



Gates of Fire

By Steven Pressfield

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BONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Steven Pressfield's *The Profession*.

The national bestseller!

At Thermopylae, a rocky mountain pass in northern Greece, the feared and admired Spartan soldiers stood three hundred strong. Theirs was a suicide mission, to hold the pass against the invading millions of the mighty Persian army.

Day after bloody day they withstood the terrible onslaught, buying time for the Greeks to rally their forces. Born into a cult of spiritual courage, physical endurance, and unmatched battle skill, the Spartans would be remembered for the greatest military stand in history--one that would not end until the rocks were awash with blood, leaving only one gravely injured Spartan squire to tell the tale....

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Gates of Fire By Steven Pressfield Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here obedient to their laws we lie.

Thus reads an ancient stone at Thermopylae in northern Greece, the site of one of the world's greatest battles for freedom. Here, in 480 B.C., on a narrow mountain pass above the crystalline Aegean, 300 Spartan knights and their allies faced the massive forces of Xerxes, King of Persia. From the start, there was no question but that the Spartans would perish. In *Gates of Fire*, however, Steven Pressfield makes their courageous defense--and eventual extinction--unbearably suspenseful.

In the tradition of Mary Renault, this historical novel unfolds in flashback. Xeo, the sole Spartan survivor of Thermopylae, has been captured by the Persians, and Xerxes himself presses his young captive to reveal how his tiny cohort kept more than 100,000 Persians at bay for a week. Xeo, however, begins at the beginning, when his childhood home in northern Greece was overrun and he escaped to Sparta. There he is drafted into the elite Spartan guard and rigorously schooled in the art of war--an education brutal enough to destroy half the students, but (oddly enough) not without humor: "The more miserable the conditions, the more convulsing the jokes became, or at least that's how it seems," Xeo recalls. His companions in arms are Alexandros, a gentle boy who turns out to be the most courageous of all, and Rooster, an angry, half-Messenian youth.

Pressfield's descriptions of war are breathtaking in their immediacy. They are also meticulously assembled out of physical detail and crisp, uncluttered metaphor:

The forerank of the enemy collapsed immediately as the first shock hit it; the body-length shields seemed to implode rearward, their anchoring spikes rooted slinging from the earth like tent pins in a gale. The forerank archers were literally bowled off their feet, their wall-like shields caving in upon them like fortress redoubts under the assault of the ram.... The valor of the individual Medes was beyond question, but their light hacking blades were harmless as toys; against the massed wall of Spartan armor, they might as well have been defending themselves with reeds or fennel stalks.

Alas, even this human barrier was bound to collapse, as we knew all along it would. "War is work, not mystery," Xeo laments. But Pressfield's epic seems to make the opposite argument: courage on this scale is not merely inspiring but ultimately mysterious. --*Marianne Painter*

From Publishers Weekly

Pressfield's first novel, *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, was about golf, but here he puts aside his putter and picks up sword and shield as he cleverly and convincingly portrays the clash between Greek hoplites and Persian heavy infantry in the most heroic confrontation of the Hellenic Age: the battle of Thermopylae ("the Hot Gates") in 480 B.C. The terrifying spectacle of classical infantry battle becomes vividly clear in his epic treatment of the Greeks' magnificent last stand against the invading Persians. Driven to understand the courage and sacrifice of his Greek foes, the Persian king, Xerxes, compels Xeonos, a captured Greek slave, to explain why the Greeks would give their lives to fight against overwhelming odds. Xeonos' tale covers his years of training and adventure as the loyal and devoted servant of Dienekes, a noble Spartan soldier, and he describes the six-day ordeal during which a few hundred Greeks held off thousands of Persian spears and arrows, until a Greek traitor led the Persians to an alternate route. Rich with historical detail, hot action and

crafty storytelling, Pressfield's riveting story reveals the social and political framework of Spartan life?ending with the hysteria and brutality of the spear-thrusting, shield-bashing clamor that defined a Spartan's relationship with his family, community, country and fellow warriors. Literary Guild and Military Book Club selections; film rights sold to Universal Studios for George Clooney and Robert Lawrence's Maysville Pictures; UK rights to Bantam, Spanish rights to Grijalbo Mondadori, Italian rights to Rizzoli. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

On a memorial stone placed at the ancient battlefield of Thermopylae are the words, "Go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here, obedient to their laws, we lie." Those simple words end and encapsulate this brilliant and brutal epic tale. Beginning at the training fields of Sparta, Pressfield (*The Legend of Bagger Vance*, LJ 4/1/95) ushers the reader through the climactic Battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C.E, fought by the combined armies of Sparta, Athens, and their allies against the invading soldiers of Persia. Narrated by the sole survivor of the battle at the "Hot Gates," in which 300 Spartans, hundreds of their allies, and tens of thousands of Persians died, this work portrays the men and women of ancient Sparta in intimate, dynamic detail. Pressfield weaves a fascinating tale of valor, fear, comradeship, and a courage that takes a handful of warriors beyond human frailty into immortality. An unforgettable novel. ?Jane Baird, Anchorage Municipal Libs., AK

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Donna Hoffmann:

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