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The Defense Of Duffer's Drift (Illustrated) (Annotated)

The Defense of Duffer's Drift



Major General Sir Ernest D. Swinton, K.B.E.,
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Synopsis

[*Illustrations*](#) [*Maps*](#) [*Introductory Material*](#) [*Linked TOC*](#) [*Linked Glossary*](#) [The Defense of Dufferin](#) is one of the most important works ever written on small unit tactics and is required reading for junior officers in military organizations around the world. It was written by Major General Sir Ernest Dunlop Swinton in 1904 when Swinton was a Captain. It details a fictional encounter in the Boer War. The book is narrated by Lieutenant Backsight Forethought (BF) who has been left in command of 50 men to defend a ford in the river. BF has a series of dreams in which his force is defeated by the Boers. After each dream, BF analyzes his performance and determines lessons learned. By the final dream, his force is successful in holding out until relieved. The lessons BF learned are the timeless lessons of small unit tactics and are as valuable today as they were at the turn of the century. The prose are simple and powerful. This book is essential reading for soldiers and students of tactics or military history. This volume also includes introductory material from the U.S. Marine Corps, maps, illustrations, a hyperlinked glossary, and a hyperlinked table of contents.

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Customer Reviews

The Defense Of Duffer's Drift - A Lesson In The Fundamentals Of Small Unit Tactics, was written by Ernest Dunlop Swinton, an English officer and veteran of the Boer War. What he has written is as valid today as it was around the turn of the 20th century. The book is written in first person, where the author has himself as a subaltern (either a first or second lieutenant). In a dream, his job, along with 40 men, is to guard a place called Duffer's Drift (a drift is a ford), until the main column arrives. The author has a series of six dreams, in each one an action occurs, and upon waking, the author learns a series of lessons about warfare. The book is still valid, and should be read by those in the military who even so much as command a squad. You can even adopt it if you are a civilian and do "paintball" games, or even "zombie shooting." However, the book is GREAT if you are a wargamer, either miniature or board (map and counter). The dreams, or scenarios, are fascinating and can be "gamed," as in each dream the author presents a map and placement of forces prior to battle. This book has been frustratingly in and out of print, but I've finally got my copy, and I'm NOT letting it go. As a wargamer (it can be played from the Boer war to present day), it is a good source, if you're a squadleader, whether military or civilian, it's invaluable.

This book is considered a classic, so thought I would give it a read. I was expecting it to be pretty dry and a slow slog. I was really surprised by how well the book flowed. Since it describes a small group of defenders it is easy to put yourself in the commander's place. The book is a series of dreams where the group commander sets up a defense from an enemy attack, sees how it fails, and then makes adjustments, thinking he had covered all the bases. Then it fails again, so he makes more adjustments, and fails again. Repeat the dream until successful. I really couldn't put the book down, and it is a fairly quick read. Anyone interested in military strategy and defensive tactics will love this book!

What a nifty little book, especially for folks who like Army tactics and enjoy a bit of a chuckle at the same time. The book puts a new British officer in command of a small force with a defensive mission against the Boers. Yes, the Boers of the turn of the 20th century Boer War in south Africa. Our officer is given a mission and proceeds to do his best. Then when he has very obviously messed up he dreamily does the same mission again. He gets to try the same mission a second, third, fourth time. Each time he employs the lessons learned from the previous fights. Each reliving of the mission brings different results. The final mission, employing all the lessons learned, brings the hero satisfaction. There are nice maps to go with each reliving of the adventure. That makes it easy to follow what the officer and his soldiers have to do. What is fun, is to put yourself in the boots

of the officer and think of how you would perform the mission. It is a bit like taking a military correspondence course, but much more lively. The lessons learned in that old war seem to fit today. The Boer War was a type of insurgency with many similar situations our military face today. A nice touch at the end is a complete listing of all the lessons learned. The book is short enough that a couple of hours went by and I had read it. I was well satisfied. I learned some new useful words, occasionally stumbling through some turn of the 20th century usage, and I compared 21st century thinking to the thinking of the decorated officer who wrote the book.

Interesting study of defensive tactics. Should be required reading for any military candidates. Total bad some of his ideas were not put into action.

Short book and excellent book. Take time to read it! (Not for the weak in heart!) It states facts as it see's it!Les

I first read this book over 30 years ago. My father, a Vietnam vet told me, after I had read it, that it was required reading for his ROTC classes at Notre Dame. I can see why. The book is a series of vignettes, dealing with one young officer, making tactical decisions. Each time he fails, with horrific results. But, each day, he relives it all over again, and makes a different decision. Eventually, he makes the correct decision. This is a book on small unit tactics, from long, long ago, the Boer War if memory suffices. Yet, the lessons learned in it are applicable to our military today. In fact, as my father found it helpful, so did I in my military years. The lessons learned are valuable, and readers, be they an old grey-haired soldier such as myself, or someone just interested in history, it is a valuable read. The book is interesting as a lesson, and as a story just to enjoy. I highly recommend this book.

the contents of this book, although more than one hundred years old, are relevant. these principles are not only applicable in combat but tied to everyday life. I would absolutely recommend this work to anyone curious about the the goings on around battlefields across the globe. The foresight required to achieve victory in everyday life is outlined right here. This is the hallmark of cause and effect, decisions made can positively or negatively impact the lives of others.

A very interesting old (Boer War) primer on infantry tactics written in the days when artillery and rifles were transitioning to modern form. The author is notable (and unusual for a general grade

officer) for his pioneering encouragement to "think outside the box". It is unfortunate that this philosophy was ignored in the coming war in Europe.

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