Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why Read *Battle Cry*?

“On the Second Battalion the fate of the operation had hinged and like a lot of kids on a lot of other islands they had apparently been licked. But nobody got around to telling them so and it was that extra something nobody can explain that pulled them through.”

-Battle Cry, pg 682

The Marine Corps takes great pride in its history and the countless Marines who have served honorably in our nation’s conflicts. The Pacific Campaigns of World War II are, arguably, what the Marine Corps is most recognized for. Most Marines today join, at least in part, because they want to follow in the footsteps of their Marine forefathers. *Battle Cry* not only tells a story of the Pacific Campaigns, but does so through the words of Leon Uris, a Marine who actually served in that theater during World War II. Presented as a novel vice a memoire, the reader gains insight into the mind of the Marine; the fictional nature of this novel grants artistic license to Leon Uris, thus allowing for historical modification and his interpretation of events based on his own personal experiences.

This book is ideally suited as a selection for the recruit/poolee level. A large portion of the book is dedicated to boot camp and MOS training, something that recruits and poolees will soon be undergoing themselves. As the story is told through the eyes of an enlisted Marine recruits can easily relate to the characters as they encounter many common themes and issues, ranging from volunteering for duty during time of war to relationships with significant others back home. Though the target audience is the junior Marine, officers would also benefit from reading this book. There are many vital leadership lessons to be learned through the examples of good and bad leadership presented throughout the book. Officers can also gain understanding of the enlisted Marines’ expectation of their officers and leaders. Most importantly for Marines of all ranks, *Battle Cry* highlights the camaraderie and esprit de corps that drives Marines to triumph. *Battle Cry* inspires confidence and pride while simultaneously recognizing the dangers of combat and cost of victory.

The most important thing to keep in mind when reading *Battle Cry* is the greater historical context. Though the characters are fictional, the war depicted and the situations they encounter are very real. In fact, a vast majority of the novel is drawn from Leon Uris’s own experiences during the war. The reader should seek to identify common themes and timeless issues mentioned in the book that are still relevant today. Some of the most obvious themes are leadership styles, training philosophies, and the Marine Corps’ warrior ethos, to include esprit de corps. Though weapons and tactics evolve over time, Marines and the Marine Corps as a whole largely remain the same. Marines today share a common bond with all those who have earned the title throughout history, and it is that brotherhood and pride that inspire us to continue our proud tradition of winning our nation’s battles.