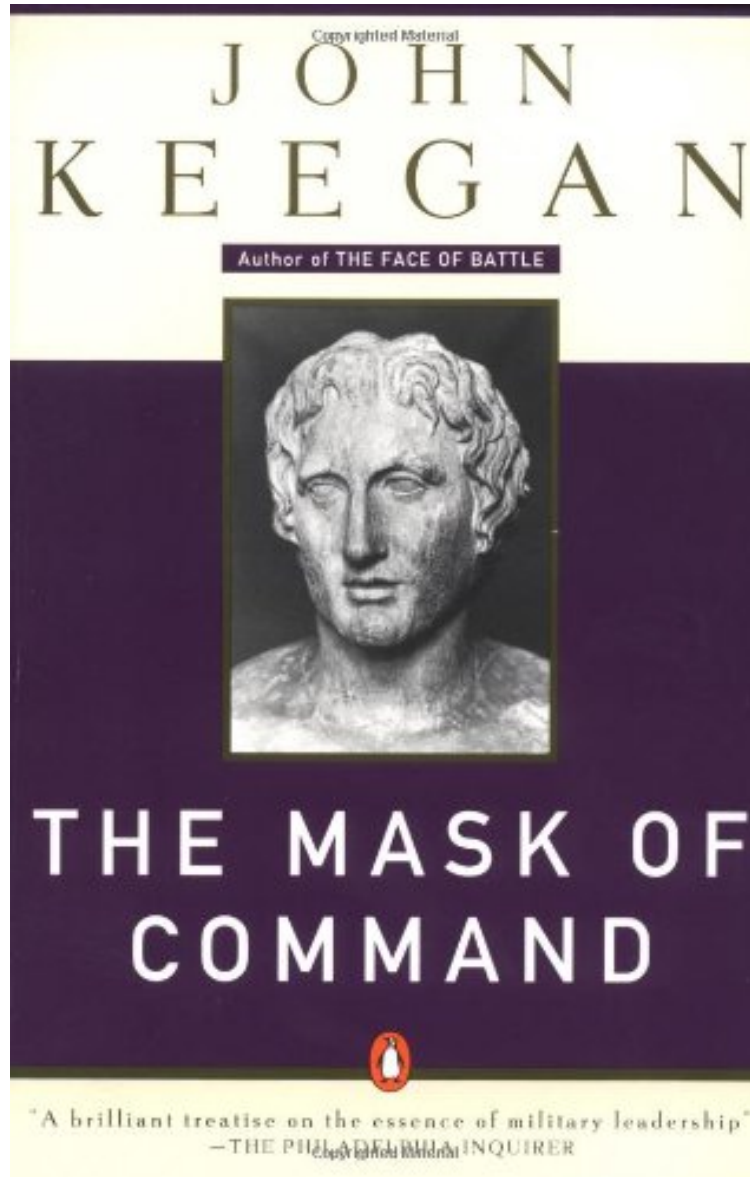


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The Mask of Command

John Keegan

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John Keegan : The Mask of Command before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mask of Command:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Four Commanders and their MethodsBy Cody CarlsonJohn Keegan's penetrating look at four military commanders, "The Mask of Command" is a wonderful examination of war, strategy, and generalship. One of our finest military historians, Keegan brilliantly examines the role leadership has

historically played in ancient and modern warfare. His case studies include Alexander the Great, whose daring, even reckless disregard for danger earned him the respect and devotion of his Macedonian force and its Greek 'allies'. Keegan's careful breakdown of Alexander's force, the strategies it employed, and Alexander's overall flamboyance on the battlefield contribute to a greater understanding of the period and military realities of the day. The second study, the Duke of Wellington, offers a more detached, though still fully engaged mind. Keegan describes Wellington as the anti-hero, in contrast to Alexander's heroics. A British aristocrat well aware of his station, Wellington employed all of his resources and cunning to win, but did so without Alexander's dramatics. Third, Keegan explores U.S. Grant during the US Civil War. Grant is the democratic soldier, committed to the republican ideal. He is engaged in prosecuting the war and always keenly aware that war itself lifted him out of obscurity and placed him in the critical leadership role. Finally, Keegan explores the twisted, though occasionally militarily brilliant mind of Adolf Hitler. Hitler commanded far behind the lines and continually inserted himself further and further down the chain of command. His justification for his own military judgment was his experience in the trenches of World War I. Hitler's growing disconnect with military reality as the war progressed spelled ultimate doom for Germany. Concise and well written, "The Mask of Command" offers fascinating insights into military leadership over the ages. Keegan is always worth reading and this work is one of his best.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Brilliant Case Study of Wartime Leadership By Michael Hill John Keegan, one of the premier military historians of the 20th century (and early 21st), wrote this as a comparative study of wartime leadership through various epochs of history, studying Alexander the Great, The Duke of Wellington, Grant, and Hitler. While I would have liked to read about some heroes from the Middle Ages (a noticeable gap in this is the only flaw I can think of) but it serves to ask very important questions about the cultural impact on leadership. The introduction, and this is key, emphasises that he is not seeking a universal or general idea of leadership but rather a number of examples of how leadership and wartime actions are a function of culture and society as much as of individual will. In this way, he distances himself from the social sciences (even if he does use their ideas in theories in many of his books) and makes it clear that in no way was Alexander's command style universal in his time for example, even if it was the expectation of warrior cultures as well as number of other factors. As other reviewers have stated perhaps the most interesting narrative was Hitler's. My area of interest does not usually fall to the World Wars, as I much prefer to learn about antiquity, but I found his to be the most enlightening and informative. It was refreshing also to learn about Hitler in his downtime, something I know is studied but have not really come across myself, and how he commanded the military of Germany. The idea that culture affects military actions is not an entirely new concept, even at the publishing of this book several decades ago, but it is one that many non-historians don't often think about. Getting specific examples of this is very enlightening. Also, I felt that of Keegan's books that I have read (Face of Battle and History of Warfare with plans to read many more) this is the most accessible and perhaps useful to those who aren't military buffs.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Leadership Profiles: Separate but Close. By MFY "The Mask of Command" is a very commendable reading for different audiences: those interested in specific military topics, those interested in history (as myself), those who research on leadership and more, much more, because John Keegan writes with a dynamic and fluent style and expose his ideas very engagingly. Four historical figures are chosen as examples for this study; we may dissent with the choice. I'm sure every reader will have a different list, if forced to select four characters among the enormous list of suitable candidates. Each Commander is presented in his historical background: political and social circumstances; his staff and soldiers, his ideals and goals, his methods and resources. Then each one is compared and confronted with the other subjects. Here is where Mr. Keegan displays a very imaginative and didactical approach. A deep insight into the commandeering skills of these forceful characters, separated in time and space, but very close to each other in the quests they have to solve. A great book to be sure! Reviewed by Max Yofre.

John Keegan's brilliant look at the meaning of leadership In The Mask of Command, John Keegan asks us to consider questions that are seldom asked: What is the definition of leadership? What makes a great military leader? Why is it that men, indeed sometimes entire nations, follow a single leader, often to victory, but with equal dedication also to defeat? Dozens of names come to mind... Napoleon, Lee, Charlemagne, Hannibal, Castro, Hussein. From a wide array, Keegan chooses four commanders who profoundly influenced the course of history: Alexander the Great, the Duke of Wellington, Ulysses S. Grant and Adolph Hitler. All powerful leaders, each cast in a different mold, each with diverse results. "The best military historian of our generation." –Tom Clancy "A brilliant treatise on the essence of military leadership." –The Philadelphia Inquirer "Fascinating and enlightening... marked by great intellectual liveliness... Mr. Keegan knows how to bring fighting alive on the page." –The New York Times

From Publishers Weekly Four chapters on "heroic" military leadership (in the broadest sense of the word) Alexander the Great, Wellington, U.S. Grant and Hitler lead up to what PW called a "masterful closing argument warning that in the nuclear age heroic leadership of any style would lead to the destruction of civilization." Photos. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Keegan (The Face of Battle, Six Armies in Normandy) turns his attention to command. He interprets generalship as manifesting a cultural urge to conquer. Its classical example is the

heroic warrior, personified by Alexander the Great, who inextricably merged identity with performance. Subsequently, the bureaucratic state, democracy, technology, etc., subsumed the heroic leader. The 20th-century re-evoked the heroic principle, but it manifested itself in the false heroism of an Adolf Hitler. Keegan concludes by appealing for post-heroic leaders who will forswear conflict. Though Keegan's structure and models are open to challenge, this provocative book nevertheless deserves reading by any student of military affairs. Dennis Showalter, Colorado Coll., Colorado Springs Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. From the Publisher 11 1.5-hour cassettes