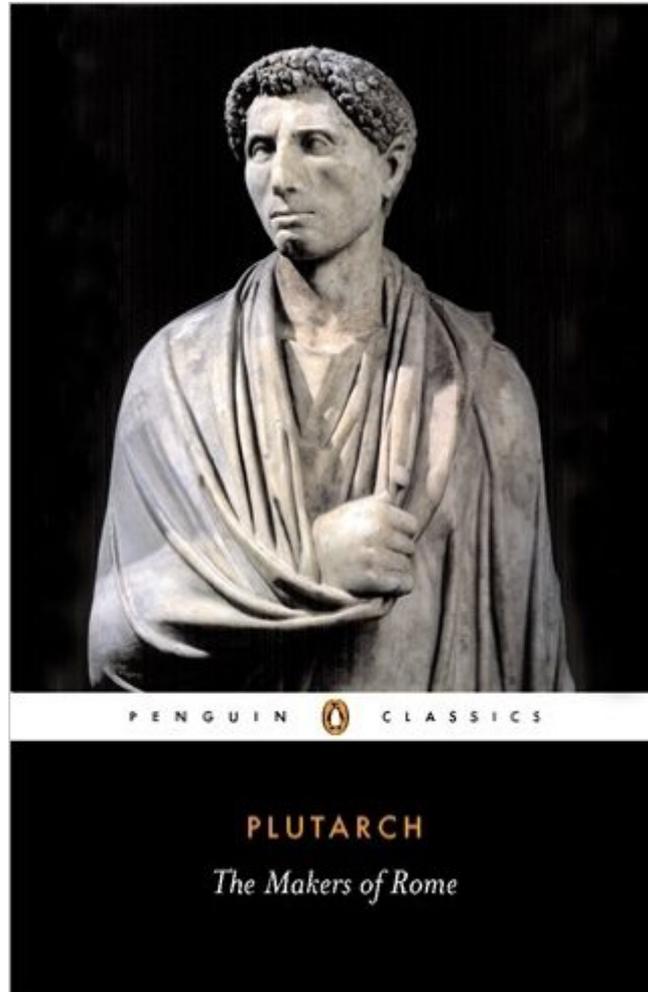


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The Makers Of Rome: Nine Lives (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Nine biographies that illuminate the careers, personalities and military campaigns of some of Rome's greatest statesmen. The lives of the statesmen featured in this collection span the earliest days of the Republic to the establishment of the Empire. Selected from Plutarch's Roman Lives, they include prominent figures who achieved fame for their pivotal roles in Roman history, such as soldierly Marcellus, eloquent Cato and cautious Fabius. Here too are vivid portraits of ambitious, hot-tempered Coriolanus; objective, principled Brutus and open-hearted Mark Anthony, who would later be brought to life by Shakespeare. In recounting the lives of these great leaders, Plutarch also explores the problems of statecraft and power and illustrates the Roman people's genius for political compromise, which led to their mastery of the ancient world. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Plutarch is one of the most popular ancient historians. His straightforward style and flair for the dramatic make his biographies of ancient Greeks and Romans both informative and entertaining. In

fact, a number of Shakespearean characters are based on Plutarch's writings. It was his fondness for dramatic appeal that prompted the "semi-fictional" rather than purely factual treatment of history for which he is known. His intent was not so much to record historical events as it was use character and dramatic examples of success and failure to illustrate moral lessons. Plutarch was not an eyewitness to the events he recorded. Although he was a prominent scholar and civil servant and traveled widely, he spent most of his life in Chaeronea in central Greece. Further, his subjects all lived 200 or more years before him. He had a wide variety of sources, but conflicting evidence and an occasional paucity of detail gave him ample opportunities to dramatize or embellish his work. In his "Lives", Plutarch pursued two major themes. One was the tenacity of Rome in war. Despite military setbacks, Rome always stayed the course and prevailed in the end. Whether it was Hannibal, Pyrrhus, Gallic tribes or whoever, Rome outlasted them. The second was Rome's political genius and ability to compromise. In contrast to the Greeks, who always fought among themselves and brought about their own downfall, Romans managed to put aside their differences and stand together when necessary. The "Lives" were originally written in pairs, matching a Greek and a Roman whose lives paralleled each other in Plutarch's estimation. For example, he paired the lives of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. To most modern readers, these pairings seem artificial.

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