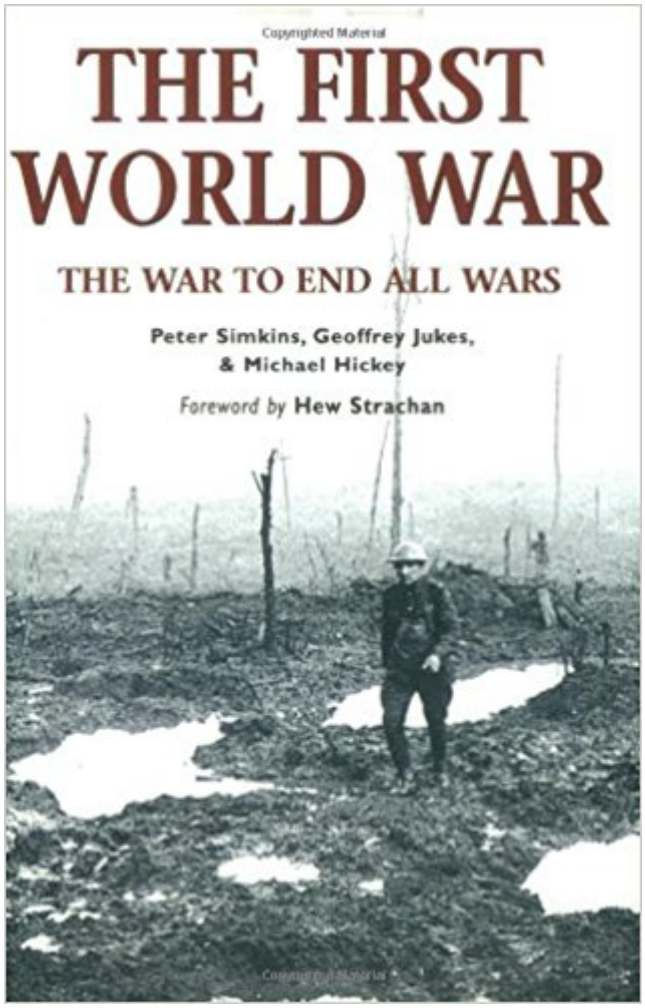
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The First World War: The War To End All Wars



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Synopsis

Raging for over four years across the tortured landscapes of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the First World War changed the face of warfare forever. Characterized by slow, costly advances and fierce attrition, the great battles of the Somme, Verdun and Ypres incurred human loss on a scale never previously imagined. This book, with a foreword by Professor Hew Strachan, covers the fighting on all fronts, from Flanders to Tannenberg and from Italy to Palestine. A series of moving extracts from personal letters, diaries and journals bring to life the experiences of soldiers and civilians caught up in the war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Essential Histories are remarkably effective in presenting military events in the wider contexts of the new military history.

After leaving Oxford, Geoffrey Jukes spent 14 years in the UK Ministry of Defence, and Foreign and Colonial Office. He has also worked on the staff of the Australian National University. Peter Simkins was Senior Historian at the Imperial War Museum until his retirement in 1999, when he was awarded the MBE for his services to the Museum. He is Honorary Professor in Modern History at the University of Birmingham, a Vice-President of the Western Front Association and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Michael Hickey retired from his position as Colonel GS Ministry of Defence in 1981, after serving in Korea, East Africa, Suez and Aden. In 2000 he was awarded the

Westminster medal for Military Literature.

This book is a compilation of 3 previously published books by Osprey covering World War One. One is on the Western Front, the Second on the Eastern and the third on the Mediterranean and Middle East plus a brief introduction to the War by Professor Hew Strachan. The book provides a very good introduction to the military aspects of each front albeit the introduction is not in-depth and really not of much use to anyone with more than a novice's degree of knowledge. It provides no new or unique insights to the war. However, for its intended audience it does a good job at comparing and contrasting the leaders involved, the armies (from troops to mid and higher ranked officers), equipment, tactics and strategies involved as well as providing a good history of the war progressed on these fronts. There are also short 2-3 page chapters on a few individuals that do an excellent job at showing the war from their perspective. In addition, the book is richly illustrated with contemporary photographs and maps of critical battles. Key battles are discussed as well as key factors affecting the war but there are still many gaps in that non-key battles are barely mentioned. Additional weaknesses include a lack of serious discussion regarding the naval struggle in the Atlantic, diplomatic and political issues.For those seeking a more in-depth on the subject this author recommends Hew Strachen's history of the First as well as John Keegan's history. These are two much more serious books for those with more time and interest in the subject.

I like Osprey's Essential Histories series, but this one is far too incomplete to get a high recommendation. It is well-researched, well-written and well-illustrated, to be sure. And it gives some good background into how the war came to happen, and what happened after the armistice and why these actions led, indirectly, to another conflagration some twenty years later.As for the war itself, it does a pretty thorough job on the ground war in the three main theaters described in the component volumes: Western, Eastern and Mediterranean. But that's about as far as it goes.The naval war is only glossed over; how a book like this can avoid subjects like the SMS Emden, the Lusitania, and the Battle of Jutland is puzzling. The air war fares even worse, with just a quick essay on how it changed warfare, but no details. The American effort in the last year of the war is also inadequately covered.Also, there is no mention of the African, Asian and Pacific actions, which, while not significant, still were important enough to get some description.The book is a compilation of four earlier volumes. Clearly, there should have been a fifth.....

Very nice photos and maps, including battle tactic maps. The main drawback for me is that the

Authors, being Britons lay too much blame on Germany (steering blame away from England) in the circumstances that were building up to the Great War.

A gift.

Publishers sometimes cobble together titles they've published on similar topics and release the finished product as a 'new' title, usually forgetting to tell the reading public the book is recycled goods. Osprey's THE FIRST WORLD WAR, THE WAR TO END ALL WARS is a recent example of this. Published in 2013, it brings together four volumes previously released as titles in Osprey's ESSENTIAL HISTORIES circa 2002.THE FIRST WORLD WAR brings together THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE EASTERN FRONT, 1914-1918 (EH 13); THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE WESTERN FRONT, 1914-1916 (EH 14); THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE WESTERN FRONT, 1917-18 (EH 22); and THE FIRST WORLD WAR: THE MEDITERRANEN FRONT, 1914-1923 (EH 23). Geoffrey Jukes authored the Eastern Front book; Peter Simkins, the two Western Front volumes; and Michael Hickey, the Mediterranean Front book.On the plus side, the Osprey 2013 compilation offers the opportunity of having all four volumes under one cover. Seemingly a straight reprint with no updating, THE FIRST WORLD WAR is entertainingly written, nicely illustrated and fairly easy on the pocketbook ($30.00).As a general WWI history however, the 2013 book is a mixed bag. The four books are really histories of the land war with scant attention given to the air war, naval war, America's involvement, etc. (The once-over-lightly approach reflects the page limitations of the ESSENTIAL HISTORIES series, which were capped at 96 pages).Moreover, most of THE FIRST WORLD WAR shows a pro-British bent. The Simkins and Hickey contributions all emphasize the contributions and experiences of British troops on the various fronts. Their sections, for example, feature detailed write-ups on the experiences of individual 'Tommies' and Brit civilians. No corresponding sections are included on their French or German counterparts, Commonwealth troops, etc. Jukes' Eastern Front chapter, the worst of the four, also errs in concentrating on one perspective - in this case, Russian - while neglecting the 'other side.' His chapter also seems both padded and rather dated.Short and not-so-sweet: while combining the four ESSENTIAL HISTORIES volumes into one may make dollars-and-cents sense, it doesn't translate into a comprehensive and even-handed history of the war to end all wars. While THE FIRST WORLD WAR has its good points, its very nature works against it. Recommended with reservations.

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