



Hannibal

Jacob Abbott

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Hannibal Details

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From Reader Review Hannibal for online ebook

Kalman says

The thinking of the nineteenth century was very anti-Carthage. Abbott has that prejudice, a lot of what he says about Carthage are based on Roman sources who were trying to put Carthage in a bad light. Abbott is very inaccurate about Hannibal. For a great biography on Hannibal you should check out Richard A. Gabriel's book on Hannibal.

Carol Bakker says

Hannibal was a Carthaginian general. I learned much about Hannibal beyond the well-known fact that he crossed the Alps with elephants (Africa —> Spain —> France —> Switzerland —> Italy)

The book is a good review of the three wars between Carthage and Rome, called the Punic Wars. (Punic was the language of Carthage, related to Phoenician.) Abbott highlights the fact that Carthage, a colony of Tyre, was first a city of commerce.

Hannibal converted a peaceful city-state into a military aggressor. *There was no real cause for any disagreement between these two nations. Their hostility to each other was mere rivalry and spontaneous hate.* Because of Hannibal's continuing hostilities, Carthage was completely destroyed by Rome.

Hannibal was wily, clever, and a thousand other synonyms for shrewd. He befuddled a string of Roman generals. I was surprised that he stayed in Italy for sixteen years giving Rome grief. Amazed that, given his violent lifestyle, he lived seventy-one years.

Hannibal's life was like an April day. Its brightest glory was in the morning. The setting of his sun was darkened by clouds and showers.

Daniel Hulmes says

This book serves as an excellent introduction to one of the most important figures of the ancient world. Hannibal was one of the greatest military generals of the age but his legacy endured in the Roman psyche for centuries after his death.

Sections of the book are a tad brief and I did get the feeling that Jacob Abbott wasn't very approving of Hannibals' actions. Reading on the kindle, there was also an issue with accessing the maps, which might be a big problem for anyone unfamiliar with the geography of the western Mediterranean.

However, all books in this series are free on kindle and so are an absolute steal. I'm already looking forward to Alexander the Great.

Kathy says

Abbott's biographies are more than just the story of one person's life. He also weaves in the context and the antecedents, so one comes away with a much fuller understanding of the place of this person in history. He also interjects his own "therefore what" commentary. The ending of this book, Abbott's concluding commentary on Hannibal, was moving and poignant:

"War and commerce are the two great antagonistic principles which struggle for the mastery of the human race, the function of the one being to preserve, and that of the other to destroy. ...

"When Hannibal appeared upon the stage, he found his country engaged peacefully and prosperously in exchanging the productions of the various countries of the then known world, and promoting every where the comfort and happiness of mankind. He contrived to turn all these energies into the new current of military aggression, conquest, and war. ... He gained most splendid victories, devastated many lands, embarrassed and stopped the commercial intercourse which was carrying the comfort of life to so many thousand homes, and spread, instead of them, every where, privation, want, terror, with pestilence and famine in their train. ... In a word, he was one of the greatest military heroes that the world has every known."

Amit says

This book does not do justice to his personality, and lacked in description of battles and political landscape of the time

Floris Wolswijk says

Hannibal is one of the most remembered leaders of history. Every history textbook (at least in Europe) writes about his travels through the Alps, his attack of Italy (then the Roman Empire) and his subsequent demise. What many forget is the historical impact that Hannibal has had on the world, what the consequences of his battles have done for Italy, but even more for the Carthaginian empire (I bet you haven't even heard of it). Jacob Abbott takes us, once again, on a journey through history and introduces Hannibal: Maker of History.

Hannibal Barca, son of Hamilcar Barca, was a brilliant strategist. As soon as he became of age he rose in rank within the army of Carthage and become one of its greatest generals. Carthage itself is an ancient empire that occupied the other side of the Mediterranean Sea from the Roman Empire. It lay in parts of countries now called Spain, Morocco, Liberia and Algeria. It was known for its commerce and found its origin from Tyre, the fortress city that almost successfully fought of Alexander the Great.

If Carthage was so known for its commerce, why then would Hannibal try and subdue the Romans? This hatred for the Romans originated from the the first Punic War. In this 24 year war, the Romans almost completely defeated the Carthaginians and became the seed for Hannibal's anger. In the following decades he would go on to invade Italy (travelling via Spain and France) and almost crush the Romans.

Hannibal was a master of tactics. Even before I discuss his tactics in war, I would like to point out his savviness in politics. When opposed by Hanno for taking the command of the army he used his strength, youth and vigour to his advantage. He knew that great stories and promises do well, and that in the end even

the best arguments can lose from passion (as illustrated by Cleopatra a small 200 years later).

In war he knew even better what to do. When marching through part of nowadays France, he won the hearts of the local governments by making clear that he was only passing through and had no intention of hurting them. In the Alps he received guidance by the locals and led his troops (including elephants) up into the mountains. And when he finally traversed the Alps, before meeting the Romans, showed his men the following. He gathered a few soldiers he had captured from traitorous mountaineers and let them fight one-on-one. He promised the victor freedom and kept to his word. After that he told his men: We are these soldiers, the men that have to fight for victory. But it will be easy, we are brave and strong men who will face the weaker forces of Scipio, we will be the victors.

In subsequent battles Hannibal conquered most of Italy but never succeeded to take Rome. In the battle of Cannæ he won a battle of 50.000 versus 80.000 men by faking a half surrender and later attacking the Romans in the back. In the end he was not defeated because his army was not strong enough (most of the time he had won with smaller armies, but better tactics). In the end he lost the war because he faced a better strategist than himself, Scipio – the son of one he faced in the very beginning after crossing the Alps. After 17 years of war, Hannibal was defeated, the second Punic war ended, and Carthage was back to the way it was.

But the flame that Hannibal ignited stayed lid for 52 years, after which the third (and final) Punic War broke out. The Carthaginians lose the war and are to surrender. The Romans enforce their, very harsh, conditions for peace by taking the sons of the most prominent families of Carthage. The Carthaginians first resist but then comply with the demands. Scipio however had not made all his demands, he wanted to destroy Carthage itself. Again emotions win from reason and when the Carthaginians have already surrendered their weapons and are at a very strong disadvantage, they start to fight back. Every brick is turned into a stone to throw, hairs are bundled to make strings for bows, and the Carthaginians fight bravely for their city.

Alas, in the end it goes down in flames. The conquests of Hannibal in the end result in the downfall of the Carthaginian Empire. As was the case with Alexander the Great, Hannibal was responsible for many deaths, as much that in each Roman family a brother or nephew was most likely to have died because of him. In the end it has costed not only lives, but an entire empire to perish from his actions. In yet another great book by Jacob Abbott the whole scene, spanning more than 200 years is described in detail. It provides enough stories to give a detailed look into the specific history, and at the same time describes the era and leaves enough room for philosophical reflections to which I am prone. Hannibal does not need to be the next book you read, but do definitively read it when convenient.

Jesse Broussard says

Well, this was actually quite disappointing. I probably went into this book with the wrong expectations, but it still ruined it for me. Hannibal Barca, son of Hamilcar Barca, was a Carthaginian general of such brilliance that he is comparable to Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Pyrrhus of Epirus and Scipio Africanus (who became great studying Hannibal, and finally defeated him). Virtually every family in Rome lost a family member due to Hannibal in the fifteen years he spent occupying Italy like the Black Death, and had the Carthaginians supplied him with siege weapons (as he repeatedly requested), it is entirely possible (dare I say probable?) that he would have taken Rome itself. After all, he never lost a battle to the Romans in fifteen years of fighting them, and he was outnumbered in (almost?) every one of their conflicts.

I was hoping for rundowns of his battles, his military strategy, his greatest victories and how they were achieved, armor and battle array, especially of Cannae: where Barca was outnumbered something like two to one, and yet it was the greatest defeat ever suffered by the Romans, who lost over 25% of their governing body in a matter of hours, and Cannae to this day is one of the bloodiest battles in human history. And I wanted to know exactly how the great Hannibal Barca, with all his elephants and heavy cavalry, was finally brought to bay by Scipio Africanus, and I didn't get a bit of it. Well, a bit. But it was preachy. "War is bad." Yeah, I know, but this guy was really good at it. That's what I was interested in.

To give a quick example: the fifteen years that he spent in Italy ravaging the countryside and decimating every single military force that the Romans could raise against him? It's mentioned in a phrase: it doesn't even earn a full sentence, just a phrase. We get a bit of depth in a couple of battles, but no detail of strategy: we are told that people hacked each other to pieces for hours, and then this side won. We are told that Hannibal was cunning, and we're given a couple of political strategies that he employed to great effect. We're told that he was ruthless, and we're given no examples. We are given examples of his generosity, and are told that it served a political purpose. Superstitions of the time are mocked, and a modern materialistic view of the world is superimposed upon the ancients.

Basically, I felt like Abbott had some deep-seated personal grudge against Hannibal, and wrote this biography as a chance to lambast him. "Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography." Well, Hannibal Barca was not recent, but this seems to apply quite aptly. So, I've got to say that this was an extremely poor biography of Hannibal if you're looking for any military strategy at all. But it was fully accurate (from a modern's point of view) on all it touched.

One conversation that was related, which was for me the high point of the book (and by the time it was related I would have put money down that it wouldn't have been) was between Hannibal and Scipio, long after their battle against each other (where Hannibal was destroyed by the great Scipio Africanus). In the conversation, military strategy naturally came up, and Scipio asked Hannibal who he considered to be the greatest military genius (clearly angling for a compliment, possibly for a well-deserved compliment). Hannibal responded that Alexander the Great was. Not pleased, but probably not surprised, Scipio asked who the second was. Hannibal responded with Pyrrhus of Epirus, due to his ability to make his soldiers and the inhabitants of conquered lands love him. Scipio then asked who was third, and Hannibal said something along the lines of, "well, that would be me." Deeply offended, Scipio sarcastically asked how Hannibal would have ranked himself if he had managed to defeat the lowly Scipio Africanus. Hannibal responded, rather surprised, that had he beat Scipio, he would have no choice but to place himself above even Alexander the Great of Macedon as the greatest military genius of all time.

Mike says

In typical Jacob Abbott fashion (19th century author of history books for kids, he tells a great story. Hannibal shows the folly of great men looking for personal glory through war.

He was a genius strategist and leader of men in getting across the Rhone through trickery, the Alps through determination and trickery, and prolonging his occupation of Italy through similar means. However, known to history as one of the great generals he ultimately, through his conceit, led indirectly to the destruction of Carthage years later in the 3rd Punic War.

To think what the course of history would have been had Carthage mustered proper reinforcements. Would

Carthage have taken Rome? If so, how would Carthage have handled the early Christians? What would modern Europe have looked like and who would have ultimately settled America? Fun to consider.

Luke Marino says

Basic overview, he does not go too in depth about any battle but gives a good idea of how things unfolded.

Linda says

This was a free book published a million years ago. I have quite a few Mr. Abbott's book about persons of note. They are really good except for the manner in which it printed for ereaders. Mr. Abbott has a keen understanding of men and how they are affected by different circumstances.

Hannibal was a clever and cunning warrior. When he and his army crossed the Alps, the conditions were deplorable. The weather, the cold, the terrain were so dangerous one wonders why his soldiers did not desert. He was a soldier who evenced confidence in his men. He made them believe in themselves because he believed in them. This book, being about the Punic Wars, is a Good Read.

Joe Akuoko II says

Great Personality who surmounted all difficulties in order to get to Rome. However great he was, his weakness was in his insatiable desire to prove his prowess in defeating the Romans even when odds were against him. Lesson learnt- we need to learn to understand our limits. Other than that its a great piece of history.

Scott Harris says

Another great historical classic by Jacob Abbott, this brief history of Hannibal is an accessible and generous account of his life and military career. As with almost every great leader of this kind, it has the tragic end to an otherwise astonishing career but it is nevertheless a compelling and interesting read.

Misanthropist says

* Nota: Escuché la versión gratuita de audio de este libro que está disponible en Librivox. *

* Note: I listened to the free audio version of this book available at Librivox. *

Libro interesante y un punto de vista muy diferente de la Segunda Guerra Púnica, considerando que yo conocía sólo el de Santiago Posteguillo y su versión basada en la vida de Publio Cornelio Escipión, el

Africano. Me gustó bastante, aunque me costó entender algunas partes y concentrarme, debido al acento de los narradores. ^^U

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Interesting book, and a very different point of view of the Second Punic War, considering I only knew Santiago Posteguillo's one and his version based on the life of Publio Cornelius Scipio, Africanus. I liked it quite a lot, even though I had some trouble keeping up with some parts and focusing on them, due to the accent of the narrators. ^^U

cody b johnson says

I'm certainly not disappointed that I read "Hannibal" by Jacob Abbott but I did find some areas of it disappointing. My expectations may have been a bit high as far as what I was expecting from this book but I found its amount of detail in many of the battles underwhelming. The book just didn't contain much detail, at all, even regarding other items.

It may have been this edition of the book but I found the lack of any type of bibliography very disappointing. I assume that Mr. Abbott received much of the information for this book from the writings of Titus Livius but he only once even mentioned Livy (English spelling of his surname) in the writing. I believe a writer should always give thanks to the other writers with which he received his information, even if that writer has been dead for two thousand years.

That being said, this book is a pretty excellent introduction to Hannibal and the Punic Wars. I did appreciate that Mr. Abbott provided some information regarding the first and third Punic Wars which happened before and after Hannibal's control of the army, respectively. I found this information to be a great addition to the book. I would recommend it to someone looking for an introduction to Hannibal and the Punic Wars.

Lanvin_T. says

It total redifines what I know about Carthage. Yes I knew about the destructive force behind scipio the young, yes I knew about Hannibal being a trickster, a man who would use any means that would seem to favour another only to benefit his own good. But I was left still wanting to know more, I mean I can understand how he felt with his own country man betraying him and how he witness his brothers death; what I couldn't understand was the last general, Hasdrubal's ways. I feel there is more to the story, but none the less it's a good read.
