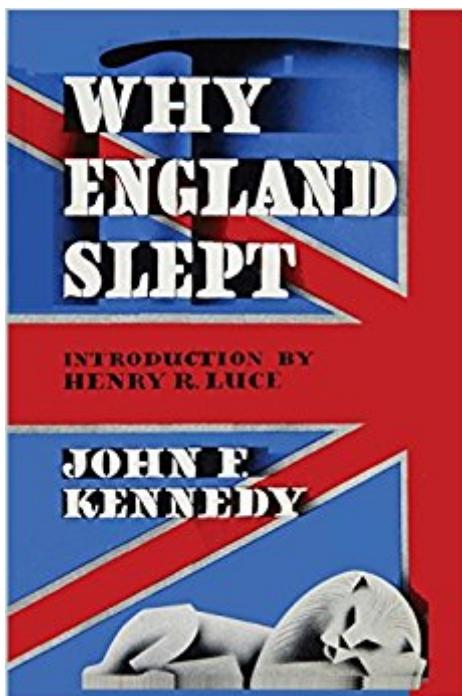


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# Why England Slept By John F. Kennedy



## Synopsis

In June 1938, Future British Prime Minister Winston Churchill published a book entitled "The Gathering Storm" (Arms and the Covenant). It was then published in the US in September 1938 as "While England Slept: a Survey of World Affairs, 1932-1938". It highlighted the United Kingdom's lack of military preparation. At that time the war was looming but had not started yet. The majority in England wanted to stay out of the war and to rely in England's natural barriers. However, the views of Churchill ultimately prevailed and it was largely on the strength of this book that Churchill was elected Prime Minister. In 1940, future President John F. Kennedy, then a student in his senior year at Harvard University, found he did not agree with the analysis by Churchill of the reasons for the war, so he wrote a book with almost the same title. Kennedy wrote this essentially as a critique and a rebuttal. In it, he examined the reasons for the UK's lack of preparation. "Why England Slept" by John F. Kennedy was first published in 1940 and went through at least five reprintings. It has become a rare book, virtually impossible to get, because of the fame of the author, until this reprinting by Ishi Press.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born on May 29, 1917 in Brookline, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard with honors in 1940 and served as a P.T Boat Commander in the South Pacific during World War II. He was decorated twice by the Navy for the serious injuries he suffered when his boat was rammed in two while attacking a Japanese destroyer in the Solomons, and for "his courage,

endurance and excellent leadership" in towing injured members of his crew to safety. A writer and newspaperman, Senator Kennedy in 1940 wrote *Why England Slept*, a best-selling analysis of England's unpreparedness for war, termed by the New York Times "a notable textbook for our times." Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946 at the age of twenty-nine, and re-elected in 1948 and 1950. In 1952 he became the third Democrat ever elected to the Senate from Massachusetts, receiving the largest vote ever polled by a Senator in the history of the State. In the 1952 U.S. Senate election, Kennedy defeated incumbent Republican Henry Cabot Lodge II for the U.S. Senate seat. The following year, he married Jacqueline Bouvier. Kennedy underwent several spinal operations over the next two years. Often absent from the Senate, he was at times critically ill and received Catholic last rites. During his convalescence in 1956, he published *Profiles in Courage*, a book about U.S. Senators who risked their careers for their personal beliefs, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1957. He was elected President of the United States John F. Kennedy was sworn in on January 20, 1961. In his inaugural address he spoke of the need for all Americans to be active citizens, famously saying, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." He asked the nations of the world to join together to fight what he called the "common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself". President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, at 12:30 pm Central Standard Time on Friday November 22, 1963, while on a political trip to Texas to smooth over frictions in the Democratic Party between liberals and conservative John Connally. Traveling in a presidential motorcade through downtown Dallas, he was shot once in the throat and once in the head. Kennedy was taken to Parkland Hospital, but pronounced dead at 1:00 pm. Only 46, President Kennedy died younger than any other U.S. president. There are numerous theories as to who killed him and why, but none have been proven.

JFK's college thesis does not point a blame, but does show cause and effect, in my view, of what good ideologue intentions and ill preparedness, leads too. JFK makes his case using historical facts in what lead to England's ill preparedness forcing Chamberlain to cut a deal with Germany in order to buy time against the rise of Hitler's war machine.

This is a sloppy product, for \$25.95. I've always admired JFK (despite his mistakes), and thought this would be fun to read as his 100th birthday has rolled around. Unfortunately this was the only version I could find. It really has some rather funny and quirky things about it:1. The title of the book, shown on the cover, is "Why England Slept." On the other hand, on the spine of the book, which

would show on a bookshelf, the title is shown as "While England Slept." Now that may seem a small difference, but Kennedy was criticized for using his "Why . . ." title because it so closely resembled Churchill's "While England Slept" title which is actually the book JFK was analyzing. So the book, as received has both titles: Kennedy's on the cover and Churchill's on the spine.<sup>2</sup> There is kind of a bizarre "Introduction" by one Sam Sloan. He seems to be intent on addressing the legitimate issue that the book might be ghost written for JFK, but then goes way beyond that with bits about Thomas Jefferson and his relationship with Sally Hemings, Kennedy Sr's. Hollywood foibles, and a theory about JFK's assassination, etc. Might be interesting to some, but surely not what I paid \$25.95 for.<sup>3</sup> Somewhat blurry "scanned" printing. Yes, it is readable, but hardly what one would expect for such a significant book. So, if this is the only way you can find to obtain this book, then go to it like I did. If you would like something more valuable for your library, then this isn't it. If none of this matters, then the content itself is an interesting view of the pre-WWII time, whether or not JFK wrote it himself.

A great analysis of a critical time in the history of democracy and an excellent blueprint for modern heads of state. If we fail to learn from past mistakes, we are doomed to repeat them.

Good book, the writing is by Kennedy while in college so the vocabulary is a little over my head, yet it is still very informative.

heard about this book from reading another book on WWII. jack was a great writer.

I can't believe the title on spine and back of the book is different than the actual title on the front cover. I purchased this for my 16-year-old daughter after we visited the Kennedy Library, and she noticed the mistake immediately. We're almost afraid to look st the rest of the book now.

An excellent read

Written in 1940, "Why England Slept" is a concise examination of the forces during the 1930s that prevented Britain from rearming until war seemed inevitable. Author John F. Kennedy, a 23 year old Harvard graduate at the time of his writing, presents a balanced and in depth analysis with the intention of aiding his country to learn from England's mistakes. This book intertwines history with political analysis. It seeks to find reasons, not to assign blame. It emphasizes the strong current of pacifism prevalent in Britain and elsewhere in much of Europe during the 1930s. It was this

consensus of opinion which prevented Britannia's leaders from leading it into necessary preparations. Peace movements of that era advanced tenets which others would adopt later. The concept that arms lead to war and that unilateral disarmament would ensure peace would, after nearly costing the West its life, be resurrected during the Cold War. This work also points out how attitudes toward Germany changed during the decade. The Versailles Treaty had cut Germany down to size, in part, by granting independence to Austria and placing millions of Germans in Italy, Czechoslovakia and Poland. An appreciation gradually grew that the Versailles borders would not be perpetual and that some adjustment in Germany's favor was reasonable. For that reason, Hitler's early demands were afforded a hearing in England until increasing German aggression turned public opinion against its authors. As public opinion stiffened, so did British resolve to stand up to aggressors. Only then did rearmament have the political support to make it a reality. England was then in a race for its life. Germany's clandestine preparation for aggression gave it a two year lead over its more peaceful rivals. Kennedy illustrates how Britain's industrial organization placed it at a disadvantage in military manufacturing in comparison to the U.S. and Germany. Besides the reflections on the events leading up to the world situation in 1940, Kennedy gives a glimpse into his political views when the contrasts the strengths and weaknesses democracies versus those of totalitarian regimes. We can now see how those beliefs influenced the course of the Cold War over which Kennedy exercised such an influence for a time. This book is a period piece. Unlike later writers, Kennedy did not know the end of the story. The reader gains a different perspective from comments such as, if Hitler prevails, if England wins or if England falls. "Why England Slept" gives us a real time analysis of the making of the greatest war in history. For that it is a worthwhile read.

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