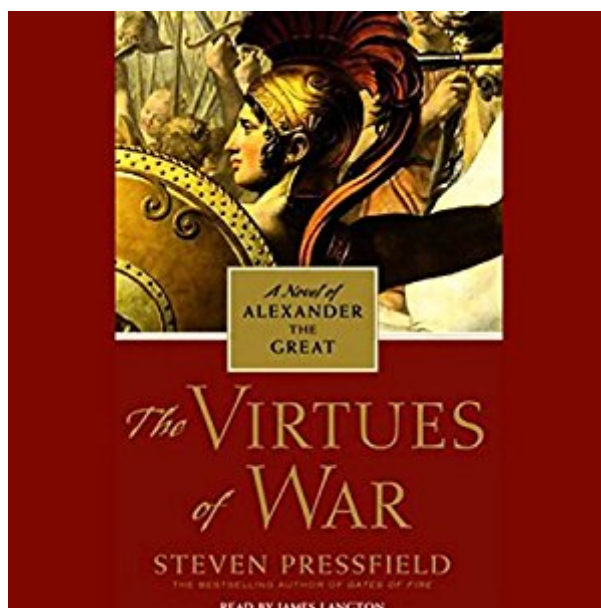


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The Virtues Of War: A Novel Of Alexander The Great



Synopsis

I have always been a soldier. I have known no other life. So begins Alexander's extraordinary confession on the eve of his greatest crisis of leadership. By turns heroic and calculating, compassionate and utterly merciless, Alexander recounts with a warrior's unflinching eye for detail the blood, the terror, and the tactics of his greatest battlefield victories. Whether surviving his father's brutal assassination, presiding over a massacre, or weeping at the death of a beloved comrade-in-arms, Alexander never denies the hard realities of the code by which he lives: the virtues of war. But as much as he was feared by his enemies, he was loved and revered by his friends, his generals, and the men who followed him into battle. Often outnumbered, never outfought, Alexander conquered every enemy the world stood against him—but the one he never saw coming. . . . --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

This book belongs on every mans shelf. I was given a copy while in Afghanistan, it took me some time to finish the book. So vividly is Alexander written, and so accurate his personality of a commander, that I let my own historical knowledge of Alexander dread the ending of the story. Here is a fictional character that I would wish to emulate, here is a fictional character that I would want to have known, and here is a story that I wish would never have ended. But all stories must end, as do lives. Seeing that we end them both well is the moral of this book.

For such an important figure there isn't a lot known about Alexander. Pressfield's *Gates of Fire* is an excellent book about Thermopylae. This book doesn't rise to that level. It is an interesting account of Alexander's campaign but a lot of space is spent detailing how his forces were deployed. That is likely from historical records but it is a bit dull to read pages of lists. The book isn't bad but it is not as good as the *Gates of Fire*.

Steven Pressfield's novel is listed as historical fiction, and I suppose that it is. However, there is virtually no plot. The whole story is fight after fight- which to some may seem interesting, but I found it boring. Don't get me wrong, the descriptions are incredible, and it seems as if we are actually at the scene of the battle. Steven Pressfield is obviously a talented writer. I enjoy reading about battles, just not an entire book about them. But I didn't feel any emotions. I wasn't excited at the victory, and found myself skimming pages just to see if there would be anything of interest later on in the chapters. Alexander the Great is undeniably one of the greatest generals who ever lived, and obviously war was a large part of his life. But this story- didn't make me go "Wow". If you're only interested in battles, then you'll probably like this book. But if you're like me, and you want a plot along with the battles, look elsewhere. I'd recommend Mary Renault's Alexander trilogy: *Fire from Heaven*, *The Persian Boy*, and *Funeral Games*; or *A Choice of Destinies* by Melissa Scott; or *Lord of the Two Lands* by Judith Tarr; or even *A Murder in Macedon* by Anna Apostolou aka P.C. Doherty. All of these books are historical fiction about Alexander the Great. They all have battles, but they also are about his life, his companions (friends/enemies), and his emotions.

Good study on Alexander the Great and presented in a way that gives the character a bit more depth (due to some artistic liberties) than reading about the accomplishments themselves. I can't help but feel that Mr. Pressfield's way of presenting the story as one being told to someone else in the book as being a bit... far-fetched? Patronizing? Would someone actually describe their life in such a way to another human being? I understand it is a way for the story to be told etc., but there are far easier ways to accomplish that goal that feel more natural.

This is an account of Alexander's life in battle told by Alexander to a confidant.

I am an Alexander the Great admirer, and love reading about his adventures. This is a wonderful way to read about Alexander and where he went, who he fought, and even what he thought.

Pressfield (always) does a splendid job with historical fiction - enough fact to make it believable but the reader still comprehends that this IS fiction. I recommend wholeheartedly, especially for people who like to read about the ancient Middle East and as far east as India.

I love the smell of horse urine in the morning! It is the smell of victory! Or maybe that's just a gift on the hallway carpet from my dog. So maybe Gates of Fire was a slightly better book, but that story covered the spray of blood in your face three day battle that was over by the time the Thespians abandoned their position in the rear. In contrast, Alexander's story covers more than a decade and only ended when his army got bored of yet another episode of empire conquering. After taking down way bigger armies than themselves, they would say stuff like, "I was in on the slaughter of 20,000 soldiers yesterday; and all I got was some gold, and trinkets, and wives, and territories, and this lousy t-shirt." But Alexander didn't slaughter for the sake of slaughter. His ambition was to conquer empires and reduce their emperors. He never met an emperor he didn't want to subjugate. The last emperor that Alexander defeated (Porus of India) could have had a working relationship with Alexander if only Porus would have acknowledged that Alexander were a king rather than one of those foreign, unkempt conquerers. Alas, pride goeth before the fall. So Alexander's ego got a nice pat on the head with Porus's defeat, but his men tired of playing conquer the world. Neat story of history brought to life by Pressfield.

Pressfield is clearly one of the best writers ever in the historical fiction genre. I thought Killing Rommel and Gates of Fire were two of the best books I have ever read. That being said, I was not quite as enamored of Virtues of War in comparison. It was still an excellent book. Pressfield's first person writing style helps you feel you are right there with Alexander. In a way Alexander's story is a sad one. His primary skill and only interest was war and it didn't seem to matter where or with whom. He led his armies on a decade long journey of death and destruction.....for what? He went way beyond just trying to protect his country. He saw war as a virtue. He died at 32 one of the greatest warriors in history.

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