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Hannibal: The Military Biography Of Rome's Greatest Enemy

HANNIBAL

*The
Military Biography
of Rome's
Greatest Enemy*

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Synopsis

The Romans' destruction of Carthage after the Third Punic War erased any Carthaginian historical record of Hannibal's life. What we know of him comes exclusively from Roman historians who had every interest in minimizing his success, exaggerating his failures, and disparaging his character. The charges leveled against Hannibal include greed, cruelty and atrocity, sexual indulgence, and even cannibalism. But even these sources were forced to grudgingly admit to Hannibal's military genius, if only to make their eventual victory over him appear greater. Yet there is no doubt that Hannibal was the greatest Carthaginian general of the Second Punic War. When he did not defeat them outright, he fought to a standstill the best generals Rome produced, and he sustained his army in the field for sixteen long years without mutiny or desertion. Hannibal was a first-rate tactician, only a somewhat lesser strategist, and the greatest enemy Rome ever faced. When he at last met defeat at the hands of the Roman general Scipio, it was against an experienced officer who had to strengthen and reconfigure the Roman legion and invent mobile tactics in order to succeed. Even so, Scipio's victory at Zama was against an army that was a shadow of its former self. The battle could easily have gone the other way. If it had, the history of the West would have been changed in ways that can only be imagined. Richard A. Gabriel's brilliant new biography shows how Hannibal's genius nearly unseated the Roman Empire.

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Customer Reviews

Good book by Professor Gabriel on Hannibal, who won all his battles (except the next to last, Zama, and his last as a navel commander for King Prusias of Bithynia- Hannibal was a field commander, not a navel commander) and lost the war with Rome. Why does the adage "He who wins the battles, wins the war," not work for Hannibal in the Carthaginians Second Punic War against Rome? On page 218: "Hannibal failed because his operational victories did not achieve his strategic objectives. After Cannae, the strategic ground shifted beneath his feet, reducing a man who had once been the king of the battlefield to little more than a sacrificial pawn in a much larger game that he never really understood." Also important is a footnote to Chapter 9. "Why Hannibal Failed," from the text page 212, footnote 2 (on page 248 in the text): "My old friend and colleague the late Col. Harry Summers used to tell the story of his assignment to the negotiations in Hanoi between the North Vietnamese and the Americans in an effort to end the war. In a conversation with a North Vietnamese colonel, Summers remarked, 'Well, whatever the outcome, you never defeated us on the battlefield.' The North Vietnamese colonel smiled and said, 'That is true. But it is also irrelevant!'" And so it was with Hannibal against the Romans, until the end at Zama and Scipio Africanus. For general interest: "O2S4 MEC: "Objective (Simplicity); Offensive, Spirit of; Superiority at Point of Contact (Economy of Force); Surprise (Security); Security (Surprise); Simplicity (Objective); Movement (Mobility); Economy of Force (Superiority at Point of Contact); Cooperation (Unity of Command)

This is a well written book and most enjoyable. I was somewhat disappointed that it was not more of a traditional biography but it does not claim to be or aim to be so read as a military adventure story, it is well worth it and I guarantee most readers know very little of Hannibal's real life and the amazing things he accomplished in a 20+ year war against the rising Roman Empire. Read it. Every student of military history will certainly not be disappointed. L. S. Miller is the author of four novels published to date with several more coming soon. Reviews of his work are posted on Kirkus and the novels are available from Books. His first novel, *A Death in Our Family*, won a Pinnacle Award for unique fiction.

Not strictly a biography from start to finish. Plenty of analysis and background information. Not just the what, but the how and why. And that's what being a historian is all about. The nature of both societies and armies, how they functioned, how they provisioned, how they marched, what weapons, what tactics, and so on. After reading this book I could tell anyone exactly why the outcome turned out the way it did

It is a great book. Bought for a book review in a history class. Great book, well written. I love it.

This is a comprehensive guide to Hannibal's epic journey to Rome, and eventual escape from there. Historical accounts are only available from Romans about the General, and as much contempt as he was able to garner against himself, the man is still a legend.

I'm really happy with my book.

This really breaks down, insofar as we can 2500 years later, what it would have been like in Hannibal's world. I appreciate the effort it takes to plausibly reconstruct 3rd century BC military doctrine, as well as the Carthaginian applications thereof.

Very good on detail but uses a lot of current military jargon. Still, glad I read it.

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