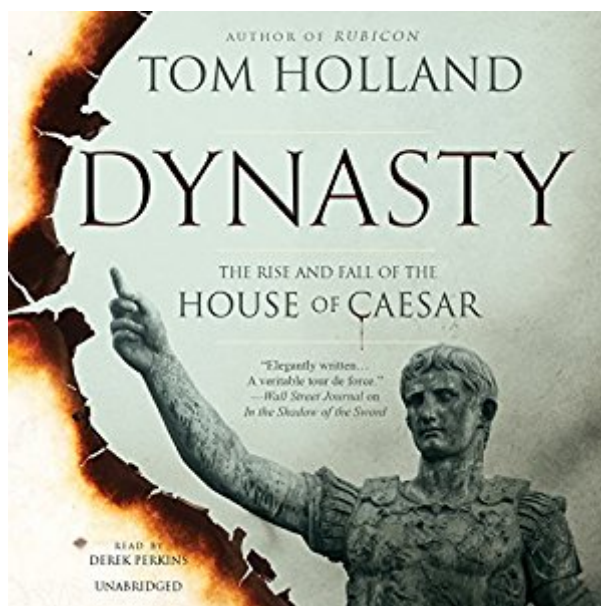


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Dynasty: The Rise And Fall Of The House Of Caesar



Synopsis

Author and historian Tom Holland returns to his roots in Roman history and the audience he cultivated with *Rubicon* - his masterful, witty, brilliantly researched popular history of the fall of the Roman republic - with *Dynasty*, a luridly fascinating history of the reign of the first five Roman emperors. *Dynasty* continues *Rubicon*'s story, opening where that book ended: with the murder of Julius Caesar. This is the period of the first and perhaps greatest Roman emperors. It's a colorful story of rule and ruination, from the rise of Augustus to the death of Nero. Holland's expansive history also has distinct shades of *I, Claudius*, with five wonderfully vivid (and, in three cases, thoroughly depraved) emperors - Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero - featured, along with numerous fascinating secondary characters. Intrigue, murder, naked ambition and treachery, greed, gluttony, lust, incest, pageantry, decadence - the tale of these five Caesars continues to cast a mesmerizing spell across the millennia.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like many others that would take interest in this subject, I majored in History. But, that's not to exclude those with interest in the great narrative of real-life drama. As others have pointed out, Tom Holland's writing reads often like a novel more than history. I have no problem reading pure academia, but Holland transforms that knowledge into a page-turner. For those that are unfamiliar, this is (of sorts) a sequel to his previous work *Rubicon*. Whereas that focused on The Roman Republic, this picks up immediately after. The opening does recap the highlights of this previous Roman era. Plus, it does lay groundwork for pre-Republic Rome in its brief descriptions of the

Roman Kingdom and even as far back as the myth of Romulus & Remus. Here you get to see Holland at his best, as he weaves myth, history and narrative into a living breathing people that you can see with your mind. The preface and early chapters form the precursor to what will be the main subject of this work - Roman Emperors. From the roots of the Punic Wars resulting in Julius Caesar's claim of dictator to the eventual death of Nero, you can see the progression of a people from their greatest might to their eventual decline. Each of the five Julio-Claudian emperors are examined with great measure. The lesser details often become the richest as the ancient culture of Rome fills in around the reader. Holland's footnotes are extensive and often the most distracting of the passages, as I flipped forward and back. This is NOT a detraction to Holland. Instead, this is the opposite. It is a great compliment to the author as it proves the tireless work is not without merit to the reader. My only suggestions to any reader unfamiliar with Roman history, read Holland's *Rubicon* first.

I was just beginning to self-educate myself on the history of ancient Greece and Rome when I read Holland's *PERSIAN FIRE* and *RUBICON*, which were both popular history at its best. *Dynasty* is the continuation of the Roman story, with what happened once the Roman Revolution had taken place. It is as lucid and encompassing as his best early works and his writing has been polished to a whole new level. Trying to sum up the characters, the events, and the conflicts, as the dying Republic gave way to the infant Empire, is an extremely difficult task, but Mr. Holland makes it seem easy. He writes with such vim and verve that you will often find yourself grinning at his characterization of dusty antique statuary which suddenly become recognizably human in their actions. In particular, it is difficult to write about the Emperor Tiberius without being glum, and Holland manages it better than almost any synopsis I have read; of COURSE it makes absolute sense to take an antique Republican Roman, make him the unpopular Emperor of the western World, and watch him squirm in heavy-handed, paranoid anguish! Holland also handles Livia, notorious wife of Augustus, and her opaque personalities - greatest of Roman women or psychopathic poisoner? - and his picture of the repugnant Sejanus and his shenanigans I will not forget. His description of the Battle of the Teutoberg Pass in which three legions were wiped out almost to the last man literally gave me bad dreams. Scholars love to mock "popular history", but in the West, where classic knowledge is no longer either taught or much valued, nothing is better than authentic and accurate history told with fascination - not *Game of Thrones*, but the actual history that seems even more sensational.

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