

The Heart and the Fist Study Guide

The Heart and the Fist by Eric Greitens

(c)2016 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Heart and the Fist Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Summary.....	3
Preface – Part II, Chapter 3.....	5
Part II, Chapter 4 – Part III, Chapter 7.....	8
Part III, Chapter 8 – Part III, Chapter 11.....	12
Part III, Chapter 12 – Part III, Chapter 14.....	15
Part III, Chapter 15 – Afterword.....	18
Important People.....	20
Objects/Places.....	23
Themes.....	26
Styles.....	31
Quotes.....	33
Topics for Discussion.....	36



Summary

“The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy SEAL” is an autobiographical account by Eric Greitens of his early life and time as a Navy SEAL around the world in pursuit of defending America and helping others. Eric begins his book with a preface saying that courage and compassion go hand-in-hand, and are essential for one another. Eric then moves to his service in Iraq, where a friend and Marine named Travis Manion is killed in combat. Eric and his friend and Intel Officer, Joel Poudrier, decide they must do something in honor of Travis’s sacrifice, and in honor of all those who have served and want to do more.

Eric, a Missouri native, then moves back more than a decade to the early 1990s, where he recounts wanting to experience something of the world in college. He travels to China, where he meets with student protestors who campaigned against Communism. This inspires Eric, because he sees history in the making. Eric takes up boxing upon his return from China, which will strengthen his faith and help him to become more courageous. Through boxing, Eric learns that life, and whatever else he does such as boxing, are indistinguishable from one another. Each are dependent on the other. (Eric will ultimately come to see his work as both SEAL and humanitarian as indistinguishable from one another.) Eric next travels to Croatia, where he assists and documents Bosnian refugees from the Serbian-led massacres throughout Bosnia. Eric encounters people who want to know why America won’t intervene to stop the genocide. This deeply troubles Eric, who wants to be able to help these people in a protective, rather than a reactive way.

Eric next travels to Rwanda, to help Tutsis who have managed to survive the Hutu-led genocide. Eric here learns that true evil is possible at the hands of human beings. He then travels to Bolivia, where he sees poverty on a massive scale, sees how children live in the streets addicted to sniffing glue, and sees how these children will never have a chance. However, he is encouraged by an American married couple named Jason and Caroline, who are working with some of the kids, keeping them clean, and keeping them off the streets. This inspires Eric to want to do the same. He finishes up his education at Oxford in England, writing in a dissertation about how important it is that the long-term health and vitality of those who have suffered is not about what they are given, but about what they do with their lives after volunteers and aid workers have gone.

Eric then decides to become a SEAL. He attends Naval Officer Candidate School, and upon graduation, begins Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training. Eric’s training is brutal, designed to ensure only the toughest, most disciplined men make it through to Advanced Training, which Eric does. Even then, more men drop out, but Eric perseveres. As a Drill Instructor explains to another SEAL candidate, there is no second-place prize in war. One wins, or one dies. Eric survives Advanced Training, and becomes a SEAL. Due to his humanitarian work and studies, Eric is sent to Iraq, and to various posts around the world where he ensures American success by drawing on all that he has experienced and learned. As he explains to the reader, victory isn’t only

winning on the battlefield, but it is total advantage: it is about winning the hearts and minds of the people one is trying to help. In Iraq, for example, Eric notes success finally came about when American forces began to really reach out to local populations, taking an interest in their lives, and earning their trust. This, Eric explains, helps to create American friends and allies in future generations.

Eric ultimately returns to the beginning of his book, where he decides he must do something regarding the death of Travis Manion. Eric visits the wounded at Bethesda Naval Hospital, and learns that everyone wishes they could do something to help their comrades if they cannot return to combat. Eric therein begins The Mission Continues, a non-profit which offers fellowships to veterans to allow them to reach out and do good deeds around the country, including helping other veterans. As of the book's afterword, written in January, 2012, The Mission Continues has given more than 250 fellowships, and has had more than 25,000 volunteers assist with projects.



Preface – Part II, Chapter 3

Summary

Preface – Eric Greitens explains to the reader that the book about to be read is about service on the frontlines, about combat and humanitarianism. Greitens also notes that SEALs are humanitarians as well as warriors, and that courage and compassion are necessary for each other.

Part I: Mind and Fist

Chapter 1: Iraq – Eric is awakened from sleep by an insurgent attack, along with a suicide truck bomb. Eric notes that his SEAL training, first passed down by the Underwater Demolition Teams who worked to clear the beaches at Normandy, kicks in. Eric dives to the floor, and along with Big Sexy Francis (a Staff Sergeant and gunner for Eric's Humvee), Lieutenant Colonel Fisher, Mike Marise (a former Marine fighter pilot who gave up his plane for ground combat), and Joel Poudrier (an intelligence officer) make their way up to the roof of the damaged barracks, which is being flooded with chlorine gas. At the top, no one can see where the enemy has attacked from. A Marine named Travis Manion joins Eric and the others on the roof. Travis is a recent Naval Academy graduate who sees himself as a Spartan warrior defending his home and family. A Quick Reaction Force (QRF) arrives to reinforce the Americans at the barracks, while Eric and the others – including Joel, whose head has been broken – are evacuated to the hospital.

One month later, Travis Manion is killed. Joel, who is recovering from his own injuries, visits the Manion family with Eric in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. They recount to Travis's family how Travis died saving the lives of other Marines, and inspiring a counterattack that saved even more lives – something for which Travis received the Silver Star. Eric and Joel decide they must do something to honor Travis's legacy, as well as all those who served and sacrificed.

Chapter 2: China – Eric grows up learning about heroes, from the ancient Greeks to George Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr, and worries that God and his parents have brought him into the world too late to do anything great. As a child, Eric constantly worries about whether his grades and his actions in life will allow him to go to college.

In college, Eric is less than thrilled with the Public Policy courses he is taking, because Public Policy is being taught in a very mathematical way, calculating outcomes to determine courses of action.

In 1993, Eric ends up taking a grant to study business in China, because his uncle had visited a broom factory there some years before. Eric travels to the Chinese city of Changchun to study the emerging business sector there, during which time he does all he can to learn about China's history and culture, including taking a kung-fu class. He



befriends a Chinese coworker named Han Lin who helps him adjust to life in China. Eric also goes on to teach English in the afternoons to eager students who are more interested to learn about American freedom. Many of his students have been to demonstrations, seeking freedom from Communism in China. Eric is amazed by these young people, because they are in the process of actually making history. Eric is arrested and charged with breaking Chinese law because of this, is fined \$90, and released. He returns to the States a few days later.

Chapter 3: Boxing – Back in the States and still in college, Eric decides to test himself by getting into boxing, which his grandfather had done during the Great Depression. Eric begins training alongside 26-year-old black fighter Derrick Humphrey who first thinks Eric is a crazy white man. Eric also trains with Derrick's own trainer, Earl Blair. To Earl, there is no distinction between life and boxing because to him, both are the same – from God's mercy to humility to being on time to performing well. Earl also teaches students to pray before each practice, and to buy their own equipment so they appreciate it more and care for it better.

In his first tournament, Eric is unopposed in his match, so he wins the trophy by default. This upsets him, but Earl explains Eric has earned the trophy for his hard work for the past three years. A few weeks later, Eric gets a practice fight against professional boxer named Maurice. Eric beats Maurice. Earl then has Eric come over to his house, where he has Eric affix a metal plate engraved with his name below a trophy for the fight against Maurice.

Analysis

“The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy SEAL” is an autobiographical account by Eric Greiten of his early life and time as a Navy SEAL around the world in pursuit of defending America and helping others. From the very beginning, the theme of war is central to Greiten's account, as he is serving in Iraq and his barracks comes under attack by insurgents. Eric relies on his Navy SEAL training to survive, and at home a few weeks later, is deeply hurt by the loss of Travis Manion, killed not long after Eric's departure. Manion's death will signal the beginning of a new mission and a new phase for Eric in his life.

Eric then darts back in time more than a decade, briefly to his youth, and with greater emphasis on his college years. Learning quickly becomes a vital theme to the book (note part of the book's subtitle – “The Education of a Humanitarian”). Eric grows up reading about the heroes of history, from Alexander to George Washington to Martin Luther King, Jr., and knows he wants to do something important with his own life. Eric is hungry to know more about the world, so he heads to China. There, he learns about Chinese history and culture, and is deeply moved by the student protest movement against Communism. It is through the denial of freedoms in China that Eric comes to more deeply appreciate his own freedoms as an American.



Eric's education continues back in the United States as he gets into boxing. Eric learns through Earl Blair that boxing (or whatever Eric does in life) is indistinguishable from life itself. Both are ultimately the same. In the future, this will cement Eric's belief that the courage of being a SEAL is inseparable from the compassion of his humanitarian life. Who one is as a SEAL or a humanitarian is also who one is in life in general. Eric's time boxing also begins to toughen him up and to physically test him in ways he has not been tested before.

The reader should also note that in Eric's preface, he speaks about the importance of courage and compassion in relation to one another. Like Earl's contention that life and what one does in life are one in the same, so too does Eric consider compassion and courage as being mutually dependent upon one another. Courage and compassion become an important theme in the novel, and can already be seen in various ways. For example, Eric has courage as a SEAL, and compassion for the men he serves with. This compassion fuels his courage, and his courage steels his compassion for his fellows. Courage and compassion will ultimately fall hand-in-hand with Eric's education in humanitarianism, and in his operations as a Navy SEAL.

Vocabulary

uncharitable, acrid, discretion, ill-disciplined, virtue, scattershot, sparring



Part II, Chapter 4 – Part III, Chapter 7

Summary

Part II: Heart and Mind

Chapter 4: Bosnia – Eric’s grandfather, Harold Jacobs, nicknamed “Shah” after the Polish word for “shush” or “quiet” because he always talked so much, is a huge inspiration to Eric. By the summer of 1994, Shah has suffered a second stroke, and Eric is preparing to travel to Pula, Croatia, to work with war orphans at the Puntizela refugee camp. Eric sees Shah struggling to put on lip balm, but does not help Shah. It is something Eric regrets, wondering how he can travel around the world to help people he does not know but cannot help someone who is family with a simple task.

On the way to Croatia, Eric encounters a Bosnian woman who wants to know why America isn’t intervening to stop the genocide in Bosnia, and thinks that the Americans would intervene if they had oil. At the camp, Eric helps anywhere he can, from organizing soccer and chess games to sitting in with families and sharing coffee with them. Here, he learns firsthand the horrors committed against the Bosnians by the Serbs. A few weeks later, Eric is sent on to another camp, Gasinci, outside of the city of Osijek. Eric is stunned to learn how little the United Nations can actually be involved. He is further horrified to learn later of the mass killings in Srebrenica in July, 1995. But in the summer of 1994, Shah passes away. Back at Duke University, Eric presents a slide show about his Croatian trip to a local church, the audience members of which are more interested in the people Eric met than the issue politically. They want to know what they can do to help. This causes Eric to realize that loved ones must be protected from harm to begin with.

Chapter 5: Rwanda – Eric’s Bosnian experience leaves him wanting to do more to help people, so he travels with one of his professors, Neil Boothby, to Kigali, Rwanda, where Neil has been taken on in the group for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is May, 1995. Eric will be there to listen, learn, and document the experience. The genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda is unlike anything seen since the Holocaust, which many blame on the Belgians for their time as colonists decades before because they created divisions among locals to make control easier. Eric strives to take pictures of survivors, to show Americans what hardships they have endured. Eric becomes angered that the United States under President Bill Clinton did not intervene.

Eric travels to meet with refugees in Zaire, where he is helped by a born-again Christian from Texas named Karen. Karen brings Eric to Goma, where 1.2 million survivors have been relocated. There, he learns that among the hardest working volunteers are American evangelical Christians. While Eric considers that some, like Karen, may have bumbled culturally by trying to get Tutsis to convert, he also recognized they were doing the hard work of feeding and caring for survivors. Eric’s time in Rwanda also convinces



him that human beings are able to commit utterly evil acts. Eric realizes he has far more to learn, and far more to do.

Chapter 6: Bolivia – Eric studies hard as he finishes out college, learning everything he can because he knows it will benefit him, and because he knows he shouldn't take for granted an amazing opportunity that so many others in the world do not have. He graduates in May, 1996, deeply appreciating America and the country's history. With a grant, Eric travels to Bolivia to document its people and the poverty in which they live. Many of the children essentially live on the streets, with nearly all of them sniffing glue as a way to ease the pain of their lives.

Eric travels to the Mano Amiga home outside Santa Cruz, run by a married American couple named Jason and Caroline. There, Eric plays soccer with barefooted kids, realizing that they can find joy even in such bad circumstances. Still, the poverty is terrible. Eric ventures into slums riddled with crime and trash. It hurts and angers Eric to know that the kids in such a place never have a chance. One day, Eric takes a group of kids from the center to see a soccer game, but one, Rodrigo, goes missing. He turns up in a concession stand, causing Eric to realize that rebellious teenagers in Bolivia are essentially the same as teenagers in America. The entire Bolivian experience teaches Eric that real change does not happen overnight, but through time, patience, and conviction – such as the kind Jason and Caroline have. For this, understanding is required.

Chapter 7: Oxford – Eric comes to realize that it is not enough just to fight for a better world, but that one must live a life worth fighting for as well. Eric comes to understand the importance of a peaceful life, including love, beauty, and joy, through his time as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Eric is taken by the friendly, old-world, and diverse atmosphere of the place. Eric does everything from exploring all of Great Britain to traveling to Malta and the Mediterranean to picking up boxing again under the tough-as-nails Henry Dean. It is during this time that Eric writes his dissertation, noting that the long-term health and vitality of those who have suffered is not about what they are given, but about what they do. Such lessons, as Eric learns, were made throughout history, but the mistakes were always repeated wherein people would not be equipped to live life after humanitarian aid could no longer be given.

In December, 1996, Eric travels to Gaza where he learns that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat considered Palestinian children to be weapons. Eric also discovers that, despite popular conception, most terrorists are middle-class or upper-class people who did not have to worry about where their next meal was coming from, and could have the luxury of choosing something other than survival.

Eric next travels to India to help and document struggling children, then to Cambodia where land mines still buried from the Vietnam War are still a daily danger. It is during his humanitarian years that Eric also learns more about the SEALs –Sea, Air, and Land commando teams. Eric decides to apply for Officer Candidate School. He knows that being a SEAL will make his life better and will allow him to do good.



Analysis

Eric's education continues in this section of his autobiography, both in terms of academics and humanitarianism. The reader should note, interestingly enough, the regretful experience Eric has when he doesn't step in to help his grandfather put on lip balm, but is willing to travel halfway around the world to help people he has never met before in his life in Bosnia. It is something that Eric will always feel badly about, and will spend the rest of his life trying to make up for in his determination to be as helpful to those he knows (such as Travis Manion and his family) and those that Eric does not know (such as the Iraqis that Eric later comes to help).

It is while Eric is in Bosnia and Rwanda that the themes of war and terrorism reenter the picture. In Bosnia, war has led to outright terrorism and genocide in the butchering of thousands of Bosnians at the hands of the Serbs. In Rwanda, war leads to terrorism which in turn leads to genocide as hundreds of thousands of Tutsis are massacred by the Hutus. Through these experiences, Eric continues to learn. He truly comes to understand the utter evil that human beings are capable of. He comes to appreciate the safety and security of the Western world, especially the peace and tranquility of places like America and England, even more.

Eric also has his first encounters with people who expect answers that he cannot yet provide. The reader should note the poignant conversation that Eric has with a Bosnian woman, wherein she asks him why the United States has not intervened to stop the killing. Eric feels an urge not only to reactively help those who have suffered at the hands of war, terrorism, and genocide, but feels a desire to preemptively seek to protect them. This education in the ways of the world will propel Eric along a path that will ultimately lead to his becoming a Navy SEAL.

As Eric continues to travel throughout the world, including heading to places like Bolivia and Palestine, he sees the wretched conditions in which children are forced to live. For example, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat disgustingly considers children to be nothing more than weapons, while in Bolivia, crime and poverty have reduced children to living on the streets, huffing glue, and repeating an endless cycle of despair. In such situations, Eric knows courage and compassion are both needed in equal measure to help these children – such as the kind provided by Jason and Caroline. Eric also learns that patience is required to change any situation – the sort of long-term patience that Jason and Caroline have regarding their efforts to change the lives of the street children of Bolivia. Likewise, his experience with Christians also helps Eric to recognize the people he seeks to help overseas as actual human beings with their own stories.

All of these things will come to benefit Eric tremendously in the future. His decision to become a SEAL ultimately leads him from the relaxed, comfortable life he enjoys at Oxford to Navy Officer Candidate School. He does this for a variety of reasons, knowing that being a SEAL will allow him to actively do good throughout the world. Eric's education as a humanitarian is about to become complemented through his making as a SEAL – and both will come to be invaluable to him as his life proceeds.

Vocabulary

incapable, inquisitive, deprivation, denounce, resilient, exacerbating, antagonistic, unencumbered, prejudice, ubiquitous, equivalent, voracious, revelry, motley, cajole



Part III, Chapter 8 – Part III, Chapter 11

Summary

Part III: Heart and Fist

Chapter 8: Officer Candidate School – Eric arrives for Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Florida, on January 20, 2001. He knows his life will change dramatically from what he had been. He looks forward to serving his country and helping others, but worries about how disciplined his life will now become. Eric and his fellow candidate officers are taken to their barracks and meet Staff Sergeant Lewis, a no-nonsense Marine Corps drill instructor. Training gets underway. Eric must do everything from dressing properly to exercising properly to shooting and fighting properly. Eric is assigned to ensure Wong, an Asian-American recruit, passes the final physical fitness test. Eric realizes that training isn't all physical training, but is about leadership and helping out his fellows. Eric, along with Wong, are among the graduates of Navy Officer Candidate School. Eric is given orders to report for SEAL training in Coronado, California.

Chapter 9: SEAL Training – Eric arrives at Coronado, California. As he does, he thinks about the original frogmen, the Underwater Demolition Teams of World War II, whose training forms the core of present-day SEAL instruction. Eric knows that Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training (BUD/S) is rigorous. Only about 250 candidates graduate from BUD/S, and not all of those go on to survive the six-month advanced training to become a SEAL. At BUD/S, Eric meets and befriends a man named Dustin Connors, who would go on to serve with SEAL Team One in Iraq, and go on to live in California with a family. The gear Eric is assigned is notable because it bears the crossed-out names of individuals who didn't make it.

Training is brutal, and includes everything from underwater to on-land training. Eric notes that their evolution as men is immense. Training is even dangerous. When a helicopter training exercise goes awry, Petty Officer Greg Hall must hold onto the strut all the way back to base. Each day, many quit. To do so, they must ring a bell three times. Eric notes that the guys in his class are tough, but do not fit the Hollywood stereotypes. For example, among Eric's classmates is Drew Bolton, son of a logger who loves to read, and is a big fan of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Eric befriends a quiet man named James Suh, who would later die in Afghanistan during a rescue operation for Matt "Axe" Axelson, who Eric also met. Eric explains that many had come to BUD/S not only to learn how to be SEALs, but how to be men as well. Eric prepares himself because Hell Week is coming.

Chapter 10: Hell Week – Eric and his classmates are nervous as Hell Week arrives. It begins in the middle of the night. Eric and a few classmates get past the initial round of ordered chaos created by the Drill Instructors first by hiding, then by running through and pretending to have been ordered to count all their other classmates. Eric and his



littler group – including Raines, Old Man Johnson, and Hall – agree to stay positive and work together. Eric explains the tests of Hell Week are to ensure quality men who can lead others on the most dangerous missions around the world. Eric explains that in 1991, during the Gulf War, a single team of six SEALs planted explosives and created such chaos that Saddam Hussein sent two entire divisions to respond, allowing the Allies to invade Kuwait from Saudi Arabia. Such Hell Week tests include races with inflatable boats, small IBS, 150-pound logs, rock portage, and a two-mile swim.

Of the 223 men who began BUD/S, only 23 remain, including Eric. Eric explains that the first SEALs were commissioned by President John F. Kennedy in 1962, because Kennedy knew that a war could not be fought with nuclear weapons, but would be better fought with flexible responses – such as special operations forces like the SEALs. Eric explains that American forces, especially Special Forces, are often misunderstood by the public. He explains that they are capable of taking down an Iraqi insurgent while protectively carrying a child to safety, for example. He explains that warriors are warriors because of their ability to apply strength to good purposes.

Chapter 11: Advanced Training – Eric and the BUD/S graduates move into Advanced Training. There, they learn about the September 11 terrorist attacks. Eric and his fellows realize they are going to war. Over the next few months, they hone and refine their skills to exacting perfection, from underwater operations to jumping out of planes to being able to assemble, load, and fire numerous weapons. SEAL class graduation takes place in concrete bay known as the “boat barn”, where the only decoration is an American flag. There, Eric and his classmates are given golden Tridents, which are pinned to their uniforms. Eric knows, however, that combat will be far different than all of their training, because people will actually be seeking to kill them.

Analysis

Eric’s decision to become a SEAL comes not merely from a desire to do good in the world, but to serve and protect his country as well. Based on Eric’s experiences as a humanitarian in places torn by war, poverty, terrorism, and crime, Eric has come to more deeply appreciate and value his country and the freedoms that America offers. Eric knows that America is a force for good in the world, and he seeks to be a way to implement that goodness. His training and testing to become a Navy SEAL will further develop both his courage and compassion in numerous, important ways.

As Eric comes to recognize through his appointed task of ensuring that Wong passes the final physical fitness test, Eric must be a leader. To lead others, he must know those whom he leads. As this later comes to bear in places like Iraq, Eric knows he must know those locals whom he is working with. At OCS, BUD/S, and in Advanced Training, Eric learns how to work effectively as a team with his fellow candidates, and tests the limits of his own endurance. The brutal training is utterly necessary, however, as the reader will note that a Drill Instructor explains there is no second place in war. Second place is death. Whatever humanitarian endeavors a SEAL may undertake, a SEAL’s primary duty is to war, and is to win at war.



Importantly, as Eric gets to know his fellows, he points out important things to the readers. For example, he notes that Hollywood has portrayed SEALs all as heavily-muscled killing machines, but not all SEALs have a Hollywood physique or think only of killing. He points out that SEALs are people too, such as Drew Bolton, who loves to read. He also notes that the Navy SEALs have had a long, storied, and important history ranging back to the pioneers of the SEALs, the Underwater Demolition Teams who cleared the Normandy beaches before D-Day, or the SEALs who diverted two entire Iraqi divisions during the Gulf War.

While Eric is going through his training, the United States is attacked by Al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks of that day bring terrorism to the United States in a way it has never experienced terrorism before. Terrorism here becomes a prominent theme alongside war, as the attacks of 9/11 bring about the War on Terror. Eric and his fellows understand that they will indeed be going to war in the coming months and years. Everything that Eric has learned and accomplished will now be put to the test like never before.

Vocabulary

precision, synchronized, ineffective, affirmation, amphibious, elegiac, ludicrous, delirium



Part III, Chapter 12 – Part III, Chapter 14

Summary

Chapter 12: Afghanistan – Prior to September 11, Eric recalls not ever having heard of Al-Qaeda. Eric brushes up on his history of Afghanistan, from Alexander the Great through the Soviet invasion of the 1970s. The Soviets were brutal, wiping out entire villages of people. The Americans backed the Mujahideen rebels, who eventually broke the Soviet occupation. In the chaos that followed the Soviet departure, the Taliban rose to power, instilling their own brutal Islamic rule and harboring the terrorist Osama Bin Laden.

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Congress gives President George W. Bush the power to find and kill anyone involved in 9/11. Bush gives the Taliban the ultimatum of handing over Bin Laden, or facing war. The Taliban refuse, so the United States sets to war. By 2003, Eric is sent to Afghanistan. While the Taliban have been driven from power and Al-Qaeda has been knocked back, they are still fighting an insurgent war. To counter them, a cooperative effort between American forces and local populations is needed.

Eric is called in to assess some of these efforts, including the need for winning hearts and minds and strengthening human intelligence. Personal contact for these things is critical. Eric embeds with a firebase not far from Kabul. Each day, Eric and a diverse team of military and civil professionals move out to befriend and earn the trust of the local population. They do this by caring for their injured, speaking about their lives, and spending time with the children. They also gather intelligence, track down insurgents and terrorists, and use cash to buy critical information. Information is also gained from detainees by rapport and patience, not fear and intimidation. Local relationships pay off, as local leaders direct Eric and his comrades to hidden explosives and suicide bomb trucks. After only a few weeks of this, Eric learns he is being given command of a Mark V special operations craft detachment in Southeast Asia.

Chapter 13: Southeast Asia – Eric is redeployed to Singapore to take command of his Mark V special operations craft detachment, where he commands two boats and twenty-one men. The Mark V boats are designed for secretly sending in and pulling out SEALs. They are heavily armed craft, and work by jet propulsion. There, Eric and his comrade, Doug “Crazy T” Traver, are made shellbacks for their first crossing of the equator. In Thailand, Eric’s team participates in a massive military exercise. While in Thailand, Eric rides an elephant with his buddy Kaj Larsen. It is during this time that Kaj reveals one of the SEALs is suspected of doing drugs, which prompts a urinalysis test of all members of the team and others around them. Several men, including several SEALs, are kicked out of the Navy as a result. Eric and his team later move on to the Philippines, where they are to fight terrorists. The Philippines, Eric explains, have been targeted by terrorists for their closeness with America. The terrorists are led by the



radical Abu Sayyaf. Eric's Americans help the Filipinos track down many of Sayyaf's men, and keep Sayyaf on the run.

Chapter 14: Kenya – Eric notes that some of America's greatest victories come when enough courage, intelligence, and discipline are displayed without actually having to fight. Eric says he learned this while in Kenya, where he was sent to Manda Bay. Many coastal cities in Kenya are Muslim, and they hate Americans. In Manda Bay, Eric is to serve as Naval Special Warfare Task Unit Manda Bay commander, and will be especially responsible for repairing damaged relations with locals. Eric explains that the War on Terror is not one to be won merely by battlefield victories, but by gaining absolute advantage, including among civilian populations. Eric's men work with the Kenyan military forces to target enemy craft, and also take time to spend with the locals, earning their support and trust by discussing things like schools and the health of residents. Eric notes, however, that it is far wiser to invest in ambassadors to future generations, such as teachers, than building actual schools. Schools become controversial political issues locally, and any building issues (like a leaky roof) will be blamed on the Americans. But pro-American teachers, however, can change the minds of generations to come. Such lessons – winning the hearts and minds of locals – will become especially important in Iraq.

Analysis

Eric arrives in Afghanistan following the American invasion. As Eric reveals, the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan harbored the terrorist network, Al-Qaeda, which was responsible for 9/11. When the Taliban refused President Bush's justified demand that the terrorists be handed over, the United States went to war. War becomes a focal point of Eric's career as a SEAL, because as the reader will recall, the primary purpose of the United States Armed Forces is to successfully conduct military operations. In this case, the American military has been called upon to depose the corrupt Taliban and to destroy Al-Qaeda.

Eric reveals that the American military victory that topples the Taliban and dislodges Al-Qaeda is brilliant, but another victory must be won. Eric is called in to assess efforts being made by the American military and its allies to win the hearts and minds of local populations. Here, Eric's humanitarian nature – his compassion – comes to complement his status as a warrior – his courage. Eric becomes part of a military and civilian team that reaches out to, and grows relationships with, locals. Over time, these efforts pay off as the locals come to recognize the Americans as truly good, and begin to point out hidden explosives and weapons caches. The locals realize the Americans are there to help them and are on their side through personal relationships, spending time with children, and caring for locals who need medical attention.

Eric is redeployed to Singapore to take command of a SEAL detachment, where the SEALs work in conjunction with local military allies of America in a massive exercise. The relations American military forces build with the military forces of other countries become crucial not only in the effectiveness of waging war, but in the waging of wars



against common enemies such as terrorism. It is in Thailand that Eric has the unfortunate duty of having to help root out drug-users, because they jeopardize the effectiveness of the SEAL teams and America's armed forces at large. In war, one must be clear-headed and prepared to fight at their best. Eric and his men must be at their best, as in the Philippines, they chase down terrorists and keep them on the run.

In addition to war, humanitarianism and long-term effects of humanitarian efforts matter greatly. Eric explains how it is a good thing that Americans always want to help build infrastructure in places, such as schools, but notes again that people must be able to stand on their own when help is no longer available or possible. Eric explains that any problems with a school, for example, will be blamed on Americans. Schools may have their purposes subverted, may be caught up in local politics, or may be destroyed. Instead of building schools, Eric believes money should be invested in things like training teachers, who will radically change the hearts and minds of future generations. The goal is long-term, not short-term improvement of the quality of life.

Vocabulary

hostile, haggard, predominant, clandestine, insertion, extraction, provocation, indigenous, interdicted



Part III, Chapter 15 – Afterword

Summary

Chapter 15: Iraq – Eric is in Iraq to see the beginning of the Surge, a dual effort of additional combat troops and renewed efforts at winning the hearts and minds of locals. Eric is assigned to track down Al-Qaeda leaders and operatives in Fallujah. Eric patrols in the day with Marines, and accompanies Army Rangers by night. They impress Eric greatly. By relying on locals, the effectiveness of the American forces is greatly increased. However, the taking and holding of detainees always causes problems due to jurisdictional issues and lack of a clear, stable judicial system. Likewise, many of the Iraqi forces treat their prisoners horribly and often arrest innocent people. Yet Eric knows that the Americans are not blameless in this because they fight alongside the Iraqi forces. Eric admits that not all choices in life are perfect, and that any war will always involve suffering in some form.

Epilogue: The Mission Continues – Three weeks after arriving home after the attack on the barracks, Eric learns that Travis Manion has been killed. After visiting with Travis's family, Eric goes to Bethesda Naval Hospital where he visits with wounded, recovering men, women, and their families. He learns from these servicemembers that, if they can't go back to serve with their comrades on the frontlines, they would like to help out their fellows back at home. As a result, Eric forms The Mission Continues, which offers fellowships for wounded and disabled veterans to serve at nonprofit, charitable, and public benefit organizations. Eric draws on everything he has learned, from Jason and Caroline to the Manions to Eric's own experiences. Chris Marvin becomes the organization's first fellow, and later goes on to become an MBA student at Wharton. Eric funds the second fellowship with his credit card for Matthew Trotter, injured in a shipboard accident. He goes on to work with Horses Helping the Handicapped. Over time, The Mission Continues grows and flourishes, providing more than 100 fellowships.

Afterword – Eric is thrilled to learn about Osama Bin Laden's death in May, 2011. Eric knows it is a testament to the SEALs who have been in the War on Terror for more than a decade, and to their families and loved ones. In the War on Terror to the date of the writing of the book's afterword in January, 2012, some seventy-four SEALs and support personnel have died in the War on Terror. Eric notes that more two-million men and women have served throughout the War on Terror, while the mission of the Mission Continues, continues. As of January, 2012, more than 250 fellowships have been awarded, and more than 25,000 Americans have joined them in volunteer efforts.

Analysis

Eric returns to Iraq where the new American strategy is paving the way to success. This involves a renewed fight against enemy combatants, and a renewed effort to win the hearts and minds of locals just as has been done in Afghanistan. Eric is impressed by



the Marines and Rangers that he serves with, seeing in them both courage and compassion. They are just as easily able to take down an enemy insurgent as they are able to protect and spend time with innocent civilians. It is a combined effort at war and humanitarianism that will lead to a better future.

Eric is also a realist, as he notes that all wars – even those fought for good purposes – have bad outcomes. There will always be suffering. He gives as an example the jurisdictional and judicial issues of detainees kept by Iraqi security forces in terrible prisons. Eric explains though that in life, not all choices are perfect, but people must do all they can to do good.

Eric's determination to continue doing good – as well as the inspiration he receives from other wounded and disabled veterans who want to continue to do good – is manifested in Eric's decision to create The Mission Continues. They have had courage in combat, and now have compassion in their return to civilian life. The Mission Continues combines the effects of war with the importance of humanitarianism, and allows servicemembers to continue to do good things in the country. Eric notes in his Afterword that, as of its writing in January, 2012, more than 250 fellowships have been awarded, and more than 25,000 people have volunteered in Mission Continues projects.

Vocabulary

idling, dishdasha, adjacent, floundered, radicalized



Important People

Eric Greitens

Eric Greitens is the narrator and subject of his autobiography, “The Heart and the Fist”. In the book, Eric recounts his life, focusing primarily on his experiences and education as a humanitarian, and his efforts and deployments as a SEAL where he brings his humanitarian knowledge to bear. Eric is a native of Missouri, and spends much of his time in college working overseas to help people in need, and to learn more about the world. His experience in other countries makes him more grateful to be an American, and this in turn fuels his decision to become a SEAL. As a SEAL, Eric knows he will be able to defend his country while also protecting and helping those in need around the world. Between college and his time in the SEALs, Eric travels to places as far away as China and Rwanda, and to combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. Following the death of friend and Marine Travis Manion, and following meeting with wounded and disabled veterans, Eric begins the organization The Mission Continues.

Travis Manion

Travis Manion is a U.S. Marine and native of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Travis befriends Eric while serving in Iraq, and comes to view his role as a Marine as akin to the Spartans defending their homeland against the invading Persians. Travis is a recent Naval Academy graduate and excellent wrestler. He is killed in combat in Fallujah while saving the lives of countless brothers-in-arms, and his death serves as the catalyst for Eric’s forming of The Mission Continues.

Joel Poudrier

Joel Poudrier is an intelligence officer who befriends Eric while serving in Iraq. Joel suffers a serious head wound in the Fallujah barracks attack, and returns to the States to be recover. While there, he learns that his friend, Travis Manion, has been killed, and so goes to visit the Manion family with Eric. Joel and Eric decide they must do something to honor Travis’s memory, which later becomes The Mission Continues.

Earl Blair

Earl Blair is an African-American boxer and boxing coach who takes Eric under his wing in North Carolina. Earl is a good man, but very disciplined and very intense. He strengthens Eric’s faith in God and helps Eric to understand that boxing – or whatever else Eric may do – is inseparable from his life as a whole.



Harold Jacobson

Harold Jacobson is Eric's grandfather, born and raised in Chicago and of Polish descent. Harold is a kind man, a veteran, and a boxer. He in part inspires Eric to try his hand at boxing. Harold is known as "Shah", a Polish word for "hush" or "quiet", since he likes to talk so much. Eric visits Harold in the hospital late in his life before he leaves for Bosnia, coming to regret not helping his grandfather put on lip balm. Eric wonders how he could so easily help people half a world away he doesn't know, but remained unable to help someone he knew so intimately. This inspires Eric to help all those he can, including those he knows and those he does not know.

Bosnian woman

A Bosnian woman speaks to Eric on a train to the refugee camps in Croatia. The woman demands to know why the United States is not intervening to stop the war, the terrorism, and the slaughter of innocents. This, in part, compels Eric to want to not only respond to help those in trouble, but to do something proactive to protect them in the first place.

Jason and Caroline

Jason and Caroline are an American married couple who live and work in Bolivia where they run a center for street children. There, they endeavor to get Bolivian kids off the streets, keep them drug-free, well-fed, and well-clothed. Eric meets and befriends Jason and Caroline, helps them out and documents their efforts, and learns from them that real change requires patience and time.

Mike Marise and Drew Bolton

Mike Marise is a Marine Corps F-18 Fighter Pilot who gives up his cockpit for ground combat in Iraq. Drew Bolton is the son of a logger who loves to read and becomes a Navy SEAL. Mike and Drew are representative of the two million Americans who come to serve in the War on Terror to defend the United States. Eric explains that these warriors are not Hollywood stereotypes, but real human beings who simply want to do their part.

Drill Instructors

Drill Instructors train Eric and his fellow candidates to become Naval officers and SEALs. The Drill Instructors make things as tough as they can on Eric and the others in order to ensure that only the best of the best make it through, and to make sure that they realize war is not a game. As one Drill Instructor reminds them, in war, there is no second-place prize. One lives or one dies. Eric takes this lesson to heart.

Osama Bin Laden

Osama Bin Laden is an Islamic terrorist and leader of the Islamic terrorist organization Al-Qaeda. Bin Laden and his network are quartered in Afghanistan by the Taliban, from where they plot and launch the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Within a month, American military forces have toppled the Taliban and sent Bin Laden and his terrorist network on the run. In May, 2011, Osama Bin Laden is killed by a detachment of Navy SEALs and finally dispensed justice.

Objects/Places

Trident

A golden Navy Trident is given to each SEAL upon graduation from Advanced Training. The Trident consists of an anchor, symbolizing the Navy, its roots, and its mission of power projection and peace; the trident, symbolizing a SEAL's connection to the sea; the pistol, representing the SEAL's capabilities on land; and the eagle, the nation's emblem of freedom and symbolic of the SEAL's air abilities. Eric is both honored and thrilled to receive his Trident and to be made a SEAL.

Dissertation

Eric's Oxford dissertation focuses on humanitarian relief efforts and how they might be made most effective. In his dissertation, Eric argues that long-term efforts must ultimately be strengthened, for the people volunteers help must be able to stand on their own when the volunteers are no longer able to help. Eric puts this theory into practice through his work as a humanitarian and his service as a SEAL, reaching out local populations and ensuring that they will be able to survive once he, and others helping them, have gone home.

Camera

A camera is carried by Eric throughout his travels around the world, especially during his time as a humanitarian. His first travels, including in China, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Bolivia, are spent not only helping the people he encounters, but documenting their lives as well. He brings these photographs with them wherever he gives talks about his efforts so that Americans can have a more intimate understanding of those suffering around the world.

Total Advantage

Total advantage is the sort of victory all military forces should achieve. It involves not simply winning in actual combat, but in winning the peace –the hearts and minds of those around the fighting. This sort of total advantage means that the locals will become friends and allies, and will fight with rather than against one if a fight occurs at all.

Fellowships

Fellowships are financial grants awarded by The Mission Continues. The fellowships are awarded to individual wounded and disabled veterans who wish to continue on with their service of others. The fellowships are designated for a specific amount of time



during which the individual veteran may continue his or her service for others. As of the Afterword, written in January 2012, The Mission Continues had awarded more than 250 fellowships.

Bosnia

Bosnia is a country in Southeastern Europe on the Balkan Peninsula. In the 1990s, it is torn apart by war and then terrorism and genocide on the part of the Serbs, who butcher the Bosnians. The Bosnians are angered when President Bill Clinton refuses to intervene militarily to stop the genocide, as Eric learns when he travels to assist with refugee efforts in neighboring Croatia. It helps instill in Eric the desire to do something good.

Rwanda

Rwanda is a country in Africa that is formerly a Belgian colonial possession. Rwanda is split apart by civil war and then genocide in the 1990s, as the Hutus slaughter the Tutsis based on divisions created by the Belgians during their rule. Eric travels to Rwanda to assist with refugees, and there encounters a devastating evil on a scale he has never encountered before. It makes him realize that human beings can be capable of such atrocity, and instills in him further the desire to want to do good in the world.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a mountainous country in the Middle East. It has a long and storied history of wars and invasions. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the radical Taliban come to power, take away the rights and freedoms of Afghans, and institute brutal Islamic fundamentalism as law. The Taliban harbor Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, who commit the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Within a month, American military forces have thrown the Taliban from power, and sent Al-Qaeda on the run. In Afghanistan, Eric puts his humanitarian knowledge to work as a SEAL, where he and other Americans reach out to win the hearts and minds of the local population, who in turn work with the Americans to eradicate insurgents and terrorists.

Iraq

Iraq is a country in the Middle East ruled by the brutal dictator Saddam Hussein, who committed genocide against his own people and funded terrorism. American military forces invade Iraq, overthrow Saddam, and seek to sow democracy. Iraq becomes the central battleground in the War on Terror, and is where Eric is redeployed. There, Eric works to defeat the insurgency and to win the hearts and minds of locals. Ultimately, local Iraqi populations side with the Americans and help them to pacify Iraq and win the peace.

Bethesda Naval Hospital

Bethesda Naval Hospital, part of the Water Reed National Military Medical Center, is located in Bethesda, Maryland. After returning from serving overseas, Eric goes to the hospital to meet with wounded and disabled veterans because he longs to continue to help others. These wounded and disabled veterans at the hospital hope to be able to return to the front lines, and if not, to find ways to help other veterans. This helps inspire Eric to begin *The Mission Continues*.

Themes

Humanitarianism

Humanitarianism is an important theme in the book “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy Seal” by Eric Grietens. Humanitarianism is the belief and practice of the alleviation of suffering for imperiled people based on their moral worth as human beings. Humanitarianism is not only an important theme in Eric’s book, but in Eric’s life. He considers humanitarianism to be equal and as equally important as his being a SEAL –requiring both courage and compassion to assist others in need.

When Eric is in college, he spends most of his vacation time traveling around the world, learning about the history and cultures of other countries. Eric meets student anti-Communists in China, and is inspired by their courage and heroism, knowing how brutal the Chinese government has been toward its own people. This makes him want to reach out to people in other countries to assist in alleviating their suffering. Eric decides to head next to Bosnia, but before he goes, he has an encounter with his grandfather that he both comes to regret and to redeem himself for, wherein he does not help his struggling grandfather put on lip balm. Eric wonders how he can travel around the world to help people he does not know, but cannot help someone he knows so well.

In Bosnia, Eric hears horrific stories of cruelty and genocide, and encounters the survivors of the Serbian-led massacres. In Rwanda, Eric encounters even more genocide survivors in the form of Tutsis who have escaped being massacred by the Hutus. In Bolivia, Eric encounters children who live on the streets in absolute poverty, spending their days sniffing glue to get high and being trapped in an endless cycle. In each of these places, Eric lends a hand to assist relief efforts, and to do what he can to make the suffering of these people lessen. Eric is inspired also by people like Jason and Caroline, who devote their lives to helping the children of Bolivia. Eric learns that humanitarianism is a practice which takes patience and time to bring about real change.

Eric also comes to accept the fact that humanitarianism is only as good as its long-term effects. While short-term goals, such as feed people are important, long-term goals, such as what these people will do when the volunteers must all go home, are just as important. Eric comes to believe that investment in people, rather than things like school buildings, matters most. He applies his humanitarian experience in places like Afghanistan and Iraq to great success, where the local populations rally with the Americans against the enemy. Winning a battle is important, Eric explains, but so too is humanly winning the hearts and minds of the people being protected.



War

War is an important theme in the book “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy Seal” by Eric Grietens. War involves open combat between two or more adversaries. Wars occur throughout the 1990s and 2000s, and have tragic and terrible consequences, even when wars are fought for good.

In the 1990s, Eric travels to Croatia to assist with Bosnian refugees who have fled their homeland due to war, terrorism, and genocide suffered at the hands of the Serbs. Thousands upon thousands of Bosnians flee their war-torn country for the safety of other countries. Not long after, the war in Rwanda between the Tutsis and the Hutus lead to wholesale slaughter and genocide of the Tutsis by the Hutus. Millions of Tutsis flee the country while hundreds of thousands of Tutsis are massacred. Eric comes to assist the Tutsi refugees, and sees firsthand the evil that humans can commit.

Eric decides to become a SEAL not only to protect American against enemy threats, but to help people around the world threatened by enemies. Eric trains for war just as the terrorist attacks against America on September 11, 2001, lead to the War on Terror. As Eric learns in his training, there is no second-place prize in war, only death. Eric understands that war will invariably lead to suffering and death, even when done for the right reasons. Eric loses many friends to combat, including Travis Manion, whose death serves as the catalyst to form The Mission Continues.

In war, Eric explains that victory must be total – not only on the battlefield, but among the hearts and minds of the people one is seeking to protect. The idea is to have a total advantage over the enemy, both civilly and militarily. Eric goes on to explain that, even though America has the most elite military in the world, America’s military forces are also the world’s most compassionate. He notes how American Marines just as easily take down an enemy insurgent as they use their own bodies to shield and protect children. Eric also explains that tragedies do occur in war, such as the deplorable conditions detainees are kept in by the Iraqi Security Forces. Eric explains that in life – especially in war – there are no easy choices, and the best that can be done must be done.

Terrorism

Terrorism is an important theme in the book “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy Seal” by Eric Grietens. Terrorism is a malicious, violent act (or the threat of such an act) targeted primarily at civilians to bring about a desired goal by the terrorists through bloodshed and fear. Terrorism is both immoral and illegal, and leads to great suffering and hardships on the part of its victims.

Eric travels throughout the world, and meets with refugees and survivors of terrorist attacks, and terror-related activities. In Bosnia, innocent civilians are targeted by the Serbs with the express desire to kill them, leading to mass executions and ultimately, genocide. In Rwanda, a civil war leads to the rise of terrorism, in which Hutus target and



massacre innocent Tutsis. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis are killed, with many more harmed and forced to flee based on the Belgian-instilled bigotry of the Hutus. In the Philippines, terrorists attempt to undermine a stable society by targeting civilians with attacks, especially Americans.

On September 11, 2001, the Islamic terrorist group Al-Qaeda launches terrorist attacks on the United States, leading to the deaths of nearly 3,000 innocent Americans. Because of this, the United States launches the War on Terror, aimed at destroying and obliterating terrorist networks around the world – particularly Al-Qaeda. Eric, as a SEAL, becomes part of the effort to destroy the terrorists and bring help to those who have suffered under them. American troops deploy to Iraq, and later to Afghanistan to combat terrorism.

As Eric serves in Iraq and Afghanistan, he knows that the American response to terrorism must be even stronger. This comes not merely in hunting down and killing terrorists and insurgents, but in ensuring that local populations may live well and may live in peace when the Americans have returned home. Eric and his comrades reach out to local populations, befriending them, helping them, and earning their trust. As a result, local populations bravely come to side with the United States in courage rather than remaining potential victims to the terrorists.

Courage and Compassion

Courage and Compassion is an important theme in the book “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy Seal” by Eric Grietens. Courage involves the bravery and ability of one to do something fearful or dangerous, or to display strength in the face of such fear and tragedy. Compassion is the sympathy and desire to help those who are suffering or have been wronged.

Eric explains clearly that courage and compassion are utterly essential to humanitarianism and to his career as a SEAL. He also notes that courage and compassion are dependent upon one another. As Eric explains, without courage, compassion falters, and without compassion, courage has no direction. It takes courage for Eric to fly around the world to new places as a college student to help the refugees who have suffered at the hands of others. Here, Eric also displays compassion by being willing to put his own life on hold by helping others, such as the Bosnian and Tutsi refugees.

Clearly, Eric wants to help these and other people. He decides that one of the best ways to do this will be to become a SEAL. In such a role, he will be able to do courageous and compassionate things both in protecting, and helping those in peril. Eric’s training to become a SEAL is courageous, for the training is brutal and designed to ensure only the best of the best become SEALs, for such is the importance and critical nature of their work. Eric heads into combat as SEAL as well, which also requires great courage since he faces down death on a constant basis.



Eric has courage as a SEAL, and compassion as a humanitarian; and compassion as a SEAL and courage as a humanitarian. In Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere as a SEAL, Eric puts his humanitarian side to good use. He helps to assess American relations with local populations, and to improve them where needed. He speaks admiringly of the American troops who exhibit courage in taking down a terrorist or insurgent, and then courageously and compassionately use their own bodies to shield and protect innocent children.

Learning

Learning is an important theme in the book “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy Seal” by Eric Grietens. Learning forms a core part of Eric’s life, as readers will note that he devotes part of the book’s subtitle, “The Education of a Humanitarian”, to education. Learning occurs for Eric academically and experientially, both in his time as a humanitarian aid worker and a Navy SEAL.

Eric, a Missouri native, wants to learn more about the world and its people as a young man. He travels to China, where he meets with and learns of the efforts of student protestors who campaign against Communism. Eric takes up boxing when he returns from China, which will strengthen his faith and help him learn to become more courageous. Through boxing, Eric learns that life, and whatever else he does such as boxing, are indistinguishable from one another. Each one is totally dependent on the other. Eric will ultimately come to see his work as both SEAL and humanitarian as indistinguishable from one another.

Eric next travels to Croatia and Rwanda to help refugees from among Bosnia and the Tutsis, respectively, who have managed to survive war and genocide. Eric learns from these experiences that true evil is possible at the hands of human beings. His travels in Bolivia expose him to poverty on a massive scale when he sees how children live in the streets addicted to sniffing glue, and sees how these children will never have a chance. An American married couple named Jason and Caroline, who are working with some of the kids, keeping them clean, and keeping them off the streets, helps Eric understand and learn that real change takes time. He finishes up his education at Oxford in England, writing in a dissertation about how important it is that the long-term health and vitality of those who have suffered is not about what they are given, but about what they do with their lives after volunteers and aid workers have gone.

Eric then decides to become a SEAL. He attends Naval Officer Candidate School, and upon graduation, begins SEAL training and later, Advanced Combat Training. As a Drill Instructor explains to another SEAL candidate, there is no second-place prize in war. One wins, or one dies. Due to his humanitarian work and studies, Eric is sent to Iraq, and to various posts around the world where he ensures American success by drawing on all that he has experienced and learned. As he explains to the reader, victory isn’t only winning on the battlefield, but it is total advantage: it is about winning the hearts and minds of the people one is trying to help. When Eric visits the wounded at Bethesda

Naval Hospital, he learns that everyone wishes they could do something to help their comrades if they cannot return to combat. Eric therein begins *The Mission Continues*.

Styles

Structure

Eric Greitens tells his autobiography “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy SEAL” in the first-person reflective omniscient narrative. This is done for several reasons. First, Eric is telling his own story in the book, so it is only natural that he writes from a first-person perspective. Second, Eric is recounting the events several years after they have happened, so his writing takes on a tone of reflection and recall. Third, because of this, he is able to provide contextual information in the book, including things of which he was not aware of at the time of his experiences described, such as his knowledge of Al-Qaeda in 2001. Eric’s first-person narration allows him to describe the things he felt, thought, and experienced, communicated intimately to the reader in a very personal and straightforward way. This makes Eric’s experiences all the more compelling, and all the more impressive.

Perspective

Eric Greitens tells his autobiography “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy SEAL” in language that is simple and straightforward. It is clear based on Eric’s life and education that he is a very intelligent individual, but he writes for a general audience. He does this for several reasons. The first is to be able to impress upon people the importance of the things he writes, allowing people to easily and more accurately understand those things about which he writes – from refugee camps in Croatia to the war-torn streets of Fallujah. Second, he has important messages and thoughts to convey to readers, and wants to make these points clearly and plainly – such as the importance of courage and compassion in human life. Third, the simple language is evidence of Eric’s explanation that he, and the other SEALs, are not mere Hollywood stereotypes but are ordinary guys who have done extraordinary things and in so doing, have become extraordinary. Eric and his fellows SEALs are human.

Tone

Eric Greitens divides his autobiography “The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy SEAL” into three primary parts, with each part being subdivided into chapters. Each part involves a specific portion of Eric’s life relating to his education as a humanitarian and making as a SEAL, and each chapter deals with a specific event, or series of events relating to the overall part. In Part I: Mind and Fist, Eric recounts his early life, early education, and boxing days – the mind (education) and the fist (boxing). In Part II: Heart and Mind, Eric recounts his continuing education and firsthand experience in helping refugees – the heart (humanitarian work) and the mind (education). In Part III: Heart and Fist, Eric recounts his work to become a Navy SEAL,

and the humanitarian efforts made toward suffering people as a SEAL – the heart (humanitarian work) and the fist (service as a SEAL). These three parts are concluded by an Epilogue in which Eric describes his work in founding The Mission Continues, and an Afterword in which Eric speaks of the death of Bin Laden and the work The Mission Continues has done up through the beginning of 2012.



Quotes

This is a book about service on the frontlines.

-- Eric Greitens (Preface paragraph 1)

Importance: In the Preface to his book, Eric explains succinctly to the reader that his book is about serving on the frontlines. While this certainly includes combat and danger, it also includes the humanitarian efforts of Eric and the Navy SEALs. All too often, people assume that American military forces only ever go to war, but this is not true, for American servicemembers do tremendous humanitarian service for people around the world as well.

As warriors, as humanitarians, they've taught me that without courage, compassion falters, and without compassion, courage has no direction.

-- Eric Greitens (Preface paragraph 1)

Importance: As Eric continues the Preface, he makes clear the case for courage and conviction. He explains that both are equally important in the role a SEAL plays. SEALs, and other men and women in uniform, must be brave so that they may be compassionate. They need courage to travel the globe on their missions. Yet, they also need compassion, because that moral sense of ethics gives them the right direction to follow in their missions. Courage and compassion become intertwined throughout the book, as the reader will learn.

The details I heard were so sickening, I found it hard to believe that the people sitting in the trailers telling me these stories were in fact the same people who had lived them; the stories seemed to come from another world entirely.

-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 4 paragraph 37)

Importance: Eric's first real experience regarding the horrors perpetrated on innocent people truly comes through his time in Bosnia, where he learns about the disgusting cruelty of the Serbian Army against the Bosnians. Eric is asked by a Bosnian woman why the Americans haven't intervened to stop the genocide. Eric finds himself wondering why, and finds the peaceful quiet of America – and his own life – in sharp contrast to the horrors of what is going on in Bosnia in the mid-1990s.

It had left me hungry to do more: to document the lives of people living with courage through tragedy and find a way to help them.

-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 5 paragraph 1)

Importance: Eric reveals that his experience in Bosnia was transformative. It left in him a deep desire to help people, and to protect them. As such, Eric travels to Rwanda in May, 1994, and experiences genocide on a scale unseen since the Holocaust. This leaves in him the resolve to do more to help those in trouble around the world.



Here in Bolivia most of the kids played in bare feet, and they had as much fun as we ever had. Alone, human beings can feel hunger. Alone, we can feel cold. Alone, we can feel pain. To feel poor, however, is something we do only in comparison to others.

-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 6 paragraph 26)

Importance: Eric next travels to Bolivia to document the lives of street children and the dire poverty that has affected them. Eric learns that, even in such bad situations, community and humanity can still lead to a good life. He notes that poverty is only something noted when people compare themselves to others, that the kids he plays soccer with in their bare feet could care less about fancy shoes, but merely want to play for the love of it.

Doing humanitarian work overseas, I had come to realize that it's not enough to fight for a better world; we also have to live lives worth fighting for.

-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 7 paragraph 2)

Importance: Eric explains here that he has come to understand the importance not only of fighting for a better world, but having a life worth fighting for. Eric comes to understand this kind of life at Oxford, where he learns about things like joy, beauty, and peace – all things worth preserving and fighting for. People must make the most of the lives that they are given, and this is something which Eric endeavors to do.

Amid the pleasures of Oxford life and the draw of the boxing team, I was still determined to find a pathway for humanitarian work. I wrote a dissertation on the subject. My thesis was simple: What matters for the long-term health and vitality of people who have suffered is not what they are given, but what they do. (Chapter 7 paragraph 39)

Importance: While at Oxford, Eric is determined to continue on in his humanitarian work. He writes a dissertation on humanitarianism, noting that what matters about helping those who are suffering is not in what they are given, but in what they do. For example, a mission to another country to help refugees may last only so long, but when the volunteers must go home, the suffering people must be able to survive on their own. This will have incredibly important consequences for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that are only a few years away.

I knew that I wanted to serve my country... The strong often need to protect the weak, and I believed that rather than talking about what should be done, I should do it. I should live my values by serving.

-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 8 paragraph 2)

Importance: Eric travels to Florida for Officer Candidate School, where he will begin his journey toward becoming a SEAL. Eric explains that his decision to do so was a matter of serving his country, and being able to actually put his values into practice in a way he had never done before. This includes having the ability to protect those who need protecting.



It's death. There is no prize for second place.
-- BUD/S Drill Instructor (Chapter 9 paragraph 37)

Importance: BUD/S training is tough. Many candidates drop out. As the Drill Instructor explains to a struggling trainee in simple, no-nonsense language, there is no trying in the SEALs. SEALs win, or they die. And to die is not a reward.

Warriors are warriors not because of their strength, but because of their ability to apply strength to good purpose.
-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 10 paragraph 157)

Importance: Eric explains that American forces are often misunderstood, believed only to be capable of great violence for a good purpose. Eric explains that, while this is true, there is another side to the American Special Forces. They are capable of taking down an Iraqi insurgent while protectively carrying a child to safety, for example. Eric explains that warriors are warriors because of their ability to apply strength to good purposes.

The best preparation for battle will sometimes mean that we do not have to use force at all.
-- Eric Greitens (Chapter 14 paragraph 1)

Importance: During a visit to Kenya, Eric learns that a War on Terror is not just a question of battlefield victory, but of winning hearts and minds. He explains that rather than investing in building schools, for example, Americans should invest in training teachers who are pro-American, thus bringing new generations of foreign countries closer together with Americans in the future. Such things lead to total advantages, rather than just battlefield victories.

Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and author of 'Man's Search for Meaning', wrote that human beings create meaning in three ways: through their work, through their relationships, and by how they choose to meet unavoidable suffering. Every life brings hardship and trial, and every life also offers deep possibilities for meaningful work and love.
-- Eric Greitens, after Victor Frankl (Epilogue paragraph 84)

Importance: Eric concludes his book by speaking about Viktor Frankl, who survived the Holocaust and great suffering in life to do good things with his life after having endured so much. Eric speaks about the importance of a meaningful human life, noting that real meaning comes through work, relationships, and dealing with suffering. Eric has done all three, from his work and service as a SEAL to his humanitarian efforts to his building relationships with local populations.



Topics for Discussion

Humanitarianism

How does Eric first get into humanitarianism? Why does humanitarian outreach become so important to Eric? What things does it teach him, especially about himself, the United States, and what he wants to do with this life?

Humanitarianism

Of all of Eric's humanitarian efforts, his time in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Bolivia affect him most deeply. Why? How? What do these experiences inspire Eric to do?

War

In what ways does war influence the need for humanitarian outreach? How does Eric ultimately come to view war, including after he himself has served in combat? How does Eric see war in relation to humanitarianism as an American Navy SEAL? Why?

War

What insights about war and humanitarianism does Eric offer throughout the book? What has shaped his understanding of these things? Why does Eric offer these insights to readers?

Terrorism

What is terrorism? In what ways, and where, does terrorism appear in the book (especially with respect to the human cost)? How do Eric and the American military seek to wipe out terrorism?

Terrorism

In Afghanistan and Iraq, Eric and the American military forces do more than just fighting enemy insurgents and terrorists. What else do they do? Why? Are these efforts successful?



Courage and Compassion

What is courage? What is compassion? What does Eric believe about courage and compassion? Why? Select three instances of courage and compassion being simultaneously displayed during the book, and describe them.

Courage and Compassion

Why do courage and compassion matter so much to Eric? How does Eric's service as a SEAL demonstrate both courage and compassion, both in his time as a SEAL, and the humanitarian outreach he makes as a SEAL?

Learning

Select three lessons that Eric learns throughout his life. Why do these lessons matter to Eric? How do they ultimately affect his life?

Learning

What lessons does Eric learn while training to become a SEAL? How do these lessons serve Eric in combat? How do these lessons serve Eric after he returns to the United States, especially in relation to *The Mission Continues*?