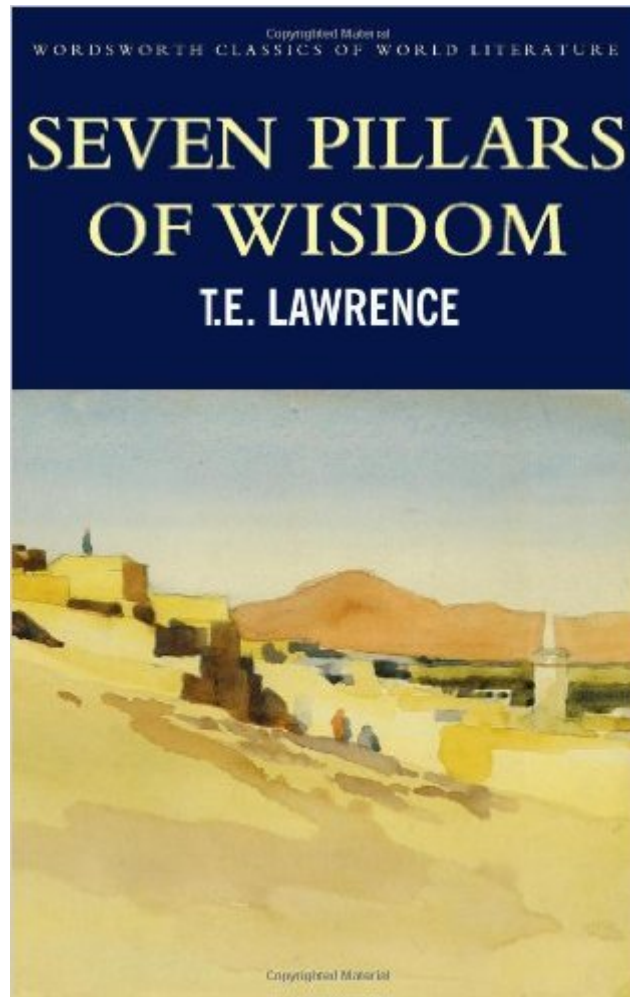


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Seven Pillars Of Wisdom (Wordsworth Classics Of World Literature)



Synopsis

As Angus Calder states in his introduction to this edition, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is one of the major statements about the fighting experience of the First World War'. Lawrence's younger brothers, Frank and Will, had been killed on the Western Front in 1915. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, written between 1919 and 1926, tells of the vastly different campaign against the Turks in the Middle East - one which encompasses gross acts of cruelty and revenge and ends in a welter of stink and corpses in the disgusting 'hospital' in Damascus. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is no 'Boys Own Paper' tale of Imperial triumph, but a complex work of high literary aspiration which stands in the tradition of Melville and Dostoevsky, and alongside the writings of Yeats, Eliot and Joyce.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is difficult to describe the experience of reading *The Seven Pillars*. It is by turns beautiful and ugly. It is military history. It is a subjective view provided by a man very much of his time. It is an apology and an excuse for the necessities of war. It is a portrait of a tribe that Lawrence came to respect and even love. It is a travel book about life in the desert at the time of writing. It is inevitably a mix of fact and history and fiction and probably at least a little bit of wishful thinking. It is, ultimately, a pretty amazing book to read. A few notes: Before you read the book, do some quick background reading on the history that's involved. This will help avoid confusion. Be prepared for a long read! It's not only a long book, it's an extremely dense book. The choppiness and frequent changes in tone make it hard to put on the reading cruise control. Read it as a product of its time. Lawrence was a fascinating

man, but not without his prejudices or faults.

SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM would be that rarity, an extraordinary tale of action, adventure, politics, and introspection, told by a writer who was also a first-rate intellectual and man of letters (the two -are- different), if it weren't also part of a tradition in English letters: the man or woman such as Charles Doughty or Gertrude Bell or Hester Stanhope or Freya Stark, or the men who went off and played the Great Game in India and Afghanistan who willingly entered cultures alien to them and returned changed, with books for us. Of all of these, Lawrence has fascinated me most. I first read SEVEN PILLARS when I was twelve, and I've read it every couple of years since then. As I grow wiser, it grows richer. Lawrence was an unlikely defender of empire, an unlikelier man of action who forced himself into a kind of ascetic mental and physical preparation for the great deeds he felt himself called upon to play. Living as he did from 1888 to 1935, he was practically born in the last age where someone could express that claim without being ridiculed; and he found his war in the Arab Revolt, that long-lasting sideline to the War to End All Wars that produced more war -- and some great writers, among whom Lawrence was one. This is a story of war. It's also a story of heroism and of anguish, written by a man who not only shaped events, but was shaped -- and warped -- by them. It can be read as military strategy, political history, travel story, or pathology. But it's better to read it as itself: a unique and complex book written by a man who was loved and admired by the most famous people of his time, but who, in the end, wanted only obscurity and the anesthetizing speed of one of the motorcycles that killed him.

(This review pertains only to the BN Publishing company's hardcover edition of T.E. Lawrence's "Seven Pillars of Wisdom.") I bought this edition of "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" because it was the only hardcover version available at the time. I'm a big advocate of hardcover books, but avoid this one. I get the sense that the publishers simply took an old copy of the book, scanned it, converted the scan into a basic word processing document, and published it. If that is what happened, they never bothered to read through their generated document to check for basic typographical errors. For example, on page 488 the text reads: "They circled off We, watching their line of/light, noticed a great cloud of apparent dust added to the slow smoke rising from the ruined yard at Mafrak station." In that sentence, it appears that a period has been omitted, a slash has been inserted, and a capital S has been rendered in lower case. That one is easy enough that I can work out what the text is supposed to say. But there are errors of this sort on almost every single page, and Lawrence employs a difficult writing style as it is. These excessive typographical errors

significantly detract from the readability of the book. A second serious problem-- there is not a single map in this book, though Lawrence did include a map in earlier editions. There are points of the story where it is necessary to know where things are situated in order to appreciate what is going on. It got to the point where I found and downloaded some maps from the internet, and taped them inside the covers of my book. I referenced these maps constantly. The publishers did include some photographs in the back matter, but they were either too cheap or too lazy to include a map. T.E. Lawrence has written a book that is worth reading (coming from me, that's pretty high praise), but avoid this error-ridden fly-by-night edition.

A superlative intelligence shines through this book. It is a historical memoir and a deep personal meditation, by turns harsh, humane, strange and profound. Lawrence comes across as a man highly educated, determined, resourceful, sensitive, and tough; there is no false modesty about him. He also shows us, with remarkable frankness, a born outsider and a man tormented by his complicity in great power machinations in Arabia. What a read! Enough said about the original. This book has been around for nearly 100 years. The text of the Kindle edition is shabby. It appears to have been scanned from a printed text using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, and it is full of words that don't belong: the word "life" almost invariably appears as "Me" ("the gift of Me" [chapter 3] looks conceited even for this author); and the name "Ali" frequently appears as "Ah", which complicates the difficulty of tracking the multitude of personal names. There are many other transcription errors to trip the reader. Also, why is the table of contents at the back of the book, where I found it only when I no longer needed it? Come on. You can do better than that!

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