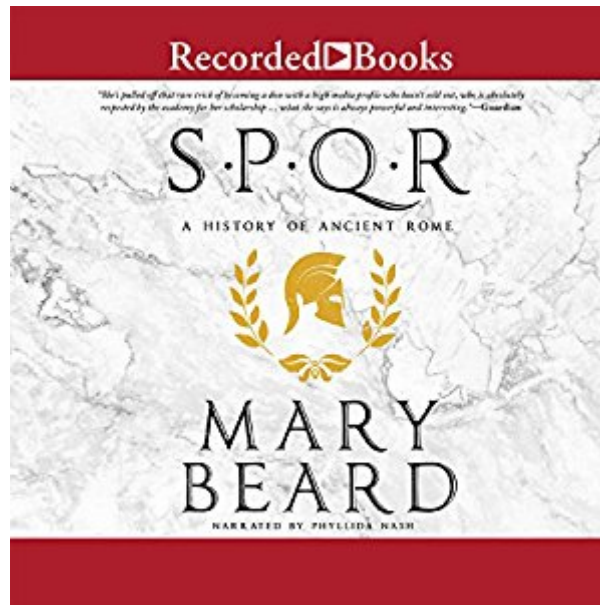


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SPQR: A History Of Ancient Rome



Synopsis

A sweeping, revisionist history of the Roman Empire from one of our foremost classicists. Ancient Rome was an imposing city even by modern standards, a sprawling imperial metropolis of more than a million inhabitants, a "mixture of luxury and filth, liberty and exploitation, civic pride and murderous civil war" that served as the seat of power for an empire that spanned from Spain to Syria. Yet how did all this emerge from what was once an insignificant village in central Italy? In *SPQR*, world-renowned classicist Mary Beard narrates the unprecedented rise of a civilization that even 2,000 years later still shapes many of our most fundamental assumptions about power, citizenship, responsibility, political violence, empire, luxury, and beauty. From the foundational myth of Romulus and Remus to 212 CE, nearly a thousand years later, when the emperor Caracalla gave Roman citizenship to every free inhabitant of the empire, *SPQR* (the abbreviation of "The Senate and People of Rome") not just examines how we think of ancient Rome but challenges the comfortable historical perspectives that have existed for centuries by exploring how the Romans thought of themselves: how they challenged the idea of imperial rule, how they responded to terrorism and revolution, and how they invented a new idea of citizenship and nation. Opening the audiobook in 63 BCE with the famous clash between the populist aristocrat Catiline and Cicero, the renowned politician and orator, Beard animates this "terrorist conspiracy", which was aimed at the very heart of the republic, demonstrating how this singular event would presage the struggle between democracy and autocracy that would come to define much of Rome's subsequent history. Illustrating how a classical democracy yielded to a self-confident and self-critical empire, *SPQR* reintroduces us, though in a wholly different way, to famous and familiar characters.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hours and 30 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: November 19, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B01865AVD6

Best Sellers Rank: #2 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Ancient #5 in Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Rome

Customer Reviews

Posted a couple of minutes before on .co.uk This book from Professor Mary Beard is in many respects a masterpiece, but it is also a somewhat original one because it covers the history of Rome, but only its first millennium. The period starts with its foundation, traditionally set at 753 BC, and it stops around to 212 AD, when the Emperor most well-known as Caracalla made all free inhabitants of the Roman Empire into Roman citizens, therefore changing what it meant to be a Roman and making more than 30 million provincials into Romans overnight, to quote the author. The event was indeed momentous, as rightly emphasised by the author, but this was largely because of its far-reaching consequences, and these may only have appeared overtime. It can seem odd to publish a book on the history of Rome or on the Roman Empire and stop in AD 212, knowing, as we do, that the Roman Empire continued for over two and a half centuries for its Western part, and at least a further century and a half in the East. This is where the book's title, its meaning, and the author's intentions are important to understand. SPQR is the acronym of the Senate and the People of Rome. The meaning refers to a period where the Senate and the People exercised supreme power in the city of Rome, which was a city-state to begin with, then the capital city of Italy, and the capital of an Empire. It also refers to a period where they appeared to exercise such power, as was the case after the so-called Roman Revolution from Augustus onwards, during what used to be called the period of the Principate.

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