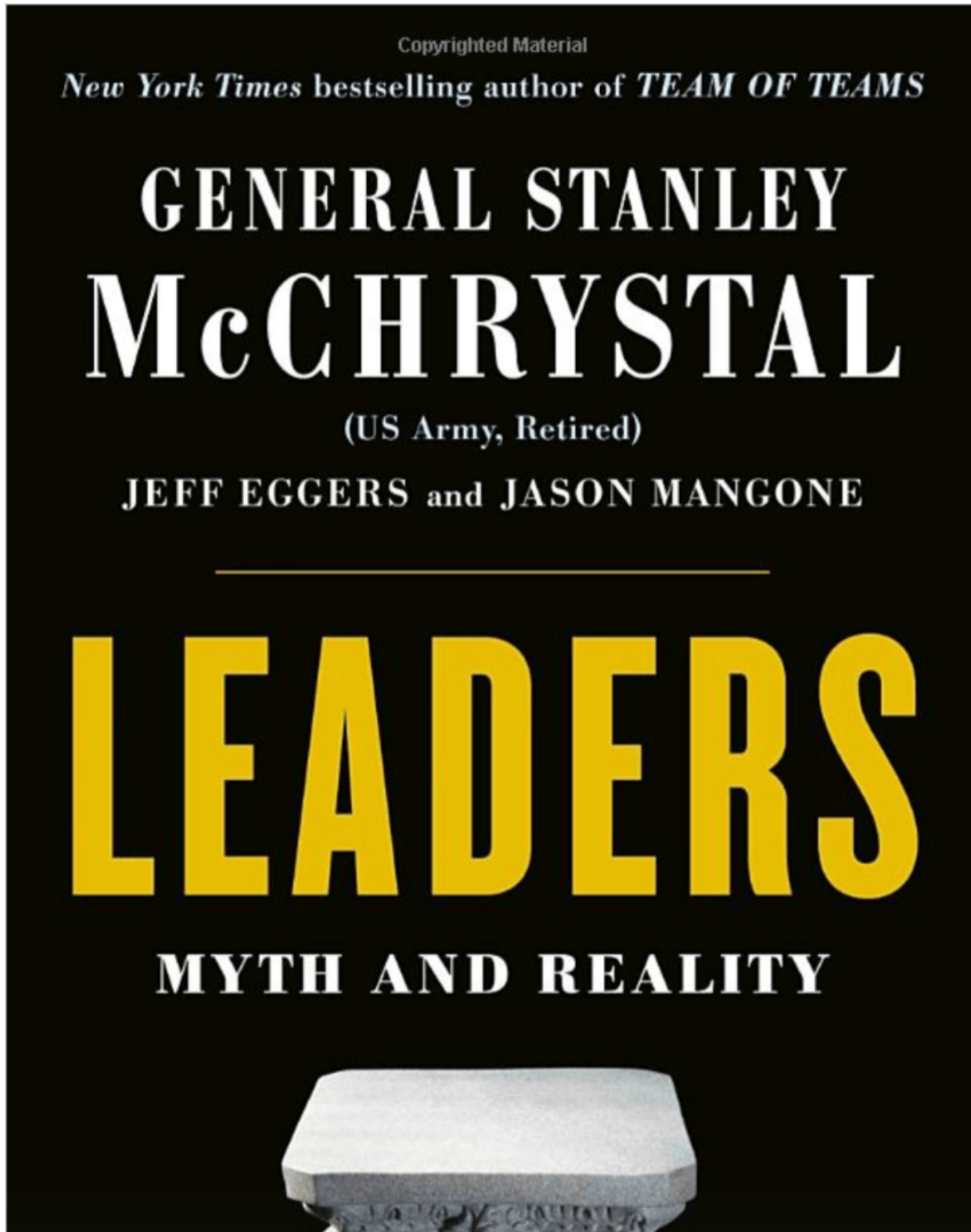


McChrystal: Everything I Thought About Leadership Has Changed



By Stanley McChrystal

Because leaders don't rise as much as they emerge to fulfill a specific need for followers at moments, it can get dangerous when leaders emerge who give resonance to our darker impulses. To caution against this, we need to better understand why and how leaders emerge.

What we found upon looking back at 13 historical leaders—and we looked at a diverse group from Robert E. Lee to Margaret Thatcher to Zheng He—is that it was very easy to attribute broad trends and important outcomes to individuals. We oversimplify. We tend to overlook the facts and assume leadership follows a specific, replicable formula.

The truth is, it doesn't work that way. Leadership is not just one individual dictating action and achieving results, but rather a process that involves leaders and followers working in a system that is very dependent on situation and context.

When I wrote *My share of the Task*, I realized that my existing conclusions about things that had happened to me as a leader, outcomes I had believed hinged on my own efforts, were often the result of forces outside of me—my followers, the specific time and place. When I wrote *Team of Teams*, I discovered further that when you apply context, outcomes are different. For this book, it was interesting to compare what my existing conclusions had been about historical leaders and to discover in every single case; they were different than what I thought. They were more nuanced.

Leadership needs to be redefined for the modern age to consider how humans actually behave. It needs to take into account the relationship between leaders and followers in a particular situation and in a specific context.

Because the situation and context matter so much, checklists and formulas are not all that

helpful to us when we try to study leadership, emulate leadership, or train others to lead.

For more, check out the latest book from General Stanley McChrystal (Ret.), Jeff Eggers, and Jay Mangone who published [Leaders: Myth and Reality](#) on Oct. 23, 2018.

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