



The Age of Caesar: Five Roman Lives

Plutarch , James Romm (Editor) , Pamela Mensch (Translation) , Mary Beard (Foreword)

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Pompey, Caesar, Cicero, Brutus, Antony: the names still resonate across thousands of years. Major figures in the civil wars that brutally ended the Roman republic, their lives pose a question that haunts us still: how to safeguard a republic from the flaws of its leaders.

This reader's edition of Plutarch delivers a fresh translation of notable clarity, explanatory notes, and ample historical context in the Preface and Introduction.

The Age of Caesar: Five Roman Lives Details

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From Reader Review The Age of Caesar: Five Roman Lives for online ebook

Foo Lixin says

I'd wanted to read Plutarch's Parallel Lives for a while, but the classic Loeb collection spans multiple books and is furthermore unavailable in libraries and bookstores (here at least). So imagine my pleasant surprise when I stumbled upon this translation during a library grind.

This edition contains only 5 Roman Lives, without their Greek parallels and the comparison theses. That kinda takes the "parallel" thing out of it, but hey, that's (probably) why it's published under a different name. It isn't really fair to judge a book for what it clearly states on its blurb.

Besides, the period and historical figures the book is hence centred on by structure - the late Roman Republic and Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, Cicero the orator/statesman/savior of the Republic from the Catiline Conspiracy etc, Brutus the Liberator/Conspirator, Antony the debauched paramour of Cleopatra... - was what I was most interested in, so I'm not really complaining.

The footnotes giving context and explaining certain archaic terms were extremely helpful and saves readers from constantly flipping to the back of the book for notes. The translation itself is more modern compared to the public domain(?) Dryden translation, which is the only other I've read snatches of online and hence can comment on. However the appendix about the political structure of the Roman Republic, especially regarding the *cursus honorum*, was rather confusing (for struggling friends Wikipedia actually has a flowchart for better visualisation).

Jose Mari says

This is a primer about the lives of 5 famous Roman leaders. Someone's hero is someone else's villain. A robe made of the finest fabric is no match for a treacherous hand with a dagger.

Hundeschlitten says

This is epic writing about epic people, in the best of the sense of the word. The nonchalance of the violence, the focus on fate and character, on dominating your enemies, foreign and domestic; it's like being transported to A Game of Thrones, except this world was real. It is a contemporary, breezy translation, light on the poetry. But I mostly appreciated its readability. It was my first real taste of Plutarch's "Lives," which proved a welcome tonic for the watery-eyed trivialities of the modern age. It probably won't be my last.

Melora says

This translation of Plutarch selects from the Parallel Lives the stories of Pompey, Caesar, Brutus, Cicero, and Antony. Though not "parallel" according to Plutarch's arrangement, the lives of these five Romans, who all lived in the same critical period in Roman history and who interacted as friends, enemies, and in-laws,

provide a “360 degree panorama” view of the acts and intriguing of these key players in events in the mid-1st century BC. James Romm and Mary Beard provide interesting and helpful introductions, and Pamela Mensch's translation flows along with vigor and clarity. I enjoyed this as an audio recording, read by Michael Page. Four and a quarter stars – the last chapter, on Antony, made me a little cranky – he was *such* an idiot – but it seems unfair to punish Plutarch for my loathing for Antony, so he gets that last star on credit.

Nicole Seitler says

I picked this book to read while my high school student was studying Rome this year and it was one of my favorites! I've heard great things about reading Plutarch and I'm glad I took the time to read these five lives. I'm also looking forward to finding a copy of a few Greek lives the next time I have a student going through ancient history. I don't know that I would be up for reading through the entire volume of all of Plutarch's Lives, but this small sampling was perfect—especially in light of the fact that the lives of these five men all overlapped. It was an excellent primer on the birth of the Roman Empire and a perfect companion for reading Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (which is something else we are reading together this year). I highly recommend this book if you are interested in this period of history! This translation was lovely and the notes were very helpful!

Ben says

The Romans—they're just like us! Okay, not really. But you don't have to dig deep to find the family resemblance.

This collection of five of Plutarch's *Lives* includes Pompey, Caesar, Brutus, Antony, and Cicero, with many lines threading between each of these. Plutarch is entertaining and funny, insightful and critical, and through the seemingly endless descriptions of wars and battles, we gain access to a period of history when the people wanted security and prosperity, the noblemen wanted to maintain systems that ensured them access to incredible wealth, and the leaders were willing to strike deals and scheme betrayals if only to gain one more day of supreme power. There are occasional moments of nobility and honor, but more often these *Lives* reveal the ways that arrogance and paranoia work in concert to raise up strong men and also to ensure their downfall. An enlightening read.

Geoff Walling says

Too much information.

Erik says

Read the first few lives. Interesting primary source. Translation is very readable. Footnotes are really useful.

Katie says

Those wacky Romans. Extremely entertaining - war, politics, backstabbing, etc. Four stars because it's a little tough to keep up at first, though the editors and translators do a great job of annotating Plutarch to make things a little easier to understand.
