

50 Battles that Changed the World

by William Weir (2001)

1. 490 BC – Marathon = the Greeks sent runner Pheidippides 25 miles from Marathon to Athens to proclaim victory [“Nike”] over the Persians, then died. Democracy was saved.
2. 390 BC – Rome = the Gauls won a battle, got drunk & the Romans killed them all.
3. 331 BC – Alexander the Great preserved Western civilization
4. 216 BC – Cannae = Hannibal (Carthage) picked the battle field & defeated the Romans.
5. 166 BC – Emmaus = Jews beat the Greeks in battle & had freedom [1st time in 500 yrs].
6. 451 AD – Italy = Attila the Hun defeated the Romans & ended their empire. And the Middle Ages began.
7. 636 – Yarmuk Valley = Muslims destroyed the Romans due to a sandstorm.
8. 1180 – Gupta = the Gobi Desert was expanding into Mongolia & Genghis Khan needed to expand his empire to save his people.
9. 1187 – Hattin = Christians lost to Muslims due to metal armor, heat & no water.
10. 1212 – Spain = the Spanish defeated the Moors & Islam was out of Spain.
11. 1509 – Diu = Portugal sent 17 ships [large sea worthy with cannons] against the Muslim’s 200 ships [smaller] & Portugal took control of trade to India.
12. 1520 – Tenochtitlan = Cortez killed Montezuma & ended Aztec domination.
13. 1552 – Kazan = Russians were tired of paying ‘tribute’ money to the Mongols. They fought & it marked the beginning of the end of Mongol power.
14. 1565 – Malta = Turks lose & began a steady decline into the Third World.
15. 1588 – English Channel = The Spanish did not like England cutting into their slave trade profits & attacked, but wind & lack of supplies defeated them. This was the start of a 400 yr empire [greater than Alexander, the Romans & Genghis Khan].
16. 1775 – Bunker Hill = American militia gain confidence.
17. 1777 – Saratoga = British troops lost to American militia
18. 1814 – New Orleans = England was still treating the US as a colony, but that stopped after Andrew Jackson defeated the British [it was the most lopsided battle in their history].
19. 1836 – Alamo = Santa Anna & 5000 Mexican soldiers killed the 182 Americans [including James Bowie & Davy Crockett]. They cry went out through Texas & Sam Houston took revenge & we got TX, OK, NM, CO, UT, AZ, NV & CA.
20. 1863 – Chickmauga = Confederates were winning the battle, but at a cost of 1/3 of their men & were too exhausted to pursue. They were then stampeded by union supply mules & lost heart.
21. 1898 – Manila Bay = Cuba & Philippines wanted to be free from Spain. US destroyed Spain’s ships in the harbor. They became independent & the US a great power.
22. 1905 – Tsushima = Japan’s win over Russia. It was the 2nd most lopsided battle in history [USA 1898 win over Spain was #1].
23. 1917 – Petrograd = peasants left the field to work in the factories, but this created a food shortage in Russia. Then WWI broke out & the government printed tons of worthless paper money [inflation hit] & there were no peasants to go to war. A rebellion led to communism & the Soviet Union.
24. WWI – Germany = The German people had had enough loss of life, food & fuel. Wilhelm fled & the war was over.
25. 1914-WWI = more soldiers were killed than any other war [11M military + 7M civilian].

26. 1942 – Stalingrad = Hitler’s obsession with Stalin’s city lost him taking the oil fields & he ran out of gas.
27. 1942 – Midway = US planes sunk all 4 Japanese carriers & stopped their advance.
28. 1939-45 – WWII = in '41 German subs were sinking ships 3x faster than Britain could build them, but that changed in '43 with radar & mass ship building. 50-80M people died in WWI.
29. 1968 – Tet Offensive, Vietnam = US military was so focused on where they thought the Viet Cong were going to strike that they missed the actual attack. North Vietnam took control of South Vietnam & the US lost their 1st war in history.

Quotes: “Whoever has experienced war at the front will want to refrain from all avoidable bloodshed.” (Hitler) Fixed fortifications are “a monument to the stupidity of man.” (Geo. Patton)

Notes: The modern marathon race is now 26.2 miles [distance from Windsor Castle to the Olympic Stadium in London [1908]. During the potato famine, 1.5 M people starved while Ireland was still shipping food to England. 1259 Roger Bacon formulated gun power. 20M died in the Taipang Rebellion. Genghis Khan & his two generals working together were the greatest generals in history. US civil war introduced machine guns, armored war ships & railroad mass transport.

Books: Influence of Sea-Power on History (Alfred Mahan); On War (Carl von Clausewitz);