



The 33 Strategies of War

Robert Greene

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Brilliant distillations of the strategies of war—and the subtle social game of everyday life—by the bestselling author of *The 48 Laws of Power* and *Mastery*

Robert Greene's groundbreaking guides, *The 48 Laws of Power*, *The Art of Seduction*, and his latest book, *Mastery*, espouse profound, timeless lessons from the events of history to help readers vanquish an enemy, ensnare an unsuspecting victim, or become the greatest in your field. In *The 33 Strategies of War*, Greene has crafted an important addition to this ruthless and unique series.

Spanning world civilizations, synthesizing dozens of political, philosophical, and religious texts and thousands of years of violent conflict, *The 33 Strategies of War* is a comprehensive guide to the subtle social game of everyday life informed by the most ingenious and effective military principles in war. Structured in Greene's trademark style, *The 33 Strategies of War* is the I-Ching of conflict, the contemporary companion to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

Abundantly illustrated with examples from history, including the folly and genius of everyone from Napoleon to Margaret Thatcher, Shaka the Zulu to Lord Nelson, Hannibal to Ulysses S. Grant, as well as movie moguls, Samurai swordsmen, and diplomats, each of the thirty-three chapters outlines a strategy that will help you win life's wars. Learn the offensive strategies that require you to maintain the initiative and negotiate from a position of strength, or the defensive strategies designed to help you respond to dangerous situations and avoid unwinnable wars. The great warriors of battlefields and drawing rooms alike demonstrate prudence, agility, balance, and calm, and a keen understanding that the rational, resourceful, and intuitive always defeat the panicked, the uncreative, and the stupid. An indispensable book, *The 33 Strategies of War* provides all the psychological ammunition you need to overcome patterns of failure and forever gain the upper hand.

The 33 Strategies of War Details

Date : Published December 14th 2007 by Penguin Books (first published March 3rd 2005)

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Author : Robert Greene

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Genre : Nonfiction, Psychology, History, Business, Philosophy, Self Help, War

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From Reader Review The 33 Strategies of War for online ebook

Ryan says

This book is lousy. I was constantly amazed at the author's ability to say absolutely nothing through so much of the book. If you like pseudo-philosophical catch phrases like "If you want to win a battle, fight your battle to win" Ok, I just made that up, but it would have gone along fine in the book. It's filled with all these pithy says that really don't inform the reader of anything.

Its one saving grace are the stories interspersed to highlight the points Greene is making. Many of them are good, even the ones I already knew from paying attention in history class (or reading them in other history books). The problem is while about half of them are actually about war, the other half are about politicians, Hollywood moguls, and other people whom the author deems "strategic". His point (in the preface, and throughout the book) is that each of us fight war even though most of us aren't soldiers, we face in everyday life situations which we need to have a plan of attack or our enemies will destroy us.

The glaring thing is virtually none of the politicians he focuses on are conservative (he does talk about Eisenhower, but only as a general; and Margaret Thatcher), he spends an inordinate amount of time telling the reader how smart Roosevelt and Clinton were. I'm sorry I tend to notice things which are lop-sided politically. But he talks about Nazi tactics alongside allied tactics, Napoleonic tactics alongside Horatio Nelson where is the bipartisan spirit? Either talk about all the politicians or leave modern politics out of it.

The book would have been much better if it was all stories and only organized into the 33 strategies with a one sentence introduction to each strategy. But to be fair, it's a self help book, and I typically can't read self help books because of all the pithy pseudo-psych stuff in them (as described in the first paragraph). They are either unbearably vague or glaringly obvious and sometimes both. Also to be fair, I didn't finish the book. I got to about strategy 19 before I just gave up. Who knows, maybe he was saving the Reagan and Bush stories for the later strategies. I guess I'll never know.

Jeremy says

"The 33 Strategies of War" basically assumes you're a member of the fucking Borgias family--everyone you meet is an enemy or a strategic friend, and both groups will likely undermine you. I feel like Robert Greene has read way too much Machiavelli, and now sees his entire life in those terms.

While I found the Game of Thronesy political/strategic angle entertaining, it becomes wearisome after 200 pages or so. Green's prose isn't awful, but he's very repetitive. On the plus side, he throws in a lot of interesting military history to illustrate his "principles".

Read this if you're a high-powered exec. looking for a book to justify your amoral/psychopathic worldview.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02EJ1...>

Erik says

The 33 Strategies of War picks up where the 48 Laws of Power left off. Greene continues his exploration of historical figures, turning his attention to the more focused ways to fight a conflict, whether that be an actual war or a business meeting. The book is split into 5 sections, each dealing with a different type of conflict or method of fighting a conflict, from fighting defensively to dirty fighting favored by revolutionaries. He uses the same style as in the 48 Laws where he retells the history of how a figure, such as Napoleon or Henry Kissenger fought a conflict. After telling the story, he distills the wisdom of what was done, how it was done and why it was the wisest course of action given the circumstances. Then, he explores where the people in the story weren't successful and why they failed. As I said before regarding the 48 Laws, this is one of those books I notonly wish I had read as a child, but would highly recommend to anyone with any level of ambition or love of history.

Ramy says

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Carolyn Kaufman says

I'd like to give this a 3.5 stars, please.

The good:

- Lots of illustrative stories. (After seeing 300, though, I admit to rushing home and being annoyed I couldn't find anything...especially since I knew what [wouldn't] happen to Xerxes because I was reading this at the time.)
- A good guide to different approaches to strategy and war.

The bad:

- Usually when people say a book is too long, I assume they're used to reading magazine articles and are kind of lazy. (I know, that's awful.) With this, though, I started to feel like he got paid more to write longer chapters. I started seeing the same stories in different parts of the book, and things-are-blending-together redundancy is a cardinal sin in my book. I like clean and conscise. when I get 1/4 through the book and am seeing the same stories, I'm wondering how often I'm going to read them before I'm done.
- Greene's books tend to be about getting something. In the right context, that's okay with me, but I have read few books that feel so manipulative as his. (That includes the Seduction and Power books. Do his techniques work in the right hands? Absolutely. Is there danger in hollowing yourself out enough to use these things without feeling bad about those you're affecting? Absolutely!) Referent power is when people do things because they like you and want to be like you, and Greene explains why this is important and "how" to do it...unfortunately, this isn't one of those things that's easy to fake.
- There's not a lot of honor in many of the approaches. Granted, it's war, and it works, but if you have issues with stabbing people in the back (sometimes literally), you will have issues with some of the approaches. As you read, you'll see more and more value to stabbing people in the back...but I go back to my other points. Do you really want to be that cold? (BTW, I did read this as research of sorts rather than to Go to War with someone or something. So maybe I wasn't feeling bitter enough.) I read The Art of War after this, because it's referenced so much I started to wonder why I hadn't just read that instead. The translation I read, at least, has the feel of "we do what is necessary," rather than "we will rip their heads off and enjoy doing it, who needs friends you can't trust them anyhow, mwah ha ha ha."
- Even if you think the rest of my remarks are a little silly, this one may be the most important con. Many of the 33 strategies contradict themselves. There is an approach for everything, and any good warrior realizes that you play to the situation, but that is an art form rather than a connect-the-dots. If you're a critical thinker

who can see why you would use one strategy in one situation and the opposite (which may actually be called a bad move in another chapter) will get a lot more out of this than someone who's looking for The Answers.

Dean says

It's a lovely sunny afternoon, and I'm sitting here in my flat near the window enjoying the flair and pleasant atmosphere!!!

I'm asking myself how to review such an awesome book as this....

Let me begin by saying that this indeed is one of the most important books I have ever read in my entire life so far.

In my humble opinion it should become a compulsory read for everyone who wants to cope successfully with the strains and pressures which modern life demands from all of us!!!

What you actually have in your hands with "the 33 strategies of war" by Robert Greene is an elaborate and thoroughly researched piece of work embracing the techniques which will put you on your way by the yellow brick road to the emerald city !!!

What I mean by this is, "the 33 strategies of war" will indeed turn out to be a great help in your way of success and victory against the intrigues and dealings you'll have ever to suffer with....

My experience during my readings has been kind of an eye opener!!!

Enlightened and full of handy and helpful quotations and thoughts from a variety of sources....

Let me say that the book for himself is really pretty good elaborate, and with letters in a comfortable size which will make it easy to read for you, handsome too, with different colors to highlight important aspects. This book starts from the premise that life itself is warfare, and you must be prepared to be able to defend yourself against attacks....

Here you have defensive and offensive warfare strategies, with explanations about unconventional (dirty) warfare, and the meaning of self-directed warfare.

Particularly the passive-aggression strategy has captured my full attention!!!

Yes, five stars and my full recommendation.....

Dean:)

Issa Deerbany says

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Mohamed Adam says

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Nada says

This is a book to study, not to read. The magical combo of Robert Greene, with all the branches of the human sciences served together in the same platter. For me, it is such a delight. The only problem with the book is that with such heavy advice on winning over others, one cannot help but project the strategies and stories included within them on the people in one's circle. Every time I picked the book, an image of someone would pop to my mind and be today's enemy. Not to mention how I kept berating myself for being such a pacifist while there is so much war going around! I admit that this book changed a part of me forever, not necessarily for the more combative, but at least for the more cautious. A book to be kept in your home library and be read and counseled

Lady Jane says

In [33 Strategies of War](#), Robert Greene turns military combat into an appropriate metaphor for life in the so-called civilized world. The author introduces the book with a warning to not be deceived by the political

correctness and democratic values that the modern world promotes, because beneath the splendor of the king's court is nothing more than human nature broiling in its most aggressive essence, and rather vented through covert, subtle, and socially accepted ways. The civilized world is inherently duplicitous, with an ever widening gap between our ideals and reality. This is not because humans are bad people, according to Greene, but rather because we cannot help it. As I always say, nature is simply politically incorrect. Instead of mortals struggling against nature in a hopeless fight, Greene suggests that we should simply understand our nature, accept it, and deal with it in strategically mature ways.

From the Preface:

"We live in a culture that promotes democratic values of being fair to one and all, the importance of fitting into a group, and knowing how to cooperate with other people. We are taught early in life that those who are outwardly combative and aggressive pay a social price: unpopularity and isolation. These values of harmony and cooperation are perpetuated in subtle and not-so-subtle ways—through books on how to be successful in life; through the pleasant, peaceful exteriors that those who have gotten ahead in the world present to the public; through notions of correctness that saturate the public space. The problem for us is that we are trained and prepared for peace and we are not at all prepared for what confronts us in the real world—war.

This war exists on several levels. Most obviously, we have our rivals on the other side. The world has become increasingly competitive and nasty. In politics, business, even the arts, we face opponents who will do almost anything to gain an edge. More troubling and complex, however, are the battles we face with those who are supposedly on our side. There are those who outwardly play the team game, who act very friendly and agreeable, but who sabotage us behind the scenes, use the group to promote their own agenda. Others, more difficult to spot, play subtle games of passive aggression, offering help that never comes, instilling guilt as a secret weapon. On the surface everything seems peaceful enough, but just below it, is every man and woman for him or herself, this dynamic infecting even families and relationships. The culture may deny this reality and promote a gentler picture, but we know it and feel it, in our battle scars."

It is essential to learn the strategies and mind games of the adept, in civilized circumstances more than anywhere else, in order to best defend oneself from the snares of enemies and frenemies alike. *"What we need are not impossible and inhuman ideals of peace and cooperation to live up to, and the confusion that brings us, but rather practical knowledge on how to deal with conflict and the daily battles we face,"* explains Greene. Instead of pathologizing typically human characteristics or passing moralistic judgments, he simply presents the behaviors observed in the species throughout centuries of study, and provides insight on how to deal with attacks and obstacles accordingly. In the most primitive state, everything humans do can be reduced to self-interest, and in this sense life is merely a major chess tournament in which everyone seeks to win. The problem is that people's self-interest is not always compatible with the self-interest of others, and therein lies the root of all war. That is precisely where 33 Strategies of War comes in handy.

The Book

The 33 strategies are divided into four sections: 1) Self Directed Warfare, 2) Organizational (Team) Warfare, 3) Defensive Warfare, and 4) Offensive Warfare.

The first section is perhaps my favorite because it focuses on the only person and thing one can control—oneself, one's actions, and one's perspective. This type of philosophy reminds me very much of another favorite work of mine, The Enchiridion by Epictetus. Often one's greatest battles originate from one's fallacies and poor way of dealing with the winds of life, so it is refreshing to read a book that reminds

us of personal accountability in conflict, instead of instilling a victim mentality and blaming everyone else. Remember, one of the best aspects about Greenian literature is that there is never a good and bad—things are simply amoral, and a master chess player ought to first master himself.

The second section is excellent too because it provides tips on how to deal with the “Groupthink” philosophy that has plagued the modern workplace. This section seems to be directed at those in positions of power for it gives plenty of insight as to how authority figures think. These pages are essential reading for anybody who has to work for a master in a group, for it reveals the tricks masters apply to lead happy, obedient masses. As a member of the subordinate working class, I greatly appreciate this treasure of knowledge.

The third section, which deals with defensive warfare, fascinates me because it has some of the most useful tips in strategies against clandestine attacks from the other chess players of life whose interests just do not happen to correspond with ours, or those who strike at us for sheer entertainment.

The fourth section dealing with offensive warfare is also useful to keep around in the back of one’s mind even if one never plans to engage in any type of strike. For let us remember the famous Aesop fable, “The Wild Boar and the Fox:”

”A wild boar was engaged in whetting his tusks upon the trunk of a tree in the forest when a fox came by and, seeing what he was at, said to him, ‘Why are you doing that, pray? The huntsmen are not out today, and there are no other dangers at hand that I can see.’ ‘True, my friend,’ replied the boar, ‘but the instant my life is in danger I shall need to use my tusks. There’ll be no time to sharpen them then.’”

Robert Greene uses for examples some of the most skillful men in the arts of strategic war, such as Sun Tzu, Julius Caesar, Hernan Cortez, and Napoleon Bonaparte; he also presents examples from psychological wars outside the battlefield, and shares stories about Alfred Hitchcock and Mae West as examples. Also, the author quotes some of the most cunning thinkers in the art of strategy, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Niccolo Machiavelli, Musashi Miyamoto, and Saul Alinsky. Greene makes the history lessons enjoyable by giving the strategies a modern twist through hypothetical examples on how they can apply to the reader in modern day situations in the modern world’s battlefields: the workplace, social gatherings, and even the family setting.

Nobody escapes the author’s frighteningly clear microscope, which makes his candid work irresistibly appealing in a world that is shrouded by the tawdry twenty-five cent jewelry of politeness and political correctness. The author speaks in the second person’s point of view, which makes readers feel as if they are having a conversation with Athena herself, the goddess of wisdom and war strategy. In fact, the book is dedicated to Athena, as well as to Napoleon, Sun-tzu, and the author’s charming little feline by the name of Brutus.

Allow me to culminate with an amazing quote from this amazing book:

“We humans have a particular limitation to our reasoning powers that causes us endless problems: when we are thinking about someone or about something that has happened to us, we generally opt for the simplest, most easily digestible interpretation. An acquaintance is either good or bad, nice or mean, his intentions noble or nefarious; an event is positive or negative, beneficial or harmful; we are happy or sad. The truth is that nothing in life is ever so simple. People are invariably a mix of good and bad qualities, strengths and weaknesses. Their intentions in doing something can be helpful and harmful to us at the same time, a result of their ambivalent feelings toward us. Even the most positive event has a downside. And we often feel happy and sad at the same time. Reducing things to simpler terms makes them easier for us to handle, but because

it is not related to reality, it also means we are constantly misunderstanding and misreading. It would be of infinite benefit for us to allow more nuances and ambiguity into our judgments of people and events” (613).

Serena says

Excellent if you love History - in particular famous figures, battles, and wars. He humanizes historical people/events in a way that makes what could be dense and overwhelming reading very exciting.

Motaz Mohamad says

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Andy says

This guy writes the scariest books out there. Way scarier than Stephen King. Either that or the funniest. I can't tell. His amorality is so exaggerated it's hard to believe. Evil isn't one supernatural weirdo, evil is everyone everywhere all the time. War in this book is a big game between egomaniacs who don't care if they happen to kill millions of people. The author wants you to be like these crazy jerks in your daily life because otherwise crazy jerks will crush you. If people start accusing you of being immoral because you are, you shouldn't feel bad because they are all immoral liars too.

Sociopaths are real and they see the world this way; "homo homini lupus" (man is a wolf to man) has been their excuse for thousands of years for all the evil they do. But why is the solution for everyone to be a wolf? Sociopaths are only 4% of the population! According to the Milgram experiments, most people are sheep and will obey the wolves or whoever is giving the orders, but where are the sheepdogs and shepherds? Robert Greene would say they should read his books. Because you know the wolves do, and they are coming to eat you. Scary.

Ben Love says

I'm beginning to learn that any book by Robert Greene is a treat. The theme seems to be as follows: lots of attention-worthy historical references, crystal clear deductions from analysis, cross examination of derived points and something to take away. All wrapped up in a bow with no fluff, zero me-me-me and enough solid information to keep you thinking for at least the year after you read the book.

The topic for this Robert Greene outing: strategy. The last of his works I read were on seduction, power (definitely his defining work) and the 50 cent collaboration 50th Law.

When first pulling together the mobile strategy for the company I'm with, it never crossed my mind to research military strategy. After reading 33 Strategies of War, I am kicking myself that I didn't. Though, this book is a one-stop compendium on the topic. It's unlikely you're going to find such a collection anywhere else.

The book is thought-provoking and challenging and the topics/laws have applicability in modern life as much as ancient wars. The historian slants do not bore but make for fascinating context and paint visuals for remembering. To some though, it may come across as somewhat dark and sinister in places... but sadly that is more of a reflection on past and present actions of a messed up human race than specific to the narrative tone of the book.

Is this as punchy as 48 Laws of Power? Actually yes, though each book handles a different theme in their respectively appropriate ways.

If strategy (true grand strategy, not US business next quarter's keep shareholders happy "strategy") is something you need to be doing in your day job, devour this book for both the background and ignition for your own strategic planning. In this line of non-fiction, it is a read well worthy of your attention and interest.
