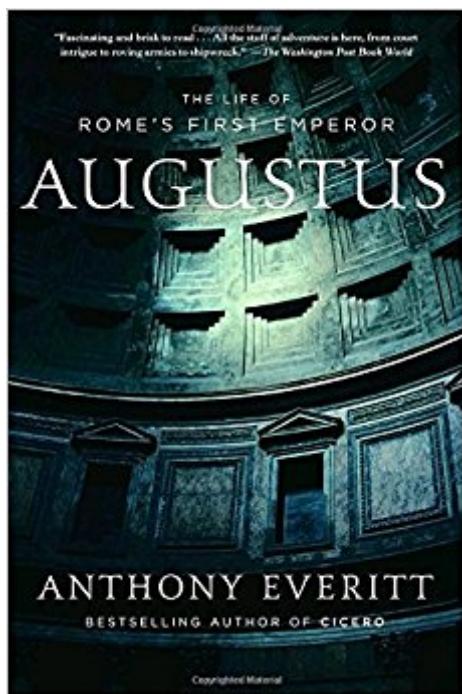


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# Augustus: The Life Of Rome's First Emperor



## Synopsis

He found Rome made of clay and left it made of marble. As Rome's first emperor, Augustus transformed the unruly Republic into the greatest empire the world had ever seen. His consolidation and expansion of Roman power two thousand years ago laid the foundations, for all of Western history to follow. Yet, despite Augustus' accomplishments, very few biographers have concentrated on the man himself, instead choosing to chronicle the age in which he lived. Here, Anthony Everitt, the bestselling author of *Cicero*, gives a spellbinding and intimate account of his illustrious subject. Augustus began his career as an inexperienced teenager plucked from his studies to take center stage in the drama of Roman politics, assisted by two school friends, Agrippa and Maecenas. Augustus' rise to power began with the assassination of his great-uncle and adoptive father, Julius Caesar, and culminated in the titanic duel with Mark Antony and Cleopatra. The world that made Augustus and that he himself later remade was driven by intrigue, sex, ceremony, violence, scandal, and naked ambition. Everitt has taken some of the household names of history—Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, Cleopatra—and whom few know the full truth about, and turned them into flesh-and-blood human beings. At a time when many consider America an empire, this stunning portrait of the greatest emperor who ever lived makes for enlightening and engrossing reading. Everitt brings to life the world of a giant, rendered faithfully and sympathetically in human scale. A study of power and political genius, *Augustus* is a vivid, compelling biography of one of the most important rulers in history. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

British author Everitt begins his biography of Augustus (63 B.C. – A.D. 14) with a novelistic reconstruction of the Roman emperor's last days, offering a new spin on his murder at the hands of his wife, Livia. Everitt presents the death as an assisted suicide intended to speed and secure the transition of imperial power to his stepson Tiberius. Later, Everitt presents a careful historical argument for this theory—and, save for a few other shadowy incidents such as the banishment of the poet Ovid, he keeps guesswork to a minimum, building his narrative carefully on solid evidence. Everitt (Cicero) makes Augustus's rapid rise through Roman society comprehensible to contemporary readers, deftly shifting through the major phases of his life, from childhood through his adoption by his great-uncle Julius Caesar to the power struggle with Mark Antony that ended with Augustus's recognition as both *imperator* and *princeps*, or "first citizen." Everitt also neatly presents his subject's complex personality, revealing how Augustus secured a political infrastructure that would last for centuries while reportedly keeping up a highly active sex life, all the while fighting off longstanding rumors of cowardice in battle. This familiar story is fresh again in this lively retelling. (Oct. 17) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

\*Starred Review\* Everitt, whose biography of the great orator Cicero evoked Rome on the cusp of empire with dazzling energy, again captures the color of the city and an era in a biography of Rome's first bona fide emperor. Born Gaius Octavius in a town south of the city, Octavius wasn't automatically marked for a political career. But his family was related to Julius Caesar by marriage, and the great general took the boy under his wing and made him his protege. After Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE, Octavius was surprised to learn that his mentor had formally adopted him in his will, making the 19-year-old a serious contender for power in Rome. Required to deal with both Caesar's enemies and his old allies, Octavius' power wasn't truly solidified until he went to war with and defeated Mark Antony, his chief political rival. Taking the name Caesar Augustus, the young man wisely and judiciously implemented changes to take Rome from unstable republic to thriving empire. Everitt's writing is so crisp and so lively he brings both Rome and Augustus to life in this magnificent work, a must-read for anyone interested in classical times. Kristine HuntleyCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

I have read many books on Cesar and Octavian and love ancient Roman history. This book reads

easily (sometimes it seems more a novel than a non-fiction book) and offers a great amount of information. However, I have to say that some of the claims the author makes seem personal theories or suppositions rather than true facts. Since there are not many footnotes, one cannot easily distinguish when the author is telling a proven fact or rather a likely fact or reason for a specific course of action. I would recommend this for someone for a "beginner" without much background on Augustus life. Someone more read or knowledgeable on Augustus' life might prefer a different book and will probably feel "shocked" of some of the claims.

I agree with the other reviewers that this writer does not seem to know his history. And yes, I too was baffled at some of his claims and assertions made in the introduction. Some things simply strain credulity upon reading. I do not believe Augustus had any sort of plan with anyone as to his succession. Livia had worked the plan out years before. Nor do I believe for a minute that Augustus arranged the murder of Posthumous with the writer going on to describe Augustus' visit to him, complete with tears and embraces. On the surface, his telling is preposterous. If indeed Augustus had make arrangements for the murder of his grandson...the flesh and blood of his own daughter and greatest friend Agrippa -- then why on earth would he ever make the voyage to visit him after having done so? Posthumous was banished, period. It's not as if Augustus had any obligation, nor Posthumous any expectation, of such a visit. And Livia smearing 'ointment' on the figs? Now, let me ask you, if you picked a piece of fruit off a tree, and it was covered in a neosporin-type substance, would you eat it? His assertion about Augustus being sent on a 'mop-up' operation to take out a group of some 5000 survivors of Spartacus' group is also something I have never heard before. Right then and there I checked this guy's sources. He cites the customarily classical works, although nothing in his book is footnoted, and then provides what I consider a lightweight bibliography, most of the works extremely recent. I guess what floors me the most is that apparently Everett has written several books about this period. Based on what I've seen so far - and I'm unsure if I'm even going to continue reading this - I consider this man neither a historian nor a scholar.

I was very impressed by the work. I've read a number of books concerning this era in Rome and about Augustus. But this book surprised me by being very interesting, even without any new information. I would also recommend John Williams novel Augustus as a work of great insight.

I thought it was a well written, interesting and engaging piece of nonfiction. Plenty of information about his public image, but also a look into his inner circle and the intrigues that whirled around him.

What can I say? I like Roman history. Recommended.

Anthony Everitt follows up his excellent biography of the Roman politician, lawyer, and writer Cicero with a strong biography of the first Roman emperor, Augustus (born Gaius Octavius in 63 BC). If one add in Goldsworthy's well done recent biography of Julius Caesar, one then has a trio of excellent biographies that help make the political intrigues of Rome in the late Republic and early Empire come to life. The challenges facing the author include holes in the life story of the man who became Augustus, leaving certain key questions about his life unanswered (nicely outlined in the last chapter). Writing the biography of someone from two thousand years ago is a daunting task, but one that Everitt ends up pulling off well. The narrative traces the life of Octavius from his childhood onward. What we see is a young man with a lot of grit and determination--and luck. His great uncle, Julius Caesar, became his patron and adopted him, providing a jump start to his career. After Caesar's violent death, Octavius showed political skills by allying with Mark Antony and Lepidus to create a triumvirate, in opposition to those who killed Caesar (whose leaders included Cassius and Brutus). The book shows how, with great patience, one of his greatest attributes, Octavius slowly increased his power and authority. With some exceptional friends and co-leaders (for instance, Agrippa), he ended up defeating Mark Antony and ascending to power. The book shows the nature of that ascent, the value of his patience (compared with the impatience of his great uncle), the way that he used his power to stabilize and enhance the Roman Empire, his continual efforts to maintain peace in Rome, his intolerance toward his own family, his dilemmas at trying to organize the succession. All in all, a very good biography of one of the more important figures in the West.

Very fun read! While I'm more than sure that some bits are hyperbole, the book does a good job of keeping the reader entertained. Some parts read a bit like a soap opera, but a lot of history does. So long as the reader keeps in mind that some bits may be exaggerated (both because the emperor himself exaggerated in propaganda or because Everitt exaggerated in order to entertain) it's a great read and a great start for anyone looking to learn more about Augustus, the Roman Empire, and the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

It is interesting that for a man so iconically successful, he suffered from terrible health and some tremendous loss of nerve during battle, nevertheless he had the capacity to recognize and use good advice.

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