



The Hundred Years War: The English in France 1337-1453

Desmond Seward

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"DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT I LIVE BY WAR AND THAT PEACE WOULD BE MY UNDOING?" -Sir John Hawkwood

From 1337 to 1453 England repeatedly invaded France on the pretext that her kings had a right to the French throne. Though it was a small, poor country, England for most of those "hundred years" won the battles, sacked the towns and castles, and dominated the war. The protagonists of the Hundred Years War are among the most colorful in European history: Edward III, the Black Prince; Henry V, who was later immortalized by Shakespeare; the splendid but inept John II, who died a prisoner in London; Charles V, who very nearly overcame England; and the enigmatic Charles VII, who at last drove the English out. Desmond Seward's critically-acclaimed account of the Hundred Years War brings to life all of the intrigue, beauty, and royal to-the-death-fighting of that legendary century-long conflict.

"[Desmond Seward] is blessed with a talent for presenting historical facts in an accessible narrative.... An ideal author for recounting this complex period." -*The Antioch Review*

The Hundred Years War: The English in France 1337-1453 Details

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Rich says

Very well-written and researched history book. Interesting perspectives on Henry V and the other kings.

Benjamin says

This book was a delight and a quick read. It is not bogged down by excruciating detail, but the full picture is there. I finally understand (more or less) what the 100 Year War was about and certainly the sequence of events. Highly recommended for anyone wanting knowledge of the origins of the animosity between the English and the French or just a good read.

Kristin says

Read this for a research paper on the battle of Agincourt, but read the entire thing so that I had a background of the entire war. It's very readable and fairly quick. I felt it was lacking something, though, perhaps because it's mostly a military history and does not at all delve into the social implications of the war (besides mentioning that there were some). It definitely gave me a very good sense of why the conflict arose and the series of battles that ensued. If, like me, you get a bit mixed up about who's who, I'd write names down on a separate piece of paper to keep them straight. Otherwise, it's written clearly and Seward is obviously full of enthusiasm. I'm looking forward to reading some of Seward's biographies, especially on Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Zechy says

Thought about giving this book four stars just because it didn't blow me away, but I really can't think of how this book could be better as an introduction to and an overview of the Hundred Years War. While it didn't knock my socks off per se, it was exactly what it claimed to be and exactly what I wanted.

Jon says

I'm being a little mean to Desmond Seward with only three stars. I read 1066 by David Howarth around the same time and Howarth's writing makes Seward's sterile and dry.

That said, Seward gives a well sourced account of the wars that made up the Hundred Years War. He keeps accounts concise and includes enough personal information about the players to explain their behavior, but doesn't get too long-winded.

A European Medieval History class would help in getting more out of this book and, unless you're trying to

learn about this war, there isn't much reason to read this book. If you are, though, it's a good read.

Okay, I'm bumping him up to four stars.

Gilbert Wesley Purdy says

A fascinating period of history. An excellent overview.

Sammy Duncan says

i found this to be a highly readable and very enjoyable book on a crucial period in European history.

Jenn says

A fun, engaging, and kind-of-fluffy narrative history of the Hundred Years War.

Praxedes says

This was a great overview of one of the strangest wars in the Western world. It is a bit dry so most will be turned off by all the background on lineage and who is to inherit what. But for history buffs it is a good choice, covering all the major events.

Hans says

If you like the French, don't read it. Go read Perroy. This wonderful summary of the great war of medieval Europe is unashamedly pro-England and proud of it. A great introduction to Dark Ages life and warfare.

David says

Clear, concise, and entertaining summary of a complicated conflict.

Kyle says

Concise, but a bit too concise at times.

russell How says

So two years after I graduate I find the right topic for my thesis. Sweet.

Frank Kelly says

After reading this brisk and enlightening book, I kept asking myself "just how many people died in the Hundred Years War??"

Overall, Seward provides a tour de force of this much forgotten and incredibly brutal period of warfare between England and France. Invasion after invasion, usually ending in a "chevauchee" -- essentially a rolling holocaust of men-at-arms and other troops that stole, burned, raped, and destroyed every town, every village, every farm, every church and monastery in their path and which, as to my earlier reference, thousands and thousands of peasants would be slaughtered. But, according to Seward, served as the primary means of enriching greater England bringing it to the majesty of Great Britain.

What this book also essentially does is puncture the romantic historical lore of a brave and honorable King Henry V (who, without the aid of Shakespeare, might be seen correctly as one of the more brutal and sadistic English kings), the life of brave knights and the emergence of England as a great power in Europe and eventually the rest of the world. Seward's book is, in the end, a smart initial primer to studying and understanding this much misunderstood period of history.

Nicole says

A very straightforward, linear account of the Hundred Years' War from a decidedly English-as-protagonists-leaning point of view. This isn't a recently written book; I believe the first publishing was 1978. As a result, some of the writing comes off as a little dated or discordant to today's reader - for example, the author describing Charles VI's queen Isabeau of Bavaria as "sluttish".
