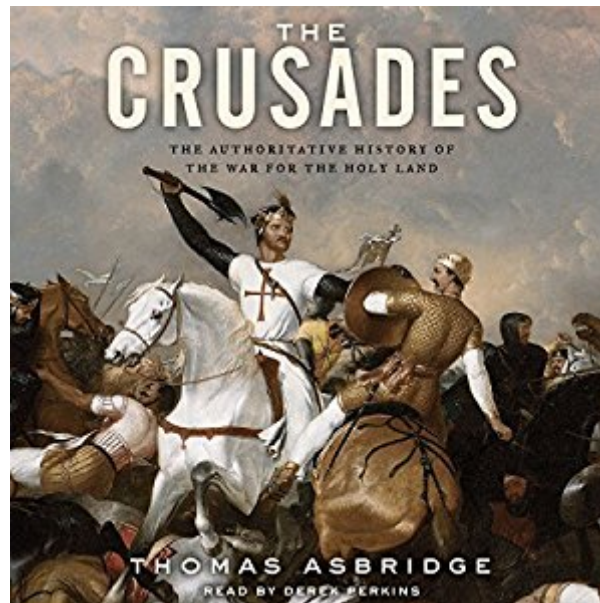




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The Crusades: The Authoritative History Of The War For The Holy Land



Synopsis

The Crusades is an authoritative, accessible single-volume history of the brutal struggle for the Holy Land in the Middle Ages. Thomas Asbridge - a renowned historian who writes with "maximum vividness" (Joan Acocella, The New Yorker) - covers the years 1095 to 1291 in this big, ambitious, listenable account of one of the most fascinating periods in history. From Richard the Lionheart to the mighty Saladin, from the emperors of Byzantium to the Knights Templar, Asbridge's book is a magnificent epic of holy war between the Christian and Islamic worlds, full of adventure, intrigue, and sweeping grandeur.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A good, readable history of The Crusades has escaped me to this point, for whatever reason. I was very excited when Tynerman's God's War was released a few years ago, and quickly became disenchanted when I tried slogging through it and realized what a boringly-written brick it was. Couldn't finish it. Runciman's classic volumes, which have been the definitive essential reading for half a century now, are still valid, entertaining reads but have been long since over-taken by newer evidence and much fresher, more-encompassing interpretations. As a read, they're still great fun. As good history, they're quite biased and lacking today. So, when I saw a shiny new tome promising a complete revisiting of long-held assumptions, I couldn't resist. Asbridge's chronology is straightforward; starting with a quick survey of Islam's rise and subsequent takeover of the Christian Holy Land, he moves to Europe to set the scene of the medieval papacy and nascent western kingships that would bring about the concept of Crusading. In a nice touch, he continues to revisit

the contemporary meanings, definitions and assumptions behind crusading as it developed from an event without even a name ("crusading" was a later appellation) to the currently-understood form. From these basics, he moves us through each of the main five Crusades, deftly describing the expected peoples, places, and battles. He strikes a good balance between talking about the most important figures and key battles versus the less-glamorous but as-important topics such as trade and societal makeup that, while harder to make exciting, are very important when trying to gain a full understanding of the events. Very crucially, he spends as much time covering the Arab viewpoint as he does the Christian.

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