

AP European History

The **BIG** List

AP Euro Reading Catalog 2019-20

INSTRUCTIONS: You are strongly encouraged, beginning in the summer before you take AP Euro, to expand your knowledge and understanding of European history. *You must read a minimum of THREE books from the list [but I encourage you to read more] over the summer and have your reviews of each when you return to class in August. You must read a minimum of ONE outside book each nine weeks over the course of the school year.* For reading the three summer books and completing the assignment outlined below for each, you will receive a 100 as your first test grade in AP Euro. In order to get the points, you have to complete a review for each book in the format outlined below. I encourage you to read books on topics you find interesting; if you find a book on a topic in European history that is not on the list below, check with me by e-mail to see if it would be acceptable for credit. Don't bother looking for *short* books, I generally will not approve them unless they are really exceptional. (During the summer you can e-mail me at mjernigan@lee-scott.org). *In the list below, books with a * before the title are books I have read. If you want a recommendation on them, ask me.*

Book Review Format

Write a minimum of 300-word review ONLY if you read the book. Use of *Spark Notes* and other condensed summaries is NOT ALLOWED and will result in a 0. In the first paragraph, begin with a quote from the book that you thought was interesting and discuss it. Then, critique the book or film and rate it using a scale of 1 to 5 stars (***** = Enjoyed it greatly, * = Didn't enjoy it at all).

In the remaining paragraphs, choose three specific facts (or people) that you felt were important to understanding the story and analyze them, react to them, and discuss them.

BOOKS

General Histories

James Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed* (2009)

Back Bay Books

This extraordinary book shows the impact that events both large and small had on the history of Western Europe and the world.

George Fasel, *Modern Europe in the Making* (1974)

Dodd, Mead

This book begins with the French Revolution and ends with the Common Market.

Specific Topics in History

Geraldine Brooks, *Year of Wonders: A Novel of the Plague* (2002)

Penguin Books

With an intensely observant eye, a rigorous regard for period detail, and assured, elegant prose, Brooks re-creates a year in the life of a remote British village decimated by the bubonic plague. Inspired by the actual town commemorated as Plague Village because of the events that transpired there in 1665-1666, Brooks tells her harrowing story from the perspective of 18-year-old Anna Frith, a widow with two young sons. As deaths mount, grief and superstition evoke mob violence against "witches," and cults of self-flagellation and devil worship. With the facility of a prose artist, Brooks unflinchingly describes barbaric 17th-century customs and depicts the fabric of life in a poor rural area.

***Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (1978 or 1987)**

Ballantine Books

In this sweeping historical narrative, Tuchman writes of the cataclysmic 14th century, when the energies of medieval Europe were devoted to fighting internecine wars and warding off the plague. Some medieval thinkers viewed these disasters as divine punishment for mortal wrongs; others, more practically, viewed them as opportunities to accumulate wealth and power. Tuchman looks into such events as the Hundred Years War, the collapse of the medieval church, and the rise of various heresies, pogroms, and other events that caused medieval Europeans to wonder what they had done to deserve such horrors.

***William Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire* (2009)**

Black Bay Books

It speaks to the failure of medieval Europe, writes popular historian William Manchester, that "in the year 1500, after a thousand years of neglect, the roads built by the Romans were still the best on the continent." European powers were so absorbed in destroying each other and in suppressing peasant revolts and religious reform that they never quite got around to realizing the possibilities of contemporary innovations in public health, civil engineering, and other peaceful pursuits. Instead, they waged war in faraway lands, created and lost fortunes, and squandered millions of lives. For all the wastefulness of medieval societies, however, the era created the foundation for the extraordinary creative explosion of the Renaissance.

Thomas Cahill, *Heretics and Heroes: How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created our World* (2013)

Random House

Thomas Cahill guides readers through the thrilling period of the Renaissance and the Reformation (the late fourteenth to the early seventeenth century), so full of innovation and cultural change that the Western world would not experience its like again until the twentieth century. Beginning with the continent-wide disaster of the Black Death, Cahill traces the many developments in European thought and experience that served both the new humanism

of the Renaissance and the seemingly abrupt religious alterations of the increasingly radical Reformation.

Lawrence Goldstone, *Out of the Flames: The Remarkable Story of a Fearless Scholar, a Fatal Heresy, and One of the Rarest Books in the World*, (2008)

Broadway Books

Michael Servetus is one of those hidden figureheads of history who is remembered not for his name, but for the revolutionary deeds that stand in his place. Both a scientist and a freethinking theologian, Servetus is credited with the discovery of pulmonary circulation in the human body as well as the authorship of a polemical masterpiece that cost him his life. *The Christianismi Restituto*, a heretical work of biblical scholarship, written in 1553, aimed to refute the orthodox Christianity that Servetus' old colleague, John Calvin, supported. After the book spread through the ranks of Protestant hierarchy, Servetus was tried and agonizingly burned at the stake, the last known copy of the *Restitutio* chained to his leg. Servetus's execution is significant because it marked a turning point in the quest for freedom of expression, due largely to the development of the printing press and the proliferation of books in Renaissance Europe. Three copies of the *Restitutio* managed to survive the burning, despite every effort on the part of his enemies to destroy them. As a result, the book became almost a surrogate for its author, going into hiding and relying on covert distribution until it could be read freely, centuries later. *Out of the Flames* tracks the history of this special work, examining Servetus's life and times and the politics of the first information during the 16th century.

***Ross King, *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Recreated Architecture* (2013) Bloomsbury USA**

Filippo Brunelleschi's design for the dome of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence remains one of the most towering achievements of Renaissance architecture. Completed in 1436, the dome remains a remarkable feat of design and engineering. Its span of more than 140 feet exceeds St Paul's in London and St Peter's in Rome, and even outdoes the Capitol in Washington, D.C., making it the largest dome ever constructed using bricks and mortar. The story of its creation and its brilliant but "hot-tempered" creator is told in [Ross King's](#) delightful *Brunelleschi's Dome*.

***Ross King, *Leonardo's Last Supper* (2013) Bloomsbury USA**

In 1495, Leonardo da Vinci began what would become one of history's most influential works of art—The Last Supper. Amid war and the political and religious turmoil around him, and beset by his own insecurities and frustrations, Leonardo created the masterpiece that would forever define him. King unveils dozens of stories embedded in the painting and overturns many of the myths surrounding it. Bringing to life a fascinating period in history, he presents an original portrait of one of history's greatest geniuses through the lens of his most famous work.

Walter Isaacson, *Leonardo da Vinci*, (2017) Simon & Schuster

The author of the acclaimed bestsellers *Steve Jobs*, *Einstein*, and *Benjamin Franklin* brings Leonardo da Vinci to life in this new biography. Based on thousands of pages from Leonardo's astonishing notebooks and new discoveries about his life and work, Walter Isaacson weaves a

narrative that connects his art to his science. He produced the two most famous paintings in history, *The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*. But in his own mind, he was just as much a man of science and technology. With a passion that sometimes became obsessive, he pursued innovative studies of anatomy, fossils, birds, the heart, flying machines, botany, geology, and weaponry. He peeled flesh off the faces of cadavers, drew the muscles that move the lips, and then painted history's most memorable smile.

***Ross King, *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling* (2014)
Bloomsbury USA**

Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling recounts the fascinating story of the four extraordinary years Michelangelo spent laboring over the 12000 square feet of the vast Sistine Chapel ceiling, while war and the power politics and personal rivalries that abounded in Rome swirled around him. A panorama of illustrious figures intersected during this time—the brilliant young painter Raphael, with whom Michelangelo formed a rivalry; the fiery preacher Girolamo Savonarola and the great Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus; a youthful Martin Luther, who made his only trip to Rome at this time and was disgusted by the corruption all around him. King blends these figures into a magnificent tapestry of day-to-day life on the ingenious Sistine scaffolding and outside in the upheaval of early-sixteenth-century Italy, while also offering uncommon insight into the connection between art and history.

***Ross King, *Machiavelli (Eminent Lives)* (2009)
Harper Collins E-Books**

The author of *The Prince*—his controversial handbook on power, which is one of the most influential books ever written—Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) was no prince himself. Born to an established middle-class family, Machiavelli worked as a courtier and diplomat for the Republic of Florence and enjoyed some small fame in his time as the author of bawdy plays and poems. In this discerning new biography, Ross King rescues Machiavelli's legacy from caricature, detailing the vibrant political and social context that influenced his thought and underscoring the humanity of one of history's finest political thinkers.

**Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (2012)
Forgotten Books**

Bainton provides very lucid and vivid historical settings, events, people, and such surrounding the life of Luther. Bainton draws his reader into the life of Luther by carefully unfolding historical events which led up to the reformation and events that helped to shape Luther's thinking during and following the Reformation. This book is certainly a must for anyone who wants a better understanding of Martin Luther as well as a crucial text for anyone wanting a better understanding of the Reformation.

**Christopher Hibbert, *The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall* (2012)
William Morrow Publishers**

It was a dynasty with more wealth, passion, and power than the houses of Windsor, Kennedy, and Rockefeller combined. It shaped all of Europe and controlled politics, scientists, artists, and even popes, for 300 years. It was the house of Medici, patrons of Botticelli, Michelangelo and Galileo, benefactors who turned Florence into a global power center, and then lost it all.

Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter* (2011)

Walker Books

During the Scientific Revolution, no figure was as influential or as controversial as Galileo. Inspired by a long fascination with Galileo, and by the remarkable surviving letters of his daughter Maria Celeste, a cloistered nun, Dava Sobel has crafted a biography that dramatically recolors the personality and accomplishments of a mythic figure whose early-seventeenth-century clash with Catholic doctrine continues to define the schism between science and religion—the man Albert Einstein called "the father of modern physics—indeed of modern science altogether." It is also a stunning portrait of Galileo's daughter, a person hitherto lost to history, described by her father as "a woman of exquisite mind, singular goodness, and most tenderly attached to me."

***Edward Dolnick, *The Clockwork Universe* (2011)**

Harper Collins

For this narrative of the 17th century's scientific revolution, Dolnick embeds the mathematical discoveries of Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Leibniz in the prevailing outlook of their time. God was presumed integral to the universe, so discerning how it worked was a quest as theological as it was intellectual. By directing readers to the deistic drive in their famous achievements, Dolnick accents what otherwise strikes moderns as strange, such as Newton's obsession with alchemy and biblical hermeneutics. Dolnick follows the greats' progress in code-breaking, depicting Kepler's mathematical thought process in devising his laws, Galileo's in breaking out the vectors of falling objects, Newton's and Leibniz's in inventing calculus, and Newton's in formulating his laws of gravitation.

Paul DeKruif, *Microbe Hunters* (2002)

Harcourt Brace and Company

This is the story of the scientists who discovered microbes and invented vaccines: Leeuwenhoek, the first person to view microbes; Spallanzani, who found that microbes multiply; Pasteur, whose vaccine for rabies convinced the world that disease could be conquered; and Ehrlich, who discovered that arsenic could cure as well as kill. I can't recommend it enough.

James Gleick, *Isaac Newton* (2007)

Vintage Press

Isaac Newton was born in a stone farmhouse in 1642, fatherless and unwanted by his mother. When he died in London in 1727 he was so renowned he was given a state funeral—an unheard-of honor for a subject whose achievements were in the realm of the intellect. During the years he was an irascible presence at Trinity College, Cambridge, Newton imagined properties of nature and gave them names—*mass*, *gravity*, *velocity*—things our science now takes for granted. Inspired by Aristotle, spurred on by Galileo's discoveries and the philosophy of Descartes, Newton grasped the intangible and dared to take its measure, a leap of the mind unparalleled in his generation.

***Andrew Roberts, *Napoleon: A Life* (2014)**

Viking Press

There have been many books about Napoleon, but Andrew Roberts' single-volume biography is the first to make full use of the ongoing French publication of Napoleon's 33,000 letters. Seemingly leaving no stone unturned, Roberts begins in Corsica in 1769, pointing to Napoleon's roots on that island—and a resulting fascination with the Roman Empire—as an early indicator of what history might hold for the boy. Napoleon's upbringing—from his roots, to his penchant for holing up and reading about classic wars, to his education in France, all seemed to point in one direction—and by the time he was 24, he was a French general. Though he would be dead by 51, it was only the beginning of what he would accomplish.

***Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (2012)**

William Morrow Publishers

The Days of the French Revolution maintains its supremacy among the plethora of French Revolution histories. An acclaimed author of over 25 historical and biographical studies, Hibbert presents complexly related events in a logical, readable format and supplies plenty of historical background and detail without sacrificing clarity or narrative flow. He writes for the general reader unfamiliar with Revolution history, introducing them to individuals as diverse as Marie Antoinette, the young lawyer Danton, the journalist Marat, and the Girondin, sans-culotte and extremist Enragé political factions, weaving their fates together, and adeptly illustrating how they influenced the Revolution and how the Revolution, in turn, changed their lives.

***Ruth Scurr, *Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution* (2007)**

Metropolitan Books

Since his execution by guillotine in July 1794, Maximilien Robespierre has been contested terrain for historians, at once the most notorious leader of the French Revolution and the least comprehensible. Was he a bloodthirsty charlatan or the only true defender of revolutionary ideals? Was his extreme moralism—he was known as "*The Incorruptible*"—a heroic virtue or a ruinous flaw? Was he the first modern dictator or the earliest democrat? *Fatal Purity* is a fascinating portrait of a man who identified with the Revolution to the point of madness, and in so doing changed the course of history.

Joan DeJean, *How Paris Became Paris: The Invention of the Modern City* (2014)

Bloomsbury USA

Though most people associate the signature characteristics of Paris with the public works of the nineteenth century, DeJean demonstrates that the Parisian model for urban space was in fact invented two centuries earlier, when the first complete design for the French capital was drawn up and implemented. Paris became the first city to tear down its fortifications, inviting people in rather than keeping them out. Parisian urban planning showcased new kinds of streets, including the original boulevard, as well as public parks and the earliest sidewalks and bridges without houses. By 1700, Paris had become the capital that would revolutionize our conception of the city and of urban life.

***Bernard Cornwell, *Waterloo: The History of Four Days, Three Armies, and Three Battles* (2015) HarperCollins**

From the *New York Times* bestselling author comes the definitive, illustrated history of one of the greatest battles ever fought—a riveting nonfiction chronicle published to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Napoleon’s last stand. On June 18, 1815 the armies of France, Britain and Prussia descended upon a quiet valley south of Brussels. In the previous three days, the French army had beaten the Prussians at Ligny and fought the British to a standstill at Quatre-Bras. The Allies were in retreat. The little village north of where they turned to fight the French army was called Waterloo. The blood-soaked battle to which it gave its name would become a landmark in European history.

***David King, *Vienna 1814* (2008)
Crown Publishing**

A brilliantly researched account of the most audacious and extravagant peace conference in modern European history. With the feared Napoleon presumably defeated and exiled to Elba, heads of some 216 states gathered in Vienna to piece together the ruins of his toppled empire. Major questions loomed: What would be done with France? How were the newly liberated territories to be divided? What type of restitution would be offered to families of the deceased? But this unprecedented gathering of kings, dignitaries, and diplomatic leaders unfurled a seemingly endless stream of personal vendettas, long-simmering feuds, and romantic entanglements that threatened to undermine the crucial work at hand, even as their hard-fought policy decisions shaped the destiny of Europe and led to the longest sustained peace the continent would ever see.

**Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1999)
W. W. Norton and Company**

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, this book is more than just European history. It attempts, on a grand scale, to understand the impact that environment and biological factors had on history. Why did some people fail to domesticate animals? Why did food production spread at different rates on different continents? Perhaps the most compelling section of the book is part 3, "From Food to Guns, Germs, and Steel," in which the author discusses the evolution of germs, writing, technology, government, and religion.

***Dava Sobel, *Longitude* (2010)
Walker Books**

The true story of a long genius who solved the greatest scientific problem of his time—the invention of a reliable device for keeping time at sea, thus improving navigation forever.

**Bernard Jaffe, *Crucibles* (2012)
Dover Publications**

Beginning with Trevisan and his search for the "philosopher's stone," the reader learns about Joseph Priestley's search for phlogiston ending with his discovery of oxygen, Lavoisier's creation of a new language for chemistry, Mendeleev and his "table of the elements," and Marie Curie's isolation of radium. The book ends with an account of the development of nuclear fission and nuclear fusion.

**Garry Wills, *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* (2002)
Doubleday**

Popes in the Roman Catholic church were not always very saintly, as you learned if you read

William Manchester. Although a little difficult to get into at first, this book is historically more accurate and compelling than the Manchester book, which tends to be sensationalistic and reports some rumors as fact.

***Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (1981)**

Random House

Against the monumental canvas of 17th and 18th-century Europe and Russia unfolds the story of Peter the Great, crowned co-tsar at the age of ten. Massie delves deep into the life of this captivating historical figure, chronicling the pivotal events that shaped a boy into a legend—including his “incognito” travels in Europe, his unquenchable curiosity about Western ways, his obsession with the sea and establishment of the stupendous Russian navy, his creation of an unbeatable army, his transformation of Russia, and his relationships. Impetuous and stubborn, generous and cruel, tender and unforgiving, a man of enormous energy and complexity, Peter the Great is brought fully to life.

***Robert K. Massie, *Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman* (2011)**

Random House

The extraordinary story of an obscure German princess who became one of the most remarkable, powerful, and captivating women in history. Born into a minor noble family, Catherine transformed herself into empress of Russia by sheer determination. For 34 years, the government, foreign policy, cultural development, and welfare of the Russian people were in her hands. One of the first rulers to be a pupil of Enlightenment values, she dealt with domestic rebellion, foreign wars, and the tidal wave of political change and violence churned up by the French Revolution.

Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic and How it Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* (2006)

A thrilling account of the 1854 cholera outbreak in Victorian London—and a brilliant exploration of how Dr. John Snow's solution revolutionized the way we think about disease, cities, science, and the modern world. A devastating cholera outbreak seized London just as it was emerging as a modern city: more than 2 million people packed into a ten-mile circumference, a hub of travel and commerce, teeming with people from all over the world, continually pushing the limits of infrastructure that's outdated as soon as it was updated. When he created the map that traced the pattern of outbreak back to its source, Dr. Snow didn't just solve the most pressing medical riddle of his time. He ultimately established a precedent for the way modern city-dwellers, city planners, physicians, and public officials think about the spread of disease and the development of the modern urban environment.

William Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp 1587-1968* (1968)

Little, Brown and Co.

The Krupp family was the premier German arms manufacturers from the middle of the 19th century until the end of World War II, producing artillery pieces and submarines that set the standard for effectiveness. This book relates the history of this influential company and becomes a history of Germany itself in the process.

***Emmeline Pankhurst, *Suffragette: The Autobiography of Emmeline Pankhurst* (2015)**

Amazon Digital Services

Emmeline Pankhurst was a leader of the British suffrage movement in a critical era—the early 1900's—and helped women win the right to vote. Although reviled by many for the violent tactics that she eventually adopted, including arson, she was named by *Time* magazine as one of the *100 Most Important People of the 20th Century*. In this autobiography, originally published as "*My Own Story*," Pankhurst details the story of the women's suffrage movement, including the escalating battle between activists and the government, her multiple stints in prison, hunger strikes, and forced feeding.

***Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror & Heroism in Colonial Africa* (1999)**

Mariner Books

Hochschild's superb, engrossing chronicle focuses on one of the great, horrifying and nearly forgotten crimes of the century: greedy Belgian King Leopold II's rape of the Congo, the vast colony he seized as his private fiefdom in 1885. Until 1909, he used his mercenary army to force slaves into mines and rubber plantations, burn villages, mete out sadistic punishments, including dismemberment, and commit mass murder.

***Alan Palmer, *Bismarck* (2014)**

Endeavour Press

At the peak of his eminence, Otto von Bismarck, the statesman who created a unified Germany and who dominated world politics in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, was regarded as a legend rather than an individual.

***Candice Millard, *Hero of the Empire: The Boer War, a Daring Escape, and the Making of Winston Churchill* (2016)**

Doubleday

It should come as no surprise that Winston Churchill was an ambitious, go-getter long before he became Sir Winston Churchill—but you might be surprised by how interesting his young life was. The son of Lord Randolph Churchill—who ascended to the position of leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer before dying at the age of 45—Winston Churchill set off as a young man to find glory on the battlefield, with an eye toward ultimately emulating his father's success in politics. The young Winston played a part in four wars on three different continents, the last of which was the Boer War. His experience as a prisoner in that war is the jumping off point of this book, and author Millard describes his harrowing escape, setting the man in his time, and illustrating the man to describe his times.

***Virginia Cowles, *1913: The Defiant Swan Song* (2018)**

Sharpe Books

Historian Virginia Cowles paints a picture of the glamour and scandals within the upper echelon of society of seven major cities, through rich prose and lively anecdotes, including English King George V's speculated alcoholism, the devotion of the Russian Empress Alexandra to the charlatan Rasputin and Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand's quick temper and conspicuous affairs. *A Defiant Swan Song* chronicles all the highs and lows of 1913—from major cultural events such as the suffragette movement in London, to the folly and fame of the ruling elite. Parties, fashion political intrigue, dancing, and dueling abound. But life was not all

one endless party before the war. Cowles also reveals the tensions and divisions behind the mask of European society. 1913 would be the beginning of the end of the Victorian way of life.

***Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (2004)**

Presidio Press

Historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Barbara Tuchman has brought to life again the people and events that led up to World War I. With attention to fascinating detail, and an intense knowledge of her subject and its characters, Ms. Tuchman reveals, for the first time, just how the war started, why, and why it could have been stopped but wasn't.

***Alan Palmer, *The Kaiser: Warlord of the Second Reich* (2014)**

Endeavour Press

He was, in the minds of many, the man responsible for the catastrophe that engulfed Europe in 1914. But there was much more to Kaiser Wilhelm II, the cold, brutal ruler, yet remarkable insecure and self absorbed ruler who represented the pride and swagger of Imperial Germany.

***Frederic Morton, *Thunder at Twilight: Vienna 1913/1914* (2014)**

Da Capo Press

Drawing on hitherto untapped sources, Morton illuminates two crucial years in the life of the extraordinary city of Vienna—and in the life of the twentieth century. It was during the carnival of 1913 that a young Stalin arrived in Vienna on a mission that would launch him into the upper echelon of Russian revolutionaries, and it was here that he first collided with Trotsky. It was in Vienna that the failed artist Adolf Hitler kept daubing watercolors and spouting tirades at fellow drifters in a flophouse. Here Archduke Franz Ferdinand had a troubled audience with Emperor Franz Joseph—and soon the bullet that killed the Archduke would set off the Great War that would kill ten million more.

***Arthur Guy Empey, *Over the Top* (2012)**

Amazon Digital Services

Arthur Empey was an American soldier who fought in the British Army during World War I. His account of that service is one of the most readable personal memoirs of what it was like to serve in the trenches of World War One. Empey was medically discharged after being wounded in action. He wrote *Over the Top* upon his return to the United States, and after selling more than a quarter of a million copies it was made into a feature film in 1918. Empey went on to become a screenwriter, actor, and movie producer.

***Robert K. Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra* (2011)**

Random House

In this commanding book, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Robert K. Massie sweeps readers back to the extraordinary world of Imperial Russia to tell the story of the Romanovs' lives: Nicholas's political naïveté, Alexandra's obsession with the corrupt mystic Rasputin, and little Alexis's brave struggle with hemophilia. Against a lavish backdrop of luxury and intrigue, Massie unfolds a powerful drama of passion and history—the story of a doomed empire and the death-marked royals who watched it crumble.

***John Keegan, *The First World War* (2000)**

Vintage

Despite the avalanche of books written about the First World War in recent years, there have been comparatively few books that deliver a comprehensive account of the war and its campaigns from start to finish. *The First World War* fills the gap superbly.

**Douglas Smith, *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy* (2012)
Farrar, Strauss & Giroux**

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks undertook a program of deliberate class warfare -- eliminating bourgeois and aristocrats whom they saw as antithetical to their new socialist society. Epic in scope, precise in detail, and heart-breaking in its human drama, *Former People* is the first book to recount the history of the aristocracy caught up in the maelstrom of the Bolshevik Revolution and the creation of Stalin's Russia. Filled with chilling tales of looted palaces and burning estates, of desperate flights in the night from marauding peasants and Red Army soldiers, of imprisonment, exile, and execution, it is the story of how a centuries'-old elite, famous for its glittering wealth, its service to the Tsar and Empire, and its promotion of the arts and culture, was dispossessed and destroyed along with the rest of old Russia.

***Adam Hochschild, *Spain in our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (2016)
Mariner Books**

For three crucial years in the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War dominated headlines around the world, as volunteers flooded to Spain to help its democratic government fight off a fascist uprising led by Francisco Franco and aided by Hitler and Mussolini. Author Adam Hochschild has discovered some compelling characters who reveal the full tragedy and importance of the war including a fiery nineteen-year-old Kentucky woman who went to wartime Spain on her honeymoon, a Swarthmore College senior who was the first American casualty in the battle for Madrid, a pair of fiercely partisan *New York Times* reporters who covered the war from opposite sides, and a swashbuckling Texas oilman with Nazi sympathies who sold Franco almost all his oil — at reduced prices, and on credit.

***William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (2011)
Simon and Schuster (50th Anniversary Edition)**

William L. Shirer's work is a monumental study of the 20th Century's most frightening moments. Shirer's description of events and the cast of characters who played such pivotal roles in defining the course Europe was to take is unforgettable.

**Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (1997)
Simon and Schuster**

From 1946 to 1966, while serving the prison sentence handed down from the Nuremberg War Crimes tribunal, Hitler chief architect and confidante Albert Speer penned 1,200 manuscript pages of personal memoirs. In 1970, Speer's critically acclaimed personal history was translated into English and published as *Inside the Third Reich*. Long after their initial publication, Speer's memoir continues to provide one of the most detailed and fascinating portrayals of life within Hitler's inner circles, the rise and fall of the third German empire, and of Hitler himself.

Benjamin Carter Hett, *The Death of Democracy: Hitler's Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic* (2018)

Why did democracy fall apart so quickly and completely in Germany in the 1930s? How did a democratic government allow Adolf Hitler to seize power? Benjamin Carter Hett answers these questions, and the story he tells has disturbing resonances for our own time. Hett is one of America's leading scholars of 20th-century Germany and a gifted storyteller whose portraits of these feckless politicians show how fragile democracy can be when those in power do not respect it. He offers a powerful lesson for today, when democracy once again finds itself embattled and the siren song of strongmen sounds ever louder.

***Ronald C. Rosbottom, *When Paris Went Dark: The City of Light Under German Occupation 1940-1944* (2015)**

Back Bay Books

On June 14, 1940, German tanks entered a silent and nearly deserted Paris. Eight days later, France accepted a humiliating defeat and foreign occupation. Subsequently, an eerie sense of normalcy settled over the City of Light. Many Parisians keenly adapted themselves to the situation—even allied themselves with their Nazi overlords. At the same time, amidst this darkening gloom of German ruthlessness, deportations, shortages, and curfews, a resistance arose. Rosbottom evokes with stunning precision the detail of daily life in a city under occupation by relying on a range of resources—memoirs, diaries, letters, archives, interviews, personal histories, flyers and posters, fiction, photographs, film and historical studies.

***David King, *Death in the City of Light* (2012)**

Broadway Books

Death in the City of Light is the gripping, true story of a brutal serial killer who unleashed his own reign of terror in Nazi-Occupied Paris. As decapitated heads and dismembered bodies surfaced in the Seine, Commissaire Georges-Victor Massu, head of the *Brigade Criminelle*, was tasked with tracking down the murderer in a twilight world of Gestapo, gangsters, resistance fighters, prostitutes, spies, and other shadowy figures of the Paris underworld.

***Leonard Gross, *The Last Jews in Berlin* (1999)**

Basic Books

In February 1943, 4000 Jews went underground in Berlin. By the end of the war, all but a few hundred of them had died in bombing raids or, more commonly, in death camps. This is the real-life story of some of the few of them—a young mother, a scholar and his countless lover, a black-market jeweler, a fashion designer, a Zionist, an opera-loving merchant, a teen-age orphan - who resourcefully, boldly, defiantly, luckily survived. In hiding or in masquerade, by their wits and sometimes with the aid of conscience-stricken German gentiles, they survived. They survived the constant threat of discovery by the Nazi authorities or by the sinister handful of turncoat Jewish "catchers" who would send them to the gas chambers. They survived to tell this tale, which reads like a thriller and triumphs like a miracle.

***Ben McIntyre, *Operation Mincemeat* (2010)**

Broadway Books

In 1943, British intelligence conceived a trick to draw German attention away from the Allies' next objective, Sicily. The bait was a briefcase full of carefully forged documents attached to

the wrist of Major William Martin, Royal Marines—a fictitious identity given to a body floated ashore in neutral Spain. The body was that of a derelict. Its costuming included the underwear of a deceased Oxford don. An attractive secretary provided the photo of an imaginary fiancée. The carefully constructed documents setting up the bogus operation against Greece and Sardinia convinced even Hitler himself. The Sicily landings were achieved with almost complete surprise. And the man who never was entered the history and folklore of WWII.

Edward Radzinsky, *Stalin* (2011)

Random House

From the author of *The Last Tsar*, the first full-scale life of Stalin to have what no previous biography has entirely gotten hold of: the facts. Granted privileged access to Russia's secret archives, Edward Radzinsky paints a picture of the Soviet strongman as more calculating, ruthless, and blood-crazed than has ever been described or imagined. Stalin was a man for whom power was all, terror a useful weapon, and deceit a constant companion.

***John Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (2014)**

Anchor Press

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian John Toland's classic, definitive biography of Adolf Hitler remains the most thorough, readable, accessible, and, as much as possible, objective account of the life of a man whose evil affect on the world in the twentieth century will always be felt.

***Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Human Tragedy* (2014)**

Rosetta Books

Rich with eye-witness accounts, incisive interviews, and first-hand source materials including documentation from the Eichmann and Nuremberg war crime trials, master historian Martin Gilbert weaves a detailed, immediate account of the Holocaust from Hitler's rise to power to the final defeat of the Nazis in 1945.

Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (2014)

Rosetta Books

Written by master historian and authorized Churchill biographer Martin Gilbert, this masterful single-volume work weaves together the detailed research from the author's eight-volume biography of the elder statesman, and features new information unavailable at the time of the original work's publication. Spanning Churchill's youth, education and early military career, his journalistic work, and the arc of his political leadership, *Churchill: A Life* details the great man's indelible contribution to Britain's foreign policy and internal social reform.

***Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of WWII* (2011)**

The New Press

Studs Terkel, the noted Chicago-based journalist, gathers the reminiscences of 121 participants in World War II (called "the good war" because, in the words of one soldier, "to see fascism defeated, nothing better could have happened to a human being"). These participants, men and women, famous and ordinary, tell stories that add immeasurably to our understanding of that cataclysmic time. Terkel touches on many themes along the way, including institutionalized racism in the United States military, the birth of the military-industrial complex, and the origins of the Cold War.

***Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of WWII* (2012)**

St. Martin's Press

The end of the Second World War in Europe is one of the twentieth century's most iconic moments. It is fondly remembered as a time when cheering crowds filled the streets, danced, drank and made love until the small hours. These images of victory and celebration are so strong in our minds that the period of anarchy and civil war that followed has been forgotten. Across Europe, landscapes had been ravaged, entire cities razed and more than thirty million people had been killed in the war. *Savage Continent* describes a continent still racked by violence, where large sections of the population had yet to accept that the war was over. Individuals, communities and sometimes whole nations sought vengeance for the wrongs that had been done to them during the war. Based principally on primary sources from a dozen countries, *Savage Continent* is a frightening and thrilling chronicle of a world gone mad, the standard history of post WWII Europe for years to come.

Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (2013)

Anchor Press

The gulags. The show trials. The boot stamping on a human face. These trappings of postwar totalitarianism have stayed in our collective memory--brutal and terrifying, yes, but after more than 50 years, also so detached from their context that they've almost become political bogeymen. Applebaum's *Iron Curtain* is a powerful attempt to show that totalitarianism was more than just its most public excesses, a book concerned with the details of totalitarian rule: the diaspora of party enforcers from the USSR to the rest of the Soviet Bloc; the sudden takeover of radio stations, universities, and youth groups by partisans; the conflicted response of Catholic leaders to Stalin's methods. Through extensive interviews and archival research, *Iron Curtain* ensures the everyday experiences of those in the Soviet Bloc will endure.

Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2016)

Penguin Books

Almost a decade in the making, this much-anticipated grand history of postwar Europe from one of the world's most esteemed historians and intellectuals is a singular achievement. *Postwar* is the first modern history that covers all of Europe, both east and west, drawing on research in six languages to sweep readers through thirty-four nations and sixty years of political and cultural change--all in one integrated, enthralling narrative.

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (2006)

Penguin Books

A definitive account of the global confrontation that dominated the last half of the twentieth century. Drawing on newly opened archives and the reminiscences of the major players, John Lewis Gaddis explains not just what happened but *why*—from the months in 1945 when the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. went from alliance to antagonism to the barely averted holocaust of the Cuban Missile Crisis to the maneuvers of Nixon and Mao, Reagan and Gorbachev.

William F. Buckley Jr., *The Fall of the Berlin Wall* (2009)

Wiley, (20th Anniversary Edition)

Buckley explains why the wall was built, reveals its devastating impact on the lives of people on both sides, and provides a riveting account of the events that led to the wall's destruction and the end of the Cold War.

**John McCormick & Jonathan Olsen, *The European Union: Politics and Policies* (2013)
Westview Press**

Covering the history, governing institutions, and policies of the European Union, John McCormick and Jonathan Olsen argue that the EU is one of the world's economic and political superpowers, has brought far-reaching changes to the lives of Europeans, and has helped its member states to take a newly assertive role on the global stage. Unlike most other books on the European Union, this text pays particular attention to the implications of the EU for the United States.

***Geert Mak, *In Europe: Travels Through the 20th Century* (2009)
Vintage Press**

In 1999, Mak, a journalist and one of the Netherlands' most popular authors, set out from Amsterdam on assignment for his newspaper, the *NRC Handelsblad*, to crisscross Europe in the final year before the millennium to discover what shape the continent was in. And crisscross he did: Vienna, London; Stalingrad (now Volgograd), Chernobyl, Lourdes, Budapest; Srebrenica and dozens more. Mak used his reporter's eye to describe the vividness of the countryside and cityscapes through which he traveled, his writer's ear to interview individuals who had experienced Europe's most terrible and terrific times, and his historian's pen to narrate the passing of that most extraordinary of centuries. Mak's brilliant compendium is difficult to define—is it a history book, a travelogue, a memoir?—but stands out as a remarkable, insightful, exhilarating exposition on that peculiar continent across the Atlantic.