

Ernie Pyle

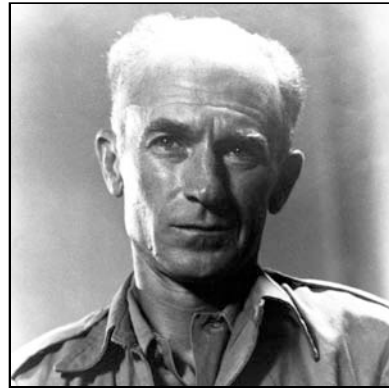
1900–1945



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Newspaper columnist Ernie Pyle followed U.S. troops in Europe and Africa and then to the Pacific. His columns from the battlefields testify to both the glory and the grief of war and pay tribute to those who fought it.



As you read the biography below, think about what Pyle's wartime columns must have meant to people back home.



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In 1945 the movie *The Story of G.I. Joe* played in theaters across the United States. Sadly, the person who helped create the story it told had died a few months earlier.

Today it may be hard to imagine how people of the 1940s got their news about the war. Television was not widely used and the Internet was yet to be invented. During World War II, people went to movie houses to watch newsreels of events that had taken place days or even weeks earlier. At home, they huddled around radios for news reports. Daily papers, and the “Extras” printed to update them, were grabbed from newsboys on the street and then read and reread. War correspondents became heroes, Ernie Pyle among them.

Pyle's newspaper columns were not straight news reporting. Rather, they gave his unique view of the events he observed as he traveled with the fighting men. He wrote of “GI Joe,” the average guy who endured the hardships of war for the sake of his buddies in the field and for those back home. He told their stories in the language they used. His fondness and respect for the fighting men is apparent throughout his columns. In 1944 he won a Pulitzer Prize.

Pyle traveled with U.S. forces throughout the campaigns of North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and France. Ill health forced him to go home in 1944, but he didn't stay in the United States for long. He told his wife that for him to stop his reporting would be the same as a fighting man deserting.

Pyle arrived in the Pacific in time to cover the battle for Okinawa. He was killed by a Japanese sniper on Ie Shima, a nearby island, not long after he got there.

The United States in World War II

Biography

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Recall** Trace Ernie Pyle's movements from early in the war until he arrived in the Pacific.

2. **Analyze** Explain why Pyle's columns were so popular with the people back home.

3. **Evaluate** In what ways has the image of GI Joe changed since the 1940s? In what ways has it stayed the same?

ACTIVITY

Check libraries for collections of Ernie Pyle's war reporting. Practice and then read one column aloud for classmates.