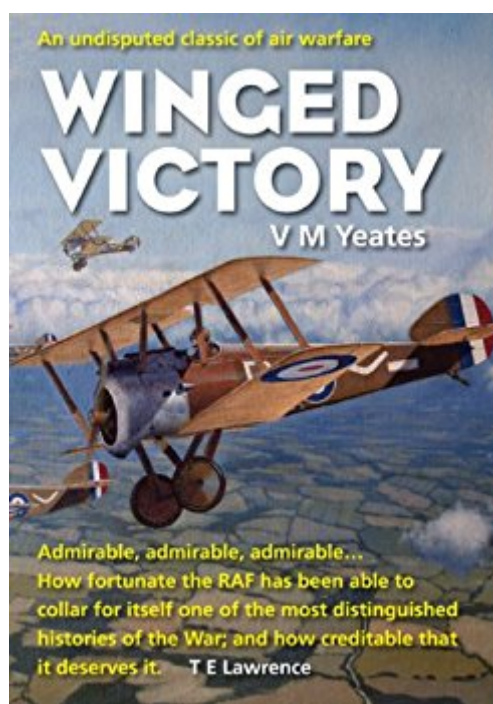


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Winged Victory



Synopsis

Brilliant, one of the few great books of air warfare. Heartily recommended to any person desiring a vivid, absorbing first-hand narrative of the sort of Homeric hell lived by fighting pilots during the last stages of the war. There is no bitter snarl nor self-pity in this classic novel, first published in 1934, about the air war of 1914-1918, based very largely on the author's experiences. Combat, loneliness, fatigue, fear, comradeship, women, excitement - all are built into a vigorous and authentic structure by one of the most valiant pilots of the then Royal Flying Corps.

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Customer Reviews

This excellent novel provides a virtually unique perspective of WWI, literally from the air. Readers of this novel will also enjoy the several of the 15-novel series, "Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight," by Henry Williamson (who writes the forwards for Yeates' novel) that deal with WWI. Indeed they will enjoy all 15 novels of this unique personal history of life in England from the mid 19th through the mid 20th centuries. Henry Williamson's first-hand descriptions of WWI are simply wonderful and are among the most underrated narratives of this conflict. They far surpass many of those considered the best in more traditional circles. Many will know Williamson as the author of "Tarka the Otter." In any event, Yeates' "Winged Victory" is a truly wonderful read.

Absolutely marvelous. *Winged Victory* is a real book. This is not a romance. There's absolutely no bull in this book. This is a fighter pilot's day by day experience. The flying parts vary between looking constantly over the shoulder, looking around the sun, looking for any specks in the sky, kicking the rudder bar for survival, hard left stick with right rudder, sliding, skidding, rolling, contour flying, sweating the low level scouting under constant ground machine gun fire, avoiding that one on your tail, firing, engine quitting again and again, crashing, crashing again, and again, And all the waiting on the ground and the nightly discussions on the terrible, wasteful war, the daily losses, the nightly heavy drinking, and the increasing depression leaving nothing and no reason to go on. The book is not without humor. Even in this environment, there are situations which are humorous, even if the subject of which would not agree. The author survived, but none of his friends. I'm sure that the author, Yeates, had nothing to do with the title of his book. There was no way he considered anything about the war a "victory." He had approved a title, "A Test to Destruction," and that far more accurately represented the author's perspective. This book was written by a pilot. It's real. No romance. Probably why there is no movie. Not the stuff of Hollywood.

What an interesting war novel! We here dwell on the flying descriptions and the information about World War I. But there is a lot more than that here. It's admittedly a bit of a tough read due to the language style, but that's the whole point. The author's style and thought processes may be foreign to our time, particularly to American readers. We see here a man raised in upper crust Britain (you had to be, to become an officer in those days), with all the moral and social attitudes and values inherent in Victorian/Edwardian times. And then he is thrust into this appalling war, but only in a rather detached "aerial" way, as compared to the fellows in the trenches. And then as it progresses, he learns a lot about his friends, himself, even his enemies, and just what life is all about. The same story has been told in other books and other wars, but this one is unique. Invest the time to read it -- you're certainly not being asked to invest much cash!

The best three star book I have ever read. Why three stars instead of four or five? Because even though I think it's a must read, it's not for everyone. If rollicking, entertaining stories are your thing, forget about this one. It's long and oftentimes dreary, but the message it conveys is an important one: wars are not glorious. Between missions in his Sopwith Camel, our protagonist Tom conducts philosophic discussions with his cohorts on lack of faith in their leaders' "military, political, and business" because of a war no one seems to know the reason for, other than a select few

making money from it. Most of these deep thinking discussions occur while on the way to drunkenness; totally believable. Tom's inner thoughts are also shared with the reader. Being shot down, especially by ground fire during strafing missions, is always on his mind. However, he finds the actual killing more disturbing. But he does it, and does it, and does it. And then he drinks. My favorite of the inner thoughts he shares are why he drinks: "Drunk he could discuss enthusiastically Fokkers and Snipes and Bentley Camels. Sober, he was sick of them all."

Yeats takes you inside a WWI squadron. You'll learn what the pilots thought of the war, their fellow pilots and friends, their leaders, their aeroplanes and the enemy. This is no sanitized picture of well-known "Dawn Patrol" clichés, but the stark and honest remembrances of someone who was there. Even if your primary interest in WWI aviation is the aircraft, you'll learn a great deal. A must for aviation history enthusiasts.

Except for the identity of the specific aircraft the rest of the novel could have been about many other conflicts. The fact that combatants in the WWI air war had many of the same things going on around them during the battle as the later air battles was very interesting. We think about the technology of WWI as being primitive but there was no flavor of that in the book. There was a definite technology war going on, just like in WWII. The Camel started out superior to the German fighters and later were inferior to the newer Fokkers that began to appear. Just like the early WWII fighters from Germany and Japan were superior to the allied aircraft until advancing technology leveled the field. Very enjoyable book.

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