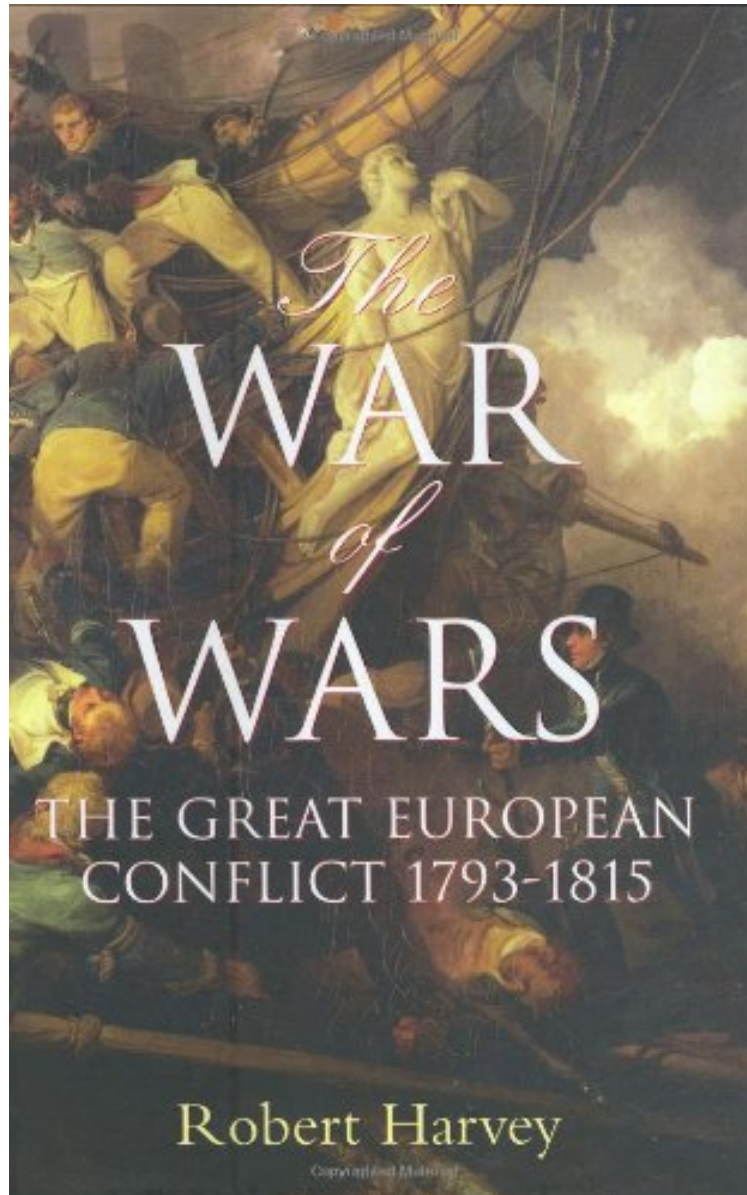


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The War of Wars: The Great European Conflict 1793 - 1815

Robert Harvey

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Robert Harvey : The War of Wars: The Great European Conflict 1793 - 1815 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The War of Wars: The Great European Conflict 1793 - 1815:

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By Robert Field Fascinating book; to me it feels similar to Foote's Civil War series. Very enjoyable and informative reading! My only complaint would be that, honestly, the editing is really bad- there are very frequent errors.
9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Excellent reading. Could have used more maps
By Craig MACKINNON Napoleon, Hitler, Alexander, Ghengis Kahn. These world-conquerors hold a special place in the minds of the human race. Even when they are considered monsters (especially Hitler, although all these men were capable of the most heinous atrocities), these larger-than-life historical figures continue to fill bookshelves in the stores and libraries. In spite of the assertions in the early chapters of the book, the French wars from 1789 to 1814 really are the history of the rise of the national conscript army and its use by Napoleon to bring the old Europe to its knees. This book hits all the usual highlights - Borodino, Austerlitz, the Nile, etc. Because it hits all the highlights, there is not a lot of detail on any given battle (Trafalgar and Waterloo fare the best, as do the battles in Wellington's Penninsular Campaign). Instead, the author wisely concentrates on the major personalities involved. We learn about Napoleon's dalliances, the Duke of Wellington's haughty manner, Blucher's relationship with his troops, etc. In fact, Harvey goes to great lengths to demolish the heroic standing of the Allied commanders. On the British side, only Cochrane and Moore come out looking good. Nelson treats his wife so badly he doesn't even answer her mail, traipses about Europe spending profligately on his mistress, and can't even be bothered to attend his own father's funeral. Wellington is aloof and cold, unliked by his men (although they follow him knowing he is a brilliant general), and jealous of his hereditary titles. The Austrian generals are at best unimaginative (Duke Charles) and mostly incompetent. On the French side, Napoleon's stepson Eugene fares best under Harvey's withering criticism. Most controversial, perhaps, is Harvey's assertion that Napoleon was not really a very good general. He concedes that Austerlitz is indeed a great victory, and one that required control over an enormous army. But Napoleon's other large battles - Borodino, Waterloo, etc. - were often tactical victories, but strategic losses (and very close-run things). Napoleon's genius was in small battles of manoeuvre (i.e. his Italian campaign when the Directory still ruled in Paris) rather than large-scale set-pieces. Ultimately, this is a general history, meant for enjoyment by a wide audience. In that, it succeeds brilliantly. This is a page-turner, not only because the events go by so fast, but because Harvey brings the personalities so vividly to life. The book could certainly have used more maps - both battle details but also strategic maps showing cities, rivers, and political boundaries.

At the turn of the 18th century the greatest nations in Europe, separated by only 21 miles of water, offered history two distinct ideals that would shape the new century: England was a democratic, constitutional monarchy; while France had suffered the cataclysm of Revolution which ripped the absolute King from the throne and replaced him with the Mob. Out of this emerged, Napoleon Bonaparte, commander of the revolutionary army, who would conquer Italy and Egypt before returning to Paris to proclaim himself Emperor. As Napoleon gained power in France, the world stood on the brink of total war. By 1805 the General Napoleon was making plans to cross the channel and invade England. The subsequent drama reaches from the frozen plains surrounding Moscow to the Caribbean waters, from the debating chamber of the Parliament to the muddy fields of Waterloo. The Great French Wars (1793-1815) can truly be called the first global war; and also the first conflict driven by industrial might. Mostly, it was a battle between commanders that history will never forget; as Napoleon's revolutionary guard ravaged Europe, men like the Duke of Wellington, Horatio Nelson, and their allies, stopped Napoleon's complete domination of the continent.