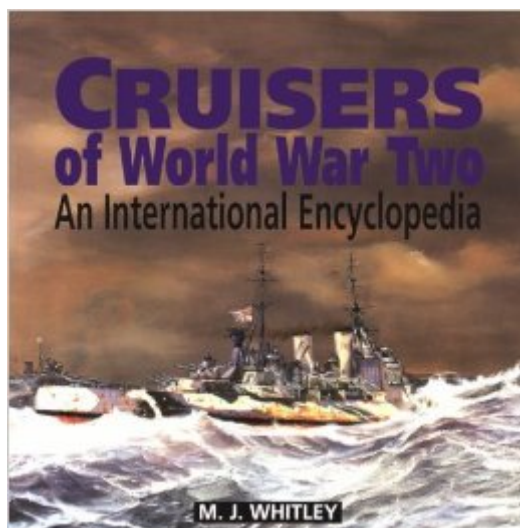


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Cruisers Of World War Two: An International Encyclopedia



Synopsis

Book by Whitley, M. J.

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Customer Reviews

A glance at the table of contents shows that there were a lot of cruisers in World War II! Ships are listed for 18 countries, of which Great Britain had the greatest number of distinct classes - 20 in all, although the USA had more ships. The cruisers described in this book varied enormously in size, from the Japanese Yubaris (under 3000 tons) to the massive American Alaska class - battlecruisers in all but name at 30,000 tons, and hardly inferior to the undergunned German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. And then there were the Royal Navy's cruisers: typically medium sized, stoutly constructed to go anywhere and survive any seas, often old-fashioned in appearance but respected by friends and enemies. This is a fine thick book that gives masses of details, together with diagrams and photographs. Quite apart from its intrinsic merit, it is ideal for flattening out curled-up papers or cardboard! As well as a bibliography and index, it has a short (4 page) introduction that gives a quick history of the cruiser type in the First and Second World Wars, and even shows the numbers of WWII cruisers lost in various ways - 10 Japanese and 20 British ships, for example, were sunk by aircraft attack. One of the most interesting themes that emerges is the naval architects' frenzied quest for the ideal compromise between speed, striking power, protection and range. For a while, this was further complicated by the requirements of the Washington treaty with its (often infringed) 10,000 ton limit. The German Hipper class weighed in at 14,500 tons; the Italian Zaras at 11,700; and the Japanese Tone and Chikuma at 11,200.

People interested in the ships of WW II will find this an interesting book. If you are interested in WW II naval history, I can recommend this book. The author has done an excellent job of assembling a listing of all cruisers in service during the WW II time period, and pictures and technical information on each class. Most of the ship classes have a basic drawing of the first deck, and sometimes an elevation view which are helpful in appreciation how each class was armed, and where the guns and turrets were located. I did not realize that there were so many countries in the world which had cruisers during WW II, and that some of the cruisers were built before WW I. Some of the really old cruisers from non combatant countries were not updated, but obviously met a need for the individual country as they were still in service. The author has some interesting comments about the struggles of the ship designers in balancing ship speed, ship endurance, armor, and gun power, both anti surface ship and anti aircraft, and staying within the weight limits of the treaties. There was never a perfect answer to how to divide the weight between the different factors, armor, guns, fuel and number of engine with their horsepower and number of shafts. Interesting discussion is provided about the Japanese design problem with weight and balance, and having to rework the Mogami class due to this issues, after one of their small ships turned turtle in a storm. Ship design was done by hand, as there were no computers or computer programs to help the designer, It was common to miss the total weight in the design process by several percent, which was not known until the ship was built put in the water.

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