

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage

****Hannibals Last Battle Zama and the Fall of Carthage****

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage mark one of the most pivotal moments in ancient history, shaping the course of the Mediterranean world for centuries to come. This dramatic clash not only signified the end of the Second Punic War but also heralded the beginning of Rome's dominance and the ultimate decline of Carthage as a major power. To truly appreciate the significance of Hannibal's last battle at Zama and the fall of Carthage, it's essential to delve into the events leading up to the confrontation, the battle itself, and the aftermath that reshaped the ancient world.

The Prelude to Hannibal's Last Battle at Zama

The Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) was a monumental struggle between two of the ancient world's greatest powers: Rome and Carthage. Hannibal Barca, the brilliant Carthaginian general, famously crossed the Alps with his war elephants, waging a relentless campaign on Italian soil. Despite his early victories at battles like Cannae, Hannibal's campaign eventually lost momentum as Rome adapted its military strategies and cut off Carthaginian supply lines.

By 202 BCE, the war had reached a critical turning point. Roman General Scipio Africanus had taken the fight to North Africa, threatening Carthage itself. This forced Hannibal to abandon his prolonged campaign in Italy and return home to defend his city. The stage was set for the climactic confrontation at Zama, near modern-day Tunisia.

Why Zama Was the Decisive Battlefield

Zama was not just any battlefield; it symbolized the final showdown between two titans. Carthage's fate hinged on this battle. Hannibal's forces were seasoned and battle-hardened, but Scipio's army had learned from previous encounters and was tactically superior. Both generals brought their experience and strategic acumen to the field, making Zama a classic example of military genius clashing with equal force.

The Battle of Zama: Hannibal's Last Stand

The battle itself was fought with intensity and precision. Hannibal's army

was composed of a diverse mix of troops—experienced infantry, cavalry, and the famous war elephants. Scipio, on the other hand, had refined his tactics to neutralize the threat of the elephants and maximize the effectiveness of his Roman legions.

The Role of War Elephants and Military Innovation

One of the most fascinating aspects of Hannibal's last battle at Zama was the use of war elephants. These massive beasts were intended to break enemy lines and sow chaos. However, Scipio anticipated this and arranged his troops in a formation with lanes for the elephants to pass through, minimizing their impact. This innovative tactic turned what could have been a devastating Carthaginian advantage into a liability.

The Tactical Brilliance of Scipio Africanus

Scipio's leadership was instrumental in securing victory at Zama. He combined disciplined infantry formations with effective cavalry maneuvers, ultimately routing Hannibal's forces. The Roman cavalry, led by Masinissa, played a crucial role by outflanking the Carthaginian army and preventing their retreat. This comprehensive strategy showcased Roman adaptability and military evolution.

The Fall of Carthage: Aftermath of Zama

The defeat at Zama was catastrophic for Carthage. Though the city itself was not immediately destroyed, the terms of the peace treaty imposed by Rome were harsh and stripped Carthage of its power. The once-mighty empire was forced to give up its territories, reduce its navy, and pay a crippling indemnity to Rome.

How the Treaty Reshaped the Mediterranean Power Balance

The Treaty of Zama effectively ended Carthage's status as a major Mediterranean power. Rome's victory established it as the dominant force in the region, setting the stage for further expansion. Carthage's loss of political and military influence allowed Rome to consolidate control over key trade routes and territories.

The Long-Term Consequences for Carthage and Rome

While Carthage survived the immediate aftermath of Zama, it was a shadow of its former self. The city eventually faced destruction in the Third Punic War (149–146 BCE), when Rome decisively crushed Carthage and razed it to the ground. In contrast, Rome's triumph at Zama became a foundation myth of Roman military prowess and imperial destiny.

Lessons from Hannibal's Last Battle Zama and the Fall of Carthage

Studying Hannibal's last battle at Zama offers valuable insights into leadership, strategy, and the dynamics of war. Hannibal's daring tactics and early successes show the power of innovation and boldness, while Scipio's eventual victory underscores the importance of adaptability and learning from past mistakes.

- **Adaptability in warfare:** Both generals had to constantly adjust their strategies based on battlefield conditions and enemy tactics.
- **Importance of alliances:** Scipio's alliance with Masinissa and other local forces proved decisive in defeating Hannibal.
- **Psychological warfare:** Hannibal's earlier campaigns had a psychological impact on Rome, but the defeat at Zama reversed this effect.

Why Hannibal's Legacy Endures

Despite his defeat, Hannibal remains one of history's greatest military commanders. His campaigns are studied in military academies around the world, and his resilience against overwhelming odds continues to inspire. The story of Hannibal's last battle at Zama and the fall of Carthage is a powerful reminder of how even the most brilliant leaders can be overcome by changing circumstances and relentless opposition.

Exploring the Historical Impact Beyond the Battlefield

The repercussions of the battle and Carthage's fall went beyond military conquest. They influenced trade, culture, and political structures throughout

the Mediterranean. Rome's control over the western Mediterranean allowed for increased economic integration and cultural exchange, paving the way for the Roman Empire's golden age.

Economic Shifts After Carthage's Decline

With Carthage's maritime dominance curtailed, Roman merchants and naval forces expanded their reach. This shift opened new trade routes and enhanced the flow of goods, ideas, and technologies across the Mediterranean basin.

Cultural and Political Transformations

Rome's ascendancy also brought about significant political changes. The Republic's institutions evolved as Rome managed its growing territories, leading toward the eventual transition into the Roman Empire. Meanwhile, Carthaginian culture, once vibrant and influential, gradually faded under Roman rule.

Hannibal's last battle at Zama and the subsequent fall of Carthage encapsulate a dramatic turning point in ancient history. This epic clash between two great civilizations not only decided the fate of empires but also laid the groundwork for the rise of Rome as a global power. Understanding this moment invites us to appreciate the complexities of strategy, the ebb and flow of power, and the enduring legacy of some of history's most formidable figures.

Frequently Asked Questions

What was the significance of the Battle of Zama in Hannibal's military career?

The Battle of Zama, fought in 202 BC, was significant as it marked the decisive defeat of Hannibal by Roman general Scipio Africanus, effectively ending the Second Punic War and diminishing Carthage's power in the Mediterranean.

Who were the main commanders involved in the Battle of Zama?

The main commanders at the Battle of Zama were Hannibal Barca leading the Carthaginian forces and Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus commanding the Roman army.

How did Scipio Africanus manage to defeat Hannibal at Zama?

Scipio Africanus used innovative tactics, including neutralizing Hannibal's war elephants by opening lanes in his formations and employing superior cavalry, which overwhelmed the Carthaginian forces and secured a decisive Roman victory.

What were the consequences of the Battle of Zama for Carthage?

Following the defeat at Zama, Carthage was forced to surrender, pay a large indemnity, cede its territories, and limit its military capabilities, marking the beginning of Carthage's decline and eventual fall.

How did Hannibal's career end after the Battle of Zama?

After the Battle of Zama, Hannibal continued to serve Carthage as a statesman but eventually went into voluntary exile to avoid Roman persecution, spending his later years aiding other states against Rome before his death around 183 BC.

What role did the Battle of Zama play in the fall of Carthage?

The Battle of Zama was the turning point that weakened Carthage militarily and politically, leading to its loss of autonomy and setting the stage for its eventual destruction in the Third Punic War.

Why is the Battle of Zama considered a turning point in ancient history?

It ended Carthage's challenge to Roman dominance in the western Mediterranean, establishing Rome as the preeminent power and shaping the future course of Western civilization.

What strategies did Hannibal employ during the Battle of Zama?

Hannibal arranged his troops in three lines, used war elephants to charge the Roman lines, and relied on experienced infantry, but his strategies were ultimately countered effectively by Scipio's tactics.

How did the outcome of the Battle of Zama affect Roman-Carthaginian relations?

The Roman victory led to harsh peace terms that humiliated Carthage, creating resentment that eventually contributed to the outbreak of the Third Punic War and the ultimate destruction of Carthage.

What lessons did Roman generals learn from Hannibal's tactics at Zama?

Roman generals learned the importance of adaptability, disciplined formations, and combined arms tactics, including cavalry coordination and dealing with war elephants, which influenced future Roman military doctrine.

Additional Resources

Hannibal's Last Battle Zama and the Fall of Carthage: An Analytical Review

hannibal's last battle zama and the fall of carthage represent a pivotal moment in ancient history, marking the definitive end of the Second Punic War and reshaping the Mediterranean geopolitical landscape. The Battle of Zama, fought in 202 BCE, stands as the climactic confrontation between Hannibal Barca, the renowned Carthaginian general, and Scipio Africanus, the Roman commander whose strategic brilliance ultimately led to Rome's ascendancy. This article delves into the complexities of this decisive battle, explores the factors contributing to Carthage's downfall, and assesses the broader implications for the ancient world.

The Context of Hannibal's Last Battle at Zama

Hannibal's campaign against Rome is legendary, characterized by his audacious crossing of the Alps and a string of victories on Italian soil. Despite his tactical genius, Hannibal was unable to deliver a final blow to Rome itself, largely due to logistical constraints and insufficient reinforcements from Carthage. The war shifted dramatically when Rome took the fight to North Africa, forcing Hannibal to return home and face Scipio Africanus on his own terrain.

The Battle of Zama was not merely a military engagement but a culmination of years of strategic maneuvering. Hannibal's forces, although battle-hardened and experienced, faced an increasingly sophisticated Roman military machine. Scipio's innovative tactics and the incorporation of Numidian cavalry under

Masinissa's leadership gave Rome a decisive advantage.

Strategic Importance of Zama

The location of Zama was significant. Situated near Carthage, it was a defensive stronghold that would determine whether Carthage could maintain its independence or succumb to Roman domination. The battle's outcome would directly influence the political and economic future of the Western Mediterranean. For Hannibal, defending Zama was essential to preserving Carthage's sovereignty; for Rome, victory meant the suppression of a powerful rival and the expansion of imperial influence.

Military Tactics and Forces Involved

The Battle of Zama showcased contrasting military doctrines, with Hannibal relying on his veteran infantry and war elephants, while Scipio emphasized flexible formations and superior cavalry maneuvers. Hannibal's elephants, intended to disrupt Roman lines, were met with tactical countermeasures that neutralized their impact. Scipio's deployment of cavalry to flank and harass Carthaginian forces was a game-changer.

- **Carthaginian Forces:** Approximately 40,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, and around 80 war elephants.
- **Roman Forces:** Roughly 34,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry, including Numidian allies.

The numerical advantage in cavalry and the effective use of combined arms tactics by Scipio highlighted Rome's evolving military sophistication. Hannibal's inability to adapt fully to these tactics contributed to his defeat.

The Role of Leadership

Leadership played a crucial role in determining the battle's outcome. Hannibal, though a brilliant tactician, faced challenges including diminished troop morale and limited reinforcements from Carthage's political leadership. In contrast, Scipio Africanus exemplified innovative command, integrating intelligence, diplomacy (securing Numidian support), and battlefield adaptability.

The contrast between Hannibal's defensive posture and Scipio's offensive

momentum underscores the strategic divergence that influenced the battle's dynamics. Roman discipline and unity proved superior to the increasingly fragmented Carthaginian command structure.

The Aftermath and the Fall of Carthage

The defeat at Zama was catastrophic for Carthage. The peace treaty imposed harsh terms: Carthage was forced to surrender its fleet, pay a substantial war indemnity, and accept Roman oversight in foreign policy. These conditions effectively reduced Carthage from a Mediterranean power to a subordinate state.

Economic and Political Impact

The economic consequences were severe. Carthage's trade networks were crippled, and its capacity to wage war diminished drastically. Politically, the loss eroded the authority of Carthage's ruling elite, fostering internal dissent and weakening the city-state's governance. This vulnerability would later facilitate Rome's final conquest during the Third Punic War.

Legacy of Hannibal and Roman Ascendancy

Hannibal's legacy is complex; despite his ultimate defeat, he remains emblematic of military genius and resistance against overwhelming odds. The Battle of Zama symbolizes the transition of power in the ancient world, cementing Rome's trajectory toward empire. The fall of Carthage marks not just the end of a war, but the decline of a civilization that had rivaled Rome for centuries.

Comparative Analysis: Hannibal's Campaign and Rome's Response

Analyzing the broader Second Punic War highlights the interplay between tactical brilliance and strategic endurance. Hannibal's early victories, including the battles of Trebia, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae, demonstrated his capabilities in field engagements. However, Rome's resilience, resource mobilization, and strategic adaptations, such as the Fabian strategy and counter-invasions, ultimately overwhelmed Carthaginian ambitions.

The Battle of Zama epitomizes this dynamic: a clash where tactical skill met strategic preparation, with Rome's long-term planning prevailing over Carthage's localized tactical successes.

Lessons from Zama for Military Strategy

Modern military scholars often study Zama for its lessons in combined arms operations, leadership under pressure, and the importance of intelligence and alliances. Scipio's ability to leverage Numidian cavalry and neutralize war elephants exemplifies adaptive warfare. Conversely, Hannibal's failure to maintain supply lines and secure reinforcements underscores the critical role of logistics in sustained campaigns.

- Importance of cavalry superiority and mobility.
- Effective countermeasures against specialized enemy units.
- Integration of allied forces into a cohesive battle plan.

These insights remain relevant in contemporary military doctrine and historical analysis.

Concluding Reflections on Hannibals Last Battle Zama and the Fall of Carthage

The narrative of Hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage is not simply a story of defeat but a multifaceted episode that shaped Western civilization's development. It reflects the complexities of leadership, the evolution of warfare, and the shifting tides of empire. The battle's outcome redefined power structures and set the stage for Rome's dominance in the ancient world.

Understanding this historical moment requires appreciation of both the tactical intricacies on the battlefield and the broader strategic and political consequences that ensued. The legacy of Zama endures as a testament to the interplay of genius, resilience, and the inexorable forces of history.

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hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *Hannibal's Last Battle* Brian Todd Carey, 2007-10-18 At Zama in what is now Tunisia in 202 BC the armies of two empires clashed. The Romans under Scipio Africanus won a bloody, decisive victory over Hannibal's Carthaginians. Scipio's victory signalled a shift in the balance of power in the ancient world. Brian Todd Carey's compelling reconstruction of the battle, and of the gruelling war that led up to it, gives a fascinating insight into the Carthaginian and Roman methods of waging war. And it offers a critical assessment of the contrasting qualities and leadership styles of Hannibal and Scipio, the two most celebrated

commanders of their age.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome* Sara Elise Phang, Iain Spence Ph.D., Douglas Kelly Ph.D., Peter Londey Ph.D., 2016-06-27 The complex role warfare played in ancient Greek and Roman civilizations is examined through coverage of key wars and battles; important leaders, armies, organizations, and weapons; and other noteworthy aspects of conflict. *Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome: The Definitive Political, Social, and Military Encyclopedia* is an outstandingly comprehensive reference work on its subject. Covering wars, battles, places, individuals, and themes, this thoroughly cross-referenced three-volume set provides essential support to any student or general reader investigating ancient Greek history and conflicts as well as the social and political institutions of the Roman Republic and Empire. The set covers ancient Greek history from archaic times to the Roman conquest and ancient Roman history from early Rome to the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE. It features a general foreword, prefaces to both sections on Greek history and Roman history, and maps and chronologies of events that precede each entry section. Each section contains alphabetically ordered articles—including ones addressing topics not traditionally considered part of military history, such as noncombatants and war and gender—followed by cross-references to related articles and suggested further reading. Also included are glossaries of Greek and Latin terms, topically organized bibliographies, and selected primary documents in translation.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *Hannibal* Joel Newsome, 2017-07-15 Considered to be one of the most talented generals in history and known for his use of elephants in battle, the Carthaginian general, Hannibal spent his life fighting and often defeating the Roman army during the Second Punic War. Though he was ultimately unable to take the city, he became a prominent political figure. Students will get the opportunity to learn about his unique militaristic prowess and successes and failures on and off the battlefield.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *A History of War in 100 Battles* R. J. Overy, 2014 Beginning with the fall of Troy in 1200 BC and ending with the invasion of Baghdad in 2003, renowned military historian Richard Overy's newest work looks at the history of warfare through the lens of 100 significant battles.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *The Laws of Yesterday's Wars 2* Samuel C. Duckett White, 2022-08-22 How international is international humanitarian law? *The Laws of Yesterday's Wars 2: From Ancient India to East Africa*, together with its companion volume, *The Laws of Yesterday's Wars: From Indigenous Australians to the American Civil War* (Brill-Nijhoff, 2021), attempts to answer that question. It offers a culture-by-culture account of various unique restrictions placed on warfare over time. Containing essays by a range of laws of war academics and practitioners, it approaches the laws of yesterday's wars from a wide cross-section of history and culture, seeking to find any common ground and to demonstrate a history of international law outside the usual confines of its 'development' by Europeans and its later 'contributions.' This volume includes studies on Japanese, Islamic and Eastern Native American rules of war.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *Hellenistic Land Battles 300-167 BCE* Fred Eugene Ray, Jr., 2020-09-11 The Hellenistic Period (323-31 BCE) saw the Grecian phalanx--long dominant in Mediterranean warfare--challenged by legionary formations from the rising city-state of Rome. The Roman way of war would come to eclipse phalanx-based combat by the 160s yet this was not evident at the time. Rome suffered numerous defeats against the phalanxes of Pyrrhus and Hannibal, its overseas campaign against the brilliant Spartan mercenary Xanthippus met disaster, and several Roman victories over Hellenistic foes were not decisive. The story of combat in this pivotal era is not well documented. This book for the first time provides detailed tactical analyses for all 130 significant land engagements of Hellenistic armies 300-167 BCE.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *Warfare in the Age of Crusades* Brian Todd Carey, 2024-01-18 Fascinating new study of the key campaigns, battles and sieges that shaped the crusading period in Europe during the Middle Ages. *Warfare in the Age of Crusades: Europe* explores in fascinating detail the key campaigns, battles and sieges that shaped the

crusading period in Europe during the Middle Ages, giving special attention to military technologies, tactics and strategies. Key personalities and political factors are addressed, including the role of the papal monarchy in initiating the crusading expeditions and the use of crusade in the Christianization of the Baltic region and against heresies in Europe. Chapters focus on the Iberian crusades or Reconquista beginning in the eleventh century through to the final surrender of the Emirate of Granada in 1492. The northern or Baltic crusades are also a key element of the story. The narrative covers the involvement of the Holy Roman emperors and the popes, the military capabilities of the Baltic peoples, and the parts played by the Scandinavians as well as the Russians and Mongols. The concluding chapters reconsider crusades launched against heresies in Europe, specifically the Cathars and Hussites.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *The Prism of Just War* Howard M. Hensel, 2016-03-03 Through a careful examination of religious and philosophical literature, the contributors to the volume analyze, compare and assess diverse Western, Islamic, Hindu and East Asian perspectives concerning the appropriate criteria that should govern the decision to resort to the use of armed force and, once that decision is made, what constraints should govern the actual conduct of military operations. In doing so, the volume promotes a better understanding of the various ways in which diverse peoples and societies within the global community approach the question of what constitutes the legitimate use of military force as an instrument of policy in the resolution of conflicts.

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *Road to Manzikert* Brian Todd Carey, Joshua B. Allfree, John Cairns, 2012-03-19 "Take[s] us through 500 years of conflict from Justinian through the rise of Islam to the coming of the Turks . . . good chapters on Islamic warfare."—Balkan Military History In August 1071, the Byzantine Emperor Romanus IV Diogenese led out a powerful army in an attempt to roll back Seljuk Turkish incursions into the Anatolian heartland of the Empire. Outmaneuvered by the Turkish sultan, Alp Arslan, Romanus was forced to give battle with only half his troops near Manzikert. By the end of that fateful day much of the Byzantine army was dead, the rest scattered in flight and the Emperor himself a captive. As a result, the Anatolian heart was torn out of the empire and it was critically weakened, while Turkish power expanded rapidly, eventually leading to Byzantine appeals for help from Western Europe, prompting the First Crusade. This book sets the battle in the context of the military history of the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic World (Arab and Seljuk Turkish) up to the pivotal engagement at Manzikert in 1071, with special emphasis on the origins, course and outcome of this battle. The composition, weapons and tactics of the very different opposing armies are analyzed. The final chapter is dedicated to assessing the impact of Manzikert on the Byzantine Empire's strategic position in Anatolia and to the battle's role as a *causus belli* for the Crusades. Dozens of maps and battle diagrams support the clear text, making this an invaluable study of a crucial period of military history. "A gripping story of desertion, defection and betrayal amongst the Byzantine troops and of the fleet and ferocious Seljuk steppe warriors."—Today's Zaman

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: *An Invincible Beast* Christopher Matthew, 2015-11-30 An innovative study of the Macedonian war machine's sarissa-wielding infantry under such leaders as Philip II and Alexander the Great. The Hellenistic pike-phalanx was a true military innovation, transforming the face of warfare in the ancient world. For nearly 200 years, from the rise of the Macedonians as a military power in the mid-fourth century BC, to their defeat at the hands of the Romans at Pydna in 168BC, the pike-wielding heavy infantryman (the phalangite) formed the basis of nearly every Hellenistic army to deploy on battlefields stretching from Italy to India. And yet, despite this dominance, and the vast literature dedicated to detailing the history of the Hellenistic world, there remains fierce debate among modern scholars about how infantry combat in this age was actually conducted. Christopher Matthews critically examines phalanx combat by using techniques such as physical re-creation, experimental archaeology, and ballistics testing, and then comparing the findings of this testing to the ancient literary, artistic and archaeological evidence, as well as modern theories. The result is the most comprehensive and

up-to-date study of what heavy infantry combat was like in the age of Alexander the Great and his successors.

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hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: H. G. Wells: Collected Novels, Short Stories, Essays and Articles H. G. Wells, 2015-04-27 This carefully crafted ebook: H. G. Wells:

Collected Novels, Short Stories, Essays and Articles is formatted for your eReader with a functional and detailed table of contents. Herbert George Wells (1866 - 1946), known as H. G. Wells, was a prolific English writer in many genres, including the novel, history, politics, and social commentary, and textbooks and rules for war games. He is now best remembered for his science fiction novels, and Wells is called a father of science fiction. Table of Contents: H. G. Wells by J. D. Beresford Mr. Wells as Historian by Arnold Wycombe Gomme Mr. H. G. Wells and the Giants by G. K. Chesterton Essays and Articles Novels and Short Stories: A Modern Utopia Ann Veronica Bealby In the Days of the Comet Joan and Peter Kipps Love and Mr. Lewisham Marriage Mr. Britling Sees It Through The Chronic Argonauts The First Men in the Moon The Food of the Gods The History of Mr Polly The Invisible Man The Island of Dr Moreau The New Machiavelli The Passionate Friends The Prophetic Trilogy The Research Magnificent The Sea Lady The Secret Places of the Heart The Soul of a Bishop The Time Machine The Undying Fire The War in the Air The War of the Worlds The Wheels of Chance The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman The Wonderful Visit The World Set Free Tono-bungay When the Sleeper Wakes Collections of Short Stories Short Stories: A Catastrophe A Deal in Ostriches A Dream of Armageddon A Slip Under the Microscope A Story of the Days to Come A Story of the Stone Age A Tale of the Twentieth Century A Talk with Gryllotalpa How Gabriel Became Thompson How Pingwill Was Routed In the Abyss Le Mari Terrible Little Mother Up the Morderberg Miss Winchelsea's Heart Mr. Brisher's Treasure Mr. Ledbetter's Vacation Mr. Marshall's Doppelganger Mr. Skelmersdale in Fairyland My First Aeroplane Our Little Neighbour Perfect Gentleman on Wheels Pollock and the Porroh Man The Empire of the Ants The Flowering of the Strange Orchid The Flying Man The Grisly Folk ...

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: A General History of the World Victor Duruy, 1898

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: The Outline of History Herbert George Wells, 1922

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: The Outline of History H.G. Wells, 1921

hannibals last battle zama and the fall of carthage: Outline of History H. G. Wells, 1925
No book is provoking a more animated discussion among students of the social sciences at the present time than H. G. Wells' Outline of History. The author's task, as he himself sets it, is to tell, truly and clearly, in one continuous narrative, the whole story of life and mankind so far as it is known today. But while these two volumes are plainly for the general reader rather than for the special student of history, it does not follow that they contain nothing beyond an endless parade of names and dates. Their chief value, indeed, is in the author's interpretation of what he writes about. Events are appraised and men are weighed in the balance as he goes along. Historians in general will not agree with some of these appraisals, nor will they credit Mr. Wells with an approach to infallibility in his judgment of the men who flit across his pages; but his estimates of the relative value of facts and forces can scarcely be brushed aside because they do not command general indorsement. On some matters, unhappily, Mr. Wells has allowed his iconoclastic proclivities to run away with him. Napoleon I, for example, cannot be disposed of as a second-grade pestilence because he killed fewer people than the influenza epidemic of 1918 (II, p. 384); nor will the world believe, so long as it retains its senses, that Napoleon III was a much more intelligent man than his uncle (II, p. 438). Even the pinchbeck himself would have rebuked this insinuation. But when all is said, these two stout volumes embody a remarkable achievement. They contain astonishingly few historical inaccuracies of the customary type. The author's advisers, and a competent galaxy of scholars they are, have kept him clear of the pitfalls. The style is terse and forceful. Mr. Wells certainly has the gift of cogent exposition.

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