



# Thucydides: The Reinvention of History

By Donald Kagan

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**Thucydides: The Reinvention of History** By Donald Kagan

**The bestselling author of *The Peloponnesian War* examines Thucydides as the first modern historian.**

Donald Kagan's magisterial history of the Peloponnesian War is recognized as a landmark of classical scholarship. Now, Kagan—one of the most respected classical historians in the world—turns his attention from one of the greatest conflicts in history to the author who so magnificently chronicled it: Thucydides, the first truly modern historian. This study offers readers a remarkable opportunity to experience one great historian engaging another across the centuries, in a work that is at once an engrossing voyage of discovery, a moving tribute, and a revelatory meditation on the practice of history and its value in human affairs.

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Yale professor of classics Kagan thoroughly examines Thucydides' life and work to successfully demonstrate that the Athenian historian was the first to utilize a truly professional (i.e., realistic and methodical) approach in recounting contemporary events. An unsuccessful general and a devoted adherent of Pericles, Thucydides believed that the Peloponnesian War was the most significant event in Greek history. He was determined that his study of the war, unlike more romantic or folkish histories, would stand the test of time because of his attention to detail; his comprehensive documentation includes symptoms of the mysterious plague afflicting Athens for the benefit of future generations, showing the historian's far-sighted versatility. To his credit, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* remains a necessity in the study of international relations, military strategy and political science. Like his subject, Kagan (*The Peloponnesian War*) tends to minimize the impact of Herodotus on the evolution of history as a discipline, yet any such weakness is offset by the inescapable fact that if Herodotus remains the acknowledged Father of History, then Thucydides could be described as the Father of Objective History, who opened the realm of history to serious study. (Nov. 2) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Acclaimed for his independence of judgment, Thucydides might have written more reliable history had he not separated himself so sharply from his contemporaries. So Kagan argues in this provocative reassessment of the great Greek historian. To be sure, Kagan acknowledges Thucydides' singular accomplishment as the father of political history, a new intellectual enterprise based upon painstaking factual research and complete repudiation of traditional mythology. However, careful analysis repeatedly shows that in his famous account of the Peloponnesian War, the Greek historian allows his biases to intrude. Scornful of the Athenian democracy that exiled him for his own failure at Amphipolis, Thucydides interprets key events—such as Cleon's victory at Pylos and the disastrous Athenian expedition to Sicily—as justification for his prejudices. Remarkably, in the details he himself provides, Thucydides furnishes Kagan with ample evidence for challenging the historian's interpretations. Ultimately, Thucydides emerges as a writer so intent on discrediting the prevailing public understanding of the war that he merits the label "revisionist." A daring approach to a cultural icon. --Bryce Christensen

About the Author

Donald Kagan is Sterling Professor of Classics and History at Yale University. His four-volume **History of the Peloponnesian War** is the leading scholarly work on the subject. He is also the author of many books on ancient and modern topics.

## Users Review

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**Daniel McDonald:**

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