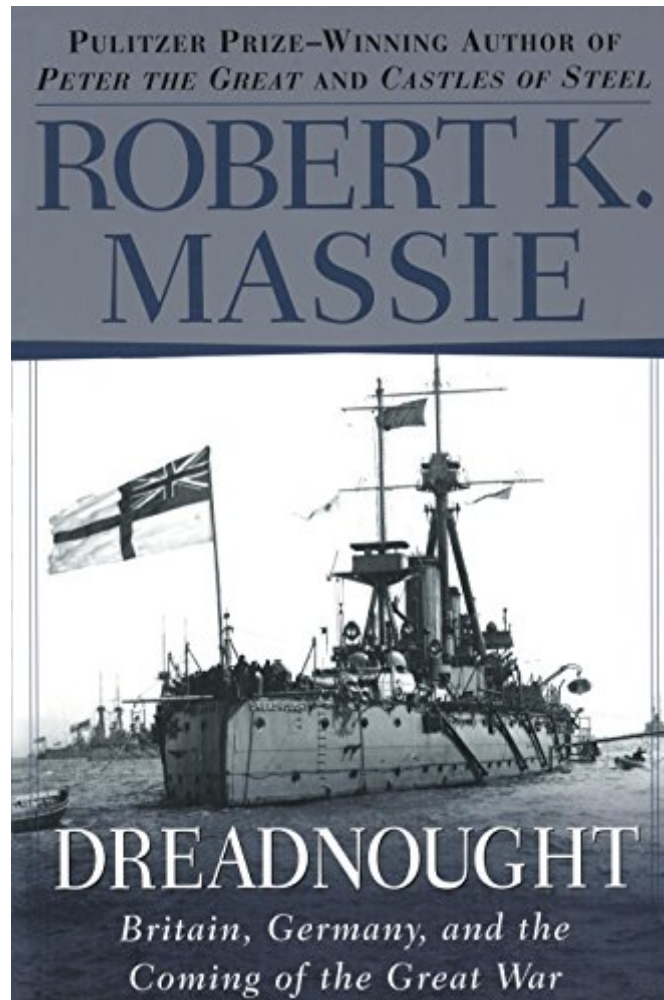




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Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, And The Coming Of The Great War



Synopsis

A gripping chronicle of the personal and national rivalries that led to the twentieth century's first great arms race, from Pulitzer Prize winner Robert K. Massie. With the biographer's rare genius for expressing the essence of extraordinary lives, Massie brings to life a crowd of glittery figures: the single-minded Admiral von Tirpitz; the young, ambitious Winston Churchill; the ruthless, sycophantic Chancellor Bernhard von Bismarck; Britain's greatest twentieth-century foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey; and Jacky Fisher, the eccentric admiral who revolutionized the British navy and brought forth the first true battleship, the H.M.S. Dreadnought. Their story, and the story of the era, filled with misunderstandings, missed opportunities, and events leading to unintended conclusions, unfolds like a Greek tragedy in this powerful narrative. Intimately human and dramatic, Dreadnought is history at its most riveting. Praise for Dreadnought: "Dreadnought is history in the grand manner, as most people prefer it: how people shaped, or were shaped by, events." •Time "A classic [that] covers superbly a whole era . . . engrossing in its glittering gallery of characters." •Chicago Sun-Times "[Told] on a grand scale . . . Massie [is] a master of historical portraiture and anecdotage." •The Wall Street Journal "Brilliant on everything he writes about ships and the sea. It is Massie's eye for detail that makes his nautical set pieces so marvelously evocative." •Los Angeles Times

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Customer Reviews

Detailed story about the people and the decisions they made for many years the eventually changed the stable political and military status of Europe to the unstable status that led to WWI. The book covers the relationship when the various royal families and the impact of the relationships on the steps that led to war. Much of the book is devoted to the desire of Germany to build a navy and the effect that had on England's military spending that resulted in an arms race Once the arms race started it was impossible to reach a stable place. The role of the various alliances in first stabilizing Europe and then destabilizing everything when a weak partner made a bad move is discusses.

The main title of Robert K. Massie's *Dreadnought* is a bit deceptive, the subtitle is what the book is truly about. *Dreadnought* tells the story of the end of the British Empire and the roots of World War I. It goes far beyond a military or naval history; it is really a political and foreign policy history. The naval arms race between Britain and Germany is the common thread around which Massie brilliantly weaves the story of the relationship between Britain and Germany as well as the personalities involved. What makes this book so great is that Massie goes beyond policies and digs deep into the personalities of the naval and political leadership of both Britain and Germany. He develops Kaiser Wilhelm II (Massie uses the English William), Queen Victoria and the Kings of England, Chancellors and Prime Ministers, First Lords, Sea Lords, and Admirals, writes about they interacted and how their relationships impacted events and policy. I got more insight into Wilhelm II in *Dreadnought* than any other book I've read on World War I. I also have a better understanding of Asquith, Grey, Haldane, Bismarck, Bulow, Tirpitz, and other politicians and officials of the time. By getting inside their heads and helping us understand what the Admirals and politicians were thinking, Massie gives us a better understanding of how and why things unfolded the way they did in the years leading to World War I. I imagine one complaint about *Dreadnought* is that it leaves you hanging at the end. Having previously read *Castles of Steel* and *The Winning of the Great War at Sea*, I recognized that what *Dreadnought* does is set the

reader up for Castles of Steel. Having read both in the opposite order of what I should have, I can strongly recommend reading them in the correct order *Dreadnought* first, *Castles of Steel* (which I'm now re-reading) second. This is an extraordinary book, a very easy read that you don't want to put down. It's a long book but one that you don't get tired of reading because of Massie's rich, descriptive writing and the human detail he puts in. Even if you're not interested in the Naval aspect of World War I, read this book simply for the insight Massie offers into the political leadership of Britain and Germany, you won't regret it. This is without a doubt one of the best books I've read recently and it's fully deserving of five stars!

This is a disappointing book. I expected it to be about dreadnoughts but it's primarily a series of biographies of important people of the era. Certainly, the development of these battleships is closely linked with politics, but the ships themselves are treated almost as a side issue. As a series of biographical sketches, it's interesting and well written.

I loved Massie's *Castles of Steel* and had high expectations for this book. I anticipated more about the battleship *Dreadnought* and the arms race it initiated but it's really focused on the personalities who influenced events leading up to WW1. The first half of the book consists largely of life stories of European royalty and politicians. A few, such as Churchill's and Jacky Fisher's, held my interest but most were exceedingly tedious and many, as it turned out, not all that important to events. The latter part of the book improves and does a better job explaining the outbreak of the war than any other I've read. However, despite being exquisitely researched and well written, it too often gets bogged down with dull people unless you're particularly fascinated by European royalty. Disappointed.

Massie is one of my favorite historians (along with David McCollough). This book is one of his best. He follows all the political machinations that led to the founding of the country we call Germany. The "players" are fully fleshed out with their motivations and actions defined. It is the story of how Germany formed and all the politics that led to WW I. Excellent ! Highly recommend.

Dreadnought is a "must read" for those even mildly interested in the events which ultimately led to the outbreak of World War I. Despite its length, it is expertly written and very hard to put down. Personally, one incentive for my reading this book comes from my longstanding interest in the USS

Texas which is the last remaining dreadnought battleship that exists worldwide and which is moored locally as a museum piece along the Houston ship Channel in La Porte, Texas.

Great story, but it comes at you at glacial speed. And there's just enough content about dreadnoughts so that you can't call the title a hoax but there's definitely a little bait and switch. Still, once I got rolling with Mr. Massie's storytelling there was no going back. Thoroughly researched, excellent footnotes. I learned a lot when I wasn't trying to, and I'm glad I did.

This is a rarity: a highly detailed, moment by moment history of the causes of the First World War that is also eminently readable, as is true of all of Massey's books. The included biographies are masterful, and the technical details are fascinating. The research, as with all this author's books, is impeccable. Most highly recommended.

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