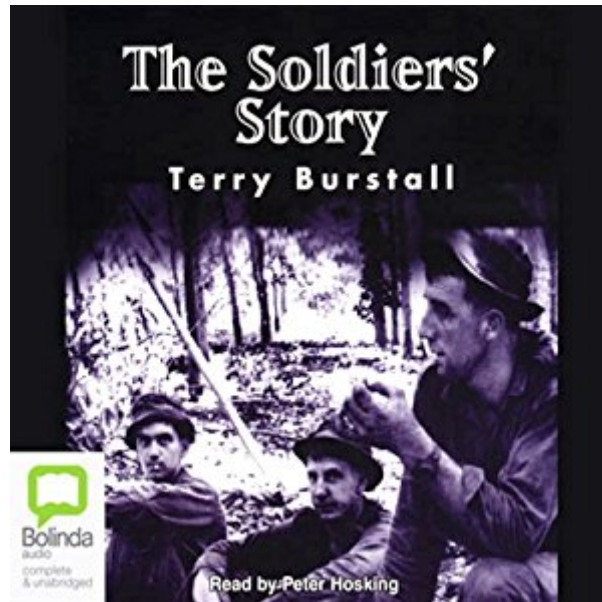




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The Soldiers' Story



Synopsis

The controversial Battle at Xa Long Tan was not only a critical episode in Australia's Vietnam involvement; it was also a textbook nightmare in the history of jungle warfare. Reconstructing this dramatic action from secret documents and the vivid recollections of many diggers who fought at Long Tan, Terry Burstall challenges the official army version.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Originally written as two stories, "The Soldiers Story" details the first major conflict for Australian forces in Vietnam : The battle of Xa Long Tan, August 1966. The political climate in Australia, the attitudes of young soldiers fired up by stories of heroism of past conflicts serve only to highlight the significance of this battle in Australia's military history. We are treated to an exciting blow by blow description of the battle and the courage, heroism and tenacity of men fighting for their lives. Burstall narrates the Battle in the Long Tan rubber plantation with a soldiers eye and tacticians mind. In the second half of the book, "A soldiers return" Burstall changes pace and direction quite noticeably. In the first installment, Burstall gives the distinct impression that he was all warrior: Kill 'em before they kill you! However in the second part of the book, he returns to Vietnam 25 years later to interview the men of the VC regiment and that fought the battle and civilians who were directly affected by the activities of soldiers in the Australian sector. This was not pretty. In this story we discover that the battle meant little to the Vietnamese armed forces, that the losses they incurred were far less than Australia's official records state and that the Australian Army committed atrocities and made life hell for the Civilian population of that ravaged country. This story is significant to historians who like their

facts straight. To those of us who know the facts and regret them, it is a harrowing piece of literature that tarnishes our history and takes away any sense of hope that we as a people conducted ourselves with dignity in a most unpopular war. I admire you for your telling your story, Mr. Burstall. I also admire your courage in confronting your demons and returning to Vietnam to give us the other side of the story. However for the sake of those that were willing to fight and the families of those that died, I wish you hadn't written it.

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