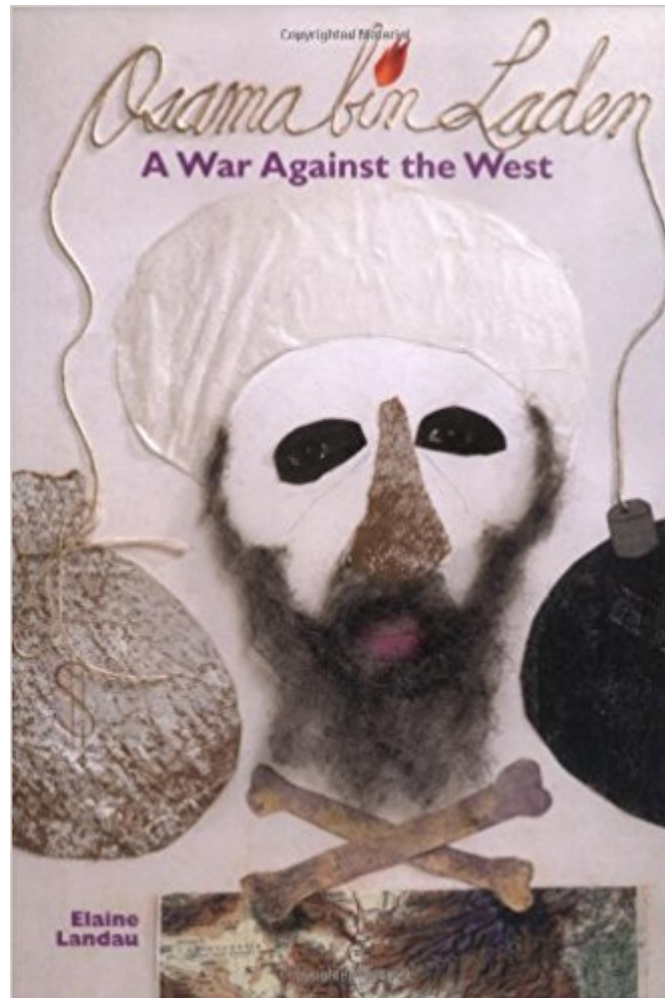




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# Osama Bin Laden: A War With Th



## Synopsis

Book by Landau, Elaine

## Book Information

Hardcover: 144 pages

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 6 & Up--In preparation since 1998, Landau's title nonetheless has little to offer readers who want to know what makes this man tick, beyond generalities about Islamic fundamentalism and a thin framework of facts fleshed out by suppositions. Of course, being private, cagey, and thoroughly conversant in techniques of disinformation, bin Laden keeps his past as shadowy as his present whereabouts-but as Landau's source notes are limited to previously published print resources, she obviously hasn't tried very hard. She does lay out bin Laden's family history, trace his general movements over the past 20 years, convey a sense of his methods and organizational skills, and, while separating him sharply from the Muslim mainstream, notes his ominous popularity in much of the Middle East. She also uncritically assumes his responsibility for the September 11th disaster-a connection that, government assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, has not as yet been unequivocally established-and, as lines like "The alliance would be crucial militarily" show, has made hasty revisions in an effort to stay on top of recent events. Supplemented by a regularly updated Web site such as the one associated with PBS Frontline's "Hunting bin Laden," this book may help students toward some understanding of the origins and motives of international terrorism,

but it's only an early, and superficial, entry in an upcoming rush of titles on the topic. John Peters, New York Public Library Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Gr. 6-10. Now that bin Laden's name is a household word, the need for a book about the man is more pressing than ever. Landau, who is known for her solid research, applies her considerable talents here, and because she has been working on this volume since 1998, it's far more valuable than any quick release. Landau covers most aspects of bin Laden's life, starting with his privileged boyhood. As a young adult, bin Laden reveled in Beirut's nightlife, but after restoring mosques, he became religious, eventually becoming fundamentalist in his beliefs. He fought against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, becoming a hero to many, some of whom were recruited into his terrorist network. Landau also looks closely at bin Laden's involvement in terrorist attacks in Somalia and the bombing of the USS Cole. Her narrative is absorbing, and she does a fine job explaining the evolution of a terrorist while putting bin Laden's life into the context of global issues and concerns, especially the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. The problem, of course, is that Landau says bin Laden is still alive, something that can change any time, and once it does, the book will seem dated. Nevertheless, the background information will remain valid and useful, and young people wanting to understand current events will do well to start here. To be illustrated with photographs. Ilene Cooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I bought this with reservations. I wanted an unbiased look into his life. I have read part of this before and although, of course, there are hints of westernized thought I did get the sense that the author's efforts were simply to supply the facts. Regardless of what he has done it is an interesting read in the respect that we can see what has led him to grow to become so angry at Western ideas. If you are an International Relations major such as myself then this will help you immensely...but you won't learn anything specifically that you wouldn't have learned from some intense googling.

This short, easy-to-read book is a biography of Osama bin Laden, the founder of al Qaeda. The book begins with a look at Islamic fundamentalism, showing how their philosophy differs from non-fundamentalist Islam. This is probably the weakest part of the book, as the footnotes all show that the author used Western journalists as resources, rather than Islamic scholars. After that, the book looks at Osama bin Laden's life, from earliest childhood through to the beginning of the American involvement in Afghanistan (where Osama bin Laden disappeared). I found the book to be very informative, and quite interesting. I did not notice any particular demonizing of him, and the

author seemed to be at pains to separate him from non-fundamentalist Islam. I was very disappointed with that first chapter, but other than that found this to be a very good book, one that I highly recommend.

Elaine Landau's *Osama bin Laden: A War Against the West* could have been written for adults who want information without a lot of academic language; she does not water down her subject or simplify the language. However, she misses the mark when she makes assertions such as describing the Twin Towers as "a towering landmark that reflected the United States as its best." If she were more exact, she might have said it reflected Western Capitalism at its best. Landau succeeds in presenting a well researched life of bin Laden using chronology -where he has lived, worked, his coming of age in his political position, and his development as a terrorist - to structure the book. She treats the subject fairly in the following ways: She explains the full meaning of Jihad and what it means to the majority of Muslims: a war within oneself to purify one's spirit. She presents bin Laden's jihad within a framework of his desire to have an Islamic Middle East free of Western control and influence. She defines what Western means in Fundamentalist Islamic terms: families in disarray, drug use, a society without morality, etc. Also, she examines the role of the United States in supporting the Fundamentalist cause in terms of money and arms. The United States supplied arms to Muslim fighters in Afghanistan because we viewed Russian as a larger threat. The CIA has a photograph from that war of Osama bin Laden holding a U.S. supplied Stinger-a heat seeking ground to air missile. There are several telling photographs:1. A man with a stack of radios confiscated by the Taliban.2. A child by an army tank in Somalia (with a questionable caption: " Exploiting brutal unrest and famine in Somalia, bin laden sought to establish jihad, or holy war, in that country in an effort to expel Western Influence.3. A protester in Pakistan with a poster of support for Bin Laden.4. And several photographs of bin Laden. There is a glossary, chapter notes, and a full index. I would suggest adding maps to show where the many countries are that bin Laden has either lived, visited, or impacted through his money and vision: Chad, Somalia, Algeria, The Philipines, Sudan, Bosnia, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Afghanistan, etc. The cover is the most biased piece: a collaged face of bin Laden that resembles a ghoulish African Tribal mask flanked by a bomb and a money bag with cross bones at his neck. On the back are recommended books, some of which I have read, as well. Represented in that list of recommended books are books that hold a critical lense to the Middle East but nothing that deconstructs the United States history within that region. Hopefully Landau is at work on that now. This is a subject which will impact the world for countless generations and the need for accurate information is critical. Overall, I really liked this book and

would recommend it for anyone wanting to understand the spread of an extreme, fundamentalist Muslim ideology and Osama bin Laden's role. Readers and librarians have a responsibility to become knowledgeable about Islam so that the beliefs of peace loving Muslims will not be confused with the beliefs of fundamentalist terrorists. A must have for the school and public library.

The book I read was of Osama bin Laden and his life. In the beginnngs Osama was a Muslim who believed in Allah . Osama's views came straight out of the Muslim holy bible (Koran). It stated that anyone who committed adultery, gambled, cheated, drank alcohol, eats pork or lends money or at interest were going to the gates of hell. Since we as a nation do each and every one of these things Osama saw us as the enemy to his religion. His father died in a terrible plane crash. That is how he got the idea of Sept. 11th. He wanted to do what he thought his father would have done. Take out the enemy before they overrun you. So Osama took his religious views out on the United States because he didn't want our corrupt and immoral ways to spread to his country. The book as a whole was very interesting to me. I got to kind of know the man who some Americans have called "Satan himself". To really get a good look into his life tells you way he did what he did. I totally don't agree with what he did to the US when we didn't do anything to him but he was brought up to think that the US is corrupt and should not be able to spread our ways to any other country. In Osama's own words "The United States shouldn't be able to infect the rest of the world so I took care of it". Osama is such an evil man. I can't believe how many terrible things he did to others. This book goes into detail of his life and in my opinion it does a very good job of showing who and why Osama is Osama. One of the things that I didn't like about this book was that the author Elaine Landau sounded like she agreed with what he did to us. It made me upset to read some parts of this book because it was like she was siding with the enemy. She said that Osama Bin Laden didn't become an internationally wanted terrorist overnight, she's right. But the way she writes that it was the Afghanistan war that changed him for the worst. She stated him as brave, a leader and a hero. Saying this made me wonder how a author who knows what a man did that was so horrible, how could she call him a hero?!

From Texas is way out of line here. What gives her the right to openly insult Muslims on ?? I am utterly horrified and if I may say, as a former Christian converting to Judaism, take a look at your own faith, honey. Ever hear of the Spanish Inquisition or the French Wars of Religion???? PS, FREE SPEECH LIVES, and every person of every belief STILL has the right to publish what he wants.

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