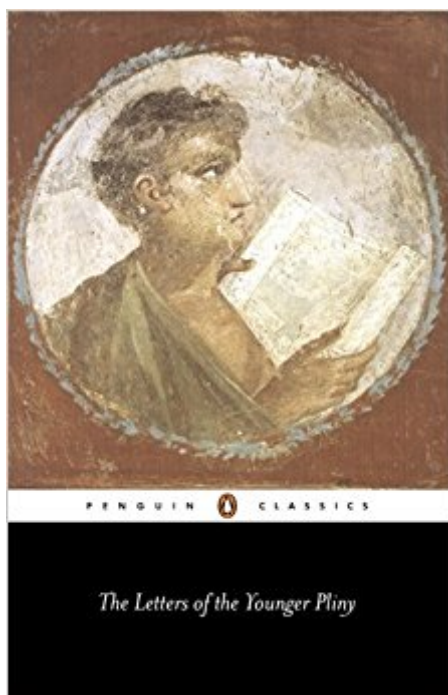


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The Letters Of The Younger Pliny (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Providing a series of fascinating views of Imperial Rome, The Letters of the Younger Pliny also offer one of the fullest self-portraits to survive from classical times. Pliny's lively and very personal letters address an astonishing range of topics, from a deeply moving account of his uncle's death in the eruption that engulfed Pompeii, to observations on the early Christians "a desperate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths" from descriptions of everyday life in Rome, with its scandals and court cases, to Pliny's life in the country. 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In high school I was an eager student of Latin, and so having read Caesar, Sallustius, Livius and many other great authors in the original, I was under the impression of having a good background in Roman history. And so it came that I didn't read anything about this particular historical period in at least fifteen years. Pliny's letters made me realise how superficial and cliché-ridden my understanding of that epoch was. It seems that as a high school student one is focused on the language to such a degree that the broader outlines of the enveloping history simply recede into the

background. As a successful, professional lawyer, as a member of a respected family, patron of a vast network of clients, as an accomplished writer, a more or less efficient administrator and prosperous land owner, Pliny embodies the quintessence of the political and cultural elite in the imperial capital. His carefully groomed letters reveal a fascinating picture of the mature Empire. What emerges from this book is a panoramic picture of a world that is not even very different from our own. Admittedly, the summit of the societal pyramid in 2nd century Rome was populated by a much smaller and more select group of people compared to the upper middle class in the advanced economies of today. But apart from the numbers, the life style of these two groups seems to have a lot of things in common. Take geographical mobility as an example. Pliny was originally descendant from the Como area in Northern Italy. Obviously, most of his time was spent in the capital, where he had a villa at the shores of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Additionally, he had an estate in what is now Tuscany. Finally there was his wife's estate in Campania, which is pretty far down the heel of the Italian peninsula.

To start Pliny the Younger (not to be confused with the elder) lived from 61AD-113AD and was a notable lawyer and administrator in the Roman Empire. He certainly lived through some turbulent times living through the terror of Domitian who killed many leaders of the Stoics. Later after Domitian was assassinated Pliny and his friends Suetonius and Cornelius Tacitus condemned Domitian and vindicated Helvidius Priscus against his charges. He spent a career in various government positions and finally commissioned as the emperor's rep. in Bithynia and Pontus. Anyways this collection has a good introduction explaining the life of Pliny which is an added bonus when reading his letters. The introduction and letters really helps one become acquainted with Pliny the man and value the life he lived nearly 2000 years ago. This collection of letters contains an assortment of intimate personal correspondence with friends on various topics and book ten of this collection contains his correspondence with the Emperor Trajan. Of the more famous letters are the ones he wrote to friend Cornelius Tacitus reminiscing about his uncles and his own experience during the Mt. Vesuvius eruption. His own experience is interesting, discussing as he and his mother left Misenum they were traveling down the road when the massive volcanic cloud engulfed everyone in total darkness (scary stuff). Also of importance is his correspondence with Trajan which highlights some of the early encounters with Christians and Pliny seeking of advice from Trajan on dealing with the issue are worth looking into. Also contained in the correspondence is a treasure trove of interesting examples dealing with the administrative aspects of the Roman Empire which are quite fascinating also.

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