



Peace, They Say: A History of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Most Famous and Controversial Prize in the World

Jay Nordlinger

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In this book, Jay Nordlinger gives a history of what the subtitle calls “the most famous and controversial prize in the world.” The Nobel Peace Prize, like the other Nobel prizes, began in 1901. So we have a neat, sweeping history of the 20th century, and about a decade beyond. The Nobel prize involves a first world war, a second world war, a cold war, a terror war, and more. It contends with many of the key issues of modern times, and of life itself.

It also presents a parade of interesting people—more than a hundred laureates, not a dullard in the bunch. Some of these laureates have been historic statesmen, such as Roosevelt (Teddy) and Mandela. Some have been heroes or saints, such as Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. Some belong in other categories—where would you place Arafat? Controversies also swirl around the awards to Kissinger, Gorbachev, Gore, and Obama, to name just a handful.

Probably no figure in this book is more interesting than a non-laureate: Alfred Nobel, the Swedish scientist and entrepreneur who started the prizes. The book also addresses “missing laureates,” people who did not win the peace prize but might have, or should have (Gandhi?).

Peace, They Say is enlightening and enriching, and sometimes even fun. It has its opinions, but it also provides what is necessary for readers to form their own opinions. What is peace, anyway? All these people who have been crowned “champions of peace,” and the world’s foremost—should they have been? Such is the stuff this book is made on.

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