



The Mint (Modern Classics)

T.E. Lawrence

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An account of Lawrence's service in the Royal Air Force

The Mint (Modern Classics) Details

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Author : T.E. Lawrence

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Maria says

This book is evidence of Lawrence's post-traumatic stress, and details an unorthodox means of dealing with it: to plunge himself right back into the fire. The book also has value as an historical record of basic training 100 years ago, but it's the personal observations of his fellow recruits and of the officers who trained them that make it shine. A short and fascinating read.

Oblomov says

Lawrence after Arabia. Seeking to escape the fame which had grown around him as a result of his adventures in Arabia, adventures in which he no longer took pride, Lawrence joined the Royal airforce as an enlisted man. This book is based on the journal he kept during his early years as an airman, his basic training and the day to day life of an airman in the RAF in the 1920's. At once a glimpse of the service during this period and also providing insights into Lawrence's personality which led him to forge a new beginning, escaping from the legend that he had become.

umberto says

I first knew T.E. Lawrence after I had watched the 1962 film "Lawrence of Arabia"[<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrenc...>] starring Peter O'Toole some 50 years ago. The film based on his "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" (available in paperback edition published by Penguin, one of those tough ones I hope to read soon) profoundly amazed me and he has long been one of my war heroes. I mean as a true one who did his job and never boasted of his success, honor or valor.

In fact, according to his message to E.M. Forster, he wrote this book as 'a private diary, interesting to the world only so far as the world may desire to dissect my personality' (back cover). Therefore, it looks naive and simple from some 50 chapters he designed and kept writing while serving in the RAF as 352087 A/c Ross. However, reading him is not easy since you need to follow his reflections embedded with innumerable military jargons and complex narration uniquely characteristic of Oxford graduates.

Before reading this memoir, I think it's a good idea to read his biography at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._E._L... and, I think, you'd realize why he has since been admirably respected as one of the great characters famously involved in the Sinai and Palestine campaign and the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

Meirav Rath says

Lawrence's style in this book is very much like that of Gunter Grass in The Tin Drum; you need to make a small dictionary in your head to understand exactly which details of reality are being described. I know not many people are bothered with such effort while reading, and that's why this paragraph is a warning.

This book is a very good window into Lawrence's post Great War psyche (hint: it's not all in one piece) and to the RAF life in the 20s. It's a lively, honest book, directly written from a soldier's point of view with very little mercy or an attempt to beautify anything or anyone.

I found it a delightful read and I recommend it to Lawrence fans.

Margaret1358 Joyce says

This is without a doubt a book to be read not so much for the 'what' of it, but for the 'how', i.e., for the language with which T. E. Lawrence, the actual Lawrence of Arabia(!), expresses his thoughts. His every sentence is a poetic jewel. A brilliant read.

Nynke says

'Everywhere a relationship: no loneliness any more.'

Ian Chapman says

Certainly an interesting read, and an historical document of service in the early Royal Air Force, with the influence of the then recent world war. This is the later edition released after the departure of A. W. Lawrence, an Oxford academic who was literary executor of his older brother. It seems that some of the not so subtle references to homosexuality might have been left out of the earlier printings. There is one reference to his Arabian ventures, when the author states that he removed a picture of himself from an official wall.

Not so much a philosophical work, but more a personal account of 1920s RAF service in the ranks.

Christine says

If you're a fan of T. E. Lawrence (aka Lawrence of Arabia) and/or interested in accounts of RAF (Royal Air Force) experiences, I'd recommend this book as almost a necessity to round out your knowledge. However, I wouldn't really recommend the book if you're not at all familiar with the author; in my opinion, context matters a lot here.

The Mint, Lawrence's account of the years during which he joined the RAF under an assumed name, is frequently punctuated with strong language, passing references to the author's past, and the everyday physical goings-on of military life that both repulsed and attracted Lawrence - a juxtaposition that was common throughout his life. The style is uniquely Lawrence's and the chapters are short and chronological, tending to read as journal entries or stand-alone short stories in style. As someone who's read a good bit of things by and about T. E. Lawrence and who considers him a "favorite historical figure", I found the book very interesting, even profound. But those who have no context for the book or reasons behind its writing will probably be puzzled at best, and offended at worst.

Francesca says

I find myself easily agreeing with E M Forster about this book: while not on so great a subject as *Seven Pillars*, it is better written and more relatable. As an early example of a genre of simple, personal military life, it may not be exceptional, but as a document of recovery it is more interesting.

The first chapter reminds me of nothing so much as Shira Lipkin's description of her rape kit, a trauma almost equal to the rape itself though done by supposed allies to better her defense. It and other incidents provide very quiet reminders of just who has entered the RAF and why, and what he is actually getting out of it.

In the end, he has not emerged in the sort of renewed glory that was expected by his contemporaries, but into a contentment, a joy of work and simple being. It is unquestionable that the man who wrote the last chapter was happier by far than the one who wrote the first, and far be it from any of us to begrudge the nature of that happiness.

Curtiss says

An intriguing look into the mind of the man known as Lawrence of Arabia during the time in which he withdrew from the public eye by enlisting incognito into the Royal Air Force as A/c Shaw.

The Penultimate chapter covering the relationship between him and his motorcycle is poignantly ironic, considering his subsequent death in a motorcycle accident.

John says

A fascinating, first hand, account of life as an ordinary, anonymous, low ranking airman in the 1920's Royal Air Force written by an extraordinary man.

Sarah Goodman says

the original text full of expletives which makes the harsh existence seem more real. The hours of drill, PT and fatigues test Lawrence's physical and emotional endurance "i was used to walking 50 miles a day in the dessert but this is harsher" and he considers their treatment at times rank cruelty. Still not sure of his reasons for wanting to play such a minor service role having led the Arab Revolt ..he comes to value the camaraderie of his fellow airmen also suffers from acute insomnia ...and seeks solace from moonlit camp walks before dawn and the reveil. You have to question how he was allowed in not once but twice under false details, first as 34 year old John Hume Ross and then in the Tank corps as Thomas Edward Shaw...perhaps his military chums helped him. A powerfully good memoir written in short journal sections which he would write then hide in the short time before lights out. Full of observational details of daily routines he is a hero in secret , determined not to break and just wanting to blend in with the men.

David says

Very, very interesting and (fittingly) idiosyncratic account of Lawrence's attempt to submerge himself in anonymity by serving under a false name as a common airman in the RAF. Bulk of the book covers "Depot" experience, which is bootcamp, in 1922 upon his first enlistment. Pretty much an every-day account of the experience. Then after a gap of three years, he writes intermittently about his life as an airman (mechanic) at a duty station.

Crystal Carroll says

It's a shame that Lawrence only wrote the two books. Seven Pillars of Wisdom is a tour de force of adventure and emotion. The Mint is equally good, although in a different way.

Less introspective. Less adventure (well, there's no war on). No camels (I should hope not in Southern England). No desert (see previous). And yet, Lawrence had this incredible gift for getting the reader into his head.

The Mint is Lawrence's attempt to chronicle how the military takes recruits as raw material and mints them into something shiny and new. It is a very successful attempt.

It also serves as a kind of bookend to Seven Pillars, in which Lawrence fell apart from internal stresses. The Mint is about how Lawrence recreates himself into something whole again. Makes himself into a part of a community that serves something greater. Not as the great man leading the charge, but as one of the cogs and wheels that make the whole thing go.

If you're in the mood for an interesting and intelligent book, take a look.

Britta says

Rich, vivid and somewhat heartbreaking post-War account of the service years of T.E. Lawrence. A large departure of style from Seven Pillars, somewhat jarring at first how intimate The Mint feels in comparison to Seven Pillars' grandeur.

Tender and poetic, Lawrence writes as much about friendship and empathy as he does about sadism and emptiness. The Mint is brilliantly bright and a pleasure to read -- as well as an honor to peek into the diaries of such a great man.
