



Tides of War

By Steven Pressfield

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Tides of War By Steven Pressfield

Brilliant at war, a master of politics, and a charismatic lover, Alcibiades was Athens' favorite son and the city's greatest general.

A prodigal follower of Socrates, he embodied both the best and the worst of the Golden Age of Greece. A commander on both land and sea, he led his armies to victory after victory.

But like the heroes in a great Greek tragedy, he was a victim of his own pride, arrogance, excess, and ambition. Accused of crimes against the state, he was banished from his beloved Athens, only to take up arms in the service of his former enemies.

For nearly three decades, Greece burned with war and Alcibiades helped bring victories to both sides — and ended up trusted by neither.

Narrated from death row by Alcibiades' bodyguard and assassin, a man whose own love and loathing for his former commander mirrors the mixed emotions felt by all Athens, **Tides of War** tells an epic saga of an extraordinary century, a war that changed history, and a complex leader who seduced a nation.

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Tides of War By Steven Pressfield Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

After chronicling the Spartan stand at Thermopylae in his audacious *Gates of Fire*, Steven Pressfield once again proves that it's all Greek to him. In *Tides of War*, he tells the tale of Athenian soldier extraordinaire Alcibiades. Despite the vaunted claims for Periclean democracy, he is undoubtedly first among equals--a great warrior and an impressive physical specimen to boot: "The beauty of his person easily won over those previously disposed, and disarmed even those who abhorred his character and conduct." He is also a formidable orator, whose stump speeches are paradoxically heightened by what some might consider an impediment:

Even his lisp worked in Alcibiades' favor. It was a flaw; it made him human. It took the curse off his otherwise godlike self-presentation and made one, despite all misgivings, like the fellow.

This tale of arms and the man requires two narrators. One, Jason, is an aging noble who serves as a sort of recording angel of the Athenian golden age. The other, Polymides, was long Alcibiades' right-hand man, yet is now imprisoned for his murder.

As they were in his previous novel, Pressfield's battle scenes are extraordinarily vivid and visceral. This time, however, many of these elemental clashes take place on water. "As far as sight could carry, the sea stood curtained with smoke and paved with warcraft. Immediately left, a battleship had rammed one of the vessels in the wall; all three of her banks were backing water furiously, to extract and ram again, while across the breach screamed storms of stones, darts, and brands of such density that the air appeared solid with steel and flame."

In addition to his gift for rendering patriotic gore, the author excels at quieter but no less deadly forms of combat. As Alcibiades' star rises and falls and rises again, we are escorted directly into the snakepit of Athenian realpolitik. Bathing us in the details of a distant era, Pressfield is largely convincing. But it must be said that his diction exhibits a sometimes comical variegation, sliding from Homeric rhetoric to tough-guy speak to the sort of casual Anglicisms we might expect from Evelyn Waugh's far-from-bright young things. No matter. *Tides of War* conquers by sheer storytelling prowess, reminding us that war was--and is--a highly addictive version of hell. --Darya Silver

From Publishers Weekly

After Pressfield's stunning 1998 best-seller, *Gates of Fire*, which documented the Spartans' heroic last stand at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C., comes this follow-up epic novel of the Peloponnesian War, as Athens and Sparta slug it out for Greek hegemony during the Hellenic Age. Once again, Pressfield's narrator is a condemned man, in this instance the Athenian soldier and assassin Polemides, who is awaiting execution for treason. Spanning the 27 years of conflict, famine and plague that marked the Peloponnesian War, Polemides' death-row confession reveals the rise and fall of the powerful and mercurial Alcibiades, a brilliant general and shrewd politician, whose ego and ambition were as threatening to his jealous friends and allies as to his enemies. As his formerly trusted bodyguard, Polemides shows Alcibiades battling his enemies in his relentless pursuit of glory and power, only to die in exile at the hand of a familiar assassin. Despite his bloody victories on land and sea, Alcibiades changes sides too often to ensure his long-lasting legacy, and though over time he fights for the Athenians, Spartans, Persians and Thracians, he eventually discovers that he is an outcast and perceived as a danger to all of them. The voice of Polemides is ideal, for he relates this

astounding, historically accurate tale with the hot, sweaty hack-and-stab awareness of an armored infantryman, the blood lust of a paid killer and the wisdom of a keen observer of complex and deadly Greek politics. Pressfield is a masterful storyteller, especially adept in his graphic and embracing descriptions of the land and naval battles, political intrigues and colorful personalities, which come together in an intense and credible portrait of war-torn ancient Greece.

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From Library Journal

The battle of Thermopylae doesn't sound like best seller material, but Pressfield made it work in Gates of Fire. Here he moves on to Greek military leader Alcibiades (c.450-404 BCE).

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Rose:

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