

# The Good Book Guide

**SIR ROBERT PEEL: Statesmanship, Power and Party**, by Eric J. Evans, 2nd edition, Routledge - Lancaster Pamphlets series, 2006, xvi + 107 pp. £11.99 pbk.

TO SOME SIR ROBERT PEEL is the Edward Heath of the nineteenth century: remote, austere, arrogant. Wellington, on hearing of the accession of a young queen in 1837, famously grumbled to a friend, 'I have no small talk and Peel has no manners.' To others he more closely resembles Margaret Thatcher: certain of the rightness of his own opinions, determined to overcome all opposition, able to drown critics in a welter of accumulated facts. Perhaps Neville Chamberlain is his closest modern parallel: shy, hard-working, single-minded. As Professor Evans writes of Peel, he 'was extremely able, but he was also proud, could be arrogant, and found empathy with those of contrary views extremely difficult. A fatal flaw in his character was that, once he had convinced himself of the validity of an argument, he tended to regard it as proven and those who were not convinced as either mischievous or intellectually inferior.'

This is a truly excellent, and expanded, revision of an earlier work. Each phase of Peel's career is examined fairly and thoroughly, and a convincing image of the man and the politician emerges. It also paints a clear picture of British political life in the early nineteenth century which any A-Level student will find revealing as well as useful. This book can be recommended unreservedly.

John Garland.

**THE CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE. The Development of Land Warfare from 1792 to 1945** by Peter Browning. Cambridge - Perspectives in History series, 2002. vi + 202 pp. Index. £8.50 pbk.

SINCE THE INTRODUCTION of the new specifications in 2000 publishers have commissioned texts that seek to comprehensively



*Western front warfare, 1916*

service all aspects of unit study, aspects that include concepts, analysis, historiography and sources. With emphasis on techniques for success with an increasingly technical examination, the new texts can resemble technical manuals. A casualty of this trend is the absence of an engaging narrative and robust English style.

Peter Browning has written a book outside this trend. In economical, measured, unsloppy and clear English he leads the reader through the changes in land warfare from the limited wars of eighteenth-century Europe to the 'total war' that ended in 1945. Analysis is not sacrificed in a book full of judgements and insights, and the account is enhanced by reference to military theoreticians. Students will find navigation and assimilation undemanding because of chapters' subdivision into aspects. The indications of cultural responses to warfare are particularly gratifying. The only caveat by this reviewer is the limited number of maps.

Warfare is not central to AS/A2 studied units with one notable exception, OCR 2591, for which this could be a main text. For departments that do not offer this study unit but do encourage students to broaden their perspectives, and the possibilities of warfare is implied in many units, this volume will be a helpful addition to their library.

Tom Wells.

**BRITAIN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY** by Ian Cawood. Routledge - Spotlight History series, 2004. xxii + 423 pp. Index. £17.99 pbk.

HERE IS A MANUAL for examination success - in the already successful 'Spotlight' format set by Jocelyn Hunt and S.J. Lee. It is a weighty guide to Britain in the twentieth century, a mentor for AS and A2 students and their teachers. In that role it tackles the essential topics favoured by examination boards, exploring context, offering wise advice on essays and providing examples of (supposedly) successful responses, board by board. Its topic coverage is conventional, and hence the main political, foreign policy and social issues appear, all taken to the end of the millennium. It speaks to the reader directly, in the second person, and pulls no punches in its advice, setting out its aims in each section and meeting them. Along the way it explains what is expected of 'discuss', 'describe', 'identify', 'compare' and so on, and carefully differentiates emphases and meanings board by board. Students need to be sure that the advice for each board remains accurate, however (things change!).

The balance of the text is interesting. Each topic section starts with description, explanation and analysis; but this occupies about a quarter of the section, the remaining three-quarters being essay examples and skills analysis. Most students will need more guidance through the historical data if the second part of each section is to be intelligible. Hence the book surfaces as a guide to passing an examination rather than an enjoyable exploration of the past, and in this role it has its place, I'm sure. Some students will find it difficult; but the marriage of student, teacher and this book will be fertile and rewarding.

Richard Miller.

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