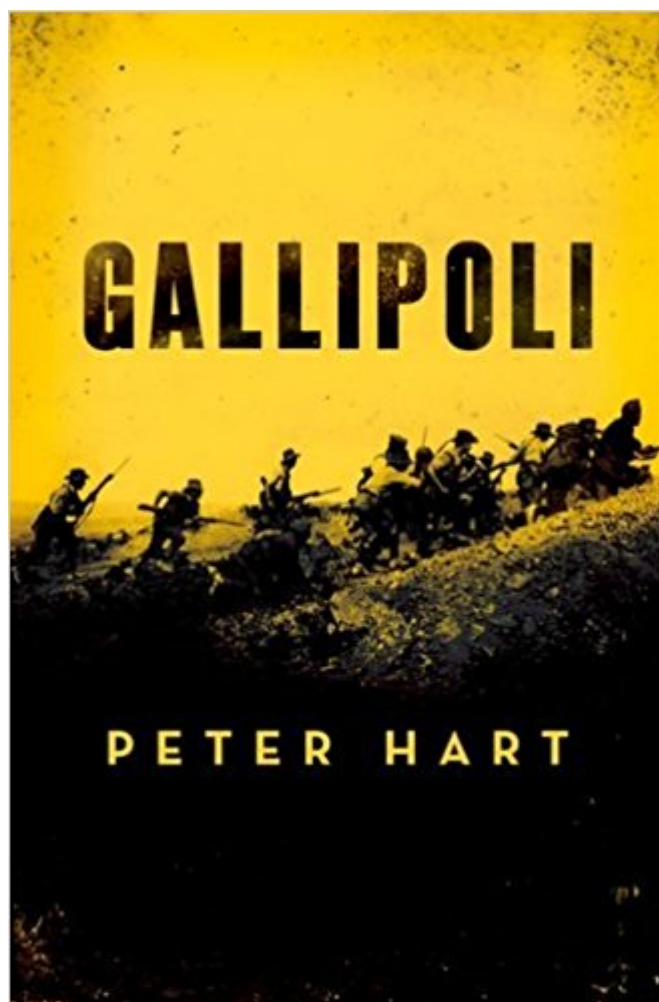


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Gallipoli



Synopsis

One of the most famous battles in history, the WWI Gallipoli campaign began as a bold move by the British to capture Constantinople, but this definitive new history explains that from the initial landings--which ended with so much blood in the sea it could be seen from airplanes overhead--to the desperate attacks of early summer and the battle of attrition that followed, it was a tragic folly destined to fail from the start. Gallipoli forced the young Winston Churchill from office, established Turkey's iconic founder Mustafa Kemal (better known as "Ataturk"), and marked Australia's emergence as a nation in its own right. Drawing on unpublished eyewitness accounts by individuals from all ranks--not only from Britain, Australia and New Zealand, but from Turkey and France as well--Peter Hart weaves first-hand stories into a vivid narrative of the battle and its aftermath. Hart, a historian with the Imperial War Museum and a battlefield tour guide at Gallipoli, provides a vivid, boots-on-the-ground account that brilliantly evokes the confusion of war, the horrors of combat, and the grim courage of the soldiers. He provides an astute, unflinching assessment of the leaders as well. He shows that the British invasion was doomed from the start, but he places particular blame on General Sir Ian Hamilton, whose misplaced optimism, over-complicated plans, and unwillingness to recognize the gravity of the situation essentially turned likely failure into complete disaster. Capturing the sheer drama and bravery of the ferocious fighting, the chivalry demonstrated by individuals on both sides amid merciless wholesale slaughter, and the futility of the cause for which ordinary men fought with extraordinary courage and endurance--Gallipoli is a riveting account of a battle that continues to fascinate us close to a hundred years after the event.

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Customer Reviews

`Gallipoli' is not the first time that Hart has been drawn to the disastrously conceived campaign of that name. He first put it under the microscope seventeen years ago in `Defeat At Gallipoli' , co-written with Nigel Steel. Since then, he has visited those fatal shores on several occasions leading battlefield tours. He tells us, indeed, that "Gallipoli will always be my primary interest in the Great War. I still love visiting the scenes of this most powerful of human dramas and long may that continue." In other words, here is an author who for the best part of twenty years has worked with and reflected upon the historical evidence for his subject as well as familiarising himself with the physical landscape upon which it was enacted. `Gallipoli' is the fully realised culmination of this investment of time and effort. Hart sets out the scope of his book in his Preface. His purpose is to give an insight into what it was like to be a soldier at Gallipoli almost a century ago. This he achieves through his skilful selection of largely unpublished accounts from the men themselves. He's been weaving such eyewitness narratives into his books for long enough now to need no particular commendation from me as to how well he does this. But Hart's `Gallipoli' is an important book because of the context into which he places these fascinating first-person accounts. His overarching goal is to expose the futility of the campaign in which these individual experiences took place. This is achieved in two ways.

Most of us that have been fortunate enough to visit the battlefields of Gallipoli know that one visit isn't enough. Gallipoli is the type of place that makes you return ... again and again. Similarly, not content with writing one book on the Gallipoli campaign, Peter Hart has written a second account of this ill-fated venture and we should be rightly thankful. This new book uses completely new material to that found in his first book, "Defeat at Gallipoli", written with Nigel Steele and published in 1994. Hart needs no introduction to the WW1 military history enthusiasts. His previous publications cover all three services and he is particularly noted for "The Somme", "1918: A Very British Victory" and "Aces Falling" (that formed the nucleus for the well received BBC Timewatch of the same name). In case you didn't know, Peter Hart is the Oral Historian at the Imperial War Museum. His genre is to use first-hand accounts and weave them into incisive and frank campaign analysis, and very importantly, in a style that is easy to follow and fully understandable. "Gallipoli" is no different and is arguably Hart's best work yet. Hart's theme is that the Gallipoli campaign was doomed from the outset and significantly averted war resources away from the critical war theatre of the Western Front. He begins by setting the political scene that led to the Naval and Army campaigns. We learn that the Turkish army that opposed the British forces were not an ill-disciplined rabble but

professional, highly motivated troops, well led by subalterns and senior officers; the myth of Turkish machine guns confronting the Allied landings is skilfully and persuasively argued against.

The Gallipoli campaign cannot be said to have been poorly served by historians. Indeed, this is the author's second work on the subject, the first, "Defeat at Gallipoli", was co-authored with Nigel Steel. However, this book makes a strong claim to adding much that is new to our understanding of what it meant to be a participant in the ill-fated Dardanelles adventure. And one that I would unhesitatingly recommend to anyone interested the subject. The telling of history, particularly that concerning the Great War, has developed significantly in the past thirty years or so. The actions of great men and plans of campaign illustrated by broad arrows on a map have been largely overtaken by anecdotal accounts of the actual participants. Both approaches have their merits but weaknesses too. Detached accounts telling how this or that division or brigade moved an inch across a map pay little heed to the price paid by the men on the ground. Whilst the stories of the men themselves without the historical infrastructure on which to link the reality of war to how and why they came to be there in the first place leave the reader little the wiser. And Peter Hart again proves himself to be a master at combining the two traditions, complemented with his own informed and expertly articulated interpretation of events. 'Gallipoli' is written in the author's by now trademark style. The motivations and actions of those at the very top of the chain of command are outlined clearly and concisely, setting in context the experiences of those given the job of putting the lofty aims of the likes of Churchill into practice.

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