

# **THE BOAT (DAS BOOT) BY LOTHAR-GUNTHER BUCHHEIM**



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Language Notes

Text: English, German (translation)

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Autumn 1941. A U-boat is on a hazardous patrol in the Battle of the Atlantic, but the tide is beginning to turn against the Germans. As the U-boat is forced to hide beneath the surface of the sea, the increasing claustrophobia of the submarine becomes an enemy as frightening as any depth charge.

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- 576 pages

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## Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

The Submarine equivalent to "Red Badge of Courage" or "All's  
By A Customer

Quiet on the Western Front". A historical novel in the classic tradition of a great novel. A strongly anti-war novel functioning on many levels: anti-war, anti-authoritarian (against High Command in general and Hitler and Adm. Doenitz in particular), instructional on the daily operation of a WWII U-boat in ALL activities, including huge hours fruitlessly patrolling (U-boats, unlike US Boats, didn't have radar until late in the war, nor specific "Ultra" code intercepts of enemy ship movements - though German codebreakers had some good successes until midway through the war); the obsolescence of the U-boats vs. experienced radar-equipped British destroyers and aircraft; the struggle of men in a tiny ship vs. the sea. This last topic receives much time, and the American translation of this originally German book is very detailed, raw, and poetic, particularly describing the changing nature of the sea, the clouds, and the author's emotions as he tries to understand, often with great difficulty, exactly what is going on. you will find great controversy on this book, mostly centered on the drunkenness of shore leave, but also the anti- High Command sentiments that are probably exaggerated. I bought and read this book in 1976 when it came out in paperback and read it in the back seat of my dad's car on a cross-country family vacation roadtrip (I was 13) and I have read and enjoyed it several times since. A searing story of just incredible moments of combat and weeks of patrolling with no enemy contact -the norm for warships, and patrolling ships and aircraft, too - most convoys were never sighted, let alone attacked. The movie is very good, but this very good book beats it, as the really good books usually do. I tried the version from England (1974 hardcover) but found the translator's choice of words and phrasing to be very dry, uncolorful, and stiff- definitely get the American translation. Historically, the author crams 6 years of warfare into one superlong patrol, juxtapositioning some trends and common occurrences a little too close together, but he does set his novel at what is now recognized as the turning point of the U-boat war- fall 1941. Although U-boats went on for another 15 months of havoc, especially of the Americas, Cape Town, and in the Indian Ocean, the British had in fact escaped serious war altering effects by the U-boats with the codebreaking, radar, signals location ("Huff Duff"), aircraft, and the Germans failure to build more

boats earlier on, provide aircraft support, radar, and secure communications. The futility of the vastly outgunned, outnumbered and out-teched Germans has you rooting for them yet knowing that like in "Finding Private Ryan" or an old Western like "The Wild Bunch", these guys have all the odds against them.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Best book I've ever read

By James B. Martin

I have just been transported into a U Boat and have experienced war, claustrophobia, sex, fear, exhaltation, depression, sadness, joy, and bereavement -- all from this book. Buchheim's descriptions are total -- they grab you and PUT you into the places and the situations. I'm shocked at my reaction to this book. I think I'll read it a dozen more times in my life -- and I'm 72. This is not a recommendation to you to read this book: this is an ORDER to read it.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

A look at WW II that will let you see German side of the war

By bedou@juno.com

I picked up a paperback copy of this book at the dump more than 15 years ago, the cover caught my eye so I picked it up. I read this book at least once a year, I find myself transported into U-96 departing La Rochelle. The writing is supurb, you feel as if you are there in the Control Room, as the depth charges are going off around you. Or the long hours spent at the mess table "Frigging Around" going back and forth in your little square on the map, while the Commmanders in Berlin play with you like Chess pieces. It is also interesting to note the "Old Man (probley no more than 26 years old) seems to despise sinking the ships, saying what a loss it is, yet he has his mission to perform. By the end of the book, I was rooting for the Germans all the way, hoping they will defeat the British. To me this is the mark of a great writer, to enable you to root for the "enemy" by the end of the book. If you can find it, read it!

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