



The 33 Strategies of War

By Robert Greene

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The contemporary companion to Sun-tzu's *The Art of War*, this brilliant distillation of the strategies of war can help us gain mastery in the modern world. Spanning world civilizations, synthesizing dozens of political, philosophical, and religious texts and thousands of years of violent conflict, this is a comprehensive guide to getting ahead and staying there. Each chapter outlines an approach that will help you win your life's wars. Learn the offensive strategies that require you to maintain the initiative and negotiate from a position of strength, and the defensive strategies that enable you to respond to dangerous situations and avoid situations where winning is impossible. As in *The 48 Laws of Power*, Robert Greene uses illustrative examples from history: Lyndon Johnson's tenacity, Julius Caesar's decisiveness, Joan Crawford's refusal to compromise, Ted Williams's competitive drive, and the folly and genius of everyone from Napoleon to Margaret Thatcher, Shaka the Zulu to Ulysses S. Grant. Great warriors of the battlefield and the drawing room demonstrate prudence, agility, balance, and calm. The rational, resourceful, and intuitive always defeat the panicked, uncreative, and stupid. Informed by the most ingenious and effective military principles in war, *The 33 Strategies* provides all the psychological ammunition you need to overcome patterns of failure and forever gain the upper hand.

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The 33 Strategies of War By Robert Greene Bibliography

- Rank: #3254445 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2007
- Format: Import
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.29" h x .91" w x 6.61" l, 1.19 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 416 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As in his bestselling *The 48 Laws of Power*, Greene puts a modern spin on wisdom that has stood the test of history, only this time his role model is Sun Tzu rather than Machiavelli. The argument is fairly standard: despite our most noble intentions, "aggressive impulses that are impossible to ignore or repress" make military combat a fitting metaphor for getting ahead in life. Greene's advice covers everything from steeling one's mind for battle to specific defensive and offensive tactics—notably, the final section on "dirty" warfare is one of the book's longest. Historical lessons are outlined and interpreted, with amplifying quotations crammed into the margins. Not all of the examples are drawn from the battlefield; in one section, Greene skips nimbly from Lyndon Johnson's tenacity to Julius Caesar's decisiveness, from Joan Crawford's refusal to compromise to Ted Williams's competitive drive. Alfred Hitchcock, he says, embodies "the detached-Buddha tactic" of appearing uninvolved while remaining in total control. The diversity of subject matter compensates for occasional lapses into stilted warriorese ("arm yourself with prudence, and never completely lay down your arms, not even for friends"). For those willing to embrace its martial conceit, Greene's compendium offers inspiration and entertainment in equal measure. (Jan. 23)

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From [Booklist](#)

Greene and "producer" Joost Elffers are the Machiavellians who brought us *The 48 Laws of Power* (1998) and *The Art of Seduction* (2001), and their latest book similarly purports to distill the profundities of history for personal gain. Unapologetically premised on Hobbesian "all that is social is war" bromides, this account collects parables of strategic success and error from a diverse cast of military and nonmilitary historical figures. Its lessons are presented self-help-book style in chapters titled "Maneuver Them into Weakness" and "Seem to Work for the Interests of Others While Furthering Your Own" and flanked by a withering barrage of reiterative marginalia. Most books this cynical (and this repetitive) need a sense of humor to be readable, something this book apparently lacks. Its quasi-spiritual tone, though perhaps increasing its attractiveness to the impressionable, is also trying at times. But those readers who push through to the end (or flip ahead) will find a curiously contemporary section on modern terrorism cloaking a surprisingly specific commentary on al-Qaeda and antiterrorism strategy. Politics by other means? *Brendan Driscoll*

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Review

"The need-to-know strategies that can also be used for 'winning the subtle social game of everyday life.'"—*Business Insider*

"Greene's specialty is analyzing the lives and philosophies of historical figures like Sun Tzu and Napoleon, and extracting from them tips on how to manipulate people and situations—a cutthroat worldview that has earned him a devoted following among a like-minded readership of rappers, drug dealers and corporate executives."—*The New York Times*

Users Review

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