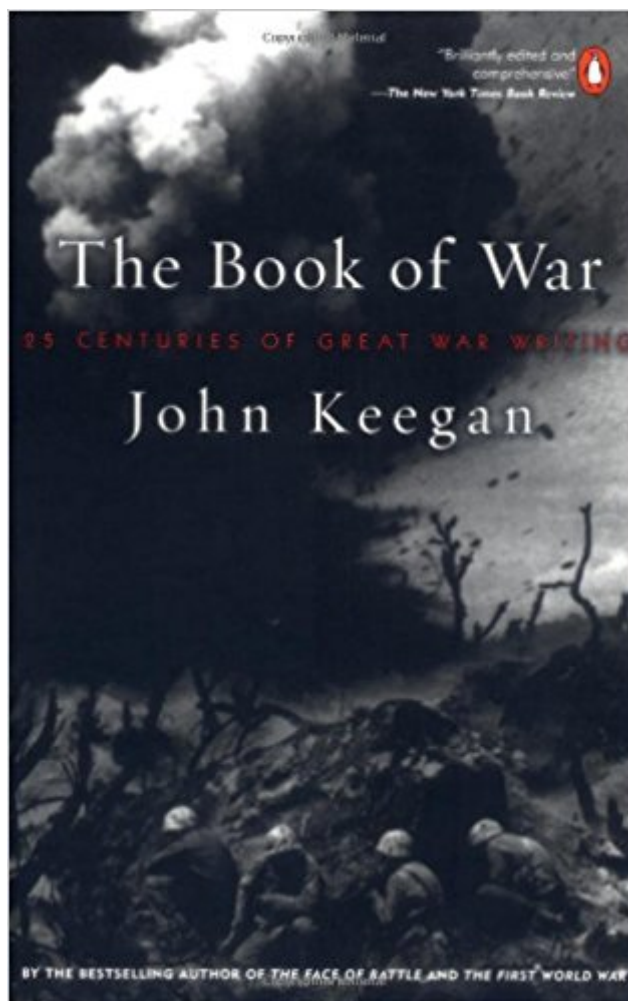


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The Book Of War: 25 Centuries Of Great War Writing



Synopsis

Acclaimed military historian John Keegan's anthology of war writing from 25 centuries of battle. In *The Book of War*, John Keegan marshals a formidable host of war writings to chronicle the evolution of Western warfare through the voice of the most eloquent participants—from Thucydides' classic account of ancient Greek phalanx warfare to a blow-by-blow description of ground fighting against the Iraqi troops in Kuwait during the Gulf War. Keegan gathers more than eighty selections, including Caesar's Commentaries on the Roman invasion of Britain; the French Knight Jehan de Wavrin at the battle of Agincourt; Davy Crockett in the war against the Creek; Wellington's dispatch on Waterloo; Hemingway after Caporetto; and Ernie Pyle at Normandy. "The best military historian of our generation." —Tom Clancy "A monumental piece of literary military history." —Chicago Tribune "A brilliantly edited and comprehensive anthology." —The New York Times Book Review.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this eclectic anthology of war writings, military historian John Keegan (author of *The Face of Battle* and *The Second World War*) has collected some of the best that has been thought and said about armed conflict over the course of 25 centuries. Keegan is especially interested in how war has evolved over time; his introduction is a brief history of this development, from the heroic age of individual combat to the horrific "total war" of the 20th century. He begins with a pair of 5th-century-B.C. excerpts from Thucydides and concludes with a British soldier's brief description of combat against Iraqi soldiers in the 1991 Gulf War. In between are selections by Julius Caesar,

Davy Crockett, Victor Hugo, George Orwell, and many others. If there is a theme to this book, it may be the clash of cultures: what happens when different military traditions collide, such as when the Romans invaded Britain, the Muslim Turks besieged Malta, or General Custer and the 7th Cavalry faced the Sioux in Montana. He understandably gives only cursory attention to several wars--the U.S. Civil War, Korea, and Vietnam--and lingers a bit on his coverage of the First World War (which Keegan views as a key to interpreting the whole 20th century) and the Second World War. The selections themselves are continually exciting, and rarely predictable. There are even a few poems thrown in for good effect. The Book of War may focus on an awful subject ("The history of all forms of warfare is ... essentially inhumane," writes Keegan), but it is also full of awfully good writing.

--John J. Miller --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Keegan (the bestselling *The First World War*) stands out among contemporary writers of military history for the literary sensibility he brings to the subject. In his introduction to this anthology, he writes that he organized his selections around contrasting military traditions: a "Western" way of war based on a code of behavior that includes mercy to the vanquished, and a more tribal approach observing few inhibitions. Thankfully, Keegan's literary sense overrides this artificial framework. He offers nearly 100 vignettes from around the world, selected with an artist's eye and a historian's judgment, that combine to show war's multiple faces. The authors are great captains like Julius Caesar and the Duke of Wellington, as well as front-line warriors such as Gulf War veteran Andy McNabb. Elizabeth Custer has her place, as do Davy Crockett and Rudyard Kipling. Some accounts capture the immediacy of war, like William Laurence's narratives on the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Some voices are matter-of-fact, like George MacDonald Fraser's account of soldiers' stoic mourning of a comrade. Others, like Ernest Hemingway's 1918 letter from the Italian front, are self-consciously literary. Familiar settings: the trenches of the Great War; Russia in 1812; a contrast with Jesuit missionary Paul Ragueneau's account of an Iroquois Indian raid in 17th-century Canada. What the selections share is passion. All the men and women in these pages engage their experiences fully. Once again, Keegan has opened a door onto the human condition, showing that we are defined by war--at least in part.

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Excellent compilation of historical war communication passed down through time, from Ancient Greece to the present. Interlaced with Mr. Keegan's wry wit and coupled with his intelligent commentary, this work lends true clarity to the harsh realities of warfare, when presented in their

proper context relative to human nature , in the proper perspective of their respective eras.

Not up to the late Mr Keegan's usual writing level. A collection of short articles, nothing like his world-class books about ww1, WW2, "Command" et. al.

America lost a good friend with the recent passing of historian John Keegan, one of the few high Brahmin British intellectuals who actually liked America. This collection is the best of its kind since Hemingway's WWII collection "Men at War." If you are curious about who we massacre ourselves, nobody explains it better than John Keegan and his friends.

If you find History interesting, this book is pretty good as it gives you a lot of nice primary sources to read. I got this book for my college history course, and I actually enjoy it, regardless of me being a History major.

The words handed down through eternity (well, before and after Alexander conquered the world) from the great historians of the past are quite interesting and enlightening. War may be hell, but it makes good reading. The excerpts from the masters of the past histories are exceptional. But how many can one read at a sitting? Not many, I found for myself. The book remains a handy resource to be picked up now and then or, if a reader wants to read about a particular battle in a particular war, this is a good start and is aimed perfectly at the desired target.

General overview of wars of the past. History of violence at its best, eh?

Excellent writing. Covered the really important periods of military history. Easy to read.

Informative introduction. Great historical authors selected and presented to give a dynamic historical context to each other

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