



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters
Major Dick Winters with Colonel Cole C. Kingseed

Summary from [Google Books](#):

“Tells the tales left untold by Stephen Ambrose, whose Band of Brothers was the inspiration for the HBO miniseries...laced with Winters’s soldierly exaltations of pride in his comrades’ bravery.”—Publishers Weekly

They were called Easy Company—but their mission was never easy. Immortalized as the Band of Brothers, they suffered 150% casualties while liberating Europe—an unparalleled record of bravery under fire. Winner of the Distinguished Service Cross, Dick Winters was their legendary commander. This is his story—told in his own words for the first time.

On D-Day, Winters assumed leadership of the Band of Brothers when its commander was killed and led them through the Battle of the Bulge and into Germany—by which time each member had been wounded. Based on Winters’s wartime diary, *Beyond Band of Brothers* also includes his comrades’ untold stories. Virtually none of this material appeared in Stephen Ambrose’s *Band of Brothers*. Neither a protest against nor a glamorization of war, this is a moving memoir by the man who earned the love and respect of the men of Easy Company—and who is a hero to new generations worldwide.

Book’s Applicability to Junior Army Officers:

Leaders, especially junior officers, are constantly faced with difficult situations and decisions. What leaders do in these difficult situations often directly contribute to mission success or failure. MAJ Dick Winters’ personal experiences, in some of the most difficult situations imaginable, provide exceptional opportunities for junior officers to understand the demands of their chosen profession. MAJ Winters demonstrates the warrior ethos, and the competencies and attributes the Army demands of officers as outlined in FM 6-22 Leader Development.

What is Read2Lead?

Read2Lead is a series of book studies published by the Center for Junior Officers, a small Army research center dedicated to empowering junior officers to develop themselves and their teams. Read2Lead modules give junior officers a ready-to-use product that they can integrate into leader professional development programs

What's in this Read2Lead?

Every Read2Lead module contains:

- A short summary of the book that you can circulate to prime people for reading
- Advice for running your Read2Lead session
- A series of questions that can be used in multiple sessions, with options for using the questions over different lengths of time
- Additional resources that may be helpful for the facilitator

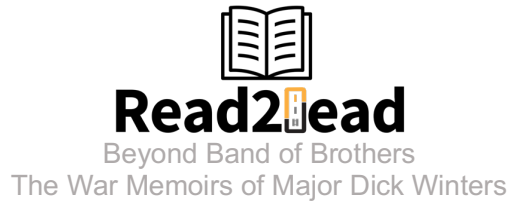
What do I need to provide to run a Read2Lead program?

First, the time. Read2Lead sessions work best when they're done over multiple sessions, so participants can digest books in small "chunks" instead of trying to cram them in all at once. Make sure you give your participants enough time to read the book and not fake the funk.

Second, the books. Books can be purchased with a government purchase card if they remain in the hands of the unit. Buying books for a Read2Lead session can be a great kick-starter for a battalion or even brigade library. You can also provide the books to Soldiers with the expectation that they pass them along to another Soldier when they are done with them. If you choose this approach, you should ensure you mark the books appropriately per the purchasing regulations and legal guidance of your organization.

Third, the space. Read2Lead sessions should be conducted in spaces where everyone can hear and see one another. Be creative: maybe you do them as hip-pocket training on a range, or at the end of motor stables. Or as a brownbag lunch in a barracks dayroom.

When you run the actual session, think of it as a time for your Soldiers to think outside the box, discuss something beyond the day-to-day concerns of the unit, and improve their communication skills. The questions provided on the subsequent pages are a starting point, but feel free to add or substitute your own to make the session more meaningful for your Soldiers.



This Read2Lead can be customized to fit the needs of your training requirements and calendar. The authors of this Read2Lead recommend two courses of action when planning LPD sessions.

Course of Action 1. Conduct a session per chapter and combine chapters 15 and 16 for a total of 15 sessions. Each session should take 30-60 minutes. This will allow time to use every question in this Read2Lead and should be programmable in most training calendars.

Course of Action 2. Conduct four sessions spanning each part of the book. Part I is chapters 1-4, part II is chapters 5-8, part III is chapters 9-13, and part IV is chapters 14-16. Each session should take no more than two hours. If you elect to use option two, the leader should have a plan to focus on the questions that are most applicable to the goals of your LPD.

Each chapter has four questions that are designed to focus your reading and help drive the discussion of your LPD. These questions are open-ended and designed to get the reader thinking about a myriad of leadership challenges and thoughts experienced by MAJ Winters. Chapters 14 and 16 have one question apiece while Chapter 15 has no questions specifically.

This book is a memoir of MAJ Winters' experience in World War II and because of that, the authors have elected to not provide supplemental material to analyze or corroborate his experiences, challenges, or thoughts on leadership. Instead, the authors recommend using the HBO mini-series "Band of Brothers" as an additional tool. Watching this series will not provide additional information, but can help the reader visualize the experience and enhance the emotions of this book.



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

Session 1: Part I, Chapter 1: Beginnings

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. What do you think of the opening paragraph? How does it make you feel?
2. What principles were driven into MAJ Winters' head from an early age? What qualities did his mother possess that would make her the "ideal company commander" in his eyes? What do you think about this? Is it enough or is this an oversimplification?
3. How would you deal with the situation if your service obligation became indefinite and you were going to war?
4. MAJ Winters was very junior compared to the NCOs in his OCS prep course. How did he overcome that? Is that a viable thing now? Why or why not?

Session 2: Part I, Chapter 2: There is Nothing Easy in Easy Company

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. What is your impression of the training at Taccoa? Is that type of training regimen sustainable or even useful?
2. What's your impression of CPT Sobel? What's good and bad about him? How would you characterize his leadership style? If he was so bad, why was he left in charge?
3. What did you feel when you read that, "every trooper who joined Easy Company after Taccoa was a replacement"?
4. How can we build a culture of excellence like the 506th in our unit?

Additional Material: Episode 1 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Currahee



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

Session 3: Part I, Chapter 3: From Benning to Shanks

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. MAJ Winters felt like he was a “stranger among friends” when he went home for leave. He was only gone for a few months. What are your expectations going home? If you’ve already gone home, was it what you expected?
2. MAJ Winters talked about two incidents concerning tardiness: one was when the Soldiers were late returning from leave and the second was an incident when he was late to a meeting in England. What do you think about those two incidents? How did MAJ Winters react to them?
3. MAJ Winters wanted to deploy and put his training to action. While his deployment was looming, how do you feel our current situation is in relation to his? How do we motivate our Soldiers to train for wartime tasks without the guarantee of using those tasks in combat?
4. Members of the 506th shouted “Currahee” instead of “Geronimo” when jumping. What do you think that little difference meant to those paratroopers?

Session 4: Part I, Chapter 4: Old Beyond My Years

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. “An officer should never put himself in a position where he takes from his men. Never abuse them by act or omission. As a commander, a leader must be prepared to give everything, including himself, to the people he leads. You give your time and you strive to be consistently fair, never demonstrating favoritism.” What do you think of this philosophy from MAJ Winters?
2. Why did MAJ Winters feel old beyond his years and what could he do because of it?
3. What was the general feeling during prep for D-Day on the day prior? How did MAJ Winters react to all of that?
4. MAJ Winters chose to take a court martial. Do you think it was worth it to make a point? Would you have that confidence if faced with a situation you knew was wrong? Why do you think MAJ Winters made this decision?



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

Session 5: Part II, Chapter 5: Day of Days

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. What would you think if you were suddenly in command of your company?
2. Describe a situation where you were forced to adapt after the plan went poorly.
3. How would you react if given a vague mission statement and expected to complete the mission? What could you do to increase the chances of mission success?
4. Would MAJ Winters' assault at Brecourt have been a success if he hadn't known his Soldiers as well as he did? What advantage did that provide him?

Additional Material: Episode 2 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Day of Days

Session 6: Part II, Chapter 6: Carentan

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. We are trained to be able to assume responsibilities one level up from our current billet. MAJ Winters said that Lieutenant Joe McMillan assumed command of Dog Company after his company commander was killed by an artillery shell. LT McMillan remained in command of Dog Company for the rest of the war. How are you preparing to assume that one level up?
2. MAJ Winters told a story of Lieutenant Harry Welsh nearly getting himself killed because of his level of intoxication. MAJ Winters simply stated that they sorted out the problem in a few days. How would you have dealt with this issue and would you deal with it differently today? This particular incident involved alcohol, would you have acted differently if this incident involved some other issue?
3. At the onset of the Battle of Carentan, MAJ Winters had to physically kick his Soldiers to move out of a trench under heavy machinegun fire. After the battle, he comforted Private Blithe who had temporary blindness likely due to stress. Can you think of a time when you were in a high-stress environment, but then had to use a low stress method to calm a subordinate? How did the situation play out, was it effective, and could you have done something differently?



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

4. During a patrol, Private Blithe saw a sniper and, instead of firing, he shouted, “bang, bang.” He was then shot by the sniper. How are you planning and conducting your training to make sure that one of your Soldiers doesn't make the same mistake?

Additional Material: Episode 3 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Carentan

Session 7: Part II, Chapter 7: Holland

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. During Operation Market Garden, some of Easy Company's Soldiers began to display complacency. How do you keep your Soldiers focused on the mission at hand and prevent complacency?
2. Do you have someone who you can speak with about the leadership challenges and any struggles you encounter? If not, do you decompress in a different way?
3. Have you "lost your cool" in front of your commander/higher ranking individuals? Reflecting on the situation now, would you still react that same way?
4. How did MAJ Winters demonstrate the tenet of "trust but verify"? What impact did that have on Easy company?

Additional Material: Episode 4 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Replacements

Session 8: Part II, Chapter 8: The Island

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. When you are confronted with a problem (tactical or otherwise), that exceeds your capabilities, how do you deal with the problem?
2. What did MAJ Winters mean when he said, “To surrender the initiative to the enemy was indefensible?” Can this thinking be applied outside of combat? If so, how?
3. Explain the Germans' failures in leadership in this chapter. How did Easy Company capitalize against this?



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

4. MAJ Winters relinquished command shortly after this battle. He reminisced about his tenure in Easy Company and talked a great deal about the cohesion of the unit. Their bonds created in training and solidified by combat made them “a band of brothers.” How can you work to build that cohesion and camaraderie within your organization?

Additional Material: Episode 5 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Crossroads

Session 9: Part III, Chapter 9: Interlude

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. MAJ Winters' "mistake" of utilizing the same task organization in combat bothered him after he left command of Easy company. Why do you think he made that mistake and what would you have done differently?
2. MAJ Winters found boredom in staff officer life compared to his time in Easy company. What do you think motivated him to continue to perform at his best?
3. How can you overcome the challenge of joining a unit that has been through combat together? How do you lead them effectively without having that shared experience?
4. How do you prevent your unit from becoming overconfident in its abilities? What are the risks of this mentality?

Session 10: Part III, Chapter 10: Surrounded Again

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. MAJ Winters said that CPT Nixon's greatest contribution to the efforts in Bastogne was as a liaison between the battalion and regimental headquarters. He also said that, “no man contributed more to keeping the regiment together during the ensuing battle.” At the time, CPT Nixon was the battalion S3 and was not a commander. How does this highlight the role of a staff officer?
2. Combat fatigue and its effects on his Soldier's performance was a theme in this chapter. MAJ Winters said self-discipline was what keeps a Soldier doing their job. Combat fatigue affected many of his Soldier's abilities to do their jobs. As leaders, we see lapses in discipline that affect Soldier performance, and not necessarily due to



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

combat related trauma. MAJ Winters had a technique to try and reinvigorate his Soldiers. What situations may affect a Soldier's ability to accomplish their jobs and how could you alleviate those issues?

3. MAJ Winters relieved LT Dike and LT Speirs assumed command of Easy Company during the battle. MAJ Winters admired him as a combat officer and he successfully led Easy Company. However, MAJ Winters also said that his actions against his men in Dog Company and POWs today would have likely led to his court martial. Is there an ethical debate here? What would you have done? Can one's ability to effectively accomplish the mission outweigh a person's crimes today?

4. MAJ Winters spoke a lot about his role as a leader and the role that the non-commissioned officers played in keeping the battalion together during the Battle of the Bulge, but spoke little about officership in general. In your own words, what is the role of an officer?

Additional Material: Episode 6 & 7 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Bastogne and The Breaking Point

Session 11: Part III, Chapter 11: The Final Patrols

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. MAJ Winters discussed not having time to write a letter back home during the winter of 1944-45 and then catching some grief about it. How do you balance the demands of work and your personal life? How would you find personal time during a combat deployment?

2. MAJ Winters disobeyed a direct order, an act of defiance that likely saved lives and had no detriment to the unit's mission. Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma such as this? What would you have done?

3. CPT Nixon's alcohol problem became so bad that his regimental headquarters didn't want him and sent him back to Battalion. How have you handled a situation with a Soldier who performs well at their job but who demonstrates unwanted behavior in one facet or another? Was your approach successful?

4. On their final patrol, MAJ Winters put his seasoned veterans, all NCOs, in charge of the mission, even though officers were present. Do you think this was the right call? Do



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

you think placing a junior ranking Soldier in charge of others who outrank him would ever be appropriate today? Why or why not?

Additional Material: Episode 8 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: The Last Patrol

Session 12: Part III, Chapter 12: Victory

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. At this point of the war, there were those like MAJ Winters who greatly limited risk to his Soldier's lives and others who tried to lead combat operations because they had not done so yet. How would you have tried to reconcile this?
2. MAJ Winters issued orders concerning discipline that he knew would not be followed perfectly. What effects do you think that had on morale? Should he have issued orders that he knew would be ignored?
3. MAJ Winters felt little remorse for occupying houses in Berchtesgaden. Do you think it would be acceptable today?
4. The war concluded while Easy Company was in Berchtesgaden on D-Day plus 335. How do you think the Soldiers reacted when they were told the war was over?

Session 13: Part IV, Chapter 13: Occupation

Recommended Time: 30-60 minutes

1. After the German surrender, Easy company began occupation duty, a task no one was trained for. Have you ever found yourself in a position you felt completely untrained for? How did you overcome the challenge?
2. MAJ Winters discusses how he used his free time during occupation duty to reflect or read. How do you reflect on your experiences? If you don't, do you think it would be beneficial to start?
3. Throughout the book, but especially in this chapter, MAJ Winters demonstrates his ability to communicate and negotiate with a variety of people, including German Soldiers who were 20 years his senior. When have you had to negotiate/communicate



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

with someone who outranks you or has more experience than you? How did you approach the situation?

4. Why is it so important to recognize and award Soldiers to the level they deserve? Often the inclination is to present awards based on rank and not contribution or impact. How do we change that in the Army's culture?

Additional Material: Episode 9 of Band of Brothers HBO miniseries: Why We Fight

Session 14: Part IV, Chapter 14: Coming Home

Recommended Time: 30 minutes

1. MAJ Winters takes this chapter to reflect on what happened at the end of the war and how he transitioned back into civilian life. Take this time to reflect on any lessons you may have learned, whether they are things you want to emulate or avoid. Are there any problems that you are facing that you may be able to solve with these lessons? Are there any problems that you can't solve with the information that you have right now?

Session 15: Part IV, Chapter 15: Steve Ambrose Slept Here and Chapter 16: Reflections

Recommended Time: 60 minutes

1. In chapter 16, MAJ Winters details what leadership means to him, which is then summarized in *Leadership at the Point of the Bayonet: Ten Principles for Success*. What do you think of these principles? Are there any that stick out to you as especially important or in need of revision? Are any of the principles applicable to anything you are dealing with now?

This Read2Lead was co-developed by Captain Austin Wesley. Austin is an Army Engineer Officer currently assigned to the Colorado School of Mines as an ROTC APMS. He is passionate about leader development and has held leadership positions from Platoon Leader through



Read2Lead

Beyond Band of Brothers
The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters

Company Command. He is a 2022 CJO Leadership Fellow. The views expressed above are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Defense or the US Military Academy.

This Read2Lead was co-developed by Captain John Plaziak. John is a Signal Officer currently assigned to the Operations Group as an OC/T at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. John most recently served as a Company Commander and has worked in a variety of command and staff positions from the platoon to brigade level. John has written previously on leadership and is a 2022 CJO Leadership Fellow. John can be found on Twitter @johnplaziak. The views expressed above are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Defense or the US Military Academy.