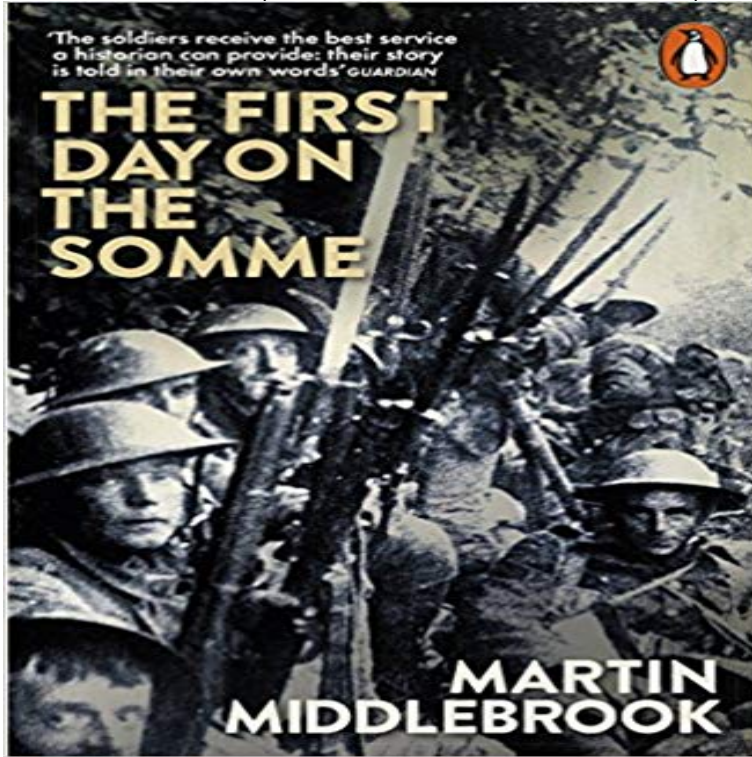


# The First Day on the Somme: 1 July 1916 (Penguin History)



On 1 July, 1916, a continuous line of British soldiers climbed out from the trenches of the Somme into No Man's Land and began to walk slowly towards dug-in German troops armed with machine-guns and defended by thick barbed wire. By the end of that day, as old tactics were met by the reality of modern warfare, there had been more than 60,000 British casualties - a third of them fatalities. Martin Middlebrook's classic account of the blackest day in the history of the British army draws on official sources, local newspapers, autobiographies, novels and poems from the time. Most importantly, it also takes in the accounts of hundreds of survivors: normal men, many of them volunteers, who found themselves thrown into a scene of unparalleled tragedy and horror. Compelling and intensely moving, it describes the true events behind the sacrifice of a generation of young men - killed as much by the folly of their commanders as by the bullets of their enemies.

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