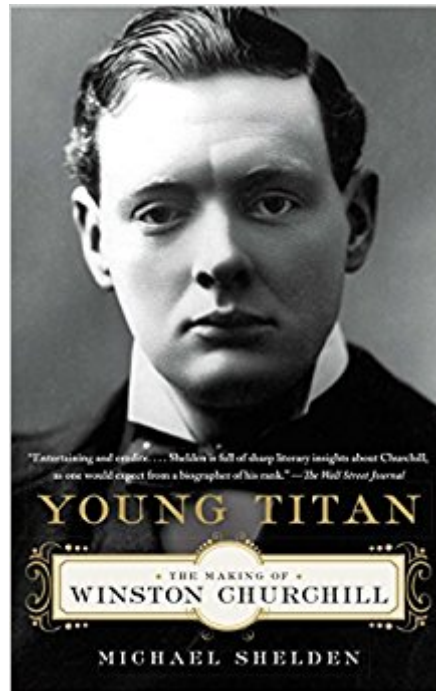


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# Young Titan: The Making Of Winston Churchill



## Synopsis

“Just when you think there can be nothing fresh to be said about the long life of Winston Churchill, along comes biographer Michael Shelden’s page-turner about Churchill from age twenty-six to forty” (The Washington Times). Between his rise and his fall, young Winston Churchill built a modern navy, experimented with radical social reforms, survived various threats on his life, made powerful enemies and a few good friends, became a husband and father, took the measure of the German military machine, and faced deadly artillery barrages on the Western front. Along the way, he learned how to outwit more experienced rivals, overcome bureaucratic obstacles, question the assumptions of his upbringing, value loyalty and how to fall in love. In >, historian Michael Shelden gives us a portrait of Churchill as the dashing young suitor who pursued three great beauties of British society with his witty repartee, political flair, and poetic letters. This is the first biography that focuses on Churchill’s early career—the years between 1901 and 1915 that both nearly undid him but also forged the character that would later triumph in the Second World War.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Customarily a biographer of literary figures (Mark Twain, *Man in White*, 2010), Shelden now turns to a politician. Averting his discovery of facts about his famous subject missed or muted by prior writers, he twins Churchill’s search for a wife and his reach for the political heights. Unfolding from 1901, when Churchill entered Parliament, to 1915, when he was dismissed as chief

of the British Navy because of the Gallipoli defeat, Shelden's narrative spryly captures Churchill's romantic impulses and vaulting political ambition to become prime minister. As many histories recount the ascent up the political ladder, Shelden sites his claim to newness in Churchill's courting of potential spouses. Churchill reached as socially high for a wife as he did in politics, receiving three ladies' rejections of his wooing before acceptance by Clementine Hozier in 1908, news he had to break awkwardly to another woman he had strung along. Including the cast of Churchill's friends and enemies, Shelden's well-judged account taps the inexhaustible interest in Churchill. --Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Perceptive and entertaining." (Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*) "A vivid portrait of a young man on the make, as ambitious as he was gifted. . . Enthralling." (DailyBeast.com [Newsweek digital edition]) "Much has been written about Winston Churchill, but there is still much to learn, especially about those early years when he seemed destined for greatness. Michael Shelden now thoughtfully explores those years in *Young Titan*. An engaging as well as perceptive take on the man who believed that while we are all worms he was a glowworm, a belief history would splendidly vindicate." (Richmond Times Dispatch) "Entertaining and erudite." Shelden is full of sharp literary insights about Churchill, as one would expect from a literary biographer of his rank." (Wall Street Journal) "[A] solid biography covering the first four decades of Winston Churchill's life, marked by both ambition and heartbreak." Shelden offers an unadorned account of Churchill's dogged pursuit to build his legacy against some long odds." (Kirkus Reviews) "Swiftly narrated." Shelden, a noted biographer whose 1992 *Orwell* was a Pulitzer Prize finalist, explores the young titan in entertaining depth, with deep regard for Churchill's achievements and no end of colorful detail." (USA Today) "Michael Shelden has done the high-impossible: he has found original things to say about the man Isaiah Berlin called the largest human being of our time." Winston Churchill. In this entertaining and deeply researched book, Shelden paints a memorable portrait of the young Churchill's life and loves." (Jon Meacham, author of *American Lion*) "Young Titan gives us an exciting, needed look at Winston Churchill in his years as a Liberal. Breaking with the Conservatives, he battled for better working conditions, for unemployment insurance, for improvements in education. He waged a two-front war: against the Tories on the right, the socialists on the left. It is the young Churchill at his best, a great foretelling of what was to come when Britain

and the world needed him most. (Chris Matthews, author of *Jack Kennedy: Elusive Hero* and anchor of MSNBC's *Hardball*) "For history buffs, Winston Churchill is the gift that keeps on giving, and in *Young Titan* Michael Sheldon has given us the gift of Churchill's fascinating formative years. It's all here—the boy wonder, adventurer, romantic, orator, and eloquent man in the arena. I didn't want it to end. (Tom Brokaw, author of *The Greatest Generation*) "A biographer of note, [Sheldon] actually found a fresh angle on England's man with the big cigar that should appeal to avid history fans. (Ft. Worth Star-Telegram) "In sparkling prose, Sheldon explores the tendentious world of high-level Edwardian politics as Churchill worked with and competed against the likes of Herbert H. Asquith, David Lloyd George, and other notables." (Library Journal) "A fluid and informative examination of the early career of one of modern Britain's most outstanding political leaders. (Publishers Weekly) "[A] charming new biography. Sheldon has capitalized on an understudied period of an iconic life and proved that such a study can still surprise. (New Criterion)

This book pleasantly surprised me. Having read a great deal on Churchill, I initially thought that this would be one of those "slice of life" books that rehashed everything said before, but with my interest in WSC and his having such a large life, allowing for many "slices" I bought it and thought I would skip through it and put it on the shelf. Silly me. Sheldon gives us a good summary of WSC's early life and his rise to power. The author's angle on this is to present information on a number of women that WSC fell in love with in his youth, some of whom did not return his affections, with the exception of two, his wife Clementine and his admirer, Violet Asquith, whose affection for Winston was not reciprocated. As for Pamela Plowden and Ethel Barrymore, I am not sure that they are important to the story, as Winston appears to have set his sights too high. The story of Muriel Wilson is more interesting but none of this compares, in my opinion, to the relationship with Violet Asquith, the daughter of the Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith. It is through Violet (later Violet Bonham Carter, who published her memories of WSC in 1965) that we see not only a beautiful, intelligent young woman, but one who had her father's attention and worked diligently to advance the career of young Winston. Of course, we all know he ended up enchanted with Clementine Hozier after a meeting at a dinner party and married her. I think Violet would have made the more interesting companion, but Winston did not consult me. But through all this we get a much better understanding of her father, which is an interesting story in itself. Also of interest to me is the human side the author shows of Churchill's mother, the American Jennie Jerome Churchill. In previous readings, I always

found her a hedonistic personality, only interested in the next man, the next dinner party, the next social excursion, but Sheldon shows her to have much more interest in her son, and even pride in him, attending his first speech in the House of Commons and even (ineffectively) campaigning for him. There was never any doubt that WSC was a young man on the rise, and we are presented a host of contributors, opponents and supporters along the way. We are also reminded that Churchill promoted himself, and with one early controversial move in his political career, changed from his father's party of Conservative or Tory to the Liberal party, which many never ever forgave him, but WSC wanted to be with the winning horse in the race. It helps explain why he did it one more time during his long political career. In spite of various cabinet positions, he is more prominently remembered as First Lord of the Admiralty just prior to the Great War. He attained this lofty position shy of 37 years of age and, like everything else, threw himself into the work while he and Clemmie grew a family. As brilliant as he was, Churchill was also overbearing while in government and made many enemies. His greatest mistake was likely bringing back Jackie Fisher to work with him as the First Sea Lord in Fisher's old age. Fisher's volatile personality was as mercurial as his brilliance, and ultimately it was the Darnalles that unhinged Fisher and brought Churchill down at an early age. From there, he was out of office, and for a while almost out of all influence, being in a type of political wilderness until fate called upon him again at age 65 and once again he came back to the Admiralty just before becoming Prime Minister. The information presented is good, and the writing moves quickly through the pages, and I think that even for the reader not well schooled on Churchill, this book will provide good information to lay a foundation on his early years and rise to power. I recommend it.

An overview of the early adulthood of the last century's greatest man. If you have read much on Sir Winston, this book, while a good tale, will have little new material to offer you. However, for a person who has not already read a few biographies on this hero of World War II, it will provide reason for reading even more about its worthy subject. It still astonishes one to be reminded of all the different colonial, military, and domestic policy areas where Winston Churchill was fully active and in the eye of the storm. And as Michael Sheldon nicely points out in his book, this was especially true in the years building up to and including the First World War. I do have one minor complaint; it seems to me that too much attention is paid here to Mr. Churchill's various and harmless early love interests.

This is the tenth Winston Churchill biography that I've read and, in my opinion, one of the best. Over the last year I've gotten into "specialist" Churchill biographies - "Mr. Churchill's Profession" (about

Churchill as a writer), "Warlord" (about Churchill as a military leader) and now this one (in addition to re-reading the three-volume Manchester bio). In particular, this book provided fresh new insight - something quite rare into so-studied a man as Winston - in the area of Churchill's evolution through his twenties. In particular, I was impressed by the fresh telling of the story of Churchill and Violet Asquith (the daughter of the Prime Minister and the grandmother of the modern-day actress Helena Bonham-Carter). I was well-aware, from having read numerous other Churchill stories, of their close friendship stretching across many decades and had always wondered why, in spite of the signs, their extreme closeness, the romanticism of their words about each other over the years, they had not married. I had always assumed - given the knowledge of how Churchill was rejected by a series of famous women that he proposed to throughout the first decade of the 20th Century - that she had spurned him. Instead, apparently it turns out that she held a largely-unrequited love for him, but he regarded her as too similar (and perhaps too assertive), and instead kept her, basically, in reserve as he courted Clementine. On account of this, he felt obligated - during their very-short engagement - to make a long journey to Scotland to tell her in person, very-nearly resulting in Clementine breaking off their engagement and also sending Violet into a violent depression. As I mentioned, despite having read thousands and thousands of pages about Churchill - including Manchester's bio, his own account of his early life, and the authorized biography - I had literally never heard of any of this certainly-significant episode before. I found the book a thoroughly-interesting read and recommend it very highly.

This is the early professional life of Winston Churchill (roughly from age 20 to 40) which many Americans, even students of history like myself, will find highly enlightening. Even most Brits are unaware of the fact that when Churchill was cashiered from his position as the First Lord of the Admiralty (head policy maker for the British Navy) as a result of the WWI debacle in Gallipoli, that he resumed his mantle as a major in the British army and took his place in the bloody trenches at the Western Front -- at the age of 40!! The political machinations that led from a Conservative backbencher in parliament to a member of the Liberal cabinet are fully explored, showing what a masterful politician Churchill was. The ebullient and high energy operations of this operator made him widely admired by the public but either distrusted and feared or revered by his colleagues in parliament. If you wonder what went into making Churchill such an effective wartime leader in WWII, you MUST read what events molded him. This book will help elucidate you in this fashion.

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