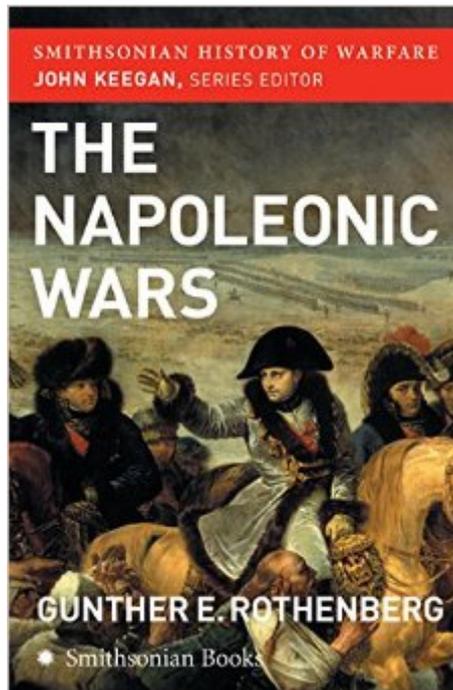


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The Napoleonic Wars (Smithsonian History Of Warfare)



Synopsis

This vividly illustrated history of the Napoleonic Wars documents the wars' origins in the French Revolution, narrates Napoleon's victories at Austerlitz and Jena, and concludes with his defeats in the Iberian peninsula, Russia, and finally at Waterloo. Author Gunther E. Rothenberg describes how Napoleon transformed interstate warfare into a system of relentless conquest, creating a military superpower on a scale not seen since the Roman Empire. Though eventually defeated, Napoleon's model of conquest set a pattern that was to be revived by modern totalitarian states, and their opponents. A sweeping examination of the rise, triumph, and eventual downfall of Napoleon, a man whose military genius forever changed the face of war. Analysis of Napoleon's system of waging war, and the strategies that allowed him to create a singularly powerful army. A look at the profound influence of Napoleonic conquest on warfare of the modern era.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Napoleon Bonaparte influenced warfare more than any other figure of his age, and arguably more than any other figure of history. He almost conquered Europe, and his influence spread through society in a myriad of ways, from sugar beet production (which he stimulated) to tactics (which he influenced but did not reinvent). This book concentrates on the military aspects of his influence, and the wars he beget over the last dozen years of his influence, 1803-15. Cassell has a number of these histories out now, short books lavishly illustrated with pictures and beautiful maps. The Napoleonic Wars covers the central events of Europe 1803-15. The book begins with two chapters that summarize events before the period the book focuses on, and Napoleon's life before that era. We then get five chapters, about a hundred and fifty pages of narrative recounting the major

campaigns of the wars of Napoleon. Each of the campaigns only gets a few pages, and battles often only are briefly mentioned. When there's more detail, as at Waterloo, the narrative still moves quickly and only a few pages suffice to recount what happened. Rothenberg is one of the better-known historians of the Napoleonic age. His main point here (and he's made the point elsewhere) is that these wars weren't the last wars of the classical age, but the first ones of the modern one. I would submit that in ways they were both, but that's more of a nuance than an actual difference of opinion. The points he makes are generally well-reasoned, and the narrative tends to support them. Books that deal with Napoleon tend to divide into two groups: those that praise him to the heavens, and those that are critical of him, to a lesser or greater extent. This book falls into the latter category, though the criticisms are generally gentle.

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