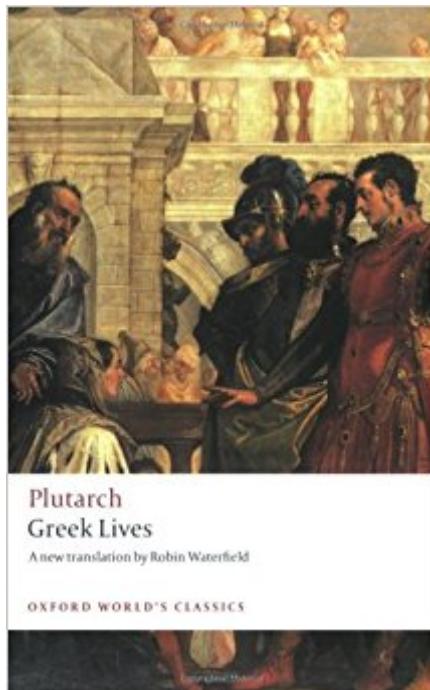


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# Greek Lives (Oxford World's Classics)



## Synopsis

"I treat the narrative of the Lives as a kind of mirror...The experience is like nothing so much as spending time in their company and living with them: I receive and welcome each of them in turn as my guest."Here, Plutarch introduces the major figures and periods of classical Greece, detailing the lives of nine personages, including Lycurgus, Solon, Themistocles, Cimon, Alexander, Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, and Agesilaus. Oxford presents the most comprehensive selection available, superbly translated and accompanied by a lucid introduction, explanatory notes, bibliographies, maps, and indexes.

**About the Series:** For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

## Book Information

Series: Oxford World's Classics

Paperback: 483 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1st Reissue edition (April 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199540055

ISBN-13: 978-0199540051

Product Dimensions: 7.6 x 0.9 x 5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #45,121 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Greece #43 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Ancient & Medieval Literature > Greek #61 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Ancient & Classical

## Customer Reviews

It is ... a privilege to be offered this sparkling new translation of nine of his Greek Lives by Robin Waterfield. ... It is ... a distinguishing trait of Waterfield's that in the interests of scholarship he will go to endless lengths to find the mot juste; ... the book entirely fulfils the publisher's own criteria for inclusion in the new Oxford World's Classics list, namely to make available 'celebrated writing' in editions equipped with 'perceptive commentary and essential back-ground information to meet the

changing needs of readers'. To do all that also at a very modest price is anergon (achievement) indeed.'Paul Cartledge, *The Anglo-Hellenic Review* 'This attractively produced addition to the Oxford World's Classics series.'Daniel Ogden, *The Classical Review* Vol.XLIX No.2

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Greek --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Excellently translated and easy to read and understand the lives of ancient Greeks. Highly recommend for anyone wanting to study antiquity

I needed this book for a summer class and it was a pretty good read. Chapters are your average text book chapters, maybe a little shorter but not by much. Informative and I learned some new things.

Interesting bios of Greek historical figures. Enjoyed learning more about Alexander, Lycurgus and Alcibiades. Others were not as exciting. Would have helped to have a bit more background on Greek history before listening to this book.

Clean book

Some of these bios are simply fascinating, especially the ones of Lycurgus, Alexander the Great and Themistocles. Plutarch tends to do character sketches, as opposed to lengthy reports of battles. For example, most of the military campaigns of Alexander the Great are simply glossed over. However, he does show the moral actions and personalities of his characters. He is also a very good writer and fun to read; not too dry at all. I would suggest this book for several reasons:1) To decide if you would like to read more Plutarch. 2) You have mastered ancient history and are looking for character portrayals of these people. 3) You are looking for an introduction for study of the ancients.

I hate Plutarch, if only because he is indispensable. His numerous Lives are all that is left of large sections of Greek and Roman history, or are essential corroboration for other, scarce sources. To modern readers, Plutarch can easily sound annoying. His portraits are invariably red-cheeked and gleaming-eyed. Vice and virtue are his main measures of men (and the few women). 'His skin used

to emit a delightful odour and... his mouth and whole body used to be bathed in a fragrance which filled his clothes,' he says of Alexander. And later: 'his self-restraint was apparent in his stubborn disregard for physical pleasures. He also had less penchant for wine than is generally thought. He gained his reputation because he dragged out the time he took over each cup, but it was time spent talking rather than drinking...' Yeah, right. Yet this is excellent, colourful, and entertaining biography. The characters jump out of the page. The times are evoked magnificently. Some people like to see in Plutarch timeless lessons on human psychology and behaviour; without going so far, his Lives certainly provide unmatched insights into the thoughts and beliefs of the ancients. As to history, one needs to be aware how this came to us. In antiquity, works were copied in schools, especially of rhetoric. Thus what ensured they were reproduced in large numbers, and had a chance of survival in the ensuing Dark Age, was style, not content. Likewise, medieval copyists, all monks, were interested in the moral lessons of the works they preserved. (There are exceptions to this: invaluable papyri were found intact in the Egyptian desert; but these are rare.) Plutarch passed both the stylistic and moral tests. But he lacks the structure of a Thucydides or a Polybius. His works are not graspable without context - a context which the introductions contained in this edition don't quite supply, even if they help. So the history enthusiast needs to be warned: this is great biography, but to the historian it is only supplementary, if essential, material. This edition contains only nine of Plutarch's Greek Lives: Lycurgus, Solon, Themistocles, Cimon, Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, Agesilaus, and Alexander. A number of the less prominent characters treated by Plutarch need to be looked for in other editions (Theseus, Pelopidas, Pyrrhus, Lysander...).

Oh sorry, wrong time period for the non-existent quote. I took Greek philosophy in college. Now I remember why I did not care for it, even when I did my best to pretend I was a fellow Greek citizen of the period. So in my golden years, I thought why not try and catch up on my reading and a subject I was less than stellar in so long ago. Even with a week in Athens staying at the Grande Bretagne with a spacious balcony and an excellent view of the Acropolis, as a primer, I discovered to my disappointment that I still was not ready for Plutarch and/or this translation. I am sure the book is fine, but just not for me.

Without a doubt, it is fascinating to read biographies based on ancient sources that no longer exist. Plutarch's Lives draws from multiple such primary sources as well as scholarly works from ancient Greece. There's no denying this. Further, much of the information on the ancient Greeks Plutarch writes about is not today available from other sources. The biographies themselves were very

popular when they were written, which explains why they were preserved and we can read them today. Reading only the Greek bios without the Roman ones against which almost all of them were paired up with has shortcomings, but it depends what you want to get out of the collection, though the introductions do a nice job of filling this information in. This edition itself has very nice 4-page introductions to each biography as well as a very nice, longer introduction to the biographies as an entirety. The footnotes are very helpful. I wanted to read all of them, but because they were listed separately in the back of the volume, it was extremely disruptive constantly flipping back and forth. I'd gladly pay double for an edition with footnotes included in the text, or at least at the bottom of each page. The translation was fine, no complaints here. On the down side, the biographies themselves tend to be more about the persons themselves than about factual/solid historical information. It's like reading about how George Washington never told a lie, threw a silver dollar across the Potomac, and had ill-fitting dentures, as opposed to how Washington helped create a new nation. Frequently, the footnotes point out that other sources portray the subject differently. I was never sure when Plutarch was bending the facts to fit the theme he was trying to get across. I, personally, was most interested in the Alexander bio, but was somewhat let down because of the above reason. The Themistocles and Pericles bios had some interesting information and the Lycurgus bio provided many insights into Sparta.

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