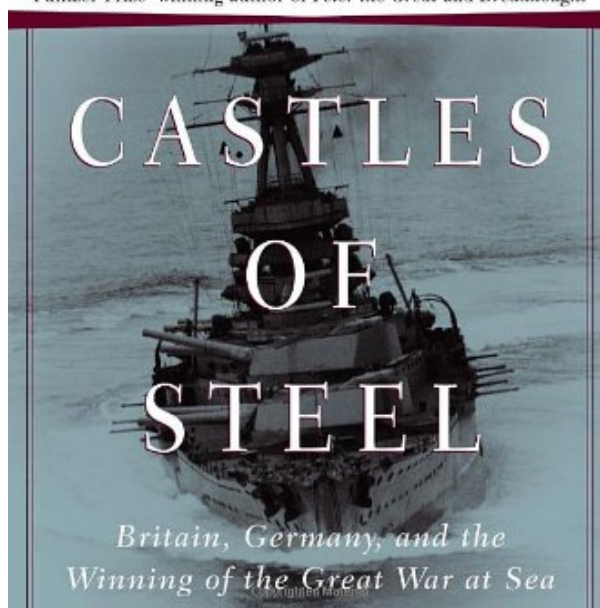


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ROBERT K. MASSIE

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Peter the Great* and *Dreadnought*



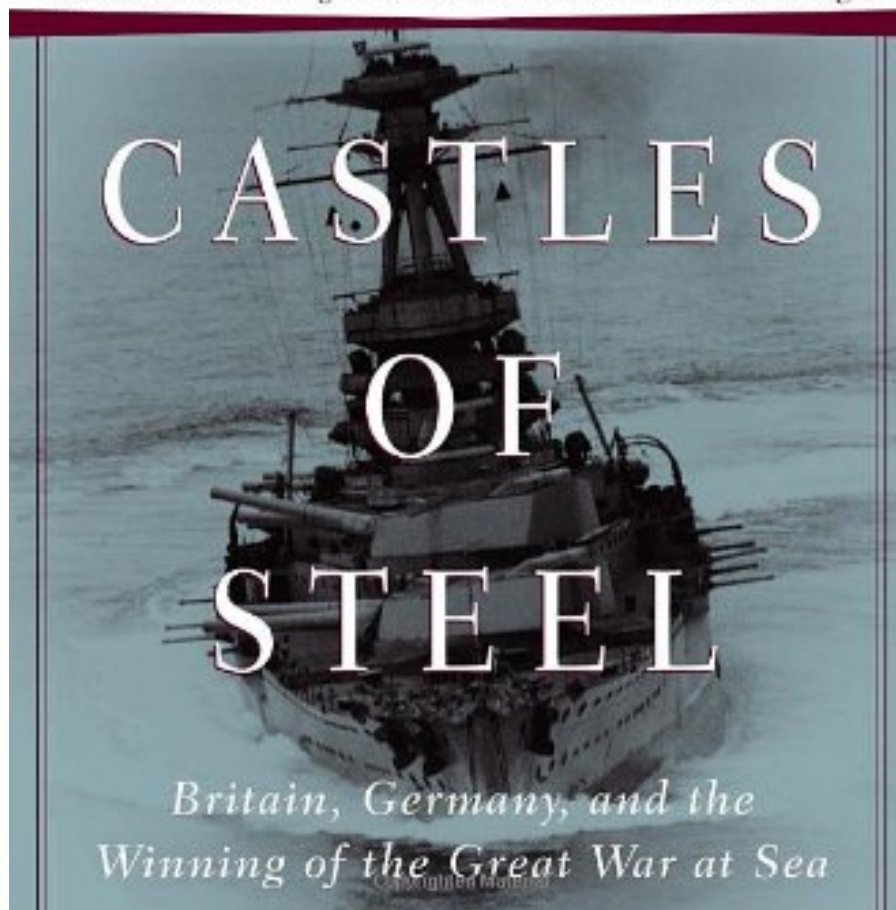
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In a work of extraordinary narrative power, filled with brilliant personalities and vivid scenes of dramatic action, Robert K. Massie, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Peter the Great*, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, and *Dreadnought*, elevates to its proper historical importance the role of sea power in the winning of the Great War.

The predominant image of this first world war is of mud and trenches, barbed wire, machine guns, poison gas, and slaughter. A generation of European manhood was massacred, and a wound was inflicted on European civilization that required the remainder of the twentieth century to heal.

But with all its sacrifice, trench warfare did not win the war for one side or lose it for the other. Over the course of four years, the lines on the Western Front moved scarcely at all; attempts to break through led only to the lengthening of the already unbearably long casualty lists.

For the true story of military upheaval, we must look to the sea. On the eve of the war in August 1914, Great Britain and Germany possessed the two greatest navies the world had ever seen. When war came, these two fleets of dreadnoughts—gigantic floating castles of steel able to hurl massive shells at an enemy miles away—were ready to test their terrible power against each other.

Their struggles took place in the North Sea and the Pacific, at the Falkland Islands and the Dardanelles. They reached their climax when Germany, suffocated by an implacable naval blockade, decided to strike against the British ring of steel. The result was Jutland, a titanic clash of fifty-eight dreadnoughts, each the home of a thousand men.

When the German High Seas Fleet retreated, the kaiser unleashed unrestricted U-boat warfare, which, in its indiscriminate violence, brought a reluctant America into the war. In this way, the German effort to “seize the trident” by defeating the British navy led to the fall of the German empire.

Ultimately, the distinguishing feature of *Castles of Steel* is the author himself. The knowledge, understanding, and literary power Massie brings to this story are unparalleled. His portrayals of Winston Churchill, the British admirals Fisher, Jellicoe, and Beatty, and the Germans Scheer, Hipper, and Tirpitz are stunning in their veracity and artistry.

Castles of Steel is about war at sea, leadership and command, courage, genius, and folly. All these elements are given magnificent scope by Robert K. Massie’s special and widely hailed literary mastery.

From the Hardcover edition.

- Sales Rank: #255019 in Books
- Published on: 2004-11-02
- Released on: 2004-11-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.17" h x 1.54" w x 6.07" l, 1.95 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 880 pages

From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

The great sequel to "Dreadnought"

By V.

These dense tomes are a lot of fun to this hardcore history fanatic. If you liked Massie's books about the czars, you'll probably like this too. It even has many familiar places, and in the case of "Nicholas and Alexandra", many familiar faces.

The titles may be misleading. Yes, there is a great importance placed on battleships. but it's a mere focal point. Massie credits battleships and naval development with the driving force that changed the world from the Victorian era, where England ruled the oceans of the entire world, to an age in which the world and its seas were suddenly far too crowded. "Dreadnought" leads us through those world changes, and "Castles of Steel" takes us through the resulting cataclysm, World War I.

If there is any complaint to be had, it may be that Massie's books are just so huge and detailed. But he is a lover of history, and he includes all these details because they are almost always too interesting to omit.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Outstanding book!

By Amazon Customer

Tremendous account of information. Book is dense and meaty. Starts with a rather detailed account of the personalities involved before moving on to the history. The book is fairly anglo-centric, which is to say most of the book deals with the British side of events. I might like a more balanced look at things, but as it stands there is still plenty of information and analysis on the German side as well. One thing I could have used was more diagrams of the various ship designs that might have better helped me to understand the actions. Battleship design was still evolving, and the standard 'turrets on the centerline' design was far from standard in WW1. I'm not a naval historian, and could have used the extra detail. I can't believe I just said that about one of the most detailed books I've read in a long time! Still, Wikipedia and all that.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Great book if you are into very detailed military/naval history

By Amazon Customer

This contains extremely detailed treatment of the naval side of WW I between Britain and Germany.

It differs greatly from its predecessor "Dreadnought" which covered a large time frame and the diplomatic ins and outs of the huge time period (pre-American Civil War to the outbreak of WW I) and does not have so many mini-biographies of the persons involved.

I would say "Dreadnought" is the better and more interesting of the books. "Castles of Steel" is definitely for hardcore lovers of naval history as it covers engagements at sea in extreme detail, down to the signals flown by the flagships and the intelligence reports received by both sides, not to mention almost each hit received by the ships involved.

Overall a great book, but compared with part I of the 2-book series (not sure if it's billed as such, but that is the case) it is slightly too involved with the minutiae for my taste. Still I give it 4 stars because of the staggering amount of research and work that must have been necessary for Massie to write it.

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