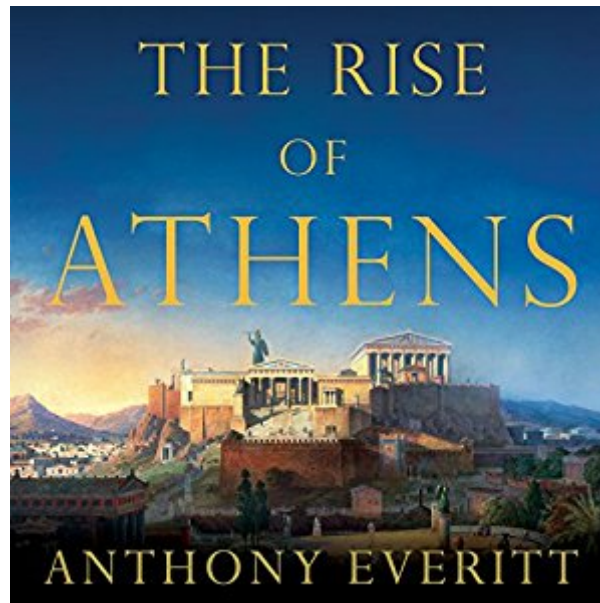


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The Rise Of Athens: The Story Of The World's Greatest Civilization



Synopsis

Filled with tales of adventure and astounding reversals of fortune, *The Rise of Athens* celebrates the city-state that transformed the world - from the democratic revolution that marked its beginning through the city's political and cultural golden age to its decline into the ancient equivalent of a modern-day university town. Anthony Everitt constructs his history with unforgettable portraits of the talented, tricky, ambitious, and unscrupulous Athenians who fueled the city's rise. An unparalleled storyteller, Everitt combines erudite, thoughtful historical analysis with stirring narrative set pieces that capture the colorful, dramatic, and exciting world of ancient Greece. Although the history of Athens is less well known than that of other world empires, the city-state's allure would inspire Alexander the Great, the Romans, and even America's own founding fathers. It's fair to say that the Athenians made possible the world in which we live today. In this peerless new work, Anthony Everitt breathes vivid life into this most ancient story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Provides an interesting view of what life in Ancient Greece was really like.

As with all of his historical works this book is no exception. I have read his "History of Rome", "Cicero", "Augustus" and have enjoyed them all. Have read books on Thucydides, Carthage, Alexander, Thermopylae, Early Greeks, and Cleopatra by other writers but Everitt is the best. Jack Kushner

The author provides a rousing tale of ancient Athens that makes you feel like you are atop the golden Acropolis with the wine dark sea in the distance watching the birth of Western civilization as democracy, philosophy, theater, technologically advanced warfare, iconic art and so much more are created in a brief span of time making for complete wonder as we find ourselves today standing on the precept where our civilization will either collapse or advance like something out of a Greek tragedy.

Bought from and review first posted on the UK site a few minutes ago... This is a well-written and entertaining book that has been put together by an author who has thoroughly researched his topic. It is targeted at so-called "general reader", writing so-called "popular history" and eminently accessible. It is also sufficiently well done that you do not realise at first glance to what extent the title does not really reflect the book's contents in two main respects. One is that the book is not only about the "Rise of Athens". It also includes about a hundred pages on Athens after the Long War, and therefore after the fall of Athens and its surrender to the Spartans. This "long farewell" "Rise of Athens" which is fact rather short when compared to the total size of the book - summarises the fourth century Athens up to the defeat of Chaeronea against Philip the King of Macedonia during which the once leading city of Greece struggled and failed to restore its past glory and hegemony. The last chapter is about how Athens was reduced into what a Byzantine bishop of the late 12th century termed a "God forsaken hole". A second point is that much of the book is in fact not so much about Athens as it is about the interactions between Athens, Sparta and the Persian Empire, to the extent that this reads at times more as a history of classical Greece than as a book centred on Athens even if the two other protagonist are treated in less detail. Having mentioned these points, it is also fair to state that they do not necessarily limit the book's value. Whether you find this book valuable or not, and to what extent, will largely depend upon what you are looking for. Although the narrative has gaps at times, the author's approach is to tell his stories by focusing on some of the main characters involved. The technique is a powerful one which makes for a lively and entertaining read and you can almost see each of the main Athenian characters - Solon, Pisistratus, Cleisthenes, Miltiades, Aristide, Themistocles, Pericles, Cleon, Alcibiades, Demosthenes and others stepping on the stage and coming under the spotlights for the author's description and review. A similar technique is used for

the major playwrights (Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes etc) with their main works being related to the political events that were happening at the time. I therefore entirely agree with the comments of another reviewer about the author's narrative being at its strongest on political history. I would even stress that it is mainly that, with the author's somewhat utopic enthusiasm in addition. There is comparatively little on the economy and trade of Athens or on every day and living conditions, perhaps because long developments on these social and economic conditions would disrupt the flow and make for a less entertaining and slower book. Moreover, what little there is relates to politics and strategy, in particular Athens need to control access to the Black Sea from which the indispensable grain fleets arrived, or her interest for Egypt or Sicily, two other "breadbaskets", for similar reasons. There is little about what goods Athens had to offer in exchange, about trading routes or about Athens monetary economy and the extent to which Athens' owls (its silver drachmas) became the international currency and the equivalent of the British Pound or the US Dollar during the 20th century. Another feature of this book is the endearing, but perhaps also questionable, enthusiasm displayed by the author when he writes about Athens' direct democracy. While he does mention some of its limits, such as the fact that the pool of citizens excluded foreigners, women and slaves, he does indeed take Pericles' funeral oration and panegyric of the Athenian democracy at face value without seeming to realise that it did not exactly work as intended. He also largely glosses over the fact that Pericles' own longevity and dominance corresponded to the Athens' "Golden Age" and a period of stability than his (mostly) less talented successors would fail to maintain. A discussion on whether and to what extent Pericles' ability to maintain himself for so long as Athens' strongman and dominate the city was compatible with real and radical Athenian democracy is entirely missing. So is an objective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such a regime, how instable it could be and how much it encouraged stasis, with the author enthusiastically believing it to be believe possible (or even ideal) nowadays thanks to electronic voting. Four stars for a good introduction, despite some limitations.

If I counted right, this is English scholar Everitt's ninth book and his eight dealing with the classical world. He writes well, sets a good scene and does a good job describing the character and actions of his players, and he knows his sources. Even when he writes popular history, which is most of what he's published, it's of a uniformly

high level, informative but equally, a pleasure to read. His approach is to tell stories, usually focusing them on the actors involved. Needless to say, the story of Athens's rise and fall provides him with an exemplary cast --from the early law-reformer Cleisthenes to Pericles, Socrates, Alcibiades and Demosthenes, Alexander of Macedon--and he makes the most of it. His narrative is strongest on political history, weaker on economics and other ancillary disciplines. He does not ignore the social sciences but the center of his narrative is men, states and politics --much like his model in ancient times, the admirable Thucydides. It is salutary to compare Everitt's book with the recent history of Rome's rise and fall, Mary Beard's SPQR (2016). There is much less talk in Everitt's account of the difficulties the scholar encounters in deciphering texts. Although Everitt does discuss the every day lives and activities of common people, his is essentially history from the top down --the history of the people who made the history. It's a good one, as so is Beard's, but Beard's account goes deeper into analysis of myth, of archaeological evidence, etc.- than Everitt. Having written that, let me reiterate: I not only enjoyed this book, I learned from it. It's a very good thing to have an accessible, lively and readable history of the rise and fall of this seminal city-state.

Mr. Everitt's book is an easy, entertaining read. "Accessible," I suppose, as some of the other reviewers put it., although I am not sure I've read an inaccessible book, other than attempting one in a foreign language in which I was not fluent. He covers far more than the rise of Athens, ending only with the death of Alexander the Great, although the rise of Macedon is only cursorily addressed, perhaps to wind up Athens' history of influence. There is plenty of information on culture, government, warfare, city life, and individual leaders, which made for interesting and wide-ranging reading. There is also quite a bit of information on the other city states, and Persia, offered in context and contrast to Athens' activities. I've read several Greek histories, and some of them can be a bit dry, but that was not the case here. Lots of interesting information, well-presented, and not overly academic.

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