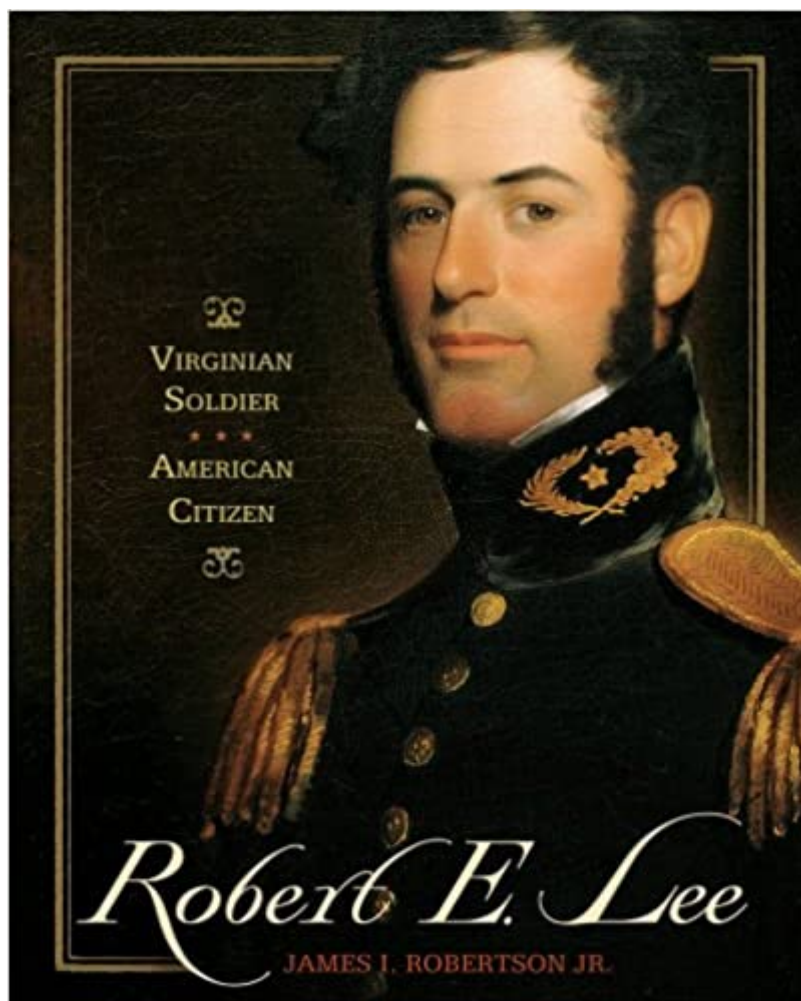


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# Robert E. Lee: Virginian Soldier, American Citizen



## Synopsis

To some, Robert E. Lee is a beloved general, held in the highest regard. To others, he is one of history's most paradoxical heroes. He fought passionately to defend his homeland and was one of the nation's greatest soldiers, yet his name is often inextricably linked with slavery and secession. In 1861 Lee was Lincoln's first choice to lead the Union troops in the Civil War. But a strong loyalty to Virginia held Lee back. Instead he chose to become the commanding officer of the Confederacy. Lee had great success in battle by spitting his forces and unleashing surprise attacks. His victory at Chancellerville, where his troops soundly defeated an enemy twice their size, remains the most astonishing. However, only when he surrendered in 1865 did the nation understand the kind of man Robert E. Lee truly was. He was kind and loving, giving all of himself to a reconciliation between the North and the South. In this meticulously researched biography, James I. Robertson explores the life of one of the most revered -- and misunderstood -- Civil War Generals.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up – A solid portrait of a complex man. The clearly written text describes Lee's birth into an aristocratic family and childhood spent in genteel poverty. Inspired by George Washington, he chose a military career, graduating from West Point. The Mexican War turned him into a hero and gave him insight into what leads to success in battle. Following postings as head of the U.S. Military Academy and on the frontier, he returned home to his Virginia plantation and

eventually freed his slaves. As war approached, he declined to lead the Federal forces, instead accepting command of the Army of Virginia. Robertson conveys Lee's war tactics, tracing both his triumphs and failures, and his admirable character and dedication to the cause. Readers will gain a greater understanding not only of his life and contributions but also of the Civil War. Extensive primary-source quotes, black-and-white reproductions, and maps bring the narrative to life. A useful resource for reports, this book will also attract history buffs. ãœJane G. Connor, South Carolina State Library, Columbia Copyright ãœ Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 7-10. This balanced, detailed portrait of Lee puts particular emphasis on his life during the Civil War years but provides plenty of information on his youth, his early military career, and his postwar years at Washington College. The author of *Standing Like a Stone Wall* (2001) and a professor at Virginia Tech, Robertson comes to the subject with a firm grasp of the social milieu and the politics, strategy, and progress of the Civil War, which he communicates clearly through a narrative text studded with quotations from letters, diaries, and other records as well as books about Lee and his contemporaries. Illustrations include reproductions of period paintings, photographs, drawings, prints, and maps. The book ends with source notes for facts as well as quotes and a bibliography of cited works. Useful for reports and interesting in its own right, this well-researched biography will be a solid addition to library collections. Carolyn Phelan Copyright ãœ American Library Association. All rights reserved

Great book and does a great job at pointing out what a great man he was.

My 11 year-old grandson thought this was a good book even though there were not many pictures. It covers all of Lee's life, not just the war years.

A gift for the same grandson . It was what he wanted. Thanks Charlotte

Great price and shipped very quickly..Book in perfect shape....5-stars plus

There are a couple of interesting things about the cover of this juvenile biography of Robert E. Lee. First, the complete title of the book is "Robert E. Lee: Virginian Solider, American Citizen," and the sub-title James I. Robertson, Jr. picked set up an ironic juxtaposition. Because Lee considered

Virginia to be his country, rather than the United States of America, he turned down President Abraham Lincoln's offer to become the commander of the Union armies, choosing instead to side with Virginia and the Confederate cause. Consequently, Lee's fame as a soldier was in part because he decided he was more of a Virginian than he was an American. There is the additional irony that at the end of his life, after the Civil War, when he was no longer a soldier, he was not exactly considered an "American citizen" by the North. The painting of Lee that appears on the cover shows him in the dress uniform of a lieutenant of the engineers in the U.S. Army, when he was in his mid-twenties, several decades before he made his fateful decision. So the cover does take a step or two back from the picture we have of Robert E. Lee as the commanding general of the Army of Northern Virginia. The paradox of Lee is that we consider him to be our greatest military commander even though he was on the losing side of the Civil War. The only other general from the "other" side that I can think of who has anything close to that level of respect would have to be Germany's Erwin Rommel from World War II, whose Afrika Corps had a reputation comparable to that of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. We tend to think of such men as existing independent of the ideologies of the nation's for whom they were fighting. Robertson deals up front with that idea, noting that on the one hand Lee is a beloved general, held in the highest regard to such an extent that he has practically become an American saint, while on the other his name is inextricably linked with the issues of secession and slavery associated with the Southern Confederacy. Robertson's introduction begins by touching on Lee's greatest military triumph at the Battle of Chancellorsville, where he defeated a Union army twice his size by dividing his smaller force in two, but most of the focus is on the Lee legend that exists today. Eight of the ten chapters in this book focus on Lee during the Civil War: (1) The Making of a Soldier covers how the son of "Light Horse Harry" Lee graduated second in his West Point class of 1829, married Mary Anne Randolph Custis, and served with distinction during the Mexican War in what proves to be the chapter's longest section. (2) Nation Versus Country begins with Lee being appointed superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy and his confirmation in the Episcopal faith, and ends with his wife inheriting the Custis estates in Arlington, his role in the capture of John Brown at Harper's Ferry, and his resignation from the U.S. Army on the eve of the Civil War. (3) Rocky Path to Army Command is one of the most interesting chapters because it reminds us that Lee did not start off the war as a commander, but rather as President Jefferson Davis' confidential military adviser. It was not until June 1862 that Lee was placed in command of troops, with low expectations exemplified by his nicknames as "Evacuation Lee" and "Granny Lee." The Lee that history remembers emerges in the next chapters. (4) Brilliance in the Field shows how Lee bested General George B. McClellan, the overly cautious

commander of the Union's Army of the Potomac in the Seven Days' Campaign, and his replacement John Pope at the Second Battle of Manassas (a.k.a. Bull Run, but I go with the belief the winning side gets to name the battle). Robertson underscores the importance of General "Stonewall" Jackson to Lee's successes. (5) *The Bloodiest Day* is about Lee's first invasion of the North and the Battle of Antietam (a.k.a. Sharpsburg), and the slaughter of Union troops at the Battle of Fredericksburg. (6) *Loss of an Arm* contrasts Lee's greatest military achievement at the Battle of Chancellorsville with the devastating loss of Jackson. (7) *Gettysburg* explains Lee's desperate gamble in invading the North a second time, focusing on how he came to order Pickett's Charge, his biggest military mistake. The next two chapters play out the end of the war, as Lee once again becomes the "King of Spades." (8) *Forced on the Defensive* looks at how General Ulysses S. Grant forced Lee's army to move backwards to protect Richmond. (9) *From Siege to Defeat* begins with Lee's entrenchments along the Richmond-Petersburg line and ends with the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House when Lee's starving troops were surrounded by several Union armies. (10) *National Symbol* is the final chapter, which details what Lee did after the Civil War in becoming the president of what was then Washington College and what is now Washington and Lee University, and covers how his death in 1870 brought on national mourning. This is a solid intermediate biography of Lee for younger readers, which goes to pains to explain the major battles he fought during the Civil War. The book is illustrated with dozens of black and white etchings and photographs from throughout Lee's life. Robertson also wrote a similar biography, *Standing Like a Stone Wall: The Life of General Thomas J. Jackson*, which would certainly provide a nice complement to this volume (Robertson also has written an adult biography of Jackson, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend*).

First saw this book on display in the gift shop at Lee's Arlington home overlooking Washington, DC and decided to get it. The reasons for Americans' enduring interest in and respect/affection for Lee are made clear in this book. It's very informative, well-organized and written and worth a look even for older readers. Some have criticized such flattering portraits as hagiography. But our view of history also reflects our modern selves. People of Lee's nobility, sincerity, self-control, and courage are so increasingly rare in our time today that we scarcely believe they existed.

Some forget or never knew that most soldiers involved in the War Between the States were Americans...brothers in arms. True, there were some foreigners but most were US citizens. And what better example of a true American citizen, patriot and Christian was Robert E. Lee. This book

was well worth the money and a collector piece to hand down to your descendants.

James Robertson's books are all well written. This is no exception. Robertson is a fabulous story teller and authoritative historian.

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