About the Book
In March of 2003, the Iraq War began with a U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime and paved the way for other key objectives. These objectives included finding and destroying weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), rooting out safe havens for al-Qaeda in Iraq, and making the country safe for democratic reform. After nearly four years of conflict and billions spent, however, the search for WMDs had been recognized as illusory, and other key objectives were under threat by a relentless insurgency and by a horrific expansion of sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia factions. In January of 2007, President Bush announced a new strategy to address these dire circumstances—a strategy, dubbed the “surge,” driven by a sharp increase in troop levels and a counter-insurgency plan. A special battalion, the 2-16 Rangers, was created to carry out this mission in one of the most dangerous and unpredictable areas of Baghdad. *The Good Soldiers* is the story of the Rangers—their lives and losses, their courage and tragedy.

Identifying with *The Good Soldiers*
Have you or someone close to you—a good friend, a parent, a sibling—fought in the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan? If you have served, how do you try to shape the way your friends or family understanding these wars? If you haven’t, describe how these individuals have shaped your sense of these wars.

Are the loss, grief, and pain that Finkel describes—as well as the sense of community and camaraderie—unique to intense war environments, or is there something universal in these experiences?

If you are in your late teens or early 20s, you came of age with the Iraq war in the background in the same way that your parents and grandparents grew up in the midst of Vietnam, the Korean War, or WWII. In what ways has this been or not been a defining experience in your life either politically or personally?

Engaging The Good Soldiers
Would you consider Finkel's account of the 2-16's role in the surge strategy to be objective and non-partisan, or are there moments where Finkel seems to offer a clearer critique of the War and how it affects soldiers, civilians, and nations alike?

Leadership comes in many forms. What are the most striking examples of leadership in *The Good Soldiers*? What does this say about what makes a great leader?

When we think of the war wounded, it is easy to think about visible traces made by bullets and bombs. But what are the psychological effects of war, and how are these registered in Finkel's account?

“In the United States,” Finkel writes, “the news was all macro rather than micro.” What are some of the most meaningful and harrowing “micro” moments that Finkel reveals, and how do these shape the “macro” version of the war we get through the news?

About the Author
David Finkel is the author of *Thank You For Your Service* (2013) and *The Good Soldiers* (2009), listed a best book of 2009 by the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, Slate.com, and *The Boston Globe*, and winner of the Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism. He is a staff writer for the *Washington Post*, and is also the leader of the Post's national reporting team. He won the Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting in 2006 for a series of stories about U.S.-funded democracy efforts in Yemen, and the MacArthur "Genius" Grant in 2012. Finkel lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, with his wife and two daughters. [bio adapted from Macmillan author page]