

Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh  
Hour: Armistice Day, 1918, by Joseph E.  
Persico.

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Saturday, October 17, 2015 11:00am

# Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh Hour: Armistice Day, 1918, by Joseph E. Persico

Bestselling author Joseph Persico recounts World War I's bloody climax in a cinematic style that evokes *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Grand Illusion*, and *Paths of Glory*.

**JOSEPH E.  
PERSICO**

*New York Times*  
bestselling author of  
*Roosevelt's Secret War*

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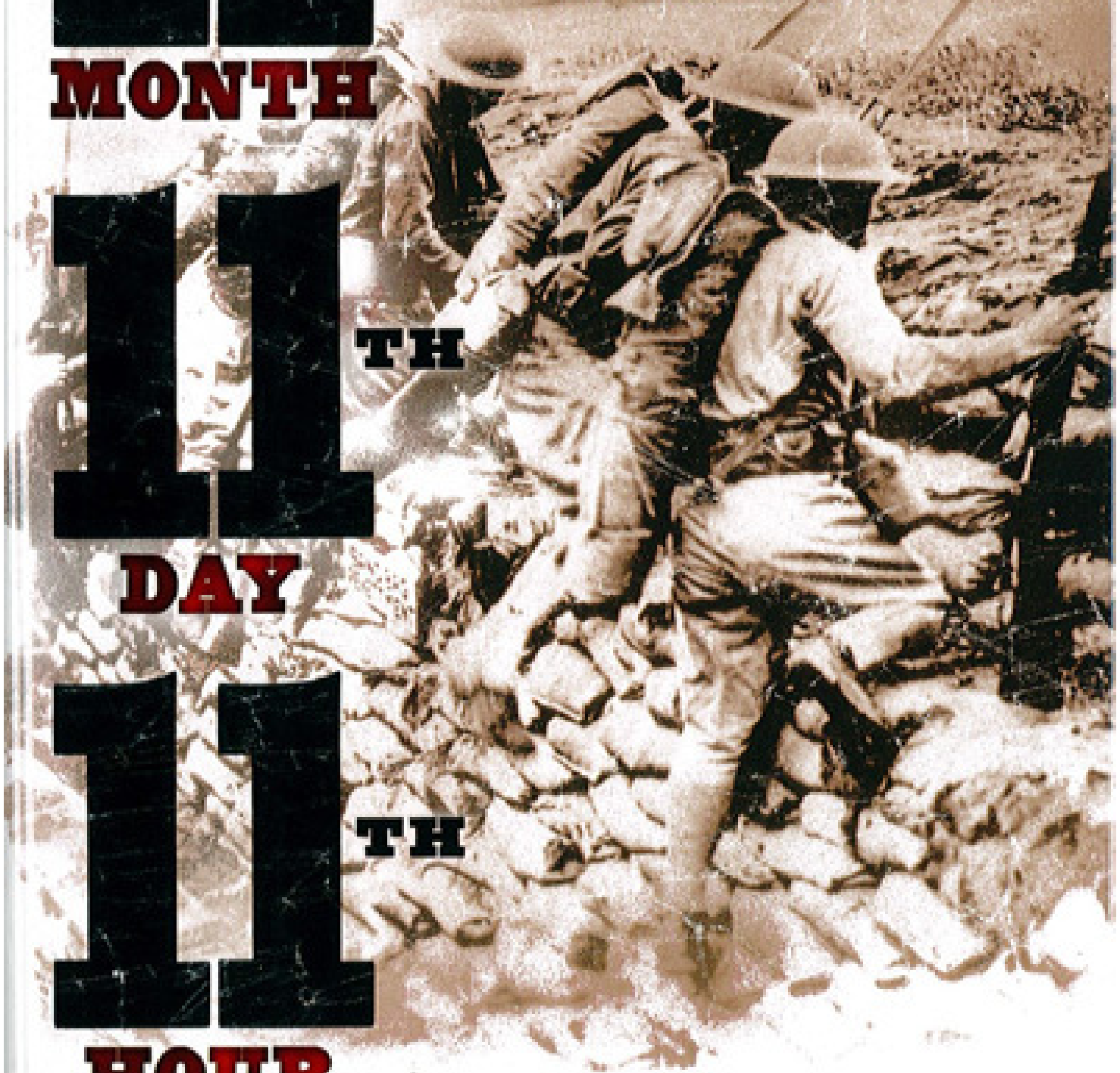
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**ARMISTICE DAY, 1918**

**WORLD WAR I AND ITS VIOLENT CLIMAX**



November 11, 1918. The final hours pulsate with tension as every man in the trenches hopes to escape the melancholy distinction of being the last to die in **World War I**. The Allied generals knew the fighting would end precisely at 11:00 A.M, yet in the final hours they flung men against an already beaten Germany. The result? Eleven thousand casualties suffered—more than during the D-Day invasion of Normandy. Why? Allied commanders wanted to punish the enemy to the very last moment and career officers saw a fast-fading chance for glory and promotion.

Joseph E. Persico puts the reader in the trenches with the forgotten and the famous—among the latter, Corporal Adolf Hitler, Captain Harry Truman, and Colonels Douglas MacArthur and George Patton. Mainly, he follows ordinary soldiers' lives, illuminating their fate as the end approaches.

Persico sets the last day of the war in historic context with a gripping reprise of all that led up to it, from the 1914 assassination of **Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, which ignited the war, to the raw racism black doughboys endured except when ordered to advance and die in the war's last hour.

The pointless fighting on the last day of the war is the perfect metaphor for the four years that preceded it, years of senseless slaughter for hollow purposes. This book is sure to become the definitive history of the end of a conflict Winston Churchill called “the hardest, cruelest, and least-rewarded of all the wars that have been fought.”

-- from the **publisher**

## Discussion Questions

- What other books have you read about WWI?
- The author chooses to examine the war through the lens of the last day of battle. How does this affect the structure of the book? What about this is successful? Unsuccessful?
- What about that last morning of fighting encapsulates your understanding of WWI?
- What in the book challenges your preconceptions of WWI?
- Persico tells us that of the 16 American divisions; nine of the commanders chose

to continue the fighting, even though they knew the Armistice had been signed (p.347). What was their motivation for doing so?

- Pershing believed that, “There can be no conclusion to this war until Germany is brought to her knees” (p.309). Do you think if the Allies had been able to push the Germans all the way to Berlin during WWI that World War II would have still happened?
- What did you learn about trench warfare that you didn’t know before?
- Of all the people featured in the book, who stuck out to you? Why?
- Was there a particular person or part of the war that you would like to learn more about?
- Does the author seem prejudiced towards a particular country/group?
- What universal themes of war are expressed by the people featured in the text?
- Persico ends his introduction by saying:

We conclude, finally that while situations shift, human nature does not. The same impulses—gain, glory, fear, pride, honor, envy, retribution—coupled with short collective memories will continue to propel mankind into a never-ending cycle of conflict occasionally interrupted by peace.

Do you agree? Why or why not?

## Further Reading

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## Recommendations by Attendees

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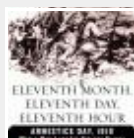
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Persico, penalty, as follows from field and laboratory observations, is possible.

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