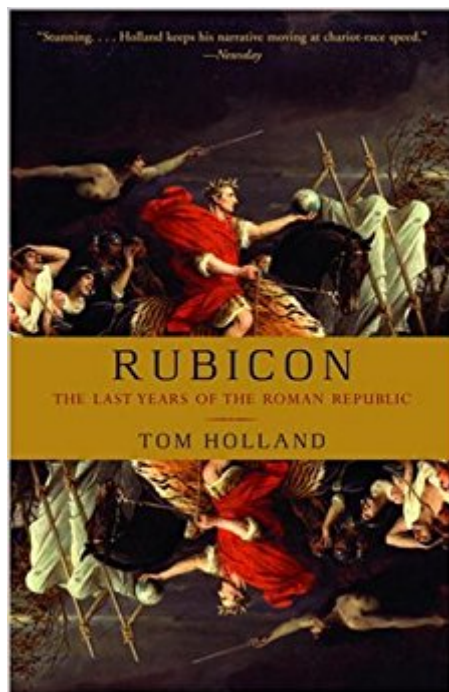


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Rubicon



Synopsis

A vivid historical account of the social world of Rome as it moved from republic to empire. In 49 B.C., the seven hundred fifth year since the founding of Rome, Julius Caesar crossed a small border river called the Rubicon and plunged Rome into cataclysmic civil war. Tom Holland's enthralling account tells the story of Caesar's generation, witness to the twilight of the Republic and its bloody transformation into an empire. From Cicero, Spartacus, and Brutus, to Cleopatra, Virgil, and Augustus, here are some of the most legendary figures in history brought thrillingly to life. Combining verve and freshness with scrupulous scholarship, Rubicon is not only an engrossing history of this pivotal era but a uniquely resonant portrait of a great civilization in all its extremes of self-sacrifice and rivalry, decadence and catastrophe, intrigue, war, and world-shaking ambition.

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Customer Reviews

After a palace coup demolished the reign of King Tarquin of Rome in 509 B.C., a republican government flourished, providing every person an opportunity to participate in political life in the name of liberty. As Holland, a novelist and adapter of Herodotus' Histories for British radio, points out in this lively re-creation of the republic's rise and fall, the seeds of destruction were planted in the very soil in which the early republic flourished. It was more often members of the patrician classes who had the resources to achieve political success. Such implicit class distinctions in an ostensibly classless society also gave rise to a new group of rulers who acted like monarchs. Holland chronicles the rise to power of such leaders as Sulla Felix, Pompey, Cicero and Julius

Caesar. Some of these leaders, such as Pompey, appealed to the masses by expanding the republic through military conquest; others, like Cicero, worked to reinforce class distinctions. Holland points to the suppression of the Gracchian revolution—a series of reforms in favor of the poor pushed by the Gracchus brothers in the second century B.C.—as the beginning of the end of the republic, providing the context into which Julius Caesar would step with his own attempts to save the republic. As Holland points out, Caesar actually precipitated civil wars and helped to reestablish an imperial form of government in Rome. With the skill of a good novelist, Holland weaves a rip-roaring tale of political and historical intrigue as he chronicles the lively personalities and problems that led to the end of the Roman republic. Maps. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review Ancient history lives in this vivid chronicle of the tumultuous events that impelled Julius Caesar across the one small river that separated the Roman Republic from cataclysmic civil war. With the narrative talents that have established him as a prominent radio personality and novelist, Holland pulls readers deep into the treacherous riptide of Roman politics. To show how Caesar eventually masters that tide—if only temporarily—Holland first traces the bloody career of the ruthless dictator Sulla, who rescues an imperiled Republic even as he breaches its founding traditions. Those breaches deeply disturb the moralist Cato, but the indulgent luxury of a post-Sullan world suits Caesar well enough: a popular favorite, he sets the fashion in loose-fitting togas—and waits for his fated opening. Recounting Caesar's eventual seizure of power in pages as irresistibly cadenced as the legionnaires' march, Holland probes the tragic ironies that quickly expose the bold conqueror to idealistic assassins, who themselves soon perish in the rise of the Augustan Empire. Not a work for scrupulous scholars, but a richly resonant history for the general reader. Bryce Christensen Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An excellent read on the lead up to Julius Caesar's fateful decision to cross the Rubicon, and of the events that immediately followed. Essentially, from Sulla's dictatorship to Augustus' victory. Holland explores the politics, but also the social elements in play, as well as the personalities of the men and women on this pivotal stage in Roman history. Unlike some historians, Holland's prose is anything but dry. He captures the essence of what it meant to the Romans to be Roman, and what the motivations likely were for all of the involved parties as they played out this real human drama. Very

well done!

In this book, Holland does a marvelous job of taking the reader through not only what happened in @ the last 100 years of the republic as a real Roman state, but also what was going on in the minds of its principal actors in the process. History is a peculiar thing. It usually seeks only to tell what happened and who did it, and maybe why, but Holland has taken the admittedly risky tactic of taking the reader into the minds of the principal actors in a way that is refreshing and, in my opinion, fascinating and very much illustrative of what made Rome, Rome. It brings into sharp focus how the values and ethics (what there was of them) shaped the republic, and eventually wound up bringing it down. He does not take the stance of trying to instruct the reader, but allows the reader to see the reasonings at work on all sides. This, along with his writing style, make the book one you just don't want to put down. I read until 2:00 a.m. one night! It's a captivating tale, made all the moreso by Holland's writing style and his insights into the minds of the actors involved in every major event. It reads more like an adventure novel than a book on history! It helped me understand why Christianity came along just when it did, and why the timing was so right for the world at that time. It makes Biblical stories more understandable when the motives and morals of the Romans are understood more fully. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in Roman history, world history, politics, philosophy, and in Christianity. It's truly pregnant with insights, and easy to read and understand. I loved it!

"Rubicon" covers all the key players and events in the fall of the Roman Republic. It is written in a very readable and engaging manner, and Tom Holland does an admirable job bringing all of the characters to life. Since there are a lot of written sources of the time period, this is possible, but really what you get are Tom Holland's vividly portrayed perspective of the primary sources. Another historian almost undoubtedly views any number of the characters quite differently. Hopefully, "Rubicon" motivates you to read those sources yourself. I deducted one star because I found his writing a bit too hyperbolic, but then he is describing some of history's strongest characters.

I really love history, but I don't think I've read any before that was this well written and engrossing. Tom Holland has a gift for storytelling matched by few that really puts you in the thick of things. Even more impressive is the way he crafted the narrative by exclusively relying on primary sources. It really makes me want to read the classics. Aside from learning so much about Roman history, I also was constantly drawing mental parallels between the book and current political developments,

as I'm sure many others have. Highly recommended to people who like history, but also to those less inclined because this book is far from boring.

I really enjoyed reading Mr. Holland's 'Rubicon.' I have read a good deal of Roman history lately, and this book contained a good condensation of the events that led up to the final years of the Republic without bogging itself down to one or two specific people. The book includes all the major players, such as Sulla, Pompey, Cicero, Cato, and of course, Julius Caesar. It provides an interesting narrative of how each of these men (as well as many others) contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire (in the case of Octavian). I highly recommend this book to any lovers of Roman history.

This is a well written, enjoyable to read history about Rome's transition from republic to empire. Its readability belies a well researched and heavily foot noted book that one would expect of a scholarly work. All the famous personages from that time whose names you have probably heard but aren't exactly sure of who they were and their relationship to each other are recounted. In some ways, Holland's narrative sounds as if the book is about today's United States. In our politically contentious times, if you want to see where the United States is headed, this would be a good place to start. Holland does not present this book as such, but some parallels are easy to draw. For those who aren't well versed in Roman history (that includes this reviewer), this book has a surprising ending.

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