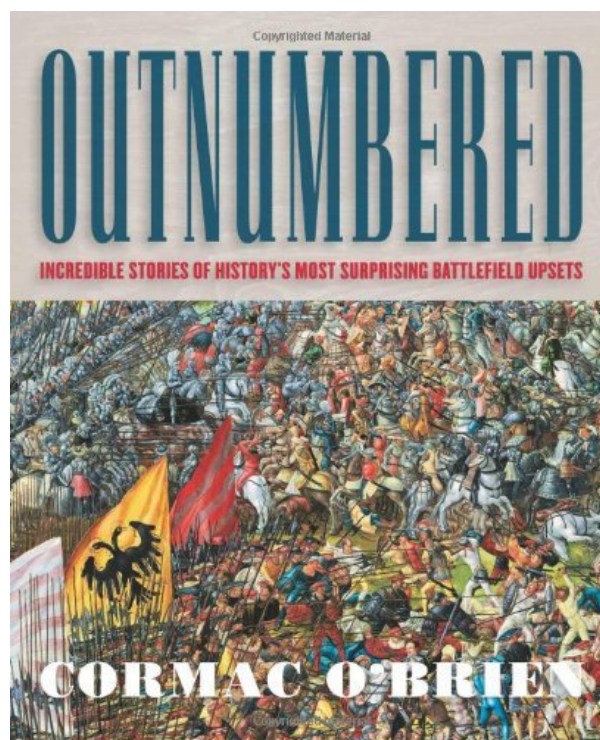
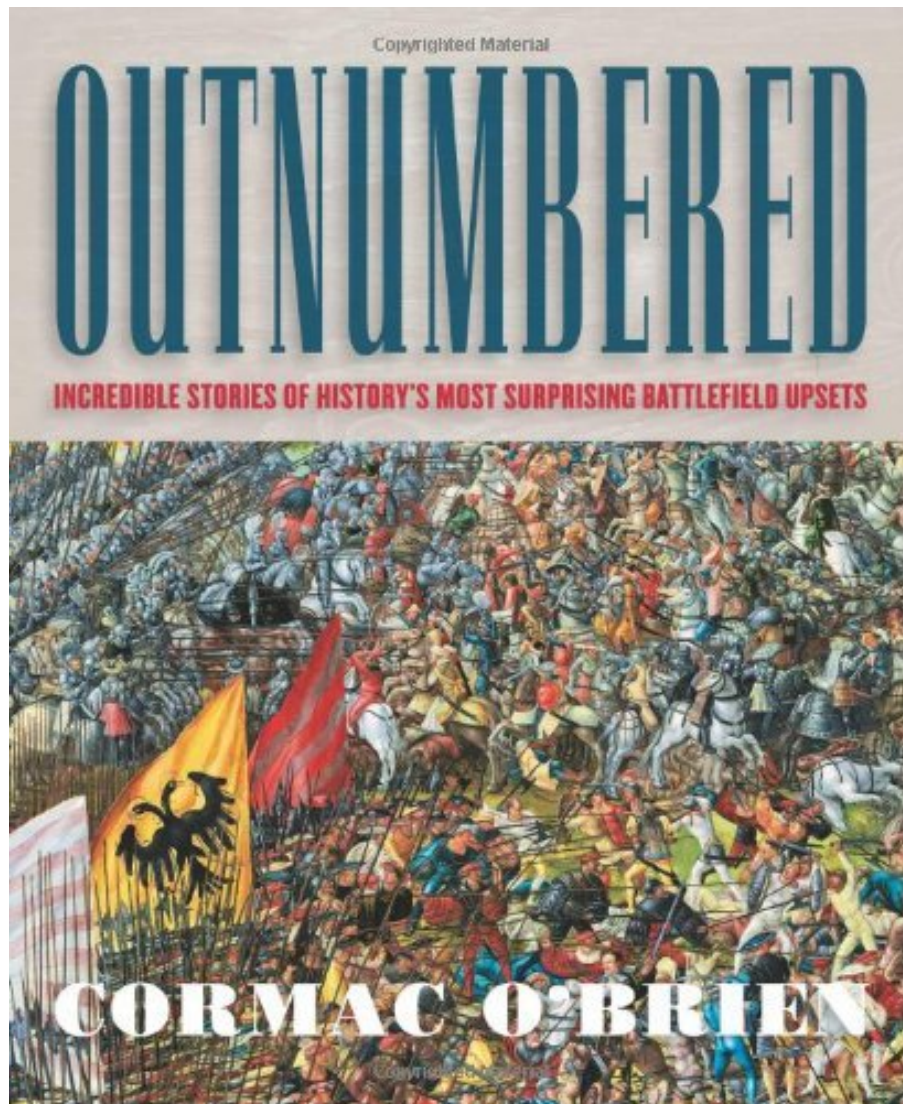


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Outnumbered but not Outmatched. How did Hannibal's 55,000 Carthaginians turn the tables on an 80,000-strong force of the ancient world's most efficient military machine, the Roman army? What allowed 6,000 Englishmen to overcome 30,000 French at Agincourt in 1415? Which errors in judgment doomed a Russian army twice as large as its opposing German force at the Battle of Tannenberg during World War I? Author Cormac O'Brien's powerful and vivid recreations of history's most surprising military victories illuminate the cunning strategies, secret weapons, fateful decisions, and changes of fortune that turned the tide of battle in the most extraordinary and unanticipated ways: the risky Greek ruse that trapped the Persian Fleet at Salamis in 480 BCE; the snowstorm that helped a Swedish force destroy a Russian army four times its size at the Battle of Narva in 1700; the newly introduced firearm that enabled 150 British soldiers to hold off an attacking horde of 4,000 Zulus at Rorke's Drift, Africa, in 1879. Even a commander as fearless, self-assured, and battle-hardened as Alexander the Great, leading 40,000 Macedonian troops, must have quailed at the sight that met him as he neared the village of Issus, Asia Minor, in 333 BCE: an unexpectedly and unimaginably vast Persian force of some 100,000 men, spanning the Mediterranean coastal plain as far as the eye could see. Warfare had already demonstrated, and has confirmed ever since, that numerical superiority consistently carries the day. And yet, every once in a while, such lopsided engagements have had an unexpected outcome, and proved to be a crucible in which great leaders, and history, are forged. *Outnumbered* chronicles fourteen momentous occasions on which a smaller, ostensibly weaker force prevailed in an epochal confrontation. Thus, Alexander, undaunted, devised a brilliant and daring plan that disoriented and destroyed the Persian force and, consequently, its empire. Likewise, during the U.S. Civil War, Confederate General Robert E. Lee, despite being outpositioned and outnumbered more than two to one by Union forces at Chancellorsville, Virginia, hatched an audacious and surprise strategy that caught his enemy completely unawares. Other equally unexpected, era-defining victories are shown to have derived from the devastating deployment of unusual weaponry, sheer good fortune, or even the gullibility of an enemy, as when Yamashita Tomoyuki, commander of 35,000 ill-supplied Japanese troops, convinced the 85,000-strong British Commonwealth army to surrender Singapore in 1942. Together these accounts constitute an enthralling survey that captures the excitement and terrors of battle, while highlighting the unpredictable nature of warfare and the courage and ingenuity of inspired, and inspiring, military leaders. A thrilling tour of the battlefields of history, replete with dramatic encounters, sudden twists of fate, and intriguing character studies, *Outnumbered* demonstrates that, even when the odds seem insurmountable, the path to glory can still be found.

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Most helpful customer reviews

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting but hard to follow

By rsoroc

This book has many great stories about military upsets through the ages. The stories were well written but there is one overriding problem- the maps. In most military histories about specific battles there is a standard format for maps through out the book that shows how the action took place. In this book there is a hodgepodge of third party sourced maps that don't even have some of the places mentioned in the story. This made some of the more complicated battles difficult to follow. A unified map system would have made this a four star book.

11 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

The 'Cliffs Note's' on some of the most amazing underdog victories

By Joel R.

As early as the story of David and Goliath, people have loved to root for the underdog. "Outnumbered: Incredible Stories of History's Most Surprising Battlefield Upsets", Cormac O'Brien, lives up to its title - it introduces the reader to many of the most famous battlefield victories won by the army facing a much larger adversary.

This collection of battles ranges from antiquity through World War II. O'Brien covers the battles of Salamis, 480 BCE; Issus, 333 BCE; Cannae, 216 BCE; Carrhae, 53 BCE; Alesia, 52 BCE; Tracamarum, 533; Agincourt, 1415; Narva, 1700; Leuthen, 1757; Auerstadt, 1806; Chancellorsville, 1863; Rorke's Drift, 1879; Tannenberg, 1914; and Singapore, 1942.

O'Brien offers the 'Cliff's notes' version on these battles. The author is a gifted writer, which made the narratives very interesting to read. He begins each chapter with a strategic overview of why the two parties were warring. O'Brien then moved on into a narrative of the battles. Where applicable, O'Brien highlights the technological innovations of the historic period that influenced the battle. In most of the battles, terrain played a key role in the battle, and the author does an excellent job of highlighting how the opponents made use of the terrain. Winning a battle doesn't necessarily equate to winning the war. O'Brien finishes each chapter by explaining subsequent events following the battle.

Each chapter has pictures and an occasional map to support the narrative. My one complaint about the book is the lack of consistency in charts and maps to illustrate the battle. The chapter on Carrhae has a very good diagram illustrating the Roman formation. On the flip-side, Narva had a map of northern Europe with only a dot to show the location of the city.

This book would be perfect for the casual reader looking for a collection of great stories about how an underdog army managed to turn the table on their adversaries. O'Brien does a great job identifying the significance of terrain, technology, and politics for the reader. He also provides a modest bibliography for the readers who are interested in learning more.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Good if Brief

By Fireman721

Outnumbered summarizes a number of battles which, on the surface, were clearly going to be one sided--generally for the ultimate loser. Many are familiar to those with any knowledge of military history (Salamis, Cannae, Agincourt, Chancellorsville, Singapore), others not so at least to me (Tannenberg, Leuthen, Narva, Tricamarum, Carrhae). There are 4 others that I had at least heard of but knew next to nothing about. All are well, if succinctly, summarized, which is where my 'beef' with the book lies. And I know I am asking a lot, for a book of this type, to have more detail. There is a modest bibliography which would serve as a start for detailed investigations of any (or all!) of the cited battles. All in all a good starter book for those interested in military history where superior commanders pulled off amazing feats against more numerous if weaker opponents (that is one of the overriding impressions from these summaries--numbers do not make up for poor leadership/generalship).

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