



# The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity

By Jill Lepore

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### Winner of the Bancroft Prize

King Philip's War, the excruciating racial war—colonists against Indians—that erupted in New England in 1675, was, in proportion to population, the bloodiest in American history. Some even argued that the massacres and outrages on both sides were too horrific to "deserve the name of a war."

The war's brutality compelled the colonists to defend themselves against accusations that they had become savages. But Jill Lepore makes clear that it was after the war—and because of it—that the boundaries between cultures, hitherto blurred, turned into rigid ones. King Philip's War became one of the most written-about wars in our history, and Lepore argues that the words strengthened and hardened feelings that, in turn, strengthened and hardened the enmity between Indians and Anglos.

Telling the story of what may have been the bitterest of American conflicts, and its reverberations over the centuries, Lepore has enabled us to see how the ways in which we remember past events are as important in their effect on our history as were the events themselves.

Winner of the the 1998 Ralph Waldo Emerson Award of the Phi Beta Kappa Society

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## **The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity** By Jill Lepore **Bibliography**

- Rank: #416427 in eBooks
- Published on: 2009-09-21
- Released on: 2009-09-23
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In 1675, tensions between Native Americans and colonists residing in New England erupted into the brutal conflict that has come to be known as King Philip's War, named after Philip, the leader of the Wampanoag Indians. Jill Lepore's book is an evocative and insightful study of America's recollection and understanding of one of the bloodiest wars to take place on its soil.

Lepore, an assistant professor of history at Boston University, depicts the horrors of this conflict, from gruesome tortures to the massacre of women and children, so explicitly barbaric that the term "war" barely applies. An underlying theme of her narrative is that this unfortunate battle only served to strengthen the boundaries of cultural difference between the Native Americans and colonists, setting a rigid foundation for the many years of enmity between Indians and Anglos that would ensue.

Skillfully drawing on accounts of substance from participants on both sides, Lepore presents a balanced overview of the causes and effects of this conflict and the reverberations it would have over the centuries to follow, ultimately revealing that how a past event is interpreted is often just as important as the event itself.

#### From Library Journal

Shortly before his death in 1675, John Sassamon warned the governor of Plymouth Colony that Philip, a Wampanoag Indian leader, was about to attack English settlers. When Sassamon was found dead, indications pointed to murder. Three Wampanoag Indians were tried, convicted, and executed. Days later, Philip and his followers began attacking and destroying one English settlement after another. Colonial armies retaliated, killing Indian warriors on the battlefield and their families in the villages. Rather than providing a battle-by-battle description, Lepore (history, Boston Univ.) presents the war through the diaries, books, articles, and dramas written about it. Her major theme is that wars and their histories cannot be separated. Wars generate their own narratives, serving to define the geographical, political, cultural, and national boundaries between warring peoples. A unique approach to historical interpretation, this book will appeal to academic libraries and those that specialize in early American history. (Illustrations not seen.)?Grant A. Fredericksen, Illinois Prairie Dist. P.L., Metamora

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#### From [Booklist](#)

King Philip's War erupted in Massachusetts in 1675. When it ended in 1678, vast numbers of homes and entire villages, both English and Native American, had been burned. In proportion, the loss of life was greater than in the Civil War. Both sides participated in the war with barbarity, slaughtering women and children and inflicting hideous torture upon captives. Lepore, an assistant professor of history, has conveyed the horror and stark brutality of the war in eloquent prose, often relying on selected testimony of participants from both sides. In addition, she has extracted a deeper meaning from the conflict. In her view, the savagery of the war shaped later American attitudes toward Native Americans and convinced many of the impossibility of whites and even "civilized" Native Americans living together. Inevitably, Native American attitudes toward whites and the possibilities of coexistence were also negatively influenced. This is a powerful book that doesn't shy away from depicting the sheer horror of what must be termed a race war. *Jay Freeman*

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#### **Charles Tebo:**

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