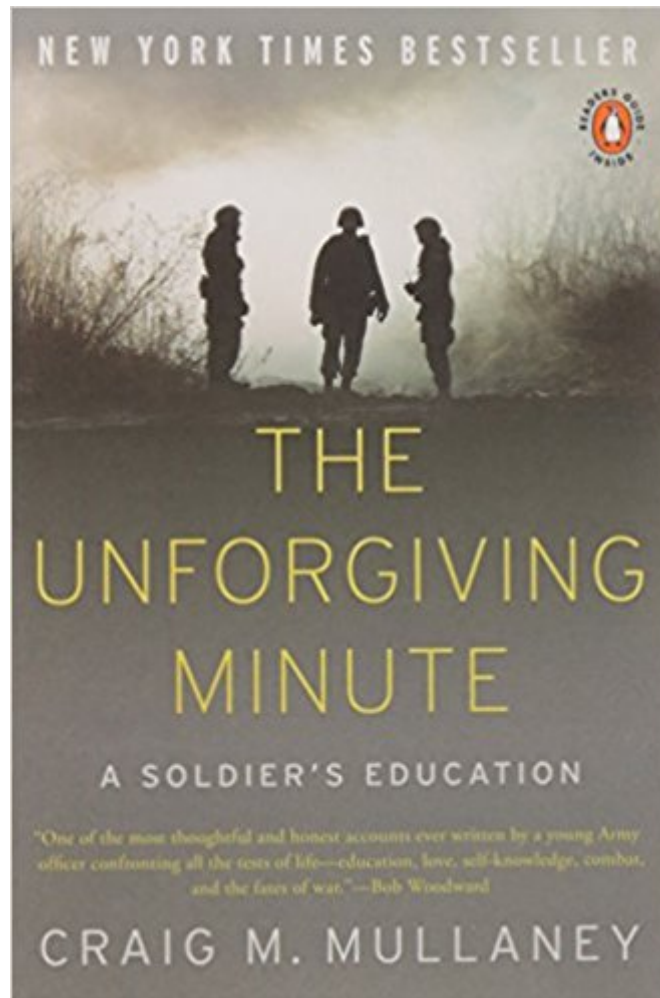




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# **The Unforgiving Minute: A Soldier's Education**



## Synopsis

"One of the most thoughtful and honest accounts ever written by a young Army officer confronting all the tests of life." -Bob Woodward In this surprise bestseller, West Point grad, Rhodes scholar, Airborne Ranger, and U. S. Army Captain Craig Mullaney recounts his unparalleled education and the hard lessons that only war can teach. While stationed in Afghanistan, a deadly firefight with al-Qaeda leads to the loss of one of his soldiers. Years later, after that excruciating experience, he returns to the United States to teach future officers at the Naval Academy. Written with unflinching honesty, this is an unforgettable portrait of a young soldier grappling with the weight of war while coming to terms with what it means to be a man.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Young Captain Mullaney's admirable, literate autobiography, that of a veteran of combat in Afghanistan, adds much to knowledge of the modern army and makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate over what a "warrior" is these days. Mullaney wryly recounts his years at West Point and as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, then writes eloquently of infantry combat and the persistent burden of guilt for not bringing all his men home even as he makes his account a tribute to his fellow warriors. He concludes with sidelights on his teaching post at the U.S. Naval Academy and the moving story of his younger brother's graduation from West Point and subsequent passage into the ranks of the warriors himself. Almost impossible to put down for anyone interested in the modern U.S. Army or in modern warfare in general. --Roland Green --This

text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"[The Unforgiving Minute] is one man's story, warmly and credibly told, and its focus is on the idealism that he brought to military service. In Captain Mullaney's mind there is no contradiction between loyally following orders and intelligently wondering what purpose those orders serve.... The Unforgiving Minute finds both suspense and pathos in the events that took place under its author's command. Its fierce climactic battle is recreated in searing detail. But what gives this memoir its impact isn't the external events that it describes. It's the inner journey of a man who is at first eager to learn as much as he can from service and scholarship. Later on he learns from his mistakes."

-The New York Times "The Unforgiving Minute is a wonderful, beautifully written story of the education and development of a young soldier-scholar, the coming of age of an infantry officer, and the exercise of a small unit leader's responsibilities in a tough, complex, and frustrating situation in Afghanistan. It captures particularly eloquently and movingly the relationships among those who walk point for our nation as part of that most elite of fraternities, the brotherhood of the close fight."

-General David Petraeus, Commander, U.S. Central Command "Craig Mullaney's memoir is a thoughtful, introspective work reminiscent of the great British memoirs of World War I. A thousand years from now, historians wanting to know about life in America after 9/11 would do well to look at this book. Equally important, it is an enjoyable and honest book. Read it." -Thomas E. Ricks, author of New York Times bestseller FIASCO: The American Military Adventure in Iraq and senior military correspondent, The Washington Post "[Craig Mullaney] ultimately delivers far more than the boy-to-man story that he promised.... In this extraordinary book, Mullaney has taken the trouble to look very closely, and has had the courage to discover the limits to his own understanding. Readers will be fascinated to look over his shoulder." -Washington Post Book World "Craig Mullaney has lived every kind of American life-he has been a working- man's son, a prize scholar, a soldier-and what's come out of it is a classic memoir about what it means to be American. By marching so many terrains, he has covered the subjects central to every life: courage, pain, loyalty, honor, friendship, love and the tests any good life faces, year by year, minute by minute. He has also produced a page-turner, a brutally honest account of West Point life, the innocence-abandoned experiences of an American abroad at Oxford, and ultimately an indelible story of life and death on the battlefield. In words his squadmates might recognize, I recommend The Unforgiving Minute without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion." -David Lipsky, contributing editor to Rolling Stone Magazine and author of the New York Times bestseller Absolutely American "The Unforgiving Minute is one of the most compelling memoirs yet to emerge from America's 9/11 era. Craig Mullaney has given

us an unusually honest, funny, accessible, and vivid account of a soldier's coming of age. This is more than a soldier's story; it is a work of literature." -Steve Coll, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ghost Wars* and *The Bin Ladens* "Former Army Capt. Craig Mullaney admits up front that, emotionally, he takes after his expressive Irish mother, who is "incapable of stemming a tear." Mullaney is less candid and perhaps unaware of his talent for evoking emotion in others.... But *The Unforgiving Minute* is far from heavy and never maudlin. Mullaney's sense of humor is obvious....It is Mullaney's clear-eyed, warm-hearted candor that elicits empathy.... This self-effacing frankness makes his coming-of-age-in-uniform memoir a charmer.... Stunning [and] pertinent." -The *Army Times* "The *Unforgiving Minute* is the ultimate's soldier's book-universal in its raw emotion and its understanding of the larger issues of life and death. Mullaney, a master storyteller, plunges the depths of self-doubt, endurance, and courage. The result: a riveting, suspenseful human story, beautifully told. This is a book written under fire-a lyrical, spellbinding tale of war, love, and courage. The *Unforgiving Minute* is the Three Cups of Tea of soldiering." -Ahmed Rashid, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Taliban and Descent into Chaos* "The *Unforgiving Minute* is a gripping account of a young military officer's quest to prepare for the unknowns of leadership under fire, and his eventual testing in Afghanistan. With unflinching candor, Mullaney depicts his evolution from idealistic teenager to reflective veteran who retains his conviction and patriotism once his innocence is lost. His emotional, often funny memoir takes us to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, through the rigors of Army Ranger school, then on to drunken debates and romance at Oxford, where he had a Rhodes Scholarship.... The book [is] a departure from traditionally dry military memoirs --it reads like a work of literature.... Mullaney's evolution through his intellectual and emotional journey grips on every page; his writing contains a modesty that becomes more endearing as his achievements mount. This is a classic coming-of-age memoir and a valuable insight into post-Sept. 11 conflict." -Bloomberg.com "Mullaney writes a great story-a true privilege to read. Entertaining, balanced, and graceful, *The Unforgiving Minute* is a powerful narrative of purpose, responsibility, courage, and personal growth. Every young man and woman in America should read this book, and aspire to his standard of public service." -General Wesley Clark, USA (Ret.) "The *Unforgiving Minute* is a classic memoir of war and personal development. Craig Mullaney has provided a far greater service to his nation by penning a riveting memoir that should be mandatory reading by every junior officer who dons the military uniform." -*ARMY Magazine* "I recommend *The Unforgiving Minute* because it is superb and important.... Read the book and you know the caliber of the men and women leading our troops and the troops themselves. More importantly, Craig shows the price of service to country and the cost of sacrifices so few individuals

endure in our name." -The Huffington Post "Craig Mullaney has written a poignant and evocative book about the great hurdles in coming of age: love, death, belief, and betrayal. Learning from his experience can help us face our own unforgiving minutes. I couldn't stop reading." -Nathaniel Fick, author of the New York Times bestseller *One Bullet Away* "Insightful... This book should be read, certainly, by everyone who has a loved one who is serving in the military, has served or might one day serve. But it also should be required reading for all Americans.... His is a remarkable journey, recounted with unflinching honesty, thoughtful reflection, occasional humor and hard-won wisdom.... An unusual book that combines grittily realistic accounts of war with highly educated reflection and introspection.... If enough people read [The Unforgiving Minute], then perhaps we as a country would not have such a profound lack of understanding of the volunteer troops we send to fight our wars, and of the sacrifices that they and their families make." -Winston-Salem Journal "One of the most thoughtful and honest accounts ever written by a young Army officer confronting all the tests of life---education, love, self-knowledge, combat, and the fates of war." -Bob Woodward "There have been a slew of memoirs, many very go

Great memoir. Mr. Mullaney is definitely a great writer and he's not your typical hooah-hooah infantry meat head. I heard this was an obligated read for West Pointers. He gives his 2 cents in leadership when he writes about his deployment in the book, but everything else he writes about is how the Army changed his life academically and spiritually. He writes a good chunk worth of his experiences at Ranger School which is a plus if you're trying to mentally get ready for the school.

This may be one of the most fascinating books I have ever read. The author does a great job by framing his education and experiences in a way that connects to his time as a PL in Afghanistan. It brings out the human side of the conflict, where CPT Mullaney thought about the decisions he made and how it caused the death of PFC Evan O'Neil. After all he had been through he makes the discovery that even if you do everything correctly, things can still go wrong. One idea that will stick with me is the fact that the 'unforgiving minute' may be the most important sixty seconds of your life as a PL, but a lifetime of preparation goes into helping you execute your job in that minute more instinctual than emotional. This is where the lives of your men are saved.

Why this guy thought he was special enough to write an autobiography is beyond me. Maybe interesting to someone who has never been in the military, but if you have served don't bother reading this, he will just make you angry.

Each time I read a coming of age narrative I look at the opportunity to reflect on the uniqueness of the author's life but in the context of how their experiences were shaped by their ethics, judgement and grit. The son of hardworking, working class parents, the author critically chronicles the complex facets of a West Point education, carefully including periods of self doubt and dissapointments as well as great success. The graduation ceremony, which included high honors and a subsequent trip to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar are separated by his stint at Ranger school, where he attains the Ranger badge. All of these experiences make him a singularly, well rounded Army officer. However, a question of overriding personal and professional significance needs to be answered-will he be able to successfully lead his men in battle?The author acknowledges that one of the motivations to write is to make a wider audience appreciate the military. He succeeds by making the reader appreciate the degree to which qualities such as intelligence, extreme attention to detail and mega preparation are prevalent and as important as bravery and resolve. His description of his tour in Afganistan, particularly the battlefield encounters, depict the danger and confusion in a manner that only a combat veteran can do well. This book is a must read for anyone, whose child is considering a military career or anyone who wants an well written personal story of the making of a modern military officer. It is a intelligent soldier's honest look at the complexities of his life and reveals his deep appreciation of his military education and the military option for public service. This book is hard to put down once started- a well craft narrative of very principled, intelligent and respectful individual.

What a great read! Many have followed a similar path, but few are capable of putting pen to paper to make the average reader understand the maturing of an officer from idealist, to more of a realist. All readers will be able to find something to relate to in the lessons of this book, as well as better understanding the challenges of officership and leadership in modern times.

Overall, a well written tome detailing just one perspective of the military experience in time of modern war. While I can relate to much of it, i think the importance of this work lies in acting as a primer for young leaders. It is important to understand as an officer, and what I think this book exemplifies, is that the officer is not and never should be the focus of a group. As he says, officers are charged with accomplishing the mission and bringing back their men alive. It can never be about yourself. Leading is a selfless act.

The Unforgiving Minute: A Soldier's Education My 16-year-old son recommended this book to me after Craig Mullaney visited his high school alma mater as part of his book tour, and had I not been laid up I probably would not have read the book. That would have been a mistake. Before reading this book I had no concept of what officer candidates go through to complete West Point, never mind the unbelievable rigors of Ranger School and actual combat. Mullaney does a splendid job describing his journey from Bishop Hendricken High School to West Point to Oxford and then to Afghanistan. He has a lively voice touched with humor and humility. It was a revelation to me to see that our armed services are staffed by people as distinguished and intellectually nimble as Craig Mullaney. His story is all the more inspiring when one considers his humble beginnings in a working class neighborhood in Rhode Island. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and have recommended it to many of my friends who are both for and against our activities in Afghanistan and Iraq. I myself benefitted mightily from Mullaney's reality check on Afghanistan. Like so many people, I had been guilty of mentally consigning Afghanistan to the back burner and focusing on Iraq, but Mullaney's book makes it clear that our involvement in Afghanistan is far from over. For all of you who are opposed Bush's war, take heart that there are people with the intellectual depth of Craig Mullaney trying to mop up the mess made by the Bush administration. For those who are in favor of the war, you too will be gratified by Mullaney's story.

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