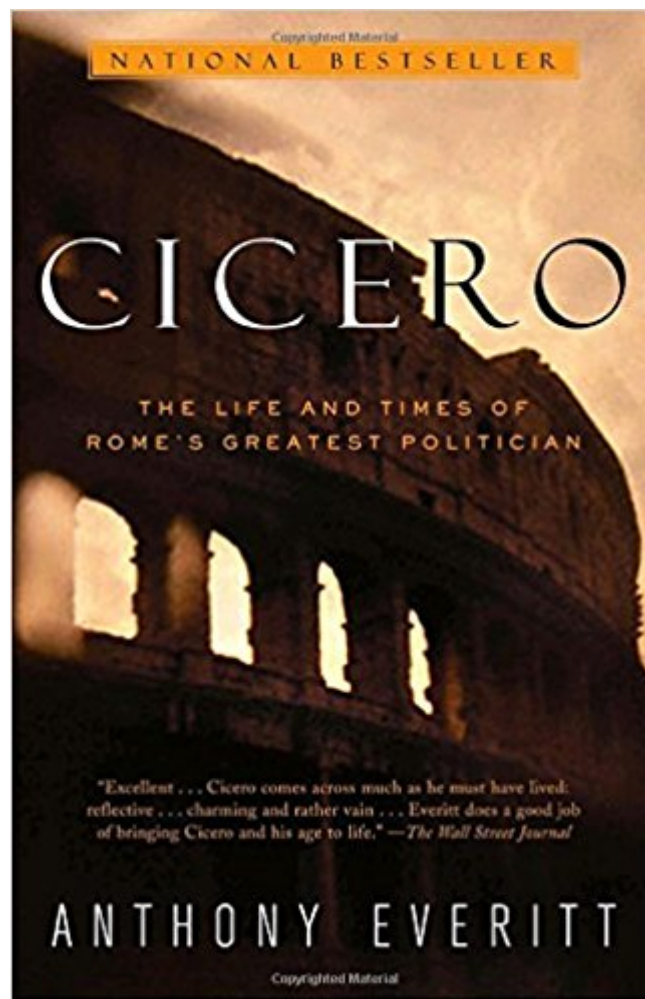


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Cicero: The Life And Times Of Rome's Greatest Politician



Synopsis

“All ages of the world have not produced a greater statesman and philosopher combined.” —John Adams

He squared off against Caesar and was friends with young Brutus. He advised the legendary Pompey on his somewhat botched transition from military hero to politician. He lambasted Mark Antony and was master of the smear campaign, as feared for his wit as he was for exposing his opponents’ sexual peccadilloes. Brilliant, voluble, cranky, a genius of political manipulation but also a true patriot and idealist, Cicero was Rome’s most feared politician, one of the greatest lawyers and statesmen of all times. Machiavelli, Queen Elizabeth, John Adams and Winston Churchill all studied his example. No man has loomed larger in the political history of mankind. In this dynamic and engaging biography, Anthony Everitt plunges us into the fascinating, scandal-ridden world of ancient Rome in its most glorious heyday. Accessible to us through his legendary speeches but also through an unrivaled collection of unguarded letters to his close friend Atticus, Cicero comes to life in these pages as a witty and cunning political operator. Cicero leapt onto the public stage at twenty-six, came of age during Spartacus’ famous revolt of the gladiators and presided over Roman law and politics for almost half a century. He foiled the legendary Catiline conspiracy, advised Pompey, the victorious general who brought the Middle East under Roman rule, and fought to mobilize the Senate against Caesar. He witnessed the conquest of Gaul, the civil war that followed and Caesar’s dictatorship and assassination. Cicero was a legendary defender of freedom and a model, later, to French and American revolutionaries who saw themselves as following in his footsteps in their resistance to tyranny. Anthony Everitt’s biography paints a caustic picture of Roman politics “where Senators were endlessly filibustering legislation, walking out, rigging the calendar and exposing one another’s sexual escapades, real or imagined, to discredit their opponents. This was a time before slander and libel laws, and the stories “about dubious pardons, campaign finance scandals, widespread corruption, buying and rigging votes, wife-swapping, and so on” make the Lewinsky affair and the U.S. Congress seem chaste. Cicero was a wily political operator. As a lawyer, he knew no equal. Boastful, often incapable of making up his mind, emotional enough to wander through the woods weeping when his beloved daughter died in childbirth, he emerges in these pages as intensely human, yet he was also the most eloquent and astute witness to the last days of Republican Rome. On Cicero: “He taught us how to think.” —Voltaire “I tasted the beauties of language, I breathed the spirit of freedom, and I imbibed from his precepts and examples the public and private sense of a man.” —Edward Gibbon “Who was Cicero: a great speaker or a demagogue?” —Fidel Castro

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Customer Reviews

Using Cicero's letters to his good friend Atticus, among other sources, Everitt recreates the fascinating world of political intrigue, sexual decadence and civil unrest of Republican Rome. Against this backdrop, he offers a lively chronicle of Cicero's life. Best known as Rome's finest orator and rhetorician, Cicero (103 -43 B.C.) situated himself at the center of Roman politics. By the time he was 30, Cicero became a Roman senator, and 10 years later he was consul. Opposing Julius Caesar and his attempt to form a new Roman government, Cicero remained a thorn in Caesar's side until the emperor's assassination. Cicero supported Pompey's attempts during Caesar's reign to bring Rome back to republicanism. Along the way, Cicero put down conspiracies, won acquittal for a man convicted of parricide, challenged the dictator Sulla with powerful rhetoric about the decadence of Sulla's regime and wrote philosophical treatises. Everitt deftly shows how Cicero used his oratorical skills to argue circles around his opponents. More important, Everitt portrays Cicero as a man born at the wrong time. While Cicero vainly tried to find better men to run government and better laws to keep them in order, Republican Rome was falling down around him, never to return to the glory of Cicero's youth. A first-rate complement to Elizabeth Rawson's Cicero or T.N. Mitchell's monumental two-volume biography, Everitt's first book is a brilliant study that captures Cicero's internal struggles and insecurities as well as his external political successes. Maps. (On sale June 11) Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Everitt's first book is a good read that anyone interested in ancient Rome will enjoy. It is also the first one-volume life of the Roman leader in 25 years. To create a work that flowed and was therefore more colorful for the lay reader, Everitt, the former secretary-general of the Arts Council for Great Britain, has taken liberties when describing a person or a place that may annoy scholars. Yet reading this book is an excellent way to understand the players of the period and the culture that produced them. Bloody, articulate, erudite, sexist, slave-owning-Cicero and his circle were all that, but Everitt is careful to recognize that the orator was a product of his age. This is not strictly a political history; Everitt scrutinizes Roman society in discussing events of the orator's life and, when describing Cicero's marriage, acquaints the reader with various aspects of that institution and the home of the era. Throughout, he is willing to admit when the evidence for a theory is weak and when he is extrapolating from the assumptions of scholars. Recommended for public and undergraduate collections. Clay Williams, Hunter Coll. Lib., New York Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book combines clear and lucid writing with a fascinating subject -- the life of Marcus Tullius Cicero, probably the greatest of all Roman Senators. Cicero lived through the end of the Republican stage of Rome and died just as Augustus would transform Rome into an authoritarian Empire. Cicero has been portrayed by different authors in different ways -- as a vain and somewhat childish man, or, as here, as an imperfect human being but essentially a ruthlessly intelligent and tough-minded man, harsh in judgment of folly and dedicated to Rome's Republican principles. In this book the author captures the various famous nuances of Cicero's career, including his vanity after the Catiline affair, and his intelligence and ruthlessness during and after the reign of Julius Caesar. I have only read a few biographies of Cicero, but I found this one to easily be the most readable of them. The author does an excellent job of explaining how Rome's system of government worked, its essential nature as an oligarchy dominated by a few noble families, which goes to the extraordinary ability of Cicero that was required to enable him, a New Man, to ascend to Rome's highest office, Consul, through sheer ability. This singular fact about Cicero should erase any doubt about the superlative ability as a lawyer, a politician, and a scholar that enabled Cicero to do what very few Romans ever did -- advance above his class by ability alone. Readers who are looking for a highly readable but still scholarly work dealing with Cicero and his times will enjoy this excellent book. RJB.

I learned a lot about Cicero, and I'm grateful for that. However, this was very long and the chapter

on the philosophies Cicero wrote about were rather boring. What was interesting were the stories of Cicero as a lawyer, senator, speaker, and politician. Also, Everitt is somewhat disrespectful towards Pompey, who was known as Pompey Magnus because he did amazing things. I also resent the assertion that Cicero is a superior Roman because he had no military accomplishments. I'm not saying you have to be in the military to be in politics, but it's disrespectful to praise someone for not being in the military. My other issue is that some of the language Everitt uses is a bit obtuse, there are many unrecognizable words, even words that are not common in English anymore.

This is a great book and essential reading if you want to understand what was happening in the final decades of the Roman Republic. Great men are forged by troubled times. The overthrow of the Republic was one of the most troubled in history and Cicero was one of the greatest in history. Before this book I had read the usual Shakespeare and shallow event-oriented presentations of Caesar, Pompey, Cato, Cassius, Mark Antony, and Octavius, but I had never read a detailed history of the period nor anything specifically about Cicero. Whether you are a history buff, a political science buff or interested in investigating how governmental systems become non-functional in light of the current dysfunction in Washington, DC, this is an informative resource and a good read.

Have read several Everitt bios/histories which I think are good. This book is also recommended and like the others, compelled me to dig-in a little deeper and read some of Cicero's work via Loeb Classical Library(to start). Marcus Tullius Cicero, a contemporary of Julius Caesar, while a great orator and politician appears to be a "survivor" at heart, which was probably very sensible during one of Rome's most dangerous times, but he also cherished some very appealing ideas of virtue, friendship, honesty. This is a good read.

Odds are, you have heard of Cicero. Considered one of Rome's greatest orators, his writings are the main influence on how way we remember the last days of the Roman republic. The story of Cicero's life is the story of end of Republican Rome. All of the major players of the era: Caesar, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, Brutus and Octavian (soon to be Augustus) all make an appearance in his life. In his role as one of the world's first brilliant statesman and backroom player, Cicero was friends and enemies with all of them. From Everitt's book, it seems Cicero was, at times, courageous in his rhetoric and at times, he was cowardly. He always tried to see all the angles and jockeyed for a position that put him in the best place politically while betraying as few of his political convictions as possible. In the end, he wound up on the wrong side of Marc Antony and was killed. The story in

getting from provincial boy to one of the most powerful men in Rome is fascinating. I am no expert on Roman history. I have read no other biography of Cicero. But to my tastes, Everitt's biography of Cicero is excellent for the reader with a casual interest in this time period in Rome. Not only does it give us insight into what a complicated person Cicero was (both arrogant and generous; brilliant in the courtroom and terrified of physical injury) but also perhaps more importantly it is an excellent primer on the death of the Roman republic. The story of Rome's descent into dictatorship, the attempt at recovering republicanism, and then the reassertion of dictatorship is the stuff that western history is made of, and Everitt's book is a good place to get a sense of who did what when and what Cicero had to say about it. Recommended.

Great information but tough to read.

Anthony Everitt wrote it, so as expected, it is riveting. Cicero won the Civil War, but fate denied him the victory. He was an auger who did not believe and a constitutionalist whose greatest victory happened when he forsook the Constitution, which he often did. He was riddled with contradiction, but consistently so, a survivor who failed to survive. Good night.

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