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Hum Core

Sun-Tzu, *On the Art of War*, Lionel Giles translation and edition (London and Shanghai: Luzac and Co, 1910), available online at http://www.artofwarsuntzu.com/Art%20of%20War%20PDF.pdf

Study Questions:

1. Notice the book's organization as a set of fragmented quotations from the author. How does this rhetorical structure either support or hinder the work's argumentative effectiveness? (P.S.: You may want to return to this question after working through the others to see if your views have changed after further study.)

2. What are the five factors for making an initial estimation of the outcome of war?

3. What is the role of deception in warfare? How can this insight be reconciled with traditional appeals to honor, glory, and courage?

4. In what ways does Sun-Tzu address the economic effects of war? What are the implications for how war should be undertaken?

5. Why is "supreme excellence" equated with "breaking the enemy's resistance *without fighting*"?

6. What does Sun-Tzu think about the siege of cities? What advice would he give Agamemnon and the Achaeans?

7. What does the term "energy" mean in Section V?

8. The dualism of Taoist thought in Sun Tze's work is evident through the rhetorical deployment of paired opposites, such as direct/indirect, weak/strong, or order/disorder. Explain the use of one such pair and what role that plays in the advancement of the book's major arguments?

9. What is the importance of "studying moods" in reference to the organizational spirit of an army?

10. What is the importance of terrain and environment for the art of war?

11. What, according to Sun-Tze, are the most and least desired traits in a leader (or general)? Compare to what Machiavelli would advise.

12. When is the general's insubordination to the ruler permissible, or advisable? And why?

13. Why does Sun-Tze endorse the use of spies? How does this advice fit into his more general thinking on war?

14. The German strategist Von Clausewitz famously wrote that "war is a continuation of diplomacy by other means." Channeling this line with reference to *Mother Courage*, Bertolt Brecht queried whether "war is a continuation of business by other means." Sun-Tzu's *Art of War* has served as a guide for very different occupations, including diplomacy, business, negotiation, management, human relations and more. Discuss how you think Sun-Tzu's insights can be creatively applied to other domains? What does this say about the value of what we might more generally call, "strategic thinking"?