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Augustus



Synopsis

Caesar Augustus's story, one of the most riveting in western history, is filled with drama and contradiction, risky gambles and unexpected success. He began as a teenage warlord, whose only claim to power was as the heir of the murdered Julius Caesar. Mark Antony dubbed him "a boy who owes everything to a name" but in the years to come the youth outmaneuvered all the older and more experienced politicians and was the last man standing in 30 BC. Over the next half century he reinvented himself as a servant of the state who gave Rome peace and stability, and created a new system of government—the Principate or rule of an emperor. In this highly anticipated biography Goldsworthy puts his deep knowledge of ancient sources to full use, recounting the events of Augustus's long life in greater detail than ever before. Goldsworthy pins down the man behind the myths: a consummate manipulator, propagandist, and showman, both generous and ruthless. Under Augustus's rule the empire prospered, yet his success was never assured and the events of his life unfolded with exciting unpredictability. Goldsworthy captures the passion and savagery, the public image and private struggles of the real man whose epic life continues to influence western history.

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Customer Reviews

Adrian Goldsworthy has once again justified his reputation as the preeminent Roman historian of his generation in *Augustus*. The book reads like a novel. The characters are nuanced, the complexities of Roman civilization and the interconnections of the first families explored, along with a handy genealogy chart at the end. He is punctilious about his sources and admits where the evidence is questionable. Augustus was much more of a political genius than a military one, but knew his limitations and attracted those who could fill in his gaps, like Agrippa who was an excellent general. It is fascinating to watch Augustus change from someone who killed without remorse in his younger days to a mature ruler who learned to use his enemies, rather than kill them. If you are really interested in how the Roman Republic was transformed into the Roman Empire, this book is essential, as, I might add, are Goldsworthy's earlier books on Caesar, *How Rome Fell* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Although Goldsworthy cautions about making predictions about our own society based on what happened to the Romans, the similarities are all too striking.

Goldsworthy has written a masterpiece in this book, and is perhaps the best writer to produce this, hardcover edition. As you will learn, he tells the story with such ease, and there will be few books on Roman history that will be so 'readable'. My advice to any-one considering to read about Rome in that period, is to go on line and get one from Amazon Books, find a cosy spot near the fire, open up your Tawny Port, if you do not have a bottle, Get one. and settle in for a marvelous time. Goldsworthy writes history like you were there, in person. He is totally fluid in his writing style, and presents history and its characters like it is happening right then. I have a paperback edition which became thumb marked from reading, that I wanted a hardback copy for my library. As I write this, it is a cold wintery evening, in the mountains of Northwestern California, and I am looking forwards to enjoy, the rest of the evening, and the Tawny Port. Enjoy!!!!

This is very thorough - yet accessible - biography of Augustus. Goldsworthy gives us a detailed chronological biography, beginning before Augustus birth with an intro to his family and immediate forebears, including of course, Great-uncle Julius. We then move on a very steady pace through his long life to his death and immediate aftermath. Through Augustus eyes we also learn a great deal about Rome and the Mediterranean world of the times. I liked how Goldsworthy gives the reader background on the sources, the gaps in our knowledge, and competing interpretations of

events (with his conclusions and reasons). I sensed that "I Claudius" is silently in the background since a lot of what the layman knows of this era comes from that novel (or the TV series). So he considers, e.g., whether Livia had a hand in the deaths of various rivals to Tiberius. One quibble - that is not at all Goldsworthy's fault. The author included what I expect would have been helpful genealogy charts since keeping track of the forever marrying, birthing and divorcing Romans can be challenging. Kindle need to figure out a better way to make the types go graphics legible in the ebooks.

This is a very thoughtful and engaging treatment of one of the giants of history. The author not only provides a very thorough portrayal and explanation of the challenges that Augustus faced and the achievements he accomplished, but gives the reader a great deal of insight into the character and motives of the man. All in all, a very balanced and stimulating account of a person to whom we owe a large debt of gratitude for establishing a system of government that preserved Roman civilization for centuries.

This is a beautifully written biography about Caesar Augustus the adopted son of Julius Caesar. It discusses the time in which he lived, important people during his lifetime, and important events of his time. I highly recommend this book to historians and history buffs.

Goldsworthy has surely done better. This book touches on all the appropriate points, both high and low, of the career of Caesar Augustus. It details his emergence on the political stage as a cold and calculating faction leader while analyzing his blending of autocracy with republican forms. However, Goldsworthy stops there not treading more deeply into the sources to examine the paradox or complexity of the transformative rule of Caesar Augustus.

Well written, though with some repetitive passages. Read John Williams Augustus first as to glean a more human and psychological profile of Augustus, the man. Rome was lucky to have such a man, history does demonstrate, that though less efficient, Democracy is a better system.

Goldsworthy delivers again, everything seems to unfold simply in his telling of the life of Augustus. His transform from a sickly youth into Rome's greatest emperor is laid out in a style that not only takes advantage of a wide set of sources but does a great job of clearing up the myths that grew up around him. Not quite as riveting as his Julius Caesar book, but well worth reading to understand

how one man led into the other.

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