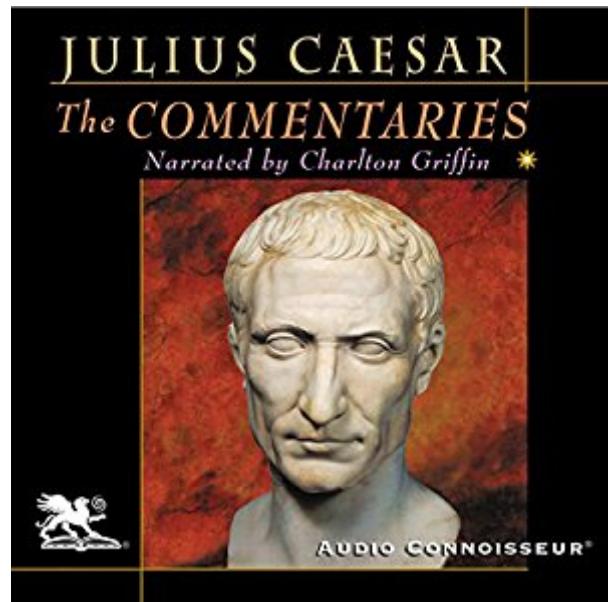


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The Commentaries



Synopsis

Julius Caesar wrote his exciting Commentaries during some of the most grueling campaigns ever undertaken by a Roman army. The Gallic Wars and The Civil Wars constitute the greatest series of military dispatches ever written. As literature, they are representative of the finest expressions of Latin prose in its "golden" age, a benchmark of elegant style and masculine brevity imitated by young schoolboys for centuries. One of the most daring and brilliant generals of all time, Julius Caesar combined the elements of tactical genius with the shrewdness of a master politician. He was an astute judge of men's character - their strengths and weaknesses. Whenever possible, he exercised restraint and mercy even when his worst enemies were in his power. But he also knew when and how to mete out stern punishment and his swift retaliations became a hallmark of his career. With his charismatic leadership, his powerful intellect and his magnetic personal charm, Julius Caesar became the idol of men and women everywhere. The fanatic loyalty of his troops and the adulation of the Roman public propelled him to the pinnacle of power. Historian Will Durant called him "the most complete man that antiquity produced." Follow along in this recording as Julius Caesar in 50 B.C. undertakes the awesome enterprise of subduing savage Gaul, an area roughly the size of Texas. That task was barely completed before his enemies in Rome struck, igniting the bloody Civil War that engulfed most of the Roman Empire and afterward left Caesar in supreme power.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

I purchased this as a gift and found this to be the better edition currently available. Initially I

purchased the Kessinger Publishing Edition. I found the print in that edition to be very muddy and the overall presentation not as clean (huge margins which crowded the text). This edition is clean and easy to read.

This classic is well worth the time of any buff on Roman History. If you are a true buff you already own it! There are eight "books" comprising about 15-25 pages apiece. Each book a reflection on the previous year's effort in Gaul. The style is plain and to the point. Written in order to curry favor in Rome and document his campaigns, Caesar is guilty of inflating enemy numbers according to some historians. Never the less he painstakingly records the relations between the tribes of the time, the Gauls, Celts, and Germanic peoples are all referenced. The final three books regarding the Civil War are longer. Ramon L. Jimenez's "Caesar against the Celts" is a great companion for this one. He has a good bibliography as well since this translation of the "Commentaries" is lacking of one. For fans of HBO's Rome television show, check out Book V chapter XLIV.

In this one volume are the complete commentaries of Julius Caesar. This edition is clean, complete and unabridged. This is one of those books that belongs on everyone's private bookshelf; to be read and re-read from time to time. To have the observations and thoughts of one of the greatest generals of all time at your fingertips is one of the true joys of literacy. If you haven't read Caesar's Commentaries, you have missed something of real value. It's never too late. Do yourself a favor.

Mostly written by Caesar, this book provides an insightful view of ancient warfare from a general's perspective, including such topics as the siege, infantry/cavalry interaction, the value of enemy awareness, military engineering, intelligence, moral building, calculated risk, and so on. It also describes such topics as the ancient use of the defeated providing hostages, the temperament of the Celtic tribes, the competition for the areas west of the Rhine (Gaul), the lifestyles and state of civilization of the Germanic tribes (this may be the first recorded account of the Germans), and political strategies. Note that Caesar writes in the third person, which almost makes it seem like it was written by an impartial historian (which is obviously not the case... Hence, its accuracy must be questioned to some degree). The only downside of this book is its translation, which I compare to reading an old version of the bible. Sentences run very long, paragraphs cover entire pages, verbs are placed in odd parts of sentences, etc. It takes a while to get through it. It is, however, worth the effort, and is an interesting window into the past.

This audible edition of Julius Caesar's Commentaries is beautifully narrated. The download is broken up into two parts, each about 6 to 7 hours long. The first part covers Books 1 to 7 of the Gallic Wars and the second part covers Book 8 of the Gallic Wars and then the Books of the Civil Wars. The narrator has a wonderful voice and reads the translation in a clear and concise manner. My only complaint is the difficulty to keep your place. Also, this edition comes with a short biography of Julius Caesar at the beginning. That in itself is fine, but it was a bit of a hassle to actually pin point where book one picked up. Again, it is a truly minor gripe to a really excellent product.

I am not learned in Latin but the translation did not flow in English. The tenses changed so suddenly and inappropriately that I suspect the translator of being too literal and the end result was difficult to read in English. It gave the impression of one step above a computer translation. I can't imagine Caesar and his scribes being so crude. I must read another edition before I have an opinion on the book—it was difficult and tedious to read. Maps would have been helpful.

I would strongly recommend getting a higher quality, clearer translation. This version of the classic is near incomprehensible compared to the Penguin or Oxford versions.

Caesar's Commentaries are an essential read for anyone who aspires to a good education. For several centuries, English public schools (meaning private) required their students to translate Caesar's Commentaries from the Latin. Since the decline of written Latin for church and scholarly purposes, translating Caesar has fallen out of favor. But, the main reasons for reading Caesar still persist: It provides an excellent model of clear, simple exposition and demonstrates how a man of substance should express himself. Make no mistake about it, Caesar was a clever, calculating, complicated man, but when he wrote, he was certain about what he intended to say and said it. MacDevitt's translation is not that of a schoolboy; it is that of a school-master. Where there is a subtle reference in Caesar's prose, MacDevitt captured it in his English translation clearly and succinctly. When you read Caesar's Commentaries, you are not reading the rantings of a third-rate politician. You are reading the words of one of the most important figures in the entire history of the human race. The accomplishments of Julius Caesar, whether for good or evil, will stand as a monument to human ambition for all time.

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