



The First World War: A Complete History

By Martin Gilbert

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The First World War: A Complete History By Martin Gilbert

The acclaimed British historian offers a majestic, single-volume work incorporating all major fronts-domestic, diplomatic, military-for "a stunning achievement of research and storytelling"

(Publishers Weekly)

It was to be the war to end all wars, and it began at 11:15 on the morning of June 28, 1914, in an outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire called Sarajevo. It would end officially almost five years later. Unofficially, it has never ended: the horrors we live with today were born in the First World War.

It left millions-civilians and soldiers-maimed or dead. And it left us with new technologies of death: tanks, planes, and submarines; reliable rapid-fire machine guns and field artillery; poison gas and chemical warfare. It introduced us to U-boat packs and strategic bombing, to unrestricted war on civilians and mistreatment of prisoners. Most of all, it changed our world. In its wake, empires toppled, monarchies fell, whole populations lost their national identities as political systems, and geographic boundaries were realigned. Instabilities were institutionalized, enmities enshrined. And the social order shifted seismically. Manners, mores, codes of behavior; literature and the arts; education and class distinctions-all underwent a vast sea change. And in all these ways, the twentieth century can be said to have been born on the morning of June 28, 1914.

"One of the first books that anyone should read in beginning to try to understand this war and this century."

-The New York Times Book Review (cover)

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Gilbert's (The Second World War) majestic opus covers WWI on all major fronts-domestic, diplomatic, military-as well as such bloody preludes as the Armenian massacre of 1915. He describes the introduction of new instruments of war like the submarine, airplane, tank, machine gun and poison gas, explaining how each was employed in great military confrontations such as Verdun and Jutland. He recounts the arrival of the American contingent (British and French brass tended at first to regard them as rabble) and Gen. John J. Pershing's struggle to prevent U.S. troops from being fed piecemeal into the maelstrom of the western front. Gilbert includes a large amount of contemporary war poetry and doggerel, which conveys the tragedy of the 1914-1918 conflict. On the whole, the author presents WWI from the human perspective, with emphasis on the grisliness and sheer waste of it. His account of the post-Armistice efforts of the international War Graves Commission starkly communicates the epic scale of the slaughter. By the distinguished biographer of Winston Churchill, this is a stunning achievement of research and storytelling on the war to end all wars. Illustrations.

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From Library Journal

Successfully using a blend of contemporary accounts and overview narrative, Gilbert (The Churchill War Papers, LJ 5/1/93) has produced a readable, one-volume account of the Great War. The impact of new technologies and tactics on humankind is best illustrated by the author's portrayal of the individual suffering of the generation lost in the conflict. The deaths of the sons and sons-in-law of political and military leaders from all sides exemplifies the extent and tragedy of the loss. The effect of the war on future leaders such as Hitler, Himmler, Churchill, and De Gaulle is shown through their experiences in this war. Profusely illustrated and containing 50 maps, this book is a fine companion volume to the author's The Second World War (Holt, 1989). Recommended for all collections.

David Lee Poremba, Detroit P.L.

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From [Booklist](#)

The Great War achieved little but changed everything in every country, having destroyed four empires and millions of lives. Causes and effects, however, are beyond Gilbert's intended ken; instead, he addresses the relentless, despairing character of the military actions. A veteran historian, Gilbert's pedigree to write solid histories is unchallengeable, and his books on Churchill (1991), the Holocaust, and the Second World War loom almost as large as their subjects. While praiseworthy as a painstaking compilation of fact, however, it cannot be said that the eloquent muse is upon this narrative; rather, the prose advances like the rolling artillery barrages it describes or the ships it tersely records sunk (for example, the Battle of Jutland rates one paragraph). In descanting upon every engagement and huge casualties at division level or above, Gilbert will stand out at his diligent best, but the work will not budge Barbara Tuchman's *Guns of August* and Paul Fussell's *Great War and Modern Memory* from their popular niches among the general readership. With 30 maps and 80 photos, Gilbert's is a hefty general introduction suitable for most libraries. *Gilbert Taylor*

Users Review

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