Guns Of August: The Drama of August 1914, a month of battle in which war was waged on a scale unsurpassed and whose results determined the shape of the world in which we live today [Illustrated] by Barbara Tuchman

A Superb History Of The First Month Of The 1St World War.

More dramatic than fiction...THE GUNS OF AUGUST is a magnificent narrative--beautifully organized, elegantly phrased, skillfully paced and sustained....The product of painstaking and sophisticated research.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Barbara Tuchman has brought to life again the people and events that led up to World War I. With attention to fascinating detail, and an intense knowledge of her subject and its characters, Ms. Tuchman reveals, for the first time, just how the war started, why, and why it could have been stopped but wasn't. A classic historical survey of a time and a people we all need to know more about, THE GUNS OF AUGUST will not be forgotten.

My Personal Review:
Written in 1962, this is a fascinating history of the beginnings of WWI and is the result of a vast amount of research. Its all true, and all documented, and even though its a dense read, the huge cast of characters springs to life. This is the story of a war that changed the course of history. And its also a story of the men who make the war. The reader gets to see the blunders and the madness and the personal feuds. And the humanity of the imperfect human beings who make the decisions that result in slaughter.
There are maps in the book describing the battles. There are also photographs. But I must admit that I barely looked at the maps. And I found all the photos of the elderly generals very similar. What I did love though was the sweep of the story as well as the many details that go into waging a war. Previously, most war books I've read had to do with the experience of the soldiers. But this book is about the experience of making
decisions, often based on folly. And it opened my eyes to how vulnerable the ordinary person is to the whims of the generals and the forces of pure chance. Ms. Tuchman also had a sense of irony and humor and sometimes I found myself laughing out loud.

The narrative of the month of August 1914 is described hour by hour. Belgium has to make a decision to accept an awful defeat or willingly allow the Germans to march through their neutral territory. There are alliances in place that are just waiting to be broken. The Russians come into the war. So do the British, even though it is with much reluctance. The basic war is between France and Germany, almost a continuation of the defeat the French suffered at the hands of the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.

Before I read this book, I didn't know much about WW1. Now I do. It was a war that defined the breakdown of the European nobility and set the stage for the next war, which was even more horrific. It taught me a lot, especially about how many people wind up dying because of the quest for power. It saddened me too because this quest for power is basic. So is the folly of mankind. The only thing that has changed is technology.

This book is a masterful work. It lays the groundwork for an understanding of the mechanics of war. I might not remember all of the names of the generals or the battle plans. But I will always remember the feeling of being right there, watching the decisions being made, marching for miles in spite of fatigue, handling the big guns, making courageous decisions that sometimes led to disaster. And, especially, knowing that this is the true face of war. Highly recommended.

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