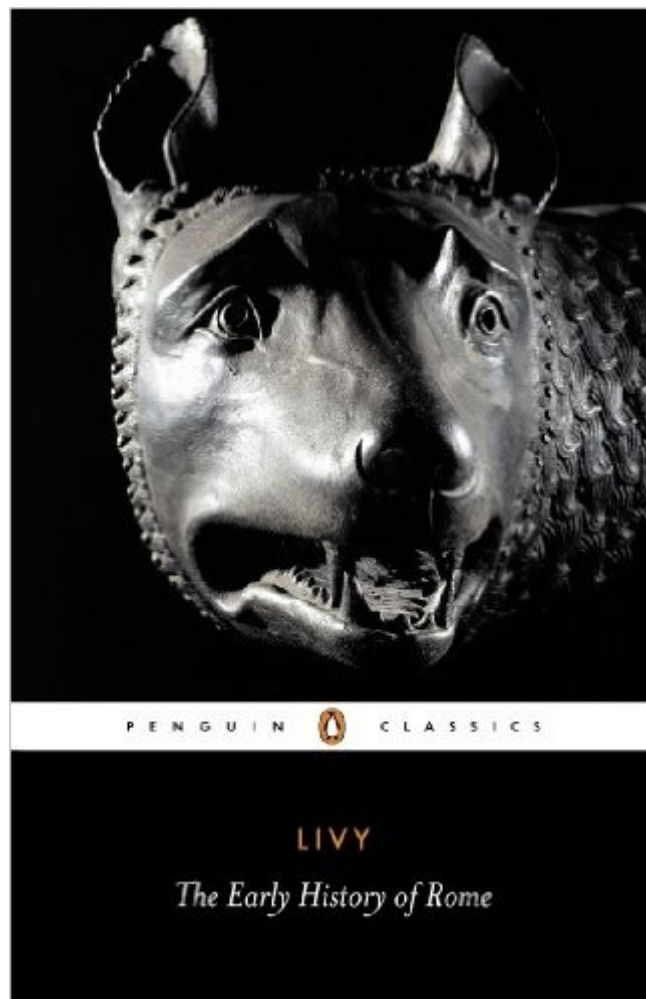


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Livy: The Early History Of Rome, Books I-V (Penguin Classics) (Bks. 1-5)



Synopsis

With stylistic brilliance and historical imagination, the first five books of Livy's monumental history of Rome record events from the foundation of Rome through the history of the seven kings, the establishment of the Republic and its internal struggles, up to Rome's recovery after the fierce Gallic invasion of the fourth century B.C. Livy vividly depicts the great characters, legends, and tales, including the story of Romulus and Remus. Reprinting Robert Ogilvie's lucid 1971 introduction, this highly regarded edition now boasts a new preface, examining the text in light of recent Livy scholarship, informative maps, bibliography, and an index. 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

Titus Livius, better known as Livy, lived and wrote his famous history about 2,000 years ago, and even then the early history of Rome was ancient history. But the Romans were a people much taken with themselves and their perception of their destiny, and they were a highly literate people as well, so Livy was not without resources on which he could draw for research. Thanks to him and a handful of other Roman historians, we have a fairly detailed knowledge of this remote period, a knowledge that is constantly being expanded and refined through archaeology. Livy's history, which

scholars believe was intended as a series of 120 or so volumes (of which 35 have come down to us), stands as a remarkable achievement, both literary and historical. The first five volumes, translated in the present book, cover the period from the founding of the city (traditionally dated to 753 BCE) by Romulus to the defeat of the Gauls by Marcus Furius Camillus in c. 396 BCE. It is a fascinating time in Roman history, witnessing the age of the kings, their ouster by Junius Brutus and the subsequent establishment of the Republic, ongoing class struggle between the aristocratic "Patricians" and their fellow citizens, the "Plebeians," and naturally, almost unending warfare between Rome, the new kid on the block, and its neighbors. At times the narrative can seem repetitive, what with the endless skirmishing against the Volscians, Hernici, and Latins, but Livy himself is aware of this and even makes a joke or two about it. Actually, Livy does an admirable job of holding his readers' interest in spite of the repetitive nature of his material. His highly accessible, round style of writing keeps the narrative moving along, and the characters that inhabit the text are themselves so dramatic and intriguing that they easily overcome any sluggish patches in the plot. Anyone interested in ancient Rome does themselves an enormous disservice if they rely solely on modern authors for their explorations. The ancient Roman historians in general, and Livy in particular, offer us vivid accounts of this truly extraordinary place and time, artistic and historical contributions that are as exciting, interesting, surprising, suspenseful, and valuable as anything penned since.

Livy was a contemporary of Augustus, Rome's first emperor. Augustus brought peace to Rome and the empire after a lengthy period of civil strife. Though Augustus brought peace by taking power from the corrupt senate and concentrating it in his own hands, it was fashionable among the senatorial class to idealize the old days when they had exercised power. In this vein, Livy wrote his monumental History of Rome with the idea of using what he saw as the old civic virtues of Rome's past as an example to inspire his decadent contemporaries. In this sense, Livy was as much a moralist as he was a historian. But, moralist or historian, he wrote very good books. His stories were probably based on tradition as much as earlier writers. And, when his sources conflicted, he simply chose one account over another. Nevertheless, his work is one of the best surviving sources for the periods he covers, and he relates events in an amusing, instructive, and dramatic manner. Not all of Livy's work has survived. What we have has been divided by this publisher into three parts. This book is the first of the three and covers the period from the founding of Rome to the time of Camillus. Included in this period are many entertaining stories: the flight of Aeneas from Troy to Italy, the founding of Rome by Romulus, the expulsion of the last king, Tarquin, from the city,

Horatius defending the bridge over the Tiber, the victory of Cincinnatus, and many others. Though Livy is perhaps not the most rigorous historian, his work makes for fascinating and informative reading. Some of what he relates is clearly mythical in nature, but he was writing for a popular audience and his goal was to entertain as well as inform. After two thousand years, his work still does exactly that. Read this book. I liked it very much, and I think you will, too.

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