The Art of War Study Guide

The Art of War by Sun Tzu

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War (Sun-tzu ping-fa)*, unlike other contributions of war literature, is not a fictional or otherwise indirect account of warfare. Rather, it is one of the first known treatises on military strategy in human history and continues to be one of the most studied and enduring of such writings.

Not much certainty exists for its date of composition, though most scholars place it during the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.) of Chinese history. In *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, military historian John A. Lynn equates the period with endless warfare, when "perhaps 110 states ceased to exist." It was a "long, brutal, and destructive" period, writes military historian Ralph Peters in "The Seeker and the Sage," but one that nonetheless "bloomed with creativity," the work of Sun-Tzu not being the least of its accomplishments. Some, alternatively, have claimed that Sun-Tzu was a contemporary of Confucius (551–479 B.C.), but this date for the text of *The Art of War* is generally rejected. Because of internal stylistic evidence, the date of composition is now tentatively set as 400–320 B.C.

In terms of the long history of military theory, Sun-Tzu stands somewhat apart from the later debate because he emphasizes war as a last resort and characterizes this last resort as itself a significant defeat. He has, therefore, earned the reputation of being a pacifist who prefers diplomatic resolutions and espionage to the open and total warfare of other theorists, such as Karl von Clausewitz, author of *On War* (1832). Within the themes of war and peace, Sun-Tzu thus takes a place at the head of the table; his strategy overall is a complex discussion of the necessity of both peaceful resolutions and warlike aggression, opposites he presents as constantly tense, much like the *yin* and *yang* ("shady" and "sunny") of classical Chinese philosophy. As such, the text informs any serious discussion of the representations of warfare in literature.

Military theorists tend to consider the centuries-old text useful still, especially in an era dominated by war on terrorism. While most commonly called *The Art of War*, some editions refer to the text as *The Art of Warfare*, as does the Modern Library War Series *The Book of War* (2000), which includes both Sun-Tzu's and Clausewitz's text, as well as numerous supplemental materials.

Author Biography

The question of authorship for *The Art of War* is a complicated debate, including at least three competing theories. A couple of things are absolutely certain, however. *Sun-Tzu* is an honorary title, means Master Sun, and whoever actually composed the text had significant military and diplomatic experience.

The first theory is that there are two Master Suns who are related, and the latter Sun annotated and expanded his ancestor's writings. The *Historical Records* of 91 B.C. includes two writers: Sun Wu (544–496 B.C.) and Sun Pin (380–316 B.C.). Also, *History of the Han Dynasty*, an index of imperial records (first century A.D.), refers to both a Sun Wu and a Sun Pin and differentiates their writings.

The second theory proposes that Sun-Tzu's writings were produced by a single historical person, who lived during the time of Confucius. Recent scholarship, though, has mostly been able to differentiate between two authors called Sun-Tzu.

Lastly, the third theory suggests no such person existed and that Sun-Tzu is the literary creation of bureaucrats who wished to influence state policy by invoking the authority of a well-respected (but fictitious) military expert. The *Commentary of Master Tso*, a fourth-century B.C. text that chronicles military events, makes no mention of a Master Sun.

The first criterion is *tao. Tao* is a very important concept in Chinese philosophy, with various meanings: the way, the art, the method, the path, or the order. Here it means "what brings the thinking of the people in line with their superiors." *Tao*, then, consists of the regulation, morale, loyalty, and courage of a population. For Sun-Tzu, these are all elements that can be controlled by an able ruler.

The second criterion is *climate*. Relevant factors include local weather conditions, seasonal effects, and the amount of available natural light.

The third criterion is *terrain*. Terrain will receive much lengthier treatment in later chapters, but here Sun-Tzu notes some basic factors: the lay of the land, distances between places, available passage, degree of openness, and how well troops might be deployed on it.

The fourth criterion is *command*. Here, he introduces the characteristics of the ideal "expert in battle": "wisdom, integrity, humanity, courage, and discipline."

The fifth criterion is *regulation*, which is primarily a matter of *shu*, logistics, as well as the organization and training of soldiers.

Once he completes discussion of his criteria, Sun-Tzu makes three proclamations. First, he notes that a commander must assess each combatant state with these criteria. Second, he threatens the hypothetical ruler whom he addresses throughout the treatise, saying he will leave if the ruler commits troops to battle against Sun-Tzu's assessments.

Third, he cautions the ruler to fashion *shih*, or "strategic advantage," from the assessments. The chapter ends with the famous point that "Warfare is the art (*tao*) of deceit," and a description of how wars are actually won in the planning stage, where one rehearses scenarios before any engagement takes place. It is primarily on account of this chapter, attempting to outline factors for objective analysis and urging testing of any proposed engagement, that Sun-Tzu's strategy can be described as a science.

Chapter 2: on Waging Battle

This chapter concerns several related points, all of which elaborate Sun-Tzu's specific ideas about *shu*, or logistics. Within the realm of *shu*, Sun-Tzu locates one of the primary difficulties of military strategy: expense. He notes that to march thousands of troops, their supplies, and assorted weapons into enemy territory will cost "one thousand pieces of gold for each day." This sum, likely an exaggerated round number, represents a king's fortune; because the expense is so great, he advises that one should "seek the quick victory," and then lists the various bad effects of delay on troops, material, and the state itself. He proclaims, famously: "I have heard tell of foolish haste, but I have yet to see a case of cleverly dragging on the hostilities. There has never been a state that has benefited from an extended war."

The chapter then commences a discussion of different means to remedy the problems associated with *shu* when a war is lengthy by necessity. He describes the economic distortions, using more exaggerated round numbers, which result from supplying an army: "The toll to the people will have been some 70 percent of their property; the toll to the public coffers … will be some 60 percent of its reserves." Then he proposes that a commander should "feed his army from enemy soil," redeploy captured enemy material, and induce captured enemy soldiers to join one's own ranks.

Chapter 3: Planning the Attack

Sun-Tzu focuses on which types of attacks should be made, and how to conduct them —it is always best "to keep one's own state intact," and only second best "to crush an enemy's state." Therefore the hierarchy of targets goes: first attack enemy strategy, then attack enemy alliances, next attack soldiers, and then, only as a last resort, lay siege to a well-defended city.

When actual battle becomes necessary, Sun-Tzu provides the following strategic calculus: if one's army is ten times larger than the enemy, "surround him." If five times larger, "attack him." If twice as large, "engage him." If armies are equal, "be able to divide him." If one's numbers are slightly smaller, "be able to take the defensive." When one is hopelessly outnumbered, "avoid him."

He then argues that a good commander is "the side-guard on the carriage of state," who can be disrupted by the political ruler in three primary ways. First, the ruler can hobble the army by ordering advances and retreats when the army is not prepared for movement. Second, the ruler can meddle with the army's internal politics, which will

"confuse officers and soldiers alike." Third, if the ruler interferes with military orders without knowing of the exigencies or demands on the army, he or she will destroy the confidence of the troops in its leadership. The result of such disruption is "sowing disorder in your own ranks and throwing away the victory."

The last section of this chapter revisits the proto-scientific method of Chapter 1 by suggesting five factors in determining who will take the victory of an engagement. First, the winning side knows when it can engage in battle or not. Second, the winning side understands how to handle superiority and inferiority of army size. Third, the winning side is united in purpose with regard to officers and troops. Fourth, the winning side is fully trained and prepared. Last, the winning side has a skilled commander and a political ruler who does not hobble the army. The chapter ends with the famous lines: "He who knows the enemy and himself / Will never in a hundred battles be at risk."

Chapter 4: Strategic Positions (hsing)

This chapter discusses *hsing*, or strategic positions, a central concept in Sun-Tzu's military theory. Victory is envisioned not as the result of brilliant battlefield decisions, personal courage in leading assaults, or blind luck. Rather, the "expert in battle" never wins an extraordinary or exceptional victory. The ideal commander knows to fight only when victory is certain, and hence victory is routine. Determining the certainty of victory is largely a matter of understanding *hsing*. The chapter, then, begins by describing how the ideal commander "makes himself invincible" and waits for the enemy to reveal a weakness: invincibility depends on oneself, while vulnerability lies with the enemy. Furthermore, invincibility is a matter of defense, where one hides "within the deepest recesses of the earth." Vulnerability, on the other hand, is a matter of attack, and the expert, when attacking, "strikes from out of the highest reaches of the heavens" in order to avoid becoming vulnerable.

If a commander understands strategy, then victory in battle is no more impressive than the ability to "see the sun and moon," or to "hear a thunder clap." Slightly more specific than these *lei*, or categories, Sun-Tzu advises commanders to stand on "ground that is unassailable" and to adhere to regulations. He then lists five factors in assessing *hsing*: calculations, quantities of supply, logistics, the overall balance of power between contending forces, and the "possibility of victory." Calculation is primarily a matter of determining how terrain will affect supply, which will limit the logistical scheme, which will indicate the relative balance of power, which will allow estimation of the chances of victory.

Chapter 5: Strategic Advantage (shih)

This chapter develops the important concept *shih. Shih* invokes numerous English terms besides strategic advantage, including aspect, situation, disposition, configuration, force, authority, and purchase, among others. Sun-Tzu identifies several factors that can grant *shih* to an army. For instance, various techniques of organization can give advantage to one side over another, such as using pennants and drums to

control troop movements; such techniques will make "fighting with many soldiers the same as fighting with a few." More importantly, one crafts *shih* with the skilled combination of "straightforward" (*cheng*) and "surprise" (*chi*) operations.

Sun-Tzu compares straightforward and surprise operations to "five cardinal notes … cardinal colors … [and] … cardinal tastes," each of which allows an infinite number of possible combinations. The same rationale applies to the number of potential combinations of straightforward and surprise operations. To gain victory, a commander should engage an enemy with straightforward operations, but use surprise to win. The key factor in using such combinations is timing: "a bird of prey when it strikes can smash its victim" because of its precise timing. Whereas the unwise commander demands that soldiers themselves fashion *shih*, the "expert in battle" selects the proper soldiers at the proper time, and then unleashes them "like rolling logs and boulders." Sun-Tzu provides an apt summary of his central concepts in the middle of this chapter: *shu* differentiates order from disorder; *shih* differentiates courage from cowardice; and *hsing* differentiates weakness from strength.

Chapter 6: Weak Points and Strong Points

This chapter continues the discussion of *shu, hsing*, and *shih*, and differentiates between weak and strong strategic positions. Rather than a tactical discussion of fortifications or an elaboration of particular maneuvers, strength and weakness are conceived here as purely relational terms (much like *yin*, shady, and *yang*, sunny). The commander who assumes a strong position does not move to meet the enemy or fight on the enemy's terms; rather, his strategy forces the enemy to move into disadvantage. Mostly a matter of *shu*, the expert will fight an enemy who is wearied by long march, is poorly provisioned, and is otherwise unprepared.

A strong attack point is one where the enemy is certainly unable to defend; a strong defense point is one where the enemy is surely unable to attack. A strong point in an engagement is a fight that the expert desires because he is sure of victory, and one that the enemy does not desire, but is forced to fight. If the expert does not wish to engage, because defeat is certain, then the enemy is prevented by as little as a "drawn line," because the expert is able to "divert him to a different objective." Sun-Tzu then stresses the value of gathering intelligence: if the enemy's *hsing* is revealed, "we will be at full force where he is divided."

Other maxims follow. If the expert's *hsing* is secret, then the enemy must prepare everywhere, and is thus weakened everywhere. If the enemy prepares at the front, his rear is weak. If he prepares on the left flank, his right flank is weak. Overall, "[o]ne is weak because he makes preparations against others; he has strength because he makes others prepare against him." One must fashion *shih* by forcing the enemy to reveal its *hsing*; to effectively conceal one's own *hsing*, one must be "formless," and like water, one must rush to the low points, where the enemy is weak. The method of ensuring this is to avoid fixed *shih* and invariable *hsing*.

Chapter 7: Armed Contest

This chapter affirms that the most difficult element of warfare is the actual engagement, despite the onerous preparation described in prior chapters. It continues the prior discussion of *shu, hsing*, and *shih*, emphasizing that each contributes to the outcome of an actual battle. Discussions, organized in *lei*, outline various *tao*: the arts of employing many troops, managing troop morale, controlling population morale, managing strength, handling changed conditions, and using troops.

Chapter 8: Adapting to the Nine Contingencies (pien)

This chapter begins in earnest Sun-Tzu's progressive discussion of terrain. Building from the *tao* of using troops from the previous section, Sun-Tzu links troop usage to specific terrain types. Each terrain type recommends a specific *pien*, or contingency. For instance, one must join with allies on "strategically vital intersections" and assault the enemy on "terrain from which there is no way out."

In slight contradiction to previous advice, Sun-Tzu recommends that the expert not depend on an enemy not attacking, but that he prepare a position that cannot be attacked. The chapter ends with a discussion of the five dangerous traits in a commander: a disregard for life, a determination to live, a bad temper, uncompromising honor, and great love for the people. Sun-Tzu claims that each of these bad traits opens the commander to various avenues of attack, thus, "an army's being routed and its commander slain is invariably the consequence of these five dangerous traits."

Chapter 9: Deploying the Army

This chapter continues the discussion of terrain, specifically focusing on how armies should be physically deployed. It includes a strategic key, whereby a commander can judge the enemy's private intentions, based on what the enemy publicly performs, as well as specific *lei* about how to handle mountains, marshes, and other terrain forms. Sun-Tzu then presents a series of maxims whereby the enemy's plans can be determined: for instance, enemies who are close and quiet occupy *hsing*, birds taking flight means an ambush awaits, and an enemy who sues for peace but has suffered no loss is nonetheless plotting some other course of action. The chapter concludes with the assertion that superior numbers do not in themselves confer *shih*, which must be fashioned with attention to all available factors.

Chapter 10: the Terrain

This chapter again continues the discourse on terrain, presenting six *tao*, or guidelines, on how a commander should use terrain. For example, a terrain that can be approached easily by either army is "accessible," and the first to occupy it has crafted *shih*. Sun-Tzu then presents the six *tao* of "certain defeat": "flight, insubordination, deterioration, ruin, chaos, and rout," as well as the characteristics of a commander that produce each one. The expert in battle is, thus, "the nation's treasure," who leads without any desire for

personal glory but only wishes to "protect his people and promote the interests of his ruler."

Chapter 11: the Nine Kinds of Terrain

The longest of the thirteen chapters, Chapter 11 concludes Sun-Tzu's theory of terrain. He notes early that in warfare, "the supreme consideration is speed," which fashions *shih* by enabling one to be where least expected. Terrain types modify how *shih* functions. Sun-Tzu does not conceive of terrain types as absolute geographic formations, but in relational contexts, such as "contested," "intermediate," "critical," and "marginal." Each terrain type calls for a specific course of action: one must "press ahead on difficult terrain" and "form alliances … at strategically vital intersections."

Chapter 12: Incendiary Attack

This chapter introduces the usage of incendiary warfare. Sun-Tzu advises a hierarchy of targets for incendiary warfare: first, set fire to soldiers; then to supplies; then, to transport; then, to munitions; last, to supply buildings. Incendiary attack is not in itself valuable, unless it fashions *shih*; the expert in battle always uses fire to create confusion and damage morale. Sun-Tzu likens literal fire to the emotional heat of an enraged ruler or a commander in the heat of battle; neither is in a strong position, and thus incendiaries, metaphorically, are as dangerous to the user as they are to the target.

Chapter 13: Using Spies

The closing chapter of the inner text argues forcefully for the value of espionage. To force the substantial cost and the extreme privation of warfare on a population without conducting adequate intelligence gathering, is for Sun-Tzu, "the height of inhumanity." A commander must know the enemy to gain victory, and to generate foreknowledge, or *chih*, a commander must create an "imperceptible web" of informants. In order to achieve this web, five categories of spies must be developed.

The first category is the "local spy," a citizen of the enemy state. The second is the "inside agent," an enemy state official. The third is the "double agent," an enemy spy who works for both sides. The fourth is the "expendable spy," who transmits false information to the enemy. The fifth is the "unexpendable spy," who reports on the enemy army's encampment. In conclusion, Sun-Tzu underscores the need for intelligence as "the essence in warfare … what the armies depend upon in their every move."

The Outer Text

Apart from the inner text, there is a considerable amount of additional material that has, over the years, accrued under the name of Sun-Tzu. Depending on the edition, books classify this material differently. The Modern Library Edition (2000) divides it into two separate parts, Parts II and III, though other editions keep it whole and attribute it wholly to Sun Pin. Much of this material is commentary, extensions that seek to clarify the

original ideas, while some of it is believed to be outright forgery that attempts to invoke the favorable name of Sun-Tzu. Generally, authorship of these texts is disputed, though most scholars do not believe that the historical Sun-Tzu, if in fact he existed, wrote all of them. Scholarship tends to attribute much of the outer texts to Sun Pin.

Part Ii: Text Recovered from the Yin-ch'üeh-shan Han Dynasty Strips

Part II is comprised of five short chapters of texts recently recovered at the Yin-ch' üeh-shan excavation, which date to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). The first chapter (The Questions of Wu) develops an actual narrative, and is dismissed by most commentators for being fiction rather than abstract strategic theory. The story concerns Sun Wu, an advisor to the king of the state of Wu, who demonstrates his skill as the king's commander when he executes the king's favorite concubines—the officers of Sun Wu's army of court ladies—after they are unable to make the ladies follow their orders. Chapter 2 (The Four Contingencies) elaborates on the nine contingencies of Chapter 8 in the inner text, suggesting that *shih* is also gained by knowing what *not* to do—roadways not to travel, armies not to attack, walled cities not to assault, and territory not to contest. In Chapter 3 (The Yellow Emperor Attacks the Red Emperor), a fable about the Yellow Emperor is used to illustrate the result of realizing the way, or *tao*. Chapter 4 (The Disposition [of the Terrain] II), barely a page long, consists of fragments relating to the use of the terrain. Chapter 5 (An Interview with the King of Wu) develops the character of Master Sun more thoroughly, presenting him in direct dialogue with King Ho-lu.

Part Iii: Text Recovered from Later Works

Part III is derived from both the *T'ung-tien*, the T'ang dynasty's (618–907 A.D.) text on law and institutions, and from bamboo strips discovered in 1978 in a tomb of the Sun family. As with most of the outer text, scholars disagree about the relation of Part III to the core thirteen chapters. The majority of this eight-chapter section is dialogue, citations of Sun-Tzu from the *T'ungtien*, including the first chapter called "A Conversation Between the King of Wu and Sun Wu." Some scholars have argued that this particular strip should be part of the inner text, but it is typically relegated to the outer. Toward the end, chapters contain less cohesive themes and present notable interpretive difficulty. These texts engage deployment, command, and other items already discussed in the inner text, but often appear more like separate quotations, or remnants of writing, than complete chapters.

Plot Summary

Part 1: the Thirteen-chapter Text

What is conceived of as the text of *The Art of War* is, like the question of the author, a complicated debate. Because of its extreme age, manner of composition, and means of preservation, one cannot easily classify the numerous texts claimed variously for inclusion. For instance, the most inclusive view argues for an eighty-two-chapter text; the least inclusive view doubts even the viability of the traditional core text. Most scholarly opinion, however, divides the competing claims, based on such factors as stylistics and archeological context, into inner and outer texts, a common critical device for ancient manuscripts. The first thirteen chapters, about which authenticity is nearly certain, comprise the inner text, or the Thirteen-Chapter text.

Chapter 1: on Assessments

Sun-Tzu begins this chapter with a key assertion: "War is a vital matter of state." From this assertion, he reasons that the survival of a state depends significantly on how well its rulers can estimate the outcome of any potential conflict. Sun-Tzu recommends five factors a ruler must assess in order to accomplish this estimation.

Themes

Keeping the Peace

Unlike other texts in war literature, the thematics of war in *The Art of War* are not buried in hidden meanings, handled indirectly, or presented with subtlety. Rather, the text speaks directly about military strategy, mass killing, invasions, and logistics. It uses some literary devices to advance its goals, but only to serve the military theory. However, the thematics of peace are quite the opposite.

Throughout this text about war is an implied peace. Peace, one could argue, is the shadow, or *yin*, of Sun-Tzu's war. As such, it is the subtext of this famous war treatise, serving, in its way, to dampen the effect of Sun-Tzu's descriptions of military strategy. Chinese philosophy scholar Roger T. Ames notes that there is the initial and "explicit characterization of warfare as an always unfortunate last resort. There is no self-promoting militarism." To fight at all, Sun-Tzu asserts, is already a significant loss, much worse than losing a battle. Conversely, to avoid battle, or to maintain peace, is automatically a success. Sun-Tzu suggests commanders make strict and extensive preparation and use all other means, including diplomacy and espionage, before engaging the enemy. In other words, the prevention of war requires the most concentrated effort. Battles, if unavoidable, should be swift so that victory comes quickly, but peace, or the suppression of war, should be protracted. A quick victory puts the least possible pressure on the state, its people, and its warriors, but sustained peace puts practically no pressure on the state, its people, and its warriors. Again and again, through implication, Sun-Tzu's war document posits peace as the greatest victory.

The Natural World

Metaphors from the natural sciences, including astronomy, geology, meteorology, and physics pervade *The Art of War*, which makes sense from many standpoints. For one, the book attempts to study war scientifically, so the inclusion of other sciences only proves to reinforce Sun-Tzu's similarly-scientific approach to war. In addition, these references were probably a way for Sun-Tzu to gain credibility with his readers. They give Sun-Tzu an authority that most people during his time could not have enjoyed. Direct references to nature (regarding the sun, birds of prey, water, and more) allow readers better access to the text, and hold up nature as the greatest example of conflict and resolution. Nature metaphors also suggest that warfare is a natural occurrence.

Philosophy and War

An obvious relationship exists between Chinese philosophy and Sun-Tzu's description of the art of war. His instructions often apply aspects of humanity and natural existence to warfare. In many places, the text reads more like a philosophical discussion than a

guide to conducting war. The decision to go to war, for instance, is mired in the philosophical notion that a defeat has already been handed to the commander who risks the lives of his soldiers on the battlefield. Ames notes that for ancient Chinese civilization, philosophy was a highly practical matter: "philosophizing in this culture is not merely theoretical—it entails practice, 'doing.' Hence warfare, to the extent that it is philosophical, is necessarily applied philosophy."

One of the five criteria that must be gauged to determine the outcome of war is command. Sun-Tzu says command is "a matter of wisdom, integrity, humanity, courage, and discipline," characteristics that an able commander cultivates and possesses. In the modern and mechanized warfare of today, it could be argued that today's society does not expect these criteria from its military commanders as much as it values the ability to follow and give directions.

Sun-Tzu's understanding of command is applicable to general well being and human aspiration. The characteristics that make a good commander are, in Chinese philosophy, the same as those that would make an individual exemplary in any profession. One may be a great philosopher, writer, and military commander all at once. As Ames points out, Mao Zedong (also known as Mao Tse-Tung), the ruler of Communist China from the 1930s through the 1970s "was profiled for public view as a great statesman, a poet, a calligrapher, a military strategist, a philosopher, an economist —even an athlete swimming the Yangtze river."

Historical Context

The Warring States Period

In "The Seeker and the Sage," Ralph Peters notes. that, during the Warring States period, "[s]ocial order was maintained by savagery." It was a time of "famine, disease, dislocation, and slaughter," producing much innovation in weaponry and fortification. In introducing *The Complete Art of War*, Ralph Sawyer writes that the period, one of "interminable strife," was dominated by seven major states, which fought to consolidate their rule. The process would eventually result in the foundation of the Ch'in dynasty in 221 B.C., which reunified the empire, itself overthrown by the Han in 206 B.C. Sawyer argues that before the chaotic Warring States period, rulers were "still sufficiently entrenched to feel unthreatened," but with the reality of constant and total warfare, "creative thinkers (such as Confucius) could no longer be ignored." This produced an opening for new thinking on many matters, including war.

Chinese Philosophy

The Warring States period and the Han dynasty featured several dominant schools of philosophy: Confucianism, Legalism, Mohism, and Taoism. It was a fertile environment for intellectual debate, and many militarist writers, like Sun-Tzu, worked within the currents of the other schools of thought.

Confucianism originated in the Spring and Autumn Period (722–481 B.C.) and enjoyed broad influence until the T'ang dynasty (618–907 A.D.), despite being banned during the brief Ch'in dynasty. It emphasizes individual virtue, both in public and in private. It also stresses loyalty, especially to family and state, and tends to prefer rigidly enforced social norms to explicit laws. Overall, it is a diverse philosophical system, with few dogmatic tenets except the veneration of Confucius (551–479 B.C.), about whom little is known directly, and whose *Analects* are well studied.

Legalism, the official philosophy of the short-lived Ch'in, argued for the strict adherence to the code of laws, despite any moral implications.

Mohism, destroyed during the Ch'in dynasty repression, was founded by Mo-Di. It explicitly rejects tradition as an unsure guide to moral action, and instead suggests a *utilitarian*, or useful, ethic based on finding objective standards to morally guide behavior and judgment.

Taoism is often considered the traditional opposite of Confucianism. Its most famous text is the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao-Tzu. It espouses individual liberty and reflection, mystical immortality, and a rejection of social norms. In matters of state, Taoism argues that the virtue of the ruler is *wuwei*, or rule through inaction.

The Conflict of Wen and Wu

John A. Lynn, in *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, considers the philosophical and historical situation of the Warring States period a "clash of *Wen* and *Wu*." What is key about the period to Lynn is not the conflict of arms, but the contest of principles. He notes that the period witnessed the development of a unified state, and came to value *wen*, or culture, over *wu*, force. He notes that the only evidence for this triumph of culture over force is found in the writings of the educated bureaucrat class, often written during the stable Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). The Han dynasty featured little internal conflict, though it experienced pressure on its frontiers from nomadic raiders who were considered barbaric and the true representatives of *wu*. Lynn notes that this preference of the Han rulers to associate themselves with *wen* and the nomads with *wu* led the bureaucratic writers to produce histories sensitive to this prejudice. Hence, *wen* triumphs in the writings of the period because it was in the interests of the writers to flatter their rulers. Even the literature of warfare becomes contemplative and civilized as a result. Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War*, Lynn concludes, is a direct product of this political process.

Critical Overview

The positive reception of *The Art of War* began very early in China after its appearance. By the second century B.C., the thirteen chapters of the inner text had already become a fixed, core document, as proven by texts found during excavations at Yin-ch'üeh-shan, entitled *Sun-Tzu with Eleven Commentaries*. This manuscript is substantially similar to the next earliest manuscript, dating from the Sung dynasty (907–1276 A.D.), which implies that someone valued Sun-Tzu's work enough to preserve it for over a millennium. Furthermore, that the Sung version is fuller and more extensive than the Han version suggests that commentators and annotators had significant interest in Sun-Tzu, wishing to add to the growing body of ideas, as well as become associated with a legendary intellectual figure.

Peters advances the theory that the name Sun-Tzu is actually an intentionally crafted legendary pseudonym, a distillation that idealizes all of the successful military commanders of the Warring States period. If this is so, then there was a ready-made audience among the late Warring States and early Han elite, who would have been familiar with the history of these famous commanders.

Furthermore, the success of the later Sun Pin suggests that his association with Sun Wu added to his advancement. Critics D. C. Lau and Ames argue in *Sun Bin: The Art of Warfare* that it is best not to conceive of *The Art of War* as an individual text, but as an entire literary genre unto itself, the genre *ping-fa*, closely associated with the often dismissed Militarist philosophical school.

Beyond its ancient reputation and preservation, *The Art of War* has enjoyed a tremendous successful modern reception, especially during the periods of the cold war and the war on terror. Several recently published new translations of it attest to its continued relevance and respect.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
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Critical Essay #1

In the following excerpt, McCready suggests that all modern nations should become familiar with Tzu's Art of War, *even as many Americans may consider it unconventional*.

Art of War by Sun-Tzu (1981) is a documentary film that presents the story of Sun-Tzu in a style similar to the written text. It is currently unavailable.

The Art of War (2000) stars Wesley Snipes as a United Nations secret agent who is framed for a murder. The film invokes Sun-Tzu's ideas as the agent evades the FBI and tries to discover the truth. Directed by Christian Duguay, this movie is available on VHS and DVD through Warner Home Video.

The Total War Series are computer strategy games developed by Creative Assembly. They feature an artificial intelligence system for computer-controlled opponents programmed specifically with the military maxims of Sun-Tzu. The series includes *Shogun: Total War* (2000), *Medieval: Total War* (2002), and *Rome: Total War* (2004).

Critical Essay #2

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* is, of course, a classic. At least six English translations can be found in most large bookstores on bookshelves next to another much cited but little read military favorite, Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* (Knopf, New York, 1993). Translator Roger Ames describes *The Art of War* as "the world's foremost classic on military strategy."

During the Vietnam war, it was popular for Army officers to be seen carrying copies of the works of Sun Tzu and Mao Tse-tung. It is unlikely that many who carried the books read them, and few who read them understood them.

Sun Tzu was a Chinese military leader and philosopher. Little is certain regarding his life, including when he lived. The biography in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Historical Records* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1994), dating from the early 1st century B.C., describes Sun Tzu as a contemporary of Confucius (551–479 B.C.) born in what is now Shandung Province. Translator Samuel B. Griffith suggests that Sun Tzu probably lived during the Warring States period (453–221 B.C.) because the military details of *The Art of War* fit that time better than they do the earlier Spring and Autumn period.

The Warring States period began with eight major states whose shifting alliances and slow consolidation resulted in the first unification of China under the short-lived Qin Empire. Sun Tzu, apparently a military leader for one of the warring states, determined to record his strategic and tactical record for later generations. His work has continued to influence Chinese military writing.

Mao Tse-tung applied Sun Tzu's ideas to his own military writings of the Chinese civil war of the 1930s and 1940s. North Vietnamese commanders Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap also drew on Sun Tzu's wisdom, using his ideas first against the French, then against the United States.

This modern history leads many to consider *The Art of War* to be a text for the underdog. In light of the current discussion about asymmetrical warfare, this is an important consideration, but Sun Tzu's ideas are also available to stronger states. In either case, political and military leaders of stronger states (such as the United States) should become familiar with Sun Tzu because if they will not be using his ideas, they must be ready to protect themselves against others who will.

Griffith, a World War II veteran, devotes an appendix to detailing how the Japanese applied Sun Tzu's axioms. He says Japan produced more than 100 editions of *The Art of War* and applied Sun Tzu's wisdom to virtually every aspect of Japanese life, including business. Twenty-first century Americans are less likely to be surprised by business appropriating military strategy than was Griffith in 1963.

Critical Essay #3

So it is important not only for U.S. generals to understand Sun Tzu's approach to warfare, it is important for their civilian masters, who make the strategic decisions, to understand because their thinking is a key target of the enemy. Changing how we think will not be easy, as it goes against the grain of what has been called the American way of war.

Much of what Sun Tzu teaches falls in the category of what Americans call unconventional warfare. Historically, this has been consigned to a supporting role to the main, conventional effort. While it is true that Sun Tzu's approach is unconventional, he does discuss how large, regular armies should operate against opponents. Conventional warriors can learn from Sun Tzu as readily as can guerrillas. Conventional and unconventional are in the eye of the beholder, and no one should assume his definitions are normative.

Sun Tzu says defeating the enemy without battle requires greater skill than winning on the battlefield. In saying this, he is stressing maneuver over firepower—that maneuver might involve politics and diplomacy or combat formations. Yet, while Sun Tzu prefers that the military leader defeat his opponent without having to resort to combat, he recognizes this is frequently impossible.

Sun Tzu develops in two ways his idea of victory without combat. The first is to so order the political and diplomatic context that one's opponent has obviously lost before he has even begun to recognize the futility of fighting. The second is to deploy one's own forces in a way that neutralizes the enemy's strategy. His advice that "the best military policy is to attack strategies, next to attack alliances, the next to attack soldiers, and the worst to assault walled cities," shows he prefers diplomatic initiative.

Elsewhere, Sun Tzu says the use of military force is a drain on the treasury no matter how great the victory. American doctrine advocates getting inside the enemy's decision cycle during battle; Sun Tzu says we should seek to get inside the enemy's diplomatic decision cycle so we can avoid battle altogether. Best of all is to get inside the enemy's mind. This way we not only maintain the initiative, but we can control the enemy's response. If we cannot do either of these, we should seek to get inside the enemy's strategic decisionmaking cycle. Doing any of these, however, requires good intelligence, and not the kind of intelligence the United States is best able to collect. Sun Tzu's advice has the greatest possibility of succeeding when the enemy's leadership has been penetrated by human agents; signals and photographic intelligence are much less effective.

One difference between Sun Tzu's approach and the American way of war can be seen as the difference between the Asian game of go and the Western game of chess. In go, the opponents place their pieces so as to maximize their control and restrict their opponent's options. The enemy loses pieces and the game by being outmaneuvered, not through direct attack. In chess, the goal is to capture the opponent's key piece, the

king. This requires territorial control, but one gains that control by capturing enemy pieces so they cannot threaten one's own king and so that they cannot protect their own king.

For military professionals, Sun Tzu notes that the down side of his proposal is that commanders who win without having to resort to battle do not gain a reputation for wisdom or credit for bravery. The kind of victory Sun Tzu recommends happens without publicity or the usual trappings of military success. I believe a major factor in success is the absence of publicity and parades. Publicity would require the enemy to respond in ways that silence does not.

Sun Tzu offers a way for weaker forces to defeat those more powerful. Because no state or nonstate actor more powerful than the United States currently exists, the approaches Sun Tzu recommends are among those U.S. political and military leaders will face in the coming decades.

Critical Essay #4

The sort of deception Sun Tzu talks about does not come from studying manuals. It is a way of thinking and being, a way that is alien to Western intellectual and cultural traditions. Sun Tzu describes it thus:

So veiled and subtle,
To the point of having no form;
So mysterious and miraculous,
To the point of making no sound.
Therefore he can be arbiter of the enemy's fate.

Sun Tzu's army is everywhere and yet nowhere. Griffith translates the beginning of the verse as "Subtle and insubstantial, the expert leaves no trace." This is the epitome of the indirect approach. There are no heavy battalions or massed batteries in this picture. They come into view only if the strategy of indirection and deception fails or is left untried.

Linked with deception is an emphasis on psychological warfare directed against enemy soldiers to destroy their morale and against enemy leaders to overstress them and create tension between them. The goal is to defeat the enemy before the battle so the outcome of the battle is a foregone conclusion or so the enemy cannot appear on the battlefield. Sun Tzu's counsel is most effective where leaders feel the need to make every significant decision, ignoring battle rhythm and sleep plans. The U.S. military, particularly its Reserve Components, is weak at this point.

Of the 13 chapters in *The Art of War*, one is devoted entirely to examining the role of intelligence in wartime. The other 12 include intelligence where appropriate to their subject. Sun Tzu's strategy of deception and maneuver depends much more on good intelligence than does a strategy emphasizing large armies, firepower, and decisive battles. The chapter titled "Using Spies" exemplifies an approach to intelligence markedly different from the modern American emphasis on high-tech surveillance and signals interception. These have their own great value, but neither offers insight into enemy leaders' thinking in the way human intelligence does. Sun Tzu says "intelligence is of the essence in warfare—it is what the armies depend upon in their every move."

As Chinese commentators on Sun Tzu make clear, the intelligence essential to this approach to war includes the names of key enemy personnel, as well as their personalities and character. A leader will then know his enemies' strengths and weaknesses and also their preferred behavior, and their susceptibility to deception operations. While signal intelligence might provide some of this knowledge, most of it can only come through human agents who know personally the enemy leaders. During the American Civil War, commanders on both sides were successful in deception operations because they had known and worked with their opposite numbers for many years before the war. This long-term personal contact was itself good intelligence and

was supplemented by the use of spies. Increasingly sophisticated counters to technical intelligence-collection require a return to the use of human agents.

Many Western and Chinese scholars have concluded Sun Tzu believed noncombat victories are usually possible. He certainly believed them preferable, but the fact that the overwhelming majority of *The Art of War* is about how to fight seems to show he considered non-combat victory an ideal rarely realized.

Sun Tzu also believed political rulers should leave strategy and tactics entirely to their generals. He even says generals should ignore their civilian leaders when the military situation requires. While this might work in authoritarian societies, it is incompatible with modern democratic societies because it denies civilian control of the military. It also seems to be inconsistent with Sun Tzu's understanding of war as one aspect of a multifaceted approach to interstate relations. Such an understanding seems to require overall control of every part of the approach by the political ruler. While it is true that ignorant civilian leadership is harmful to the military effort, the solution is not civilian uninvolvement, but informed civilian involvement.

Both Sun Tzu and his ancient Chinese commentators say success in battle sometimes depends on placing soldiers in positions where they must fight or die. This is not part of the American way of war. Nonetheless, we should recognize that for other cultures this is standard procedure, and it will affect the tactics of U.S. units facing such enemies.

Modern international relations specialists in the Realist tradition, such as Robert Kaplan, claim Sun Tzu as one of their own. A careful reading of *The Art of War* calls this claim into question. Sun Tzu writes, "The expert in using the military builds upon the way (*tao*) and holds fast to military, regulations, and thus is able to be the arbiter of victory and defeat." Tu Mu's commentary on this passage says, "The *Tao* is the way of humanity and justice … Those who excel in war first cultivate their own humanity and justice and maintain their laws and institutions." Tu Mu's Sun Tzu is concerned about the character of the military leader because good character is essential to victory.

Critical Essay #5

Sun Tzu's military thinking is not the last word in strategy, but it is a source from which Western military and political leaders can learn much. It represents an approach to conflict against which the United States has enjoyed tactical success at the cost of strategic defeat. Seriously considering a strategic approach that influences East and Southeast Asian political and military strategy (especially that of China) will richly repay the effort. As Sun Tzu himself wrote:

He who knows the enemy and himself
Will never in a hundred battles be at risk;
He who does not know the enemy but knows himself
Will sometimes win and sometimes lose;
He who knows neither the enemy nor himself
Will be at risk in every battle.

Too often, American knowledge of its foes has been limited to easily measurable economic and military data, and it has overlooked the much more important cultural, historical, and psychological elements. The way to minimize casualties has been to employ massive doses of firepower rather than using a strategy that seeks to defeat the enemy before he can muster his forces on the field of battle.

In the coming decades, with the United States remaining the world's dominant military force, employing Sun Tzu's strategic lessons will be more important than ever. The United States might not incorporate all of Sun Tzu's lessons into its offensive strategy, but it will face opponents who use these lessons, or similar lessons, against the United States. Opponents recognize that direct confrontation with the United States can only result in their defeat.

Source: Douglas M. McCready, "Learning from Sun Tzu," in *Military Review*, Vol. 83, No. 3, May-June 2003, pp. 85-89.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's"For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently

studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man–the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

"Night." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

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Malak, Amin. "Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition," Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. "Richard Wright: "Wearing the Mask," in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

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The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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