

academic discussion of the book into concrete examples. This would be particularly useful to add more depth to classes with GCSE and A level students who are looking at free-standing and architectural sculpture as part of Classical Civilisation. Furthermore, this book is accessible enough that the content can be adapted for students studying the Classical world throughout KS3.

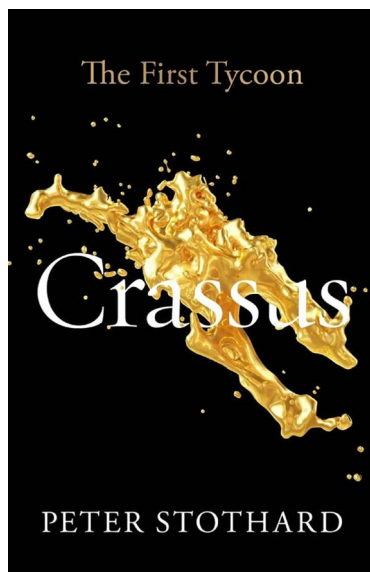
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Crassus: The First Tycoon

Stothard (P.) Pp. xii + 168, map. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2022. Paper, £28.99 (Cased, £18.99). ISBN: 978-0-300-25660-4

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‘The first tycoon of ancient Rome was also its most famous loser.’ This zippy opening line to Stothard’s compact biography of Marcus Licinius Crassus had me hooked from the outset. Sometimes I find that biographies of ancient Romans can become rather ponderous, but this neat little volume avoids this by virtue of its relatively short length. It is part of Yale University Press’ new ‘Ancient Lives’ series, which aims to tell the stories of figures from antiquity in a way that makes the problems that they faced, and actions that they took,

understandable from the reader’s modern world perspective. Whilst some may dislike this attempt to relate, I think that this can be very useful for a teacher trying to encourage sixth formers to grasp what can be a very confusing time period.

Stothard begins his biography with the event that most people relate Crassus with, his disastrous defeat at Carrhae in 53 BC. He then circles back to the very beginning and considers all of the events which led Crassus to his biggest mistake: death at the hands of the Parthians and the humiliating loss of the Roman legionary standards. In doing this, Crassus becomes a rather tragic figure, a clever man who built his fortune by novel methods: taking an army of highly educated slaves and using them to build a property empire, ruthlessly exploiting Rome’s vulnerability to fire and inadequate safety systems.

I always considered my knowledge of the years leading to the end of the Roman Republic to be good, but I realised when reading this that I did not know very much about Crassus at all. Pompey and Caesar tend to get the headlines when the story of the ‘Three

Headed Monster’ (the so-called ‘First Triumvirate’) is told. Crassus is often relegated simply to the role of banker, a shadowy figure in the background, whose role is not always entirely clear. Stothard’s Crassus, rather than simply being portrayed as greedy, a modern view which is heavily developed from Plutarch, is an outsider, someone who had to forge a different path as he did not quite fit in. To the traditional senatorial elite Crassus had the right family credentials, but he was too young and too rich. However, to the populist elements he was a loan shark, only interested in what he could gain. He also lacked the military genius of Pompey and Caesar, despite coping well, if reluctantly, with the Spartacus revolt.

This book is not a good first foray into the first century BC. Due to its length, it is assumed that the reader already knows the main events and characters. What I found interesting was Stothard’s analysis of Crassus’ role in the Catilinarian conspiracy and the career of Clodius. Often, he is just confusingly in the background, with little consideration of what he was hoping to achieve. Here Crassus is outlined as a man with twisting loyalties, focused entirely on how he could become number one, with no consideration of the broader consequences of the actions he was taking. Stothard’s account of Crassus’ Parthian campaign gallops along, a little like his dashing cavalry hero son Publius, and there is a real sense of foreboding as the omens and advice ignored by Crassus are outlined.

This book is not footnoted, but there are useful end notes which would be helpful in allowing the reader to access Stothard’s source material. He clearly uses Plutarch extensively, but there are lots of other helpful suggestions for further reading, both primary and secondary. There is also a handy timeline and map, which is always appreciated.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and found that I was eager to read more due to the short chapters and engaging writing style. This would be a good addition to a sixth form library if students are studying the Fall of the Roman Republic, but they will need some background on the period first.

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Looking at Agamemnon

Stuttard (D.) (ed.) Pp. viii + 228. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. Paper, £28.99 (Cased, £85). ISBN: 978-1-350-21434-7

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Stuttard’s edited volume *Looking at Agamemnon* looks at the cultural, historical and theatrical impact of one of Aeschylus’ most well-known, enduring and popular plays. Divided into 12 distinct chapters, this volume allows the reader to examine *Agamemnon* from many different angles. Each chapter provides a fresh perspective on an aspect of the play, each written by an expert in the field. Not only do many of the chapters focus on the play itself, but they also broaden the scope of their argument to assess not just the play on its own merits, but also the *Oresteia* in context. In this way, the entire story of house of the Atridae is both told and examined in this volume.