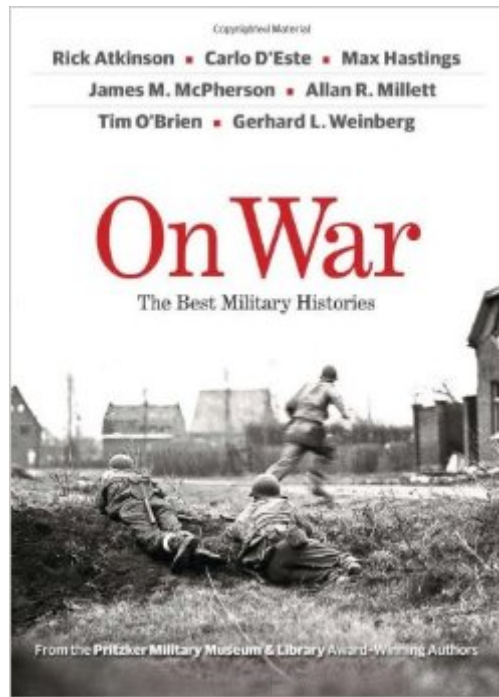


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# On War: The Best Military Histories



## Synopsis

As long as men have gone into battle, men have studied war. Herodotus and Tacitus were classic historians, analyzing the background of events. Thucydides used interviews to tell the story of the Peloponnesian War and Plutarch wrote biographies of famous people like Caesar and Alexander. Sun Tzu, Homer, and Clausewitz remain required reading for those studying military affairs today. Collected here for the first time are key works by this century's leading military historians, all recipients of the Pritzker Military Museum & Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing. The Pritzker Literature Award honors writers whose work adds to the public's understanding of military history and the role played by the military in civil society. In the tradition of historians dating back to ancient times, these authors and scholars demonstrate the numerous ways to write about military history. The surreal fiction of Tim O'Brien's *Vietnam* is just pages from an in-depth look at General George S. Patton by today's leading biographer, Carlo D'Este. Max Hastings and Rick Atkinson use their backgrounds to add a journalistic touch to modern studies of World War I and World War II, respectively. Gerhard Weinberg examines global leaders during World War II as Allan Millett discusses the developing technology that allowed them to further their causes. And James McPherson, the preeminent living Civil War scholar examines crisis in America with accessible and articulate literary skill. This anthology provides just a sample of the remarkable works by these renowned authors, who will be read by military history enthusiasts and the general public for generations to come.

**REVIEWS** Three of the seven essays collected here deal brilliantly with World War II; the others, equally brilliant, are well worth reading. *World War II* "...well worth its price... handsomely designed, nicely illustrated... It surely whets one's appetite to delve deeply into the originals" *Journal of America's Military Past* ...well written, informative, and thought provoking, providing insights not only on their primary subjects but also, more broadly, on the nature of war, military service, and soldiers. Useful even for the seasoned historian, *On War* would also make a fine introduction to military history for any thinking person. *Nymas* Spring 2015

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I bought this book being intrigued by the premise of modern day historians writing about Clausewitz's concepts of "On War." These are the theses of various authors, who have received the Pritzker Literature Award, and were chosen by them for this anthology to represent a modern understanding of war in their various fields of study. The question is; did they succeed? Carl von Clausewitz stated: "the political aim remains the first consideration. We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means." "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose." With this in mind I look at the first entry by James M. McPherson and "We are all Americans," from *Battle Cry of Freedom*. His entry on the use of black soldiers in the South towards the end of the civil war was interesting. From a political point of view the south looked at this option at the beginning of the war and discarded the notion. At the end of the war, they once again failed politically to understand that their limited resources, especially in manpower, had isolated them from their goal. Allan Millet's "Assault from the Sea" from *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, was a fascinating look into "The Strategic Context of Amphibious Operations." Looking at Japan, Great Britain and the United States and their approach to their objectives by the use of strategic amphibious landings, Dr. Millett gives us an in-depth look at advances and lessons learned from the countries mentioned.

As someone in the business of genealogy and military history, I thought this book was an excellent collection of military histories. Not only do I research and lecture on military topics but I also write books to publish and write histories for clients. This collection opened my eyes to new scholars I had not read and showed me new ways to write stories. When speaking with clients and those to whom I lecture, I've found one of the things family historians often neglect to do is look for the contextual history surrounding the lives of their ancestors. Adding contextual history to a genealogy of names, dates, and places, enriches the stories that can be written. This is a larger problem with military stories because everyone assumes all the records burned in St. Louis in 1973 so there is

nothing else to find. This is incorrect. Often researchers do not know what resources exist beyond those personnel files. They are also unaware of the best authors and scholars to seek out that provide well-written sourced information with extensive bibliographies. On War combines the best scholars with easy to read and understand military histories. The chapters provide a taste of the full works from which they originate. This provides researchers with options on books to purchase for further investigation. The chapters are so well written, they demonstrate how to weave history and narrative together so it flows than stagnates. The chapters contain source citations so readers can easily refer to the original source of information. These sources allow researchers to wander down new research paths and locate new records. The back of the book contains short biographies of each author with a list of books he has published for easier reference to additional materials.

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