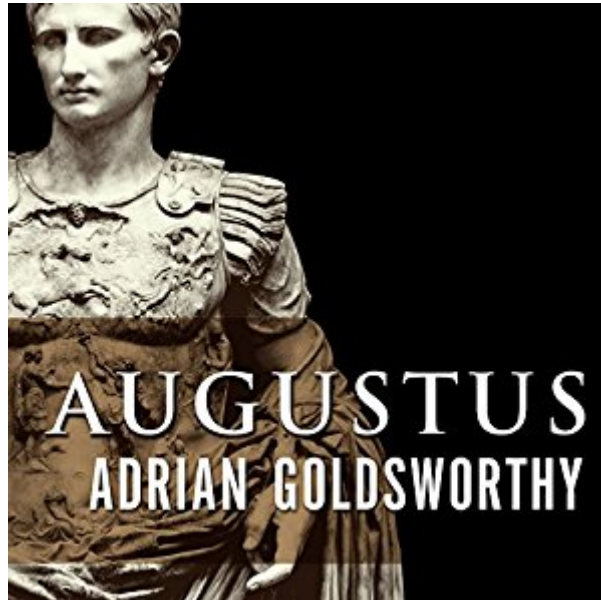




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Augustus: First Emperor Of Rome



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. Adrian 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.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hours 24 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: August 26, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00MY9ZZGY

Best Sellers Rank: #22 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Rome #26 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Ancient #110 in Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Rome

Customer Reviews

I have read many books on Cesar and Octavian and love ancient Roman history. This book reads easily (sometimes it seems more a novel than a non-fiction book) and offers a great amount of information. However, I have to say that some of the claims the author makes seem personal theories or suppositions rather than true facts. Since there are not many footnotes, one cannot easily distinguish when the author is telling a proven fact or rather a likely fact or reason for a specific course of action. I would recommend this for someone for a "beginner" without much background on Augustus life. Someone more read or knowledgeable on Augustus' life might prefer a different book and will probably feel "shocked" of some of the claims.

I agree with the other reviewers that this writer does not seem to know his history. And yes, I too was baffled at some of his claims and assertions made in the introduction. Some things simply strain credulity upon reading. I do not believe Augustus had any sort of plan with anyone as to his succession. Livia had worked the plan out years before. Nor do I believe for a minute that Augustus arranged the murder of Posthumus with the writer going on to describe Augustus' visit to him, complete with tears and embraces. On the surface, his telling is preposterous. If indeed Augustus had made arrangements for the murder of his grandson...the flesh and blood of his own daughter and greatest friend Agrippa -- then why on earth would he ever make the voyage to visit him after having done so? Posthumus was banished, period. It's not as if Augustus had any obligation, nor Posthumus any expectation, of such a visit. And Livia smearing 'ointment' on the figs? Now, let me ask you, if you picked a piece of fruit off a tree, and it was covered in a neosporin-type substance, would you eat it? His assertion about Augustus being sent on a 'mop-up' operation to take out a group of some 5000 survivors of Spartacus' group is also something I have never heard before. Right then and there I checked this guy's sources. He cites the customarily classical works, although nothing in his book is footnoted, and then provides what I consider a lightweight bibliography, most of the works extremely recent. I guess what floors me the most is that apparently Everett has written several books about this period. Based on what I've seen so far - and I'm unsure if I'm even going to continue reading this - I consider this man neither a historian nor a scholar.

I was very impressed by the work. I've read a number of books concerning this era in Rome and about Augustus. But this book surprised me by being very interesting, even without any new information. I would also recommend John Williams novel Augustus as a work of great insight.

I thought it was a well written, interesting and engaging piece of nonfiction. Plenty of information about his public image, but also a look into his inner circle and the intrigues that whirled around him. What can I say? I like Roman history. Recommended.

Anthony Everitt follows up his excellent biography of the Roman politician, lawyer, and writer Cicero with a strong biography of the first Roman emperor, Augustus (born Gaius Octavius in 63 BC). If one adds Goldsworthy's well done recent biography of Julius Caesar, one then has a trio of excellent biographies that help make the political intrigues of Rome in the late Republic and early Empire come to life. The challenges facing the author include holes in the life story of the man who

became Augustus, leaving certain key questions about his life unanswered (nicely outlined in the last chapter). Writing the biography of someone from two thousand years ago is a daunting task, but one that Everitt ends up pulling off well. The narrative traces the life of Octavius from his childhood onward. What we see is a young man with a lot of grit and determination--and luck. His great uncle, Julius Caesar, became his patron and adopted him, providing a jump start to his career. After Caesar's violent death, Octavius showed political skills by allying with Mark Antony and Lepidus to create a triumvirate, in opposition to those who killed Caesar (whose leaders included Cassius and Brutus). The book shows how, with great patience, one of his greatest attributes, Octavius slowly increased his power and authority. With some exceptional friends and co-leaders (for instance, Agrippa), he ended up defeating Mark Antony and ascending to power. The book shows the nature of that ascent, the value of his patience (compared with the impatience of his great uncle), the way that he used his power to stabilize and enhance the Roman Empire, his continual efforts to maintain peace in Rome, his intolerance toward his own family, his dilemmas at trying to organize the succession. All in all, a very good biography of one of the more important figures in the West.

Very fun read! While I'm more than sure that some bits are hyperbole, the book does a good job of keeping the reader entertained. Some parts read a bit like a soap opera, but a lot of history does. So long as the reader keeps in mind that some bits may be exaggerated (both because the emperor himself exaggerated in propaganda or because Everitt exaggerated in order to entertain) it's a great read and a great start for anyone looking to learn more about Augustus, the Roman Empire, and the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

It is interesting that for a man so iconically successful, he suffered from terrible health and some tremendous loss of nerve during battle, nevertheless he had the capacity to recognize and use good advice.

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