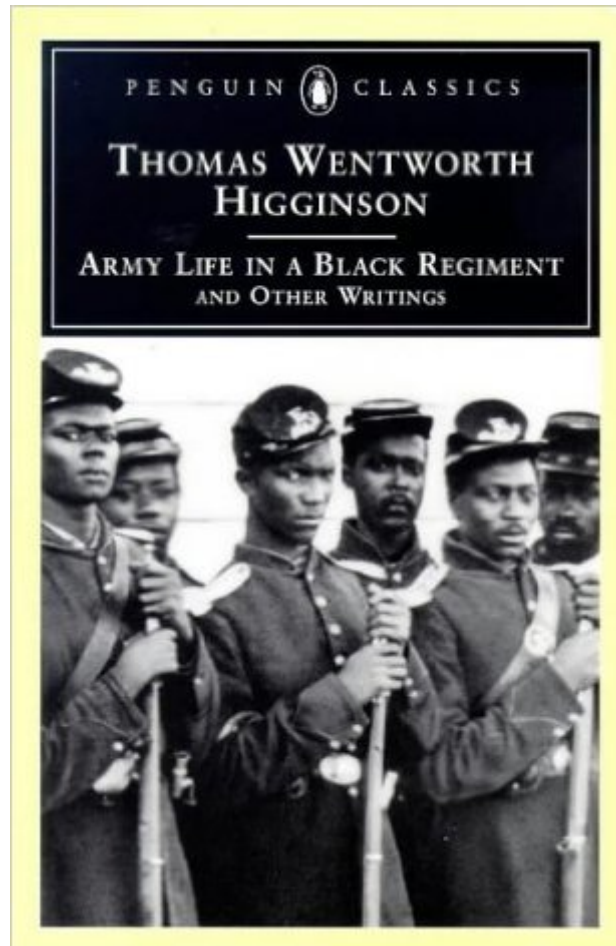


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Army Life In A Black Regiment: And Other Writings (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

A stirring account of wartime experiences from the leader of the first regiment of emancipated slaves Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a Unitarian minister, was a fervent member of new England's abolitionist movement, an active participant in the Underground Railroad, and part of a group that supplied material aid to John Brown before his ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry. When the Civil War broke out, Higginson was commissioned as a colonel of the black troops training in the Sea Islands off the coast of the Carolinas. Shaped by American Romanticism and imbued with Higginson's interest in both man and nature, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* ranges from detailed reports on daily life to a vivid description of the author's near escape from cannon fire, to sketches that conjure up the beauty and mystery of the Sea Islands. This edition also features a selection of Higginson's essays, including "Nat Turner's Insurrection" and "Emily Dickinson's Letters." For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Several years ago I urged John Seelye to edit this work for Penguin. A couple of years after that, he asked me to do it instead, and I did. This is a remarkable book about a literate Yankee (Higginson

"discovered" the poet Emily Dickinson) who "discovers" the South. It's also "about" Black soldiers in a white war, white officers in a Black regiment, self-discovery, rivers, and hope. Much of the imagery and characterization in the movie GLORY seems to have been lifted from this book: it is, after all, a first-hand narrative of war by an idealist sorely tested by politics and physical hardship. Higginson's writing of the book is in part his attempt to deal with what today we would call Post-Traumatic-Stress Disorder, and it is no wonder that the tone sometimes reminds the reader of Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River." Because the teller of this story emerges as an interesting person per se, this edition includes some of his other essays, ranging from his fascination with slave rebellion to his appreciation for poetry.

In 1862 Thomas Wentworth Higginson was commissioned as a colonel in the Union Army and assigned to train emancipated slaves to become soldiers. He did so on the Sea Islands off the coast of the Carolinas. This is his story. His accounts of traveling up the St. Johns and St. Mary's Rivers during the war with his regiment were thrilling but the best chapter in my opinion was about his own personal decision to swim to the Confederate lines at night, naked, to scout out their positions. The chapter is entitled "A Night in the Water." It is gripping stuff. The narrative has its ups and downs, but overall, this is well worth reading.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Harvard graduate, abolitionist and Unitarian took a challenge that most in his position would have shied away from. He organized the first South Carolina Regiment made up of Black slaves. This is his story told by him of the trials and endurance of his people as they struggled to learn all that a soldier needed to know. They were more than up for the task. As you read Higginson's diary it is clear how his preconceptions are erased as he comes to know these men. This is a wonderful account by a white officer of his experience with Black troops. A volume not to be missed by the Civil War buff.

The author was a writer before he ever thought of muskets and artillery. Frequent contributor to Atlantic Monthly, Higginson's lovely style occasionally sounds dated and prejudiced to our ears, but what he did in leading the first black regiment far exceeds anything he wrote. His amusement at childlike naïveté is balanced by his awe of certain black non-commissioned officers. No one who has ever feared dark or tide or water will soon forget the growing terror of the chapter 'In the Water,' as Higginson becomes lost in the dark while exploring a tidal estuary.

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