



The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World's Greatest Civilization

Anthony Everitt

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A magisterial account of how a tiny city-state in ancient Greece became history's most influential civilization, from the bestselling author of acclaimed biographies of Cicero, Augustus, and Hadrian

Filled with tales of adventure and astounding reversals of fortune, *The Rise of Athens* celebrates the city-state that transformed the world--from the democratic revolution that marked its beginning, through the city's political and cultural golden age, to its decline into the ancient equivalent of a modern-day university town.

Anthony Everitt constructs his history with unforgettable portraits of the talented, tricky, ambitious, and unscrupulous Athenians who fueled the city's rise: Themistocles, the brilliant naval strategist who led the Greeks to a decisive victory over their Persian enemies; Pericles, arguably the greatest Athenian statesman of them all; and the wily Alcibiades, who changed his political allegiance several times during the course of the Peloponnesian War--and died in a hail of assassins' arrows. Here also are riveting you-are-there accounts of the milestone battles that defined the Hellenic world: Thermopylae, Marathon, and Salamis among them. An unparalleled storyteller, Everitt combines erudite, thoughtful historical analysis with stirring narrative set pieces that capture the colorful, dramatic, and exciting world of ancient Greece.

Although the history of Athens is less well known than that of other world empires, the city-state's allure would inspire Alexander the Great, the Romans, and even America's own Founding Fathers. It's fair to say that the Athenians made possible the world in which we live today. In this peerless new work, Anthony Everitt breathes vivid life into this most ancient story.

Praise for *The Rise of Athens*

"[An] invaluable history of a foundational civilization . . . combining impressive scholarship with involving narration." --*Booklist*

"Compelling . . . a comprehensive and entertaining account of one of the most transformative societies in Western history . . . Everitt recounts the high points of Greek history with flair and aplomb." --*Shelf Awareness*

"Highly readable . . . Everitt keeps the action moving." --*Kirkus Reviews*

Praise for Anthony Everitt's *The Rise of Rome*

"Rome's history abounds with remarkable figures. . . . Everitt writes for the informed and the uninformed general reader alike, in a brisk, conversational style, with a modern attitude of skepticism and realism." --*The Dallas Morning News*

"[A] lively and readable account . . . Roman history has an uncanny ability to resonate with contemporary events." --*Maclean's*

"Elegant, swift and faultless as an introduction to his subject." --*The Spectator*

"An engrossing history of a relentlessly pugnacious city's 500-year rise to empire." --*Kirkus Reviews*

"Fascinating history and a great read."--*Chicago Sun-Times*

The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World's Greatest Civilization Details

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From Reader Review The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World's Greatest Civilization for online ebook

Chris Jaffe says

This is a really good book. It's well-written & easy to read. It covers a lot of ground and covers it well.

Why only four stars? Well, there isn't one single good reason, but a group of reasons in and of themselves fairly minor, but combined... bugged me a bit. Maybe more than they should. While the title says, "The Rise of Athens" - it's really the rise of Athens, the plateauing of Athens, and the fall of Athens. So the title gives a false impression of the material. Why title it that way? Well, Everitt's last book was "The Rise of Rome." (The cover jacket even says, "Anthony Everitt: Bestselling author of The Rise to Rome.") That book really was on the rise, not the entire story. So the title here is branding. Who is Everitt? He's an academic who specializes in ancient history, with four previous books. All those books were on Rome. So.... Everitt is an academic a bit outside his area of speciality who is apparently writing this book to cash in on the success of his previous book in the most lucrative way possible.

Look, I get it. And there's nothing wrong with it. There's nothing wrong with pop history - which is what this is. (By "pop history" I mean a work for a broader audience that isn't necessarily breaking any new ground in terms of scholarship, argument, or anything). There's a place for that. I'm fine with an academic doing pop history - hey, if someone can do it well, may as well have the masses here it from an academic than Some Random Guy in Tacoma. But the whole combination..... like I said, for some reason it bugs me a little. Look, this is taking entirely too many keystrokes. Let's move on.

The book itself is fantastic. One of my favorite parts was a few pages he had on Sparta, and how hard life was there and how they built Spartan character. Some of the more interesting points were Athens after the Persian Wars. The Delian League fought against Persia, and eventually won a peace. But Athens benefitted from it and wanted it to keep going. The others had been given a choice between supplying ships or money - and most picked money, and Athens used their naval supremacy to their advantage. They initially got along well with Sparta after the war, and their main leader was generally pro-Sparta. He fell from power after Athens helped Sparta put down a revolt among their subject people, and many in Athens didn't like doing that at all. Pericles rose and took a harder line against Sparta.

The Peloponnesian War led to civil wars breaking out across Greece, between factions that sided with either Athens or Sparta - and it often broke into democratic/autocratic sides. The island of Lesbos, a free ally, revolted in 428 and was put down. The entire adult male population was nearly executed and the women/kids enslaved - but that order was rescinded at the last minute. Later on in the war, though, stuff like that actually happened, including the port of Scione. Melos led to the play The Trojan Women. Athens actually staged a recovery after the Sicily fiasco, but it was done by scraping the bottoms of their reserves and couldn't be sustained.

Most of Aristotle's works have been lost. He did a lot of philosophy for the general reader, but those have all been lost. He analyzed 158 Greek states, but only a study of Athens survives. He did lots of scientific overviews, which do survive.

Melora says

A fine narrative history of ancient Greece, focused on Athens in its rise to eminence and then, more briefly, on its decline. The emphasis is strongly on political history -- power struggles among Athenians, and those between Athens and other city states and foreign powers -- but Everitt includes plenty of social history and amusing anecdotes and keeps the story moving along in a lively sort of way. He brings in tales from myths and contemporary dramas, and, particularly when telling of Athens's early days, he relates stories which he admits are likely apocryphal with cheerful relish. I listened to this as an audiobook, read by Michael Page, and enjoyed it.

Tony says

The Rise of Athens covers such interesting material that it is a generally enjoyable read despite Everitt's lackluster writing. Far from focusing solely on the rise of Athens, this book chronicles the city's rise and fall. It also devotes considerable attention to Sparta and, to a lesser extent, to the Persian empire and Macedonia. While mostly centered on politics and warfare, the author also highlights some important works of Athenian art and literature. Overall, The Rise of Athens is a tidy summary of ancient Greece, albeit a clumsily written one.

Taylor Burrows says

This was actually quite a fun book to read about some general Greek history. Although, admittedly, the title of the book might be a bit misleading. The principle theme of the book was more or less about Hellenas as a whole rather than just Athens. After all, it would be difficult to write a book about Athens without including the political ramifications of everything they did going on around them.

However, at the beginning of the book Everitt clarifies that his initial intent was to mainly hit the respective stories primarily revolving around Athens, Sparta, and Persia. Throughout, there are many events which derail this limited perspective when he starts to explain what other poleis were up to at the time in order to better explain the rationale for the actions of the Greek states.

However, the author does tend to hit most of the major power players that made Hellenes anything special and some of the major events of which are covered, concisely, are:

Arrival of Dorians/Alluding to decline of Mycenaeans,
Colonization by Greeks especially including the Ionian Cities,
The unification of Persia,
Athenians aiding Ionians revolt from their Satrap,
The resulting invasion of Marathon,
The Greeks partnering up against Xerxes,
The golden years following the Persian invasions to include Athenian empire,
A very lengthy summation of the Peloponnesian war events,
The rise of Macedon

Overall, the book was about the quality you would expect from Anthony Everitt, but I feel like only a couple

of major points were glossed over. At the end of the book is about a page's worth of brief passing comments about how Alexander found Greek principles and culture to be so absolutely fabulous that he dragged it all about the Middle East. However, I feel like in such a short scope of writing, a reader may gloss over the implications that he's making. For example, the Romans later looked to the Greeks seeing that their own idea of being well cultured was imitating the kinds of philosophies that were important to the Greeks, and in particular, the Athenians. The Romans, debatably as much so as Alexander, helped to propagate the lasting legacy that was Greek culture and with it even the principles of government that originated with the demos. Alas, the only time Romans are mentioned is "the Greeks, and later the Romans, would send their young to study in Athens for a year [for rhetoric and oratory]". If there was a point to be made by writing a book about Athens, an important selling point is to note how largely that one polis has impacted Western civilization and how that came to be.

Those thoughts aside, it was an entertaining history book.

Mike says

Zdania nie zmieni?em, chcia?bym je?dzi? na wakacje do antycznej Grecji.

Steven Walle says

This was a faboulas book on the rise and fall of the Greek empire. It was very detailed and the author made you feel as if you were actually there with the Athinians.

I am especially interested in this topic because I am to visit Sicily and the Greek Isles this autumn.

Enjoy and Be Blessed

Peter Mcloughlin says

History of the world's first democracy Athens. I enjoyed this book. It is written in a more old school historical narrative that harkens back to 19th-century classism. It covers the history the way someone circa 1925 might have read about the Greeks. Obviously, it is a current work and doesn't suffer from the particular failings of history from that era. It does have some of its virtues of telling a good story and giving a straight digestible narrative. Sometimes people want to read a popular history that isn't so bound up in present concerns. Escapism sure but someone reading about the ancient Greeks might not be particularly interested in tying it into the latest news reports. I enjoyed it.

Kirk says

I received this book as a Goodreads Giveaway. This book works as a highlight of the major characters and events in the ancient Greek world revolving around the city of Athens, and the author provides context to the development of Athens through insights into its major competitors: Sparta and the Persian Empire. Although

the structured focus on these three regions is beneficial for the reader, there is less depth on the city of Athens itself and its connections to the Mediterranean world.

On a minor aside, the author's brief observation of related Jewish topics was a bit shaky. Everitt states that the book of Isaiah bestows upon the Persian King Cyrus "the honorific title of Messiah." Perhaps messiah, but not Messiah. The difference matters in Jewish culture and history. Everitt also refers to the Hebrew God as Jehovah, a bit old-fashioned, rather than Yahweh. Perhaps, I am being petty, or perhaps we can be thankful that the author did not write a book on the rise of the ancient Hebrews. Either way, this was a fairly straightforward read and worth the time.

Josiphine/Tessa says

3.5 stars

I found the first half of this book to be difficult to follow as an audiobook. It was interesting and well-written but better suited for print, I think. I enjoyed the second half more.

Poor Sparta. The only thing they do better than Athens is warfare and then Athens had to be the best at that too.

Sam says

The Rise of Athens is a very accessible account of the formation of the Athenian democracy in Ancient Greece, and gives great context to its rise versus that of its main foils, Sparta and Persia. There's a wealth of facts and information about life in Ancient Greece, from culture and literature to warfare and tactics. It's easy to read and very informative for relative beginners or newcomers to knowledge of Ancient Greece (or in my case refreshers), but for me, what sets apart four and five star nonfiction from three star nonfiction is the writing itself. In this case, Everitt's style was again very easy to process and pick up new facts, but it could be a bit dry, not always engaging, could get hung up on pieces of minutia that could bog down the narrative flow, and ultimately felt more like nicely presented facts with the larger story of Athens in the background, rather than letting the narrative history take center stage. I did like how Everitt would weave in the rituals of belief and the strategic use of the gods by prominent Greeks throughout. And it's definitely sparked me to return to Plutarch's *Lives*, specifically *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives* and perhaps even *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

Deanna Madden says

An excellent introduction to the rise and fall of a great city that played such an important role in Western civilization. Anthony Everitt's book is well written, provides helpful maps, a glossary, time line, and an index, and communicates effectively to the general reader. The book was helpful to read as I worked on my

final draft of a novel set in Ancient Athens. It was both informative and interesting, and I liked the way Everitt chose to organize his material—as the story of a city and its people—which appealed to the novelist in me. If you would like to know more about the fascinating history of this unique city, *The Rise of Athens* is a great way to learn about it.

Matty Esco says

Not what I'd call a thrilling read, but I learned a lot about ancient Greek history and a handful of pretentious English words. I'd never really thought about the city-state breakdowns within Greece back in the day, and this helped to make that a lot more clear. Everyone thought everyone was barbarians, but Sparta was widely respected because they were so austere and passionate about killing, while Athens was sort of like the school chess club.

Bradley says

Thanks to Netgalley for this ARC!

This is probably one of the most readable accounts of the Athens that I've ever read, punctuated with a little bit of the things we all know, like how the *Iliad* informs their lives, the huge importance of Sparta, and of course some of the interesting accounts of our favorite Know-Nothing, Socrates.

Even though I have a huge soft spot in my heart for philosophy in general and loved the brief accounts in here, make no mistake: This book is all about the big players of the political history, first and foremost. Wars are an obvious part of it, as is the evolution or even the spontaneous rise of democracy out of almost nothing, but it's the characters of history that makes this book stand out.

It's definitely good enough for a newbie fan of Grecian history and it's readable enough for everyone else, too.

My only complaint may be a personal one. Perhaps we didn't really need the fall of Ilium in as much detail. Yes, it's a cultural thing, but a quicker overview at the beginning before diving head first into the good stuff might have been even better.

Same thing goes for all the extras of Socrates, and that's even though I love reading about him.

Honestly? I'd have been perfectly content on hearing about more of the others that made up the rise of the penultimate Greek City-State. We love to focus on the iconic people, I know, I know, but he was never a real mover or shaker in the political scene, just in the evolution of thought and philosophy.

But I did get a real kick out of all the Satires, though. They gave me a much better story and a more rounded feel of the life.

All in all, I'm perfectly happy with this history. It lets me dive in with a great overview and a telling of a pretty epic and perilous story from the first beginnings, the realization that they were a power against Xerxes, all the way through Alexander. Fun stuff!

Piker7977 says

Everitt's *The Rise of Athens* is a straight forward narrative study of one of the most interesting civilizations in history. The reader encounters relevant context about this particular polis along with basic insight into Sparta, Persia, and Macedon. I read this after reading a couple of books about Ancient Greece and Athenian Democracy. While this book may be a little pedestrian for the hardcore enthusiast and a little esoteric for the reader looking for a general overview of Ancient Greece, I found it to be a good tie-in read that used the history of Athens as a thread sowing together what I previously encountered. I wished it would have covered a little more of Alexander but our author chose to conclude his work with Philip. This works well as we understand a little more of Philip's contribution to the rise of Macedon and its relation with Athens. Everitt's treatment of Philip is a good counter to popular conceptions that portray the Macedonian king as a reckless tyrant.

The Rise of Athens is a worthwhile read. Straight forward history without a lot of flare. And there's nothing wrong with that.

Peter Goodman says

"The Rise of Athens: the story of the world's greatest civilization," by Anthony Everitt (Random House, (2016). Ordinary subtitled hyperbole aside, this is a fascinating book. The writing is so clear and accessible that one doubts the author is more than a popularizer. Except that he knows Greek and Latin (most of the translations, colloquial and fluent, scattered throughout are his own), and all the scholarship and archeology. The fact that always surprises me is that the true peak of Athenian culture, when the city was at its political and military zenith and simultaneously home to Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Socrates, Plato, Pericles, Alcibiades, Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides and so forth, lasted little more than 100 years. They were all of nearly the same generation. They knew one another. They fought in the battles. AND they invented theater and created some of humanity's greatest works of art. Everitt starts in prehistoric times, traces the origins of the Greeks, including the invasion of "Dorians" and "Ionians."

He describes how the democracy was actually invented---and, he says, it was deliberately invented. In 503-502, Cleisthenes, a member of the aristocratic Alcmaeonid family, had won power but needed some way to keep it. This was after the lawgiver Solon had created the laws which governed the city. Cleisthenes needed the support of the poor and dispossessed, to defeat Isagoras and the Spartans, who had occupied the Acropolis. He created what became the Athenian constitution. Democratia stems from demos---people---and kratia---power. "Democracy" means "people power"! The Greeks, Everitt makes clear, were quarrelsome, rude, aggressive, grudge-bearing, very fractious people. It is amazing that the Athenians accepted Cleisthenes' rules. And just because they were a democracy does not mean that they were wise, just, or peace-loving. Beyond all the factionalism and resentments which constantly roiled city life, they also liked being the most powerful people in all of Greece, and maintained a very aggressive, imperial policy until they lost so many men and so much treasure that they were just exhausted, and ultimately the Spartans could walk in. Everitt follows three main groups: the Spartans, ascetic, austere, materially poor but highly trained and disciplined, the best soldiers in the land. The Athenians, active, boastful, clever, ambitious, the leading maritime power. The Persians, led by a string of Great Kings: Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, constantly trying to conquer the Greeks, but defeated at Marathon, Salamis, Platea. They were kept at bay until Alexander, son of

the Macedonian king Philip who defeated the Greeks at Chaeronea and ended their freedom, moved into Asia and beat the Persians. There is so much in this book, which is such a quick read, I am not going to try to recount it all, or even part.

<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/boo...>
