



Frederick the Great: King of Prussia

David Fraser

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A spellbinding biography of Prussia's soldier-king who changed the face of Europe.

Frederick II, King of Prussia, was a legendary ruler, artistic patron, man of letters, lawgiver, and commander -- in David Fraser's words, "one of the most extraordinary men ever to sit on a throne or command an army." He personally commanded his army in war after war with such supreme skill that he became acclaimed as the greatest soldier of his time. Fraser, himself a noted general and the author of a bestselling biography of Erwin Rommel, places Frederick's life as a soldier at the center of this immaculately researched book, allowing us to understand his strengths and weaknesses in the field more completely than in any previous biography. Fraser not only brings to these pages the authentic smell of battle but also offers a sweeping account of strategy and maneuver, of psychology, morale, and the impact of victory and defeat on both the victors and the vanquished. But he also knows how to view military action in the context of eighteenth-century European diplomacy and the ever-shifting balance of the various political forces shaping the history of the period. Fraser's spellbinding account is a full-scale portrait of an enigmatic historical figure, rendered with subtlety and infectious spirit.

Frederick the Great: King of Prussia Details

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From Reader Review Frederick the Great: King of Prussia for online ebook

Bill V says

This is my first book on Frederick and my rating is subject to change if I read any other books on him. I thought the book was alright. A lot was devoted to Frederick as a military genius as well as to him as a person and a monarch. There is a good sense of balance.

My main criticism is the lack of full names for several of the people, some major, given either in the text or the index. For example, I would read about some person and would be interested in reading a bit more on him or her on the internet. Only the last name would be given so I would have to search typing in the surname or title and Frederick or the name and Seven Years War. Often I would get multiple possibilities and then have to investigate each one to make sure it was the one I was looking for. It was like an investigation.

A major annoyance is that too much emphasis was placed going over the multiple family and monarchial connections, how they were interrelated and the political ramifications of the relationships. I found it highly confusing. This princess was the daughter of this queen, who is the sister of this king who is married to this other queen, etc.

An irritant is the liberal use of French in the book. I, for one, don't know French and initially when I would see a French expression I would have it translated. However there are so many phrases and every now and then entire sentences would be written in French that I stopped translating them and just ignored them.

Gregory says

Frederick the Great transformed Germany and hence Europe during his reign, 1740-1786. When he assumed the throne, Prussia was a regional power with little influence in Germany. After a reign of over forty years, and through several wars, he greatly weakened the power of Austria in Germany, transformed Prussia into a significant continental power, significantly added to the territorial holdings of his kingdom, and set the stage (although he did not foresee it) for German unification through conquest by Prussia.

Fraser paints Frederick as an enlightened ruler who was genuinely interested in the latest science and ideas. Frederick was a committed autocrat, yet he was, according to Fraser, the most tolerant of all his contemporary monarchs. He accepted greater degrees of dissent in the press and was more open on questions of religion, for example.

Most of the book focuses on military history, which should not be surprising considering that Frederick was considered one of the great captains of history and Fraser was a British general himself. This is not a hagiography. Frederick made plenty of strategic and tactical mistakes. Yet, he admitted his mistakes and own failings and rarely searched for scapegoats.

Rich Grisham says

It is a very interesting book about an interesting figure that played an important role in European history. The book also delves into Prussian history, and helps explain the early sentiment of fascism laid down by Frederick's father Frederick I. It's a bit dated and the cultural references made by the author are very obscure; however, it is a very well written, and even well paced book.

Matthew O'Donnell says

Fantastic book.

David Shannon says

Excellent Look into the Life of Complex Personality

The author does a fantastic job of presenting the life of Frederick the Great in a fully accessible and comprehensible manner. My only complaint would be that when directly quoting sources mid sentence in the language of the source a little translation could have been provided to clue the reader not versed in French or German some context. Reading this on a Kindle with the ability to highlight and translate helped, except those times when reading with no WiFi connection available.

vhatos says

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Gerry says

Didn't make it through. The author uses a number of French phrases unexplained. I don't read or speak French, so there were a number of holes I had to gloss over.

Dergrossest says

A too-long review of Der Grosse's life which provides more detail than anyone probably cares about in a very dry manner. While you learn of his triumphs and military innovations, the book also seems to unconsciously make the case for tarnishing his military legacy as you read about his repeated decisions to ignore obviously disadvantageous battlefield conditions and waste his men in disastrous, doomed-from-the-onset actions. A tough guy, and book, to like.

Doris says

Really more like 4 1/2 stars, but I liked it well enough to be generous. The author is a little too defensive of the subject sometimes, and there's very much more military history to it than I like. Nonetheless, it was very readable and gave a clear picture of the man and his accomplishments.

Unfortunately, the Kindle version is riddled with typos of the OCR kind: "he" for "be", and vice versa, "hut" for "but", "zo,000" for "20,000".

Charles Puskas says

I read parts of this book along with Nancy Mitford title of the same name. Both follow the same basic chronology, although Fraser provides more detail especially regarding specific battles of the Seven Years war. His maps and charts are helpful. He writes with a strong military expertise.

Arminius says

Frederick II (the great) was the son of Frederick-William I and the Princess Sophia-Dorothea, daughter of George I of Great Britain, and was born in 1712. He was granted by his parents an excellent education. When his father died Frederick ascended into Prussian kingship in 1740.

His goal was to unify the German speaking people of Europe. However, some German speaking people remained vassals of other European countries. To resolve this, he first tried to conquer Silesia. Silesia was a material rich region shared by mostly German and Polish ethnicities. However, it was under control of a powerful country of the time- Austria. He first orchestrated a victory at Mollwitz in 1741 seizing Silesia from Austria. In 1745 Austria attempted to take back Silesia, in what is known as, the Second Silesian War. At the battle of Kesselsdorf, the Prussians defeated the Austrian army forcing Austria to recognize their loss.

After 11 years of peace, Prussia's status among Europe accelerated due to education reform and military training improvements. As a result, Prussia's enemy Austria formed an alliance with Russia and France and tried once again to take Silesia from Frederick. However, Frederick found an unlikely ally in England who was concurrently battling France in North America. As of 1762 the combined Russian/Austrian forces were defeating the Prussians when suddenly Russia withdrew. This odd event turned the tide to Frederick's advantage. Consequently, Prussia was once again recognized as the master of Silesia at the Treaty of Hubertusburg. Interestingly this war goes by three different names: the Third Silesian War, the Seven Years War and the French American War.

In 1772, he obtained a portion of Poland. At his death in 1786, Prussia and Germany had more than doubled in size.

The author devotes the end of his book to why Frederick should not be entitled to the moniker "Great." I will list some reasons why he has earned that title. He built the Berlin State Opera House as well as other sensational architecture. He turned the Berlin Academy into the most influential scientific intuitions in the world. He created grain storage facilities which were used to feed the poor when necessary. I think however

that what he is most celebrated for is his practice of religious tolerance. He accepted dispelled Jesuits and provided them with teaching jobs in Silesia and Warmia. He also accepted Jewish bankers and merchants as well as expelled Huguenots from France.

Walter says

Pretty great book about a pretty amazing guy. I enjoyed the dry prose.

When someone speaks in hyperbole about someone you know there really isn't that much there, hence: the volume.

He exchanged notes with Voltaire; wrote some great music for the flute; reformed the idea of common law; backed some truly astounding art work; and was smart in the ways of war.

And this from a guy who was tossed in a dungeon by his father as a young man for his smart mouth...and found it a great occasion to think. In addition he composed the Anti-Machiavel in response to "The Prince".

Dan says

Fraser has the unfortunate habit of continually trying to justify the "Greatness" of his subject against the attacks of nameless, silent opponents.

'Aussie Rick' says

Once again, David Fraser, author of *Knight's Cross: A Life of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel* has produced another masterful biography. This beautifully told story of Frederick the Great is an outstanding account of a great military leader. You can certainly feel that Fraser has a love for this subject, even when Frederick has committed a terrible blunder the author tends to put the best light on the event as possible. This is one of the best biographies I have read on Frederick the Great and superior to most that have been available to date. In over 700 pages the author tells the story of Frederick, his conflict with his father, his love for the arts, his role as a military commander, as a King, a diplomat, as the creator of the great Prussian Army.

The author's accounts of the battles fought by Frederick are excellent and you can understand why Fraser has such a deep respect for this man. There are many accounts of Frederick leading his troops in the thick of the fighting. Losing horses under him, his aids and Generals being killed alongside him, bullet holes through his clothing. This is a commander who led from the front. Fraser also shows the many mistakes made by Frederick which led to some of the bloodiest and costliest battles in Europe during this period. After reading of some of these battles you wonder why his men followed him into others, but they did and that is what stands out about this man. He actually cared for his troops, his people and his country.

This is a great story and covers all aspects of Frederick. I believe that the maps could have been a bit more detailed but they were good enough to follow the narrative. In all 18 maps were supplied and they assisted the reader in following the battles and movements of Frederick and his armies. The story flowed along

smoothly and it was a joy to read, time slipped by effortlessly as Fraser helped you look into the man that was 'Frederick the Great'. I have no hesitation in recommending this book to anyone who enjoys a great history book. Well done to the author.
