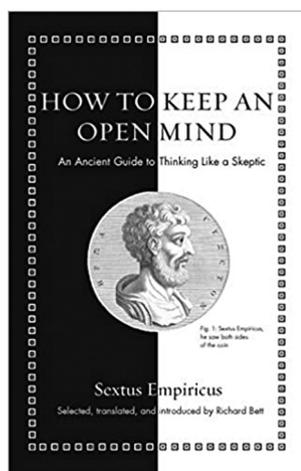


Sextus Empiricus: *How to Keep an Open Mind. An Ancient Guide to Thinking Like a Skeptic*

Bett (R.) (ed., trans.) Pp. xviii + 225. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021. £12.99, \$16.95. ISBN:9780691206042

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When many today say that they are sceptics, as a Classicist it is indispensable to have read Richard Bett's scholarly, approachable, slender introduction to Skepticism, so that you can explain how, at least by ancient standards, they are probably not Sceptics: "διόπερ οὐθετέρῳ προστιθέμεθα ὅσον ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑπὸ τῶν δογματικῶν, ἀλλ' ἐπέχομεν..." – For this reason we attach ourselves to neither side (as regards what is said by dogmatists), but suspend judgement..." (pp. 178–179).

This book does not pull its punches, but could be used with talented and precocious sixth-form Greek, Classical Civilisation, R.S. and Philosophy classes to extend students beyond Plato and Aristotle. This reviewer was pleasantly surprised to discover that this is not only a discussion of Sextus Empiricus' philosophy, but also an edition of his actual writings in a Greek-English parallel-text format.

Bett's introduction is thoughtful, covering Sextus' biography, his school of Skepticism (there were varieties) and what we can learn from it today – was it more important in a world where there was less science and more discussion about the 'what-ifs'? Bett writes with relaxed humour, 'So while it would not really be accurate to say that Sextus advocates being open-minded, a recommendation to be open-minded is, in effect, what one can gain from approaching his writings in a sympathetic yet critical spirit' (xxxvi–xxxvii).

There is a 'Note on the Text' explaining his layout and approach to translation and textual criticism. His translation is readable whilst remaining true to the Greek; he makes use of modern phrases sparingly, effectively and consistently. His chapters look at what the philosophy is, its standard arguments, phrases to have at the ready if challenged, ending with further details about Logic, Physics and Ethics. The sections about Physics and Ethics are most fascinating and cleverly saved until the end after the tougher meditation on Logic. The proof of a non-providential divinity is enjoyable (pp. 153–169) as is the discussion that nothing is good or bad or indifferent (pp. 181–189). It is a shame that Bett chooses to leave out the section on whether there is a *technē* for living well as it could have allowed for discussion of Stoic principles (he is justified though in that this is a book about Skepticism and not the place for

long digressions upon Stoicism). The Roman font used is a little strange at times: 'a', 'h' and 'y' can appear crushed, a result of printing maybe?

Footnotes take his thoughts further as do his interventions within the text. These interventions, although they break up the flow of Sextus' words are necessary as Bett has occasionally excised sections which he deems repetitive or convoluted (he summarises any part removed). Additionally, although the text is mostly from Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bett includes relevant extended sections from Sextus' other (admittedly few) works – *Against those in Disciplines* and *Skeptical Treatises*. There is a list of works for further reading and a detailed glossary of terms and personages.

I particularly enjoyed, in addition to learning about an obscure school of philosophy, being able to engage with Sextus' Greek prose which was refreshingly familiar: the vocabulary and syntax is Classical, but less arcane than Lucian's and Plutarch's hyper-Attic. There is nonetheless obscure vocabulary to stretch a reader and novel nuances of complex meaning from seemingly familiar verbs and nouns.

It is a nice book, hardback, well-cased, with a good-quality cover and pages which are pleasant to turn.

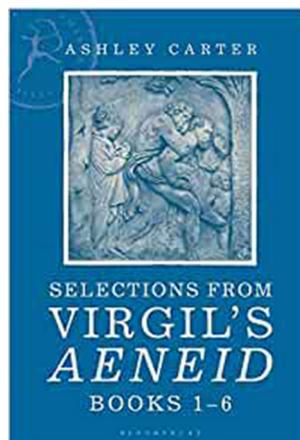
doi: 10.1017/S2058631021000465

Selections from Virgil's Aeneid Books 1–6. A Student Reader

Carter (A.). Pp. viii + 220, map. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Paper, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-4725-7570-8. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/selections-from-virgils-aeneid-books-1-6-9781472575722/>

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This book presents extracts (in Latin) drawn from the first six books of Virgil's *Aeneid* in a way that is designed to make them accessible to 'students with only a few years of study behind them' (p. vi).

The Introduction (pp. 1–16) begins with an excellent discussion of 'Virgil and the *Aeneid*' (pp. 1–2), in which the poem is helpfully situated in its historical and literary context. A summary of the first six books of the epic (oddly under the heading 'Synopsis of the twelve books of the *Aeneid*') follows (pp. 2–4), as do sections on 'Virgil's metre' (pp. 4–5) and 'Virgil's word order' (p. 6). A section on 'Stylistic features' (pp. 6–11)

follows (pp. 2–4), as do sections on 'Virgil's metre' (pp. 4–5) and 'Virgil's word order' (p. 6). A section on 'Stylistic features' (pp. 6–11)

defines key terminology and provides untranslated examples of them, drawn from the selections in the book. The Introduction ends with a 'List of Names of People and Places' (pp. 11–16) and some brief suggestions for 'Further Reading' (p. 16). The 'List of Names' (and to some extent the 'Synopsis' too) may serve better as aide-mémoire than as introduction, as only those with existing knowledge will be able to understand some of the comments (for example, the entry for Iulus: 'Cognomen of Ascanius, the son of Aeneas; thus became the founder of the Julian gens', p. 14). A map (p. vii), showing the route of Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy, is useful only to a limited extent, as many places mentioned in either the poem or the notes in this volume are not shown.

The majority of the book (pp.17–191) presents the selected passages from the *Aeneid*. Latin text (without macra) appears on the left-hand page of each double page spread, with a vocabulary list beneath; the facing page is taken up with notes and suggested questions. Each of the first six books of the epic receives its own section in this volume, each containing a number of Latin extracts, with English summaries provided for the sections of the poem not included in Latin. The Latin selections are of variable length: the shortest is just four lines (Book 6, lines 756–759), whereas the longest (by far) is 182 lines (Book 5, lines 286–467). The preface notes that each book 'has contributed around 250 lines of text' (p. vi), and in general, the selection made (when combined with the English summaries) allows a reader to gain a good impression of a book as a whole, although on a few occasions it feels as though something relevant is omitted (for example, neither the Latin selections nor English summaries in Book 3 make it clear that the Trojans take Achaemenides with them, which leaves his story – much of which is told – feeling incomplete). The Latin presented on each page generally ends with a full-stop (or at least a semi-colon), but sometimes it feels as though the page breaks would, ideally, have been placed differently; for example, it is a shame that the extract comprised of Book 6 lines 255–263 is split so that lines 255–262 appear on page 170 with just line 263 on page 172, and that the direct speech of Palinurus in Book 5 lines 13–14 is split across pages 136 and 138.

'The principle behind the glossing of words is that all except for the commonest words are glossed, with meanings appropriate to the context' (p. vi). Taking the first extract as an example – Book 1, lines 1–11 – we find that 40 Latin words are glossed in the vocabulary list on page 18, with the meanings of another 28 not given. Once a word has been glossed, it is not supposed to reappear in the vocabulary lists for that book (unless with a different meaning); although this practice (occasionally not followed) helps to keep the size of the vocabulary lists manageable, it does mean that readers will not always find all the meanings they need on the same page as the part of the text they are studying, which could particularly hinder those reading only some of the sections chosen from a given book. The meanings of all words can, however, be looked up in the useful 'Word List' at the back of the book (pp. 193–215), and overall the glossing will speed the process of reading the text.

The Notes provide relevant contextual information and explanations to help the reader understand the grammar of the Latin and appreciate its style. Although not a substitute for a full commentary and at times not expressed as clearly as one might wish, they are, for the most part, likely to be of great use to the reader. Some readers, however, might find the use of unexplained technical terminology a little inaccessible; on a single page we find 'ablative of manner', 'ablative of material', 'local ablative', and 'the genitives are subjective' (p. 81), and elsewhere we read of 'a hypermetric syllable' (p. 73) and an 'epexegetic infinitive' (p. 147). Where the notes draw attention to stylistic features of the text, terminology (e.g. 'alliteration') is used and underlined to indicate

that an explanation of the term may be found in the Introduction. The notes sometimes suggest what the effect of particular stylistic features might be, and are to be commended for prompting the reader to consider these aspects of the text. The notes also very helpfully draw attention to metrical effects.

The Questions given on each double page vary in type; some are factual, often inviting a short answer, but others address style and content in a way that will prompt contemplation and discussion (and potentially written work for students); a few encourage research on a particular point. Suggested answers are not provided, which teachers and their students might regret, especially when the answers expect identification and discussion of stylistic features that are not always easy to spot. On one occasion the line numbers quoted in a question are incorrectly given (p. 185) – one of a very few errors in the text.

This book, despite some shortcomings, does constitute a mostly student-friendly edition of large parts of the first half of the *Aeneid*, and will surely find extensive use in schools and universities.

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Living on the Edge of Empire: The Objects and People of Hadrian's Wall

Collins (R.), Birley (B.), Croom (A.), Laskey (J.), McIntosh (F.), Padley (T.), Parking (A.), Price (E.)
Pp. 168 Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2020.
£25.00 ISBN: 9781783463275

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There are many books about Roman Britain, but arguably few as engaging as this one. *Living on the Edge of Empire, The Objects and People of Hadrian's Wall* offers a fascinating insight into the lives of those individuals living in the area around Hadrian's Wall through a varied and wide-ranging selection of artefacts. The artefacts included in the book range from the famous (such as the birthday party writing tablet from Vindolanda) to much lesser-known finds, which makes this book a particularly interesting read. The aim of the book is to explore the lives of those present at Hadrian's Wall over three centuries of occupation, using artefacts which are often forgotten outside of museum trips. If one is unable to visit the Wall in person, this book offers an excellent alternative for the armchair archaeologist. The language used is accessible and engaging, with colour photographs of the artefacts interspersed throughout its eight chapters. I could not recommend this book highly enough to fellow Roman Britain enthusiasts, for the reasons outlined below.