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# The Art Of War: Bilingual Edition, English And Chinese



## Synopsis

This deluxe edition of *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu features both English and Chinese side by side for easy reference and bilingual support. *The Art of War* is one of the oldest books on military strategy in the world. The book's influence on Eastern and Western thought throughout history is unparalleled. This edition was translated by world-renowned sinologist Lionel Giles. The text is organized into 13 chapters, each addressing one aspect of warfare.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*The Art of War* seems to be a classic piece of Chinese philosophy that is easy to translate into a mediocre work. I've read a number of translations of Sun Tzu that are clunky and have none of the wit of the original text. Now, I don't read ancient Chinese, but when a Chinese philosophical text reads like a manual for a microwave, you know something is lost in translation. On the other hand, this translation, done by Thomas Cleary, showed me the subtlety in the *Art of War*. In addition to the work itself (which would make a very thin book) there is a long, interesting introduction written by the translator which I found very helpful in thinking about the *Art of War*, as well as helping to put the work in both a historical context, and the context amongst many of the other ancient Chinese philosophical works. How Sun Tzu's work relates to Taoism is very interesting. Also, there are selected commentation on each of the paragraphs of the *Art of War*. These commentaries were written over different periods of time by different Chinese philosophers. These help to show how many different points of view can exist over a single statement made by Sun Tzu. I find this

translation very well done, and I can easily recommend it to anyone who wants to read *The Art of War*.

War is ugly, dirty, brutal, wasteful and expensive. That is the reality of it. Let's not pretend otherwise. Having said that, the ancient Chinese master strips away all the familiar trappings of war - the warriors, weapons, forts and tactics - to reveal the essence of conflict and how to win. His lessons are as valid here and now as they were in an empire a long time ago and far, far away. It simply does not matter how you are fighting, what you are fighting over nor even why you are fighting. If you are forced into conflict with another, the lessons in this book will guarantee victory. Brute strength, overwhelming force, super weapons, holding the high ground, none of these are required for victory. All that is needed is a leader who can understand and apply the principles of warfare. Essentially it boils down to three ideas. 1. Know yourself. 2. Know your enemy. 3. Only fight when you can win. Do this, and you will win competitions, elections, games. Anything that involves conflict. Even wars. Sun Tzu's elegant language lays bare the principles of warfare, illustrating his lessons with examples from Ancient China. It is a thought-provoking, colourful and valuable book.

I got this particular edition of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* at a strategy course for sales. I already had a copy of it at home, but this edition is so nicely done that I gave my old copy away and kept this one. The introduction of James Clavell is a nice touch. It is amazing to me that this book is not read in high schools or colleges in favor of Machiavelli's work (*The Prince* or *The Art of War*.) Sun Tzu's writing is clear and to the point. Unlike the popular *Book of Five Rings* by Musashi, this book is not metaphorical and poetic; it's downright practical. And it's not hard to read, unlike many classics. If you are doing business in China, this is also a good book to know. I mentioned some of the classic strategies while giving a course in China, and every member of the class had read it, knew it well, and gave me many examples from recent Chinese history where Sun Tzu's strategies were employed. This book is close to their hearts, and will give you insight if you are doing business in the East. Of course, the most famous anecdote from this book is about gaining the obedience of troops; the emperor, wishing to interview Sun Tzu for the commission of general, asked if Sun Tzu's military principles could be applied to women. Sun Tzu replied yes, the principles worked for women as well as men. Accordingly, Sun Tzu was given the task of organizing the emperor's many concubines into an army. Sun Tzu lined up the concubines and set the two favorites as officers at the head of the columns. He gave them a simple set of orders to march and drill (eyes front, right face, about face). The drums sounded and instead of following the commands, the girls simply

giggled and blushed. He repeated the orders again, saying that if the orders were not clear, it is first the fault of the general. He repeated the commands, and the girls simply stood and giggled again. "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders ARE clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officers." Upon saying this, he ordered the two concubines at the head of the troop, favorites of the emperor, to be beheaded. The emperor hurriedly sent down the command to stop, he had no desire to see his favorites executed. The emperor said "We are satisfied that the general knows how to command." But Sun Tzu said, "Once having received the commission, there are certain commands I am unable to accept." And he ordered the two favorites to be beheaded. Once again, he gave the commands. The concubines marched, whirled about and drilled in perfect order. The emperor appointed Sun Tzu general.

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