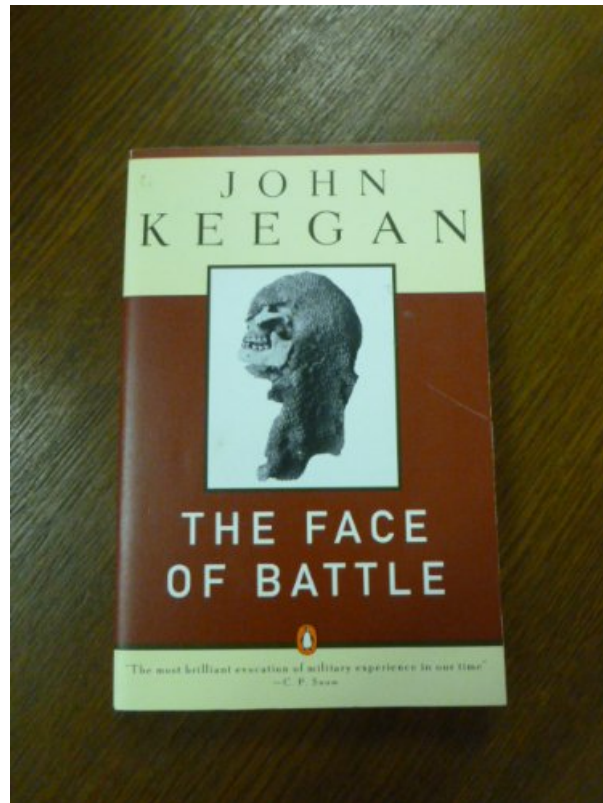
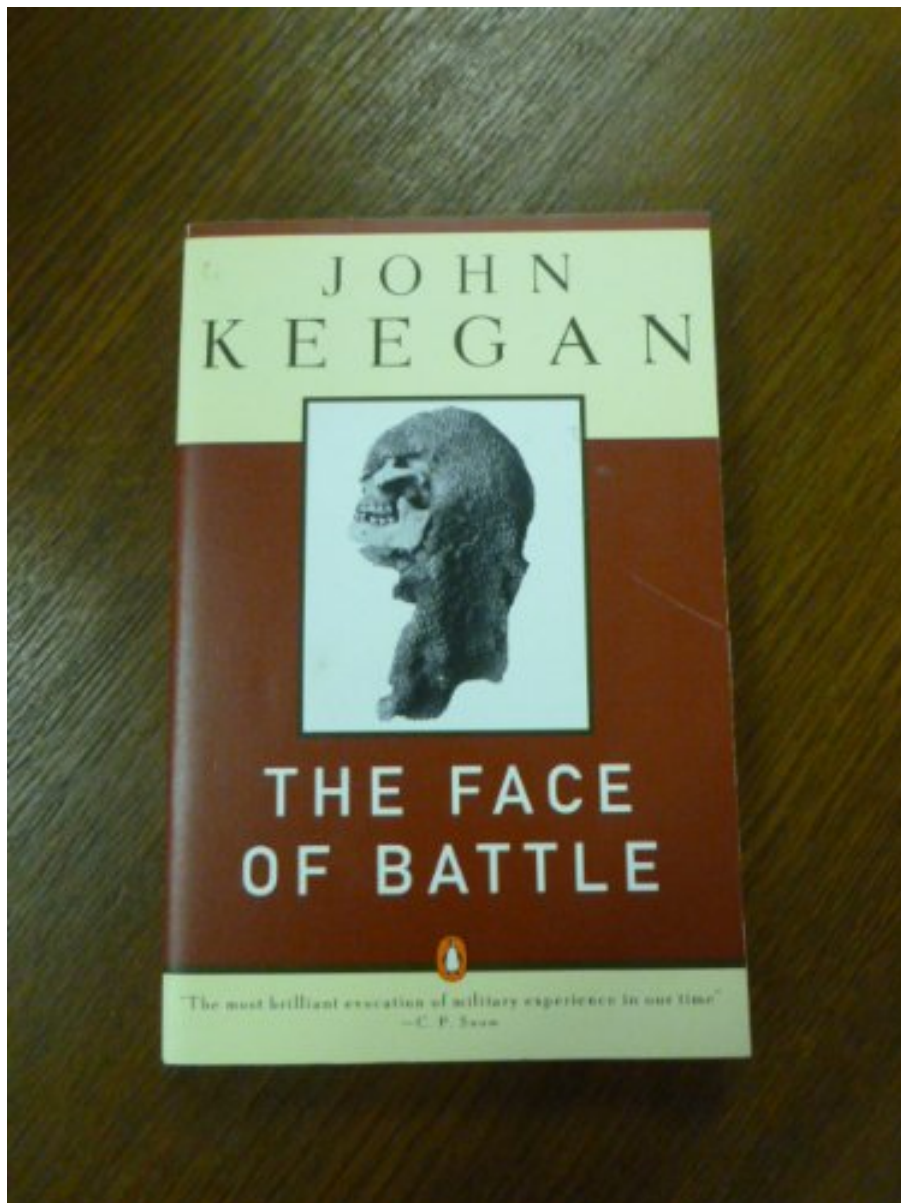


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The military history from the battlefield: a look at the direct experience of individuals at the "point of maximum danger". John Keegan has written what is probably the definitive model for military historians.

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- Published on: 1978
- Original language: English
- Binding: Paperback

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True description of How Battlefields Look Like.

By Maximiliano F Yofre

“The Face of Battle” is an early book from Mr. Keegan (1976) which shows all his virtues combined: he is a professor (at Sandhurst Military Academy), so the book is didactic; he is an investigator so his researches on how to describe a battle are shown; he is a talented literate writer, so his prose is engaging and fluent.

As with other books of the author this is a very commendable reading for different audiences: those interested in specific military topics, those interested in history (as me), those who want to know how a battle looks like and more.

Mr. Keegan opens his work with an introduction in which he wonders how battles have been described and performs a critical reading on some famous excerpts, pointing out why they fail to tell us what really happened in those critical moments of history. At the same time he draws a model on how a battle should be told.

He applies this model to three outstanding battles: Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme. He analyzes and describes each piece of battle, taking pains to break them into small components and present them to the reader with a forceful language.

Agincourt is a fearful hand-to-hand and man-to-man conflict; Mr. Keegan reviews the weapons, the battlefield, the climate, the mood of the warriors, the leadership and the moral conflict of killing prisoners among other things. Even if this battle piece is described with scientific method you have the poignant feeling of being there.

Waterloo is a different scenario; weaponry has evolved changing the kind and quality of armed encounters. Documentation on the battle overflows and menaces drowning the historian. Artists' imagination is aroused and lots of paintings full of color and inaccuracy find their way to galleries and museums. From all this massed data and imagery, however Mr. Keegan produces another coherent and accurate description of the events on 18th June.

The Somme is 20th century and an industrialized mass war, the size of the battle field enlarges to an inhuman scale, increasing logistic and communication problems. General staff miscalculations translate into human useless suffering. Pre-battle, battle and post-battle issues are analyzed and shown in this section.

Military lessons may be extracted from it by military professionals. A very realistic picture of the pains, disorientation, vision, behavior, of the front officers and soldiers, among many other “observables” may be grasped by the rest of the readers.

But as I said at the beginning of the review, Mr. Keegan is not only an historian, he is an educator, and so to complete his work, as an epilogue, he discusses the future of battle and the art of War.

Reviewed by Max Yofre.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Let's face it. You do not want to miss this book.

By Bernie

John Keegan could give Barbara Tuchman a run for her money. In this excellently written speculation on three major battles (A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme.)

The first part of the book was a mixed message. I can understand that as a writer John Keegan had to explain that he has not been in a battle to quell detractors. However he may have overdone it a bit. Mixed with his apology is an excellent overview of what a battle is. I made it to the Tet Offensive 1968. He could have been next to me from his descriptions of battle. I did see some differences in attitude between West Point and Sandhurst. I would have been satisfied if the first chapter was the book.

Then he goes on to dissect three grate battles. I only knew of the battles through Shakespeare and other tellers of tales; so it was nice to get the skinny on what it was really most likely to be. You do not have to be in a battle to feel you were there but it helps.

This is one of those books that need to be re-read as there are too many details and you will have to pause and think about what you just read.

This book was very well worth the time to read it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By JJ

need to read now

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