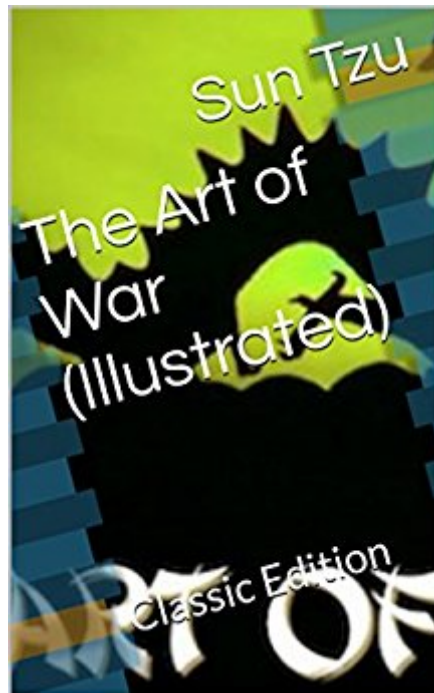


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The Art Of War (Illustrated): Classic Edition



Synopsis

The Art of War is an ancient Chinese military treatise attributed to Sun Tzu, a high-ranking military general, strategist and tactician, and kindred to the Realpolitik of his time, termed in China as Legalism. The text is composed of 13 chapters, each of which is devoted to one aspect of warfare. It is commonly thought of as a definitive work on military strategy and tactics. It has been the most famous and influential of China's Seven Military Classics, and "for the last two thousand years it remained the most important military treatise in Asia, where even the common people knew it by name." It has had an influence on Eastern and Western military thinking, business tactics, legal strategy and beyond.

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Customer Reviews

I got this particular edition of Sun Tzu's Art of War at a strategy course for sales. I already had a copy of it at home, but this edition is so nicely done that I gave my old copy away and kept this one. The introduction of James Clavell is a nice touch. It is amazing to me that this book is not read in high schools or colleges in favor of Machiavelli's work (The Prince or The Art of War.) Sun Tzu's

writing is clear and to the point. Unlike the popular Book of Five Rings by Musashi, this book is not metaphorical and poetic; it's downright practical. And it's not hard to read, unlike many classics. If you are doing business in China, this is also a good book to know. I mentioned some of the classic strategies while giving a course in China, and every member of the class had read it, knew it well, and gave me many examples from recent Chinese history where Sun Tzu's strategies were employed. This book is close to their hearts, and will give you insight if you are doing business in the East. Of course, the most famous anecdote from this book is about gaining the obedience of troops; the emperor, wishing to interview Sun Tzu for the commission of general, asked if Sun Tzu's military principles could be applied to women. Sun Tzu replied yes, the principles worked for women as well as men. Accordingly, Sun Tzu was given the task of organizing the emperor's many concubines into an army. Sun Tzu lined up the concubines and set the two favorites as officers at the head of the columns. He gave them a simple set of orders to march and drill (eyes front, right face, about face. The drums sounded and instead of following the commands, the girls simply giggled and blushed.

Like many business professionals, I've heard lots of people quote The Art of War and heard that everyone from Larry Ellison to Michael Ovitz studied it as a guide to competition in business. So I decided I needed to read it. I encountered a few issues, which I suspect others will too, so here's a little help: 1. Which version should I buy? 2. How should I read it? 3. Who can help me make sense of this? 4. Will this really make me a better leader in business? 1. Which version should I buy? As soon as I started to shop for a copy, I was confronted with an overwhelming number of choices. In the end I decided to buy the translation by Thomas Cleary because he has translated other Chinese classics that I've read and Shambhala is a well-known publisher of Eastern texts. I did a fair number of comparisons online and people were very positive about this translation as being perhaps the most accessible for first time readers. I found it easy to read and understand. (My edition is a slightly older "Dragon Edition" from Shambhala, but it is the same translation.) I have also read Griffith's translation from the 1960's and found that edition to be just as good. Cleary's version seems to be intent on highlighting more of the Taoist elements in the Art of War; Griffith, in contrast writes primarily about battles and military history. Comparing the two translations side by side it is clear that 80% of the text is probably going to be the same whichever version you buy, but there are real differences between some of the texts. I would have no problem recommending either Cleary or Griffith. 2. How should I read it? The first time I picked this up, I was confused.

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