

# Discover the Hidden Follies: A Riveting Summary of Barbara Tuchman's "The March of Folly"

Barbara Tuchman's masterpiece, "The March of Folly," is a captivating journey through history, delving into the depths of human folly that has shaped the world. In this article, we will unveil the key insights and lessons from Tuchman's thought-provoking book. Brace yourself for a remarkable expedition into the annals of history!

First published in 1984, "The March of Folly" explores humanity's continuous repetition of actions that directly contradict their own self-interests. Tuchman investigates major historical events where rulers and leaders made irrational decisions, leading to disastrous consequences.

In this enthralling work, Tuchman focuses on four case studies: the Trojans and the wooden horse, the Renaissance popes and their resistance against the Reformation, the British mismanagement of the American colonies, and the United States' prolonged involvement in the Vietnam War.



## Summary of Barbara W. Tuchman's The March of Folly by Grant MacEwan(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1446 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 76 pages
Hardcover	: 118 pages
Item Weight	: 12.2 ounces

Dimensions : 6.14 x 0.31 x 9.21 inches



## **The Trojan Deception**

Tuchman starts her book by dissecting the timeless tale of the Trojans and their ill-fated decision to accept the wooden horse as a gift from the Greeks. Despite several warnings and suspicions, the Trojans let down their defenses, leading to the city's ultimate downfall.

The author unravels the psychological motivations behind this act of folly, highlighting the blind trust the Trojans placed in the horse and their inability to see past appearances. The lessons we can learn from this ancient tale still resonate today, urging us to question our assumptions and avoid falling into similar traps.

## **The Renaissance Papacy and Resistance Against the Reformation**

Tuchman then turns her attention to the Renaissance popes who, driven by their shortsightedness and self-interest, resisted the growing wave of the Reformation. Their refusal to adapt to changing times and acknowledge the concerns of their subjects led to widespread religious tumult and schism within the Church.

By analyzing the irrationality of the papal decisions, Tuchman uncovers the disastrous consequences that arise when leaders prioritize personal power and pride over the well-being of their constituents. This section of the book highlights the importance of embracing change and listening to the voices of those affected by our decisions.

## **The British Mismanagement of the American Colonies**

Tuchman then shifts her focus to the British mismanagement of their American colonies, which eventually led to the American Revolutionary War. She explores the escalating tensions and the series of errors made by British leaders, as they disregarded the sentiments and desires of the colonists.

This section serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of ignoring the wishes of a population and highlights the importance of empathy and understanding in maintaining successful governance. Tuchman's analysis invites us to reflect on the lessons that can be gleaned from this pivotal period in American history.

### **American Involvement in the Vietnam War**

Lastly, Tuchman dives into the United States' prolonged involvement in the Vietnam War. She dissects the flawed decision-making process, exploring the political and strategic errors that perpetuated the country's entanglement.

Through this exploration, Tuchman sheds light on the dangers of hubris and the consequences of failed military interventions. Her analysis forces us to examine the ways in which history repeats itself, emphasizing the importance of learning from past mistakes to prevent future calamities.

### **The Relevance Today.**

Although "The March of Folly" was written over three decades ago, its relevance remains unquestionable. Tuchman's illuminating insights serve as a timeless reminder of the traps humanity can fall into when guided by ignorance, arrogance, and short-sightedness.

The book encourages us to question authority, critically assess decisions, and consider the potential consequences of our actions. By understanding our past

follies, we can strive for a more informed and enlightened future.

Barbara Tuchman's "The March of Folly" is a masterpiece that unfolds the intricate tapestry of human history, exposing the follies that have plagued civilizations for centuries. This captivating book serves as a crucial reminder that the mistakes of the past must not be repeated.

By learning from the Trojans' trust in the wooden horse, the papal resistance against the Reformation, the British mismanagement of the American colonies, and the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War, we can ensure a wiser path forward.

Let us reflect on Tuchman's invaluable insights and vow to break the cycle of folly that has haunted humanity. Together, we can forge a future built upon knowledge, understanding, and foresight.



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Please note: This is a companion version & not the original book.

## Sample Book Insights:

#1 The pursuit by governments of policies that are contrary to their own interests is a phenomenon that has occurred throughout history. Man makes a poorer performance of government than any other human activity.

#2 Government can be conducted for four types of reasons: tyranny, excessive ambition, incompetence, and perversity. Perversity is when a policy is pursued that is contrary to the self-interest of the state.

#3 The French Revolution, great example of populist government, reverted quickly to autocracy once it acquired an able administrator. The revolutionary regimes of Jacobins and Directorate could manage their own followers enough to keep order, but they could not collect taxes or install a competent administration.

#4 The classic case of wooden-headedness was Plan 17, the French war plan of 1914, which concentrated on a French advance to the Rhine. The assumption was that the Germans could not deploy enough manpower to extend their invasion around through western Belgium and the French coastal provinces.



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