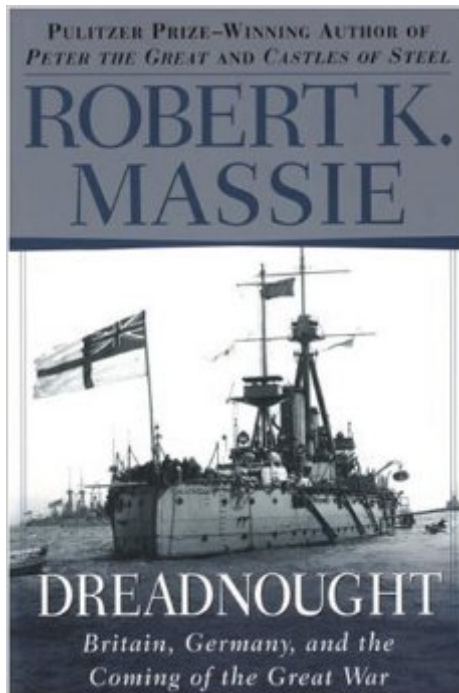


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Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, And The Coming Of The Great War



Synopsis

"A classic [that] covers superbly a whole era...Engrossing in its glittering gallery of characters."CHICAGO SUN-TIMES Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Robert K. Massie has written a richly textured and gripping chronicle of the personal and national rivalries that led to the twentieth century's first great arms race. Massie brings to vivid life, such historical figures as the single-minded Admiral von Tirpitz, the young, ambitious, Winston Churchill, the ruthless, sycophantic Chancellor Bernhard von Bulow, and many others. Their story, and the story of the era, filled with misunderstandings, missed opportunities, and events leading to unintended conclusions, unfolds like a Greek tragedy in his powerful narrative. Intimately human and dramatic, DREADNOUGHT is history at its most riveting.

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Customer Reviews

Often, non-military historians dismiss wars as "boring" and state the real "history" is what happens before or after the conflict. In Dreadnaught, Robert Massie thoroughly analyzes the decades before the Great War to illustrate how the war occurred. While the underlying theme is the naval arms race between Britain and Germany, Massie covers the royal family relationships across the continent, geo-political ambitions of the several European powers, the build up of armies, and the economic situation. Each of these elements contributed to the coming of war. Dreadnaught is perhaps the most detailed account presently available in a single volume, and it is worth the time to read this fine book. From clashes in eastern Europe to north Africa that were precursors to global conflict, to the heads of state involved to the military leaders, this book covers the entire historical landscape that

puts World War I in proper perspective. Massie's work should remain the standard in its field for years to come. Though it is long, the reader will yearn for more when finished.

Dreadnought is a very big book about a very big subject, the origins of World War I. The consequences of which were, needless to say, complicated and diverse for the road to the great war can never really be exactly determined. For example, a plausible argument may be made that the seeds of WWI were laid when the Roman Empire ended some 1,500 years ago. (The origins of World War II, in contrast, are somewhat less complicated- the Treaty of Versailles being the predominate cause of the greatest war mankind has ever fought.) Author Robert Massie tries, and generally succeeds, in telling us about the events and personalities that precipitated the conflict. The isolationism of Great Britain, the rise of Imperial Germany, the ins and outs of pre-war British politics, etc. The heart of the book is Massie's description of the Dreadnought program- the brainchild of Admiral Jack Fisher -which was an attempt to build a battleship that would revolutionize naval combat and keep England safe from invasion. Instead, the Dreadnought kicked off an arms race between England and Germany that contributed mightily to WWI. Massie is, to say the least, a thorough historian. Everything is in here that could have played even the slightest role in bringing about the conflict. One senses that there is indeed too much information here. How important really was the political dispute over Imperial Preference, a proposal which would have given tariff preferences to British colonies over other imports, to the causing of the First World War? It is a fascinating tale, perhaps worthy of its own book, but hardly of great consequence here. However, one cannot fault Massie's thoroughness or prose, for Dreadnought is a readable book that is probably the definitive work on the cause of the First World War. Outstanding. A book that any student of history can be very enthusiastic about.

Robert Massey's DREADNOUGHT is less a history of the building of the first true battleship or even a history limited to the naval arms race between Germany and Great Britain in the years prior to World War I than it is a comprehensive and expansive political and personal history of the men, policies, and treaty entanglements of Europe over the last half of the 19th century and up until the breakout of total war in 1914. The scope of this book is impressive and its particular strength is in the detailed personal narratives concerning the men who shaped the history of Europe and the world at this time. The most compelling of these narratives and the most interesting exposition of personality must be the storyline concerning the Kaiser, William II. Alternatively child-like in his petulance and his longing on approval from his family (that being the English royal family) and regal

in the assertion of his imperial prerogative and in his capricious vanity, William is flawed, but ultimately likable. This volume is powered by dozens of other richly textured character studies on both the English and German sides from Otto von Bismarck and Queen Victoria to Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and Winston Churchill. Personally, I am a fan of naval history (or more generally, the history of technologies and warfare) as well as a fan of general history. For the naval buffs, I would recommend the sequel to this volume: CASTLES OF STEEL, over this work. However, for general history, you won't find anything better than DREADNOUGHT. Jeremy W. Forstadt

This is one of the finest works of non-fiction ever written! Anyone who would like a fundamental understanding of pre-World War I Europe and the political intrigue that went along with it, should read this fine work. One empire was firmly entrenched on the world stage, one nation wanted an empire and two other empires were crumbling. It is long but there is never a dull moment. Massie clearly lays out in fine detail, the naval arms between Great Britain and Germany. His research alone must have been quite an undertaking. The author also described in a very understandable way, the technological innovations that made these new battleships state of the art. But most importantly, he lays out his argument, that fundamentally Kaiser Wilhelm is responsible for World War I. This becomes clearer near the end of the book when Massie describes the final days of peace and how those events spun out of control. Those pages alone make the book worth reading. I disagree with a previous reviewer that the book was Anglo-centric. I think the Germans and the Brits come off as they really were. The Prussians were very belligerent. A united Germany was still a young "upstart" nation. Germany was a nation of immense cultural and technological richness, but a nation that always has seemed to make bad choices. The Kaiser had we would call today "an attitude" or a chip on his shoulder. I also had very little knowledge of the pre-war Balkans. Especially enlightening was learning of the Balkan War of 1912. Massie has created a masterpiece that any student of history should read.

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