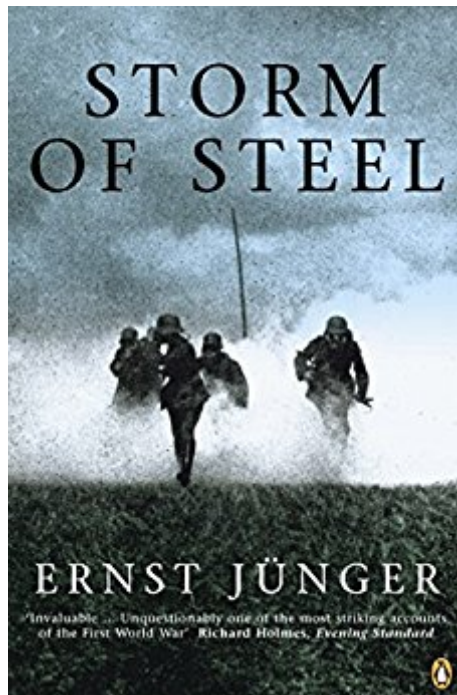


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Storm Of Steel (Penguin Modern Classics)



Synopsis

'As though walking through a deep dream, I saw steel helmets approaching through the craters. They seemed to sprout from the fire-harrowed soil like some iron harvest ...' Storm of Steel is one of the greatest works to emerge from the catastrophe of the First World War. A memoir of astonishing power, savagery and ashen lyricism, it illuminates like no other book the horrors but also the fascination of total war, presenting the conflict through the eyes of an ordinary German soldier. As an account of the terrors of the Western Front and of the sickening allure that made men keep fighting on for four long years, Storm of Steel has no equal.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you've made it this far, chances are you are interested in WWI, so Buy it Now. This book is a great, straightforward account of what the front lines of WWI were like. It's a raw, and sometimes humorous account of life in the trenches This book will stick with you long after you've finished it. I stumbled on this book on accident and wish I knew about it sooner, it's really an amazing story. I recommend skipping the long winded forward though, or maybe go back and read it after the fact.

I was pleasantly surprised by Storm of Steel, just as I was by that other WWI memoir Goodbye to All

That. GtAT I read because I had enjoyed 'I, Claudius'. It was an engaging story, regardless of any political/social commentary. Similarly, SoS, though a slow burn through the first quarter or so, is ultimately engrossing, solely on its literary merits. But I can't say it's for everyone. There is enough of it quoted in the Washington Post review above for you to know for yourself. Here's another excerpt: "Then the whistle of another shell high in the air. Everybody had that clutching feeling: 'It's coming over!' There was a terrific stupefying crash... the shell had burst in the midst of us..." I picked myself up half-unconscious. The machine gun ammunition, set alight by the explosion, was burning in intense pink glow. It illumined the rising fumes of the shell-burst, in which there writhed a heap of blackened bodies and the shadowy forms of the survivors..." I am not an action-movie junkie, nor an arm-chair general, but I cannot deny the excitement of Junger's narrative. Reading SoS, I was drawn into Junger's world and felt pangs of shame that I hadn't lived through these experiences, scared as I would be to go "over the top". Rather than being disillusioned like Robert Graves, Junger recognizes the senselessness of war, the value of peace and civilian life, but sees that, in that recognition, a category of human experience is lost: "In the cold light of reason, everything alike is a matter of expedience and sinks to the paltry and mean. It was our luck to live in the invisible rays of a feeling that filled the heart." As he points out, some soldiers seem to have a special luck, and Junger comes across as something like a living action-hero, coming through danger after danger essentially unscathed, chomping on his cigar. Before one advance: "Three minutes before the attack, my batman beckoned to me, pointing to a full bottle... I took a long pull. It was as though I drank water. There was only the cigar wanting, the usual one for such occasions. Three times the match was blown out by the confusion of the air..." I don't think this was supposed to be humorous, but how can one not smile? At the end of the book, couped up in an infirmary with one of the Red Baron's men, Junger learns that he has received Germany's highest military award. The two injured men celebrate by hurdling a chair. Initially, I was under the impression that Junger went on to support national socialism. But he did not, and in fact seems to have been loosely connected with the Stauffenberg bomb plot. Nevertheless, some other reviewers here seem to think that any book like Junger's--one that does not unequivocally denounce war--bears some responsibility. Perhaps. I'm not sure. It is inaccurate to say Junger was without compassion or remorse, and he both breaks down crying at one point and runs scared at another. But Junger was interested in honor, a value we not only largely reject today but for the most part, I believe, do not comprehend (I include myself here). This book was gross at times but made me retreat from judgement. Other reviewers, apparently annoyed at not having a map with arrows to look at, criticize Junger as a war historian and soldier. This book is not a memoir of that type. Also, I note some mention in other reviews of the

translation. The copy I ordered and received is a grey paperback with images of steel treads and barbed wire on the cover. The translator's name is nowhere to be found. The publisher is, I believe, 's in-house print-on-demand self-publishing service. This leads me to believe this is an older, out of print translation. The one by Michael Hofmann is praised by other reviewers, but when I compare chapter headings, I find that my chapter "Overture to the Somme Offensive" is translated by Hofmann as "Beginning of the Battle of the Somme". Take your pick. I'm content.

Probably the most descriptive book about WW1 ever written (far more so than Graves or Remarque). I think everyone should read this book to have some idea of how absolutely terrible that war was in the trenches (if your stomach can take the descriptions -- not for the faint-of-heart but, oddly enough, compelling too). The German lieutenant, Hans Juenger, was seriously wounded about 14 times, including a bullet, at the end of the war, through both sides of his body and one lung, lived to 102 without ever joining the Nazi party (though he was in the occupation of Paris in WW2), and was the youngest German ever to receive the highest military decoration (oddly enough, with a French name) -- Pour le Merite. If you don't believe that God (especially) looks after some people, for whatever reason, known only to Him/Her, you will now!

The great fiction of our time is that mankind hates war. This book was written by a true warrior; one of those men for whom war is a natural element for war awakens in him his true nature. But the author was much more than a warrior; a well educated man who wrote several other books (philosophical in nature), who initially supported Hitler (for his revitalization of Germany) yet who withdrew his support when faced with the reality (even in mildly occupied France), Junger was one of those rare men one would love to meet and talk with for hours. He chronicles his experiences in the trenches in WWI with a straightforwardness and clarity that allows one to experience, as much as possible, the war that hopefully will not be repeated. He describes the changing nature of war, where men are pitted against machines and where the arbitrary is natural. Junger revelled in the war and yet you cannot believe him a monster; he provides an honest description that was echoed by many veterans after the war but whose works have been shunted aside in favor of more politically correct views of that war. A great read and one which can open the mind for anyone who is truly interested in human nature.

This was a recommended book based on a university history course that was covering the period from a social as well as military basis. The intention was to become more aware of the mindset of a

warrior who fought a patriotic battle for his country, and to emphasize the individual that Junger is. It goes beyond the glorification of war, and represents an almost apolitical viewpoint into war, and warriors like the author. A fine read, perhaps I will move onto some of his later work to see the post war period.

This book is a non fiction story that exceeds any I have read from the great war. A must buy for both shelf and mind.

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