

A MACAT ANALYSIS

SUN TZU'S
THE ART OF WAR

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An Analysis of

Sun Tzu's

The Art of War

Ramon Pacheco Pardo



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Macat has worked with the University of Cambridge to identify the elements of critical thinking and understand the ways in which six different skills combine to enable effective thinking.

Three allow us to fully understand a problem; three more give us the tools to solve it. Together, these six skills make up the

PACIER model of critical thinking. They are:

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EVALUATION – exploring the strengths and weaknesses of an argument

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PROBLEM-SOLVING – producing strong solutions

REASONING – creating strong arguments

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CRITICAL THINKING AND *THE ART OF WAR*

Primary critical thinking skill: PROBLEM-SOLVING

Secondary critical thinking skill: ANALYSIS

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* is a series of lessons in the applied art of problem solving.

Sun (544 B.C.E–496 B.C.E), an experienced general from the Warring States period of Chinese history, saw war as an inevitable problem – indeed, the ultimate problem confronting the state. *The Art of War* summarises his lessons on how to solve the problems raised by conflict.

The work comprises a series of pithy discussions of the different strategic situations that might arise, and the best responses for each. In many ways it is a masterclass in the application of critical thinking to practical affairs.

Aspiring generals are advised to ‘appraise the situation’ according to five separate criteria, and to plan accordingly. ‘The expert at battle seeks his victory from strategic advantage’, Sun writes, so every general must assess their situation from every angle, and establish not only the best way to give themselves the strategic advantage – but also of preventing the other side from giving itself the advantage. Throughout the text, Sun epitomises the qualities of a good problem solver by focusing on the nature of the problem; asking productive questions about it; and making sound decisions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL WORK

Born in the sixth century b.c.e., Chinese general **Sun Tzu** was a thoughtful, yet ruthless, military strategist. In a time of unrest and war, he proved himself on the battlefield, but clearly understood all the complexities of war—aware that tactics, profound knowledge, and rational thinking were every bit as important in securing victory as raw courage. Sun Tzu's influence has lasted for more than 2,500 years, with military and business leaders still reaching for his book to gain an advantage over their opponents.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE ANALYSIS

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ABOUT MACAT

GREAT WORKS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Macat is focused on making the ideas of the world's great thinkers accessible and comprehensible to everybody, everywhere, in ways that promote the development of enhanced critical thinking skills.

It works with leading academics from the world's top universities to produce new analyses that focus on the ideas and the impact of the most influential works ever written across a wide variety of academic disciplines. Each of the works that sit at the heart of its growing library is an enduring example of great thinking. But by setting them in context – and looking at the influences that shaped their authors, as well as the responses they provoked – Macat encourages readers to look at these classics and game-changers with fresh eyes. Readers learn to think, engage and challenge their ideas, rather than simply accepting them.

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Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic
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‘This is the learning of the future.’

Rt Hon Charles Clarke, former UK Secretary of State for Education

‘The Macat analyses provide immediate access to the critical conversation surrounding the books that have shaped their respective discipline, which will make them an invaluable resource to all of those, students and teachers, working in the field.’

Professor William Tronzo, University of California at San Diego



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