

# The March



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In 1864, after Union general William Tecumseh Sherman burned Atlanta, he marched his sixty thousand troops east through Georgia to the sea, and then up into the Carolinas. The army fought off Confederate forces and lived off the land, pillaging the Southern plantations, taking cattle and crops for their own, demolishing cities, and accumulating a borne-along population of freed blacks and white refugees until all that remained was the dangerous transient life of the uprooted, the dispossessed, and the triumphant. Only a master novelist could so powerfully and compassionately render the lives of those who marched.

The author of *Ragtime*, *City of God*, and *The Book of Daniel* has given us a magisterial work with an enormous cast of unforgettable characters—white and black, men, women, and children, unionists and rebels, generals and privates, freed slaves and slave owners. At the center is General Sherman himself; a beautiful freed slave girl named Pearl; a Union regimental surgeon, Colonel Sartorius; Emily Thompson, the dispossessed daughter of a Southern judge; and Arly and Will, two misfit soldiers.

Almost hypnotic in its narrative drive, *The March* stunningly renders the countless lives swept up in the violence of a country at war with itself. The great march in E. L.

Doctorow's hands becomes something more—a floating world, a nomadic consciousness, and an unforgettable reading experience with awesome relevance to our own times.

From the Hardcover edition.

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