

Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician Study Guide

**Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest
Politician by Anthony Everitt**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

[Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....4](#)

[Chapter 1, Fault Lines, The Empire in Crisis, First Century B.C.....5](#)

[Chapter 2, Always Be the Best, My Boy, The Bravest, From Arpinum to Rome, 106-82 B.C.....6](#)

[Chapter 3, The Forum and the Fray, The Birth of an Orator, 81-77 B.C.....8](#)

[Chapter 4, Politics and Foreign Postings, Cicero Enters the Ring, 77-63 B.C.....9](#)

[Chapter 5, Against Catalina, Campaign and Conspiracy, 63 B.C.....10](#)

[Chapter 6, Pretty-Boy's Revenge, The Good Goddess Affair and the Return of Pompey, 62-58 B.C.....12](#)

[Chapter 7, Exile, The Rise of Caesar, 58-52 B.C.....14](#)

[Chapter 8, The Ideal Constitution, Writing about Politics, 55-43 B.C.....16](#)

[Chapter 9, The Drift to Civil War, 52-50 B.C.....17](#)

[Chapter 10, A Strange Madness, The Battle for the Republic, 50-48 B.C.....18](#)

[Chapter 11, Pacifying Caesar, The Last Gasps of Republican Rome, 48-45 B.C.....19](#)

[Chapter 12, Philosophical Investigations, Thoughts on the Nature of Things, 46-44 B.C.,](#)
[Chapter 13, Why, This Is Violence!, Plots and Conspiracies, January—March 44 B.C.....21](#)

[Chapter 14, The Heir, Enter Octavian, March-December, 44 B.C.....22](#)

[Chapter 15, Cicero's Civil War, Against Marc Antony, January—April, 43 B.C., Chapter 16,](#)
[Death at the Seaside, The End of the Republic, April—November, 43 B.C., Chapter 17,](#)
[Postmortems.....24](#)

[Characters.....27](#)

[Objects/Places.....30](#)

[Themes.....32](#)

[Style.....34](#)

[Quotes.....36](#)



Topics for Discussion.....38



Plot Summary

Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician, written by Anthony Everitt, is a biography of Marcus Tullius Cicero, the great lawyer, orator, writer, scholar and senator from the late Roman Republic. The book is highly-readable and based on an abundance of historical sources, including over nine-hundred letters that Cicero wrote, mostly to his friend Atticus, along with a number of his surviving speeches. While Cicero has been known to much of history as an important scholar and intellectual, Everitt's presentation of Cicero focuses on his political life, not his scholarly work.

However, Everitt brings out one theme that pervades both Cicero's career as a politician and as a writer and that is the preservation of the Roman Republican structure of government. As articulated in his book *On the State*, Cicero thought that the best government has a mixed constitution, that is, it combines the best features of monarchy, democracy and oligarchy. The Roman constitution had many complex checks and balances that evolved organically; Cicero thought they were defensible in part because they prevented any one person from gaining too much power. Throughout all of the political challenges in Cicero's life, his foremost aim was to preserve this constitution against the threat of revolution, especially from representatives of the people like Catalina and from autocracy, first against Pompey and Caesar and second against Antony and Octavian.

Everitt also focuses less on Cicero's personal life, though historians know less about it. He had a son, Marcus, and a daughter whom he loved deeply, named Tullia. When she died in childbirth, Cicero had a nervous breakdown. Cicero was married to his first wife, Terentia, for thirty years before he mysteriously divorced her. He married again briefly, but when his young wife indirectly insulted Tullia after her death, he divorced her as well.

In Everitt's view, Cicero was a great statesman because, while he desired power, he still rarely wavered from his constitutionalist principles. Only towards the end of his life was Cicero willing to use unconstitutional means to achieve his goals by trying to use Octavian to restore the republic. However, Cicero had several personal and professional flaws that prevented him from being more successful. First, while he was a spectacular orator, he lacked charisma. Second, he was nervous and insecure and easily thrown into emotional turmoil. Third, he lacked physical courage. And finally, most significantly, Cicero believed that good government came from good men; according to Everitt, he often failed to realize that good government required structural reforms. Everitt points out that Caesar realized that the Roman constitution had too many checks and balances and needed strong executive authority, but Cicero thought only about replacing bad men with good men.

Nonetheless, Everitt defends Cicero against many charges historians have lodged against him and shows that Cicero would have likely succeeded in restoring the Republic if not for several freak accidents.



Chapter 1, Fault Lines, The Empire in Crisis, First Century B.C.

Chapter 1, Fault Lines, The Empire in Crisis, First Century B.C. Summary and Analysis

In the First Century, B.C., Rome had over a million inhabitants. It was the center of a far-flung empire that had significant trouble managing its vast holdings due to high communication costs and a relative absence of public infrastructure, police forces and banking services. The Roman Constitution was an evolutionary one, with new layers of government piled upon old over time. Roman history had led to a decision that no man should have too much power, so power was divided among Senators. Senators elected two Consuls who ruled for a year and traded seniority monthly. There were twenty Quaestors, who were responsible for administration and eight Praetors, who could exercise sovereign power. Dictators, however, could be appointed during emergencies. The Senate was technically only an advisory council to the Consuls but since the positions were held for a lifetime, it became a ruling body.

Roman society did not have modern political parties but it had two broad social classes: Patricians, the aristocracy and the people or the Plebs. The Patricians held high office. The Plebs often rebelled against abuses of power, however, and so Tribunes were established to represent them. In effect, they were democratic political organs; there was a military and a general assembly. The author believes the Roman constitution had too many checks and balances but the Romans thought it was the greatest invention in history and would never change it.

The crisis that would lead to the end of the Roman Republic arose in the 130s, twenty years before Cicero was born. Civilian reformers would come to power and would then be assassinated; successful generals would replace them and implement the reforms. The basic political problem was two-fold: an agricultural crisis and the changing role of the army. In effect, Rome once had a system of citizen-farmers who would temporarily fight and then return to their homes, but the Empire became too large for this system to continue and so a class of professional soldiers was created. Cicero and his contemporaries inherited this complex system of government, military power, empire and social strife.



Chapter 2, Always Be the Best, My Boy, The Bravest, From Arpinum to Rome, 106-82 B.C.

Chapter 2, Always Be the Best, My Boy, The Bravest, From Arpinum to Rome, 106-82 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero was born into a rising aristocratic family in Arpinum, a small town around seventy miles south of Rome. His grandfather was a local politician and his father a scholar; their family rose through intermarriages with Roman elites. The also maintained an increasingly impressive villa in the countryside where Cicero himself would return during difficult times.

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born on January 3rd, 106 B.C. History knows little of Cicero's mother, Helvia, since women were expected to remain largely silent and hidden from public view. Cicero's father held absolute power in their family, though this was normal for Roman households. Cicero's father had high ambitions for him and his younger brother Quintus and made sure they had a good education. Cicero always had great academic ability. At the best schools, children were trained in rhetoric, of which Cicero would become a true master; they were trained in several methods. All recognized that they had to be performers.

When Cicero came of age (sixteen) in 90 B.C., his father decided that he should study law in Rome. Cicero and Quintus would have to go to a finishing school with more private tutors. A patron would be in charge of looking after them. It was arranged that Cicero and Quintus would be placed with the celebrated statesman Lucius Licinius Crassus. Cicero would be his pupil and the pupil of his father-in-law, Quintus Mucius Scaevola.

Cicero decided he wanted to become a famous advocate during this time. He was an excellent writer and public speaker and particularly enjoyed courtroom procedures and was impressed by how much impact an advocate could have in the courtroom. As a young man, Cicero was known for study, verse and oratory. He also studied Greek literature, philosophy and rhetoric so much that he was nicknamed "the little Greek boy".

While he was studying with Crassus and Scaevola, Cicero met other young aristocratic boys, including Caius Julius Caesar, six years younger than Cicero and Titus Pomponius (later Atticus), his future best friend. Political upheaval was in full force in Rome; Crassus was involved in an oratorical contest in the Senate that led him to exert himself so strongly that he contracted pneumonia and died. Political jostling continued and led to the War of the Allies, a bloody and bitter war. Cicero was typically opposed to



the use of coercion but went to serve in the army of Cnaeus Pompeius Strabo, whose son Pompey's life would be closely tied to his own. Rome won the war but only by granting citizenship to many of their Allies. Italy became united, old cultural divisions started to die; the shock to the Republic's stability was great. Normalcy did not return for ten years. Towards the end of this period, Sulla would lead troops into Rome, violating one of its earliest taboos. His soldiers were more loyal to him than the state and the rule of law was overturned. He also had many of the leading figures of the day killed and the Senate was depleted.

Cicero was around twenty-four when the liquidations occurred; the political inclinations of Caesar, Pompey, Atticus and Cicero all hardened with their experiences and their stars rose, though Cicero partly retreated into scholarship. In this time, he learned about Stoicism from the philosopher Diodotus. However, he shared with his peers a desire for fame.



Chapter 3, The Forum and the Fray, The Birth of an Orator, 81-77 B.C.

Chapter 3, The Forum and the Fray, The Birth of an Orator, 81-77 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero was from a small, provincial town, so Rome impressed him. The city was unplanned, chaotically built and dangerous in many places. It is said that the Forum was where Rome was founded and it was the heart of the city politically, commercially, legally and spiritually. The author describes the landscape and buildings at length. Political life was grounded in a sense of what it meant to be Roman and tied to ancestral custom which was embodied in the Forum's layout. It contained the Black Stone, a sanctuary of antiquity where Rome's founder, Romulus, was said to have been assassinated.

Most activities conducted in the Forum were sacred; political and private life was governed by religious rules and procedures to live in harmony with the will of the gods. No human enterprise was to be taken without the approval of the gods. Church and state were merged so politicians could use religion to their advantage fairly easily. During the period of political struggle in Cicero's youth, he stayed away from the Forum; instead, he studied in preparation of returning to the Forum. In 81 B.C., life started to return to normal; Sulla increased the powers and size of the Senate. New rules were introduced to control elected officials abroad and the power of Tribunes was limited. Cicero approved of Sulla's reforms but not of his means, since the Dictator won a "disreputable victory". When Cicero was twenty-five, he started giving speeches and launched his career at the bar. Cicero was very good but also often nervous, polishing his speeches for days.

In the 80s, Cicero made his reputation by defending Sextus Roscius, accused of murdering his own father. Cicero arguably was right to maintain that Roscius had been set-up. Cicero's speech was based on good research but it had its impact due to its oratorical structure. Cicero also launched an assault on those he thought guilty, including one of Sulla's favorites, Chrysogonus. Roscius was acquitted and quickly joined the front rank of orators, though many thought he was attacking Sulla. Sulla took no direct action against him. Cicero was then overloaded with briefs to take on and brought many cases to court. In the meanwhile, he married Terentia, who helped him enhance his finances. She had a strong character as well. In 79 B.C., after he married, Cicero decided to leave Rome and his reasoning is mysterious; it looks as if Cicero needed to recover his health, as he had health difficulties. Cicero also focused on his training and visited teachers of rhetoric and philosophy, studying with the well-known Stoic philosopher Posidonius and the rhetorician, Apollonius Molon. Sulla died in 78 B.C., so Cicero need not have had any worry about his safety. He returned to Rome in 77 B.C. to build his legal career in the Forum and plan his first political campaign.



Chapter 4, Politics and Foreign Postings, Cicero Enters the Ring, 77-63 B.C.

Chapter 4, Politics and Foreign Postings, Cicero Enters the Ring, 77-63 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero quickly built his reputation starting in 77 B.C. with his campaign for Quaestor. He succeeded handily and was quickly given an administrative post in Sicily. He moved there for three years with his wife and, soon, his daughter. He managed his affairs ably and gained a reputation as a fair and competent administrator. All the while, Sulla was managing Rome more effectively than before and Pompey grew in prominence, so much so that Sulla began to feel threatened. Another general, Crassus (only a distant relative of Cicero's teacher) rose in power too, and developed tension with Pompey.

One of Sulla's reforms was to give jury membership to Senators, who often engaged in corrupt practices, such as acquitting friends. The problem came to a head when some prominent Sicilians wanted to sue their former governor, Caius Verres, who was extremely corrupt. Cicero took the Sicilians as his clients, one of his rare prosecutions. Verres had the counsel of the great Quintus Hortensius Hortalus, a master of elaborate oratory. Cicero did his research and prevented Verres's men's machinations against him. Cicero used his opening statement to quickly list Verres's crimes and went right to the evidence. He told the Senators that their reputation as even-handed rulers depended on convicting Verres. Cicero was comprehensive and his case was devastating. Verres, sensing defeat, left for a lifetime of exile. The jury brought a guilty verdict. The Sicilians were pleased and Cicero made a powerful case for reforming the courts.

At the same time, Cicero ran some local festivals that made him well-known and liked among the urban masses. Cicero's reputation as a defense lawyer continued to grow. He also married off his daughter to an aristocratic family in 69 B.C., though the wedding did not take place until 62 B.C. In 65 B.C., Cicero's second and last child, Marcus, was born. Cicero's father died the same year. Cicero continued to manage his property well and enjoyed Tusculum the most.

Cicero's reputation rose in the senate as well. At age forty, he became a Praetor, in the year 66 B.C.. That year Cicero won a famous case and used the opportunity to flatter the lower classes, since he sought the Consulship and wanted their backing. He also had to decide how he would publicly react to Pompey's nomination to head the Roman army, ultimately deciding to support him. Over time, Cicero's attempts to curry favor with the people and the aristocracy nearly collapsed, however. He tried to project to the Senate that he was good, honest and a conservative at heart.



Chapter 5, Against Catalina, Campaign and Conspiracy, 63 B.C.

Chapter 5, Against Catalina, Campaign and Conspiracy, 63 B.C. Summary and Analysis

In 63 B.C., Cicero started to plan to run for Consul. His main competition came from Caius Antonius, who was often corrupt and Lucius Sergius Catalina, who was formidable. Catalina represented a populist movement that sought to dismantle Sulla's reforms and to weaken the Senate. Cicero had known Catalina for a while and their paths had intertwined for a while. Catalina also had a coterie of young men and spoiled them for their support. But his actions as an administrator in Africa were starting to get him into trouble for extortion, which became known as the first Catilinarian conspiracy. Julius Caesar was a mature politician by then and quietly supported Catalina. Together with Crassus, they seemed to be organizing a kind of coup.

Caesar was becoming center stage, spending lots of money to gain favor and attention. He was a bright, radical and scandalous man and very politically shrewd, pulling away from Catalina early on. Ultimately, the governing classes in Rome decided to back Cicero, because he would defend the authority of the Senate. Nonetheless, Cicero was uneasy about Catalina and decided to use his skills as a public speaker to blacken his opponents, and Catalina in particular. He claimed that Catalina had a new conspiracy underway. Cicero was successful and won the election handily, succeeding without bribery or violence. Cicero stood for the rule of law and the maintenance of a constitution. Catalina was furious about his defeat.

When Cicero became Consul on January 1st, 63 B.C., Rome's economy was teetering on the brink of disaster. Hopefully General Pompey would reopen trade routes by defeating the King of Pontus. Rome had high unemployment so mob rule could easily flourish. Both rich and poor suffered for various reasons. Cicero had to navigate a proposed land reform bill and opposed it, causing him to lose some political capital. He continued to maintain oratorical dominance.

Cicero also kept an eye on Catalina, since his support was still broadly based among the people. Catalina planned to assassinate Cicero and other leading figures in July of the next year. Cicero learned of the plot and persuaded the Senate to postpone the July elections and questioned Catalina publicly. But the Senate did not act against Catalina. Cicero's publicity and armed followers stopped the assassinations. Quintus and Caesar became Praetors. Catalina failed again to become Consul and was enraged, immediately beginning to plan a third assassination. Due to his intemperance, Crassus abandoned him. And Cicero found out about the plan.

After the summer and autumn, Crassus and some other senators told Cicero that Catalina's conspiracy was about to be executed. Cicero convened the Senate the next



morning, using letters Crassus delivered him to accuse Catalina of the plot, and Catalina began to delay and hide. Cicero gave a speech against Catalina directly to him. Catalina left the Forum and gathered 300 armed men; he was declared a public enemy when the Senate heard. He stayed in the field while Cicero dealt with other problems. Caesar's power rose in the meanwhile. The remaining leader of the Catalinarian conspiracy in Rome, Lentulus, had been captured and imprisoned months before; Cicero had him executed eventually. The conspiracy appeared at an end and the Senate conferred the title "Father of His Country" on Cicero. When Catalina received news, the 20,000 soldiers he had recruited began to leave. Catalina was then killed in a hand-to-hand fight with his former ally Marius. Cicero successfully put down the conspiracy and could claim a successful Consulship as the year ended. However, his success came at the price of alienating many of the people.



Chapter 6, Pretty-Boy's Revenge, The Good Goddess Affair and the Return of Pompey, 62-58 B.C.

Chapter 6, Pretty-Boy's Revenge, The Good Goddess Affair and the Return of Pompey, 62-58 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero was proud of himself due to his victory over Catalina but probably boasted too much and did not realize that Pompey saw him as a threat to his triumphant return to Rome. Pompey dispatched his brother-in-law, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Nepos, a Tribune, to try to get Pompey permission to kill Catalina in the countryside to deprive Cicero of complete victory. When it was found that Catalina was dead, Metellus Nepos instead prevented Cicero from giving a speech at the end of his Consulship proclaiming his accomplishments and defended his actions on the grounds that he had prevented the people from speaking through Catalina and that now Pompey would speak for them.

In the meanwhile, Cicero got caught up in another conflict. At The Good Goddess festival, where women presided over various religious ceremonies, Clodius, a contemporary of Caesar's, sneaked into the ceremony dressed as a woman, breaking religious ritual. He did so because he was in love with Caesar's wife, Pompeia. Clodius was discovered; his actions became scandalous. The problem was that Clodius was a member of a general group of young men who were sympathetic to Catalina and the people, so the Senate did not know how to handle the affair for fear of them. Nonetheless, they had to proceed with a tribunal. Terentia goaded Cicero into breaking Clodius's made-up alibi of being in another town the night of The Good Goddess festival. While Crassus bought off the jury, Clodius was determined to get back at Cicero, who called him "Pretty-Boy".

At the end of 62 B.C., Pompey came back to Italy after six years of campaigning, full of victories; trade with Asia Minor could resume. His reputation preceded him and he was first man of Rome, not needed to establish a military autocracy. His main goals were to get the Senate to ratify his conquests and get farms for his veterans. Cicero, however, hoped to draw Pompey away from the masses and towards the constitution in order to bring order to the Empire. Pompey did not entirely rebuff him but lacked the political talents to keep his political capital. But over the next year, Cicero's hope to unite the social classes behind the Constitution fell apart in part due to Pompey's land bill, which for various reasons did not pass and alienated Pompey from the Senate.

In 60 B.C., Caesar returned from fresh victories in Spain and was quickly elected Consul. He hatched a plot to bring Pompey, Crassus and Cicero together (his main rivals) by buying them off. Caesar successfully made deals and alliances with Pompey



and Crassus, but Cicero ultimately declined to ally himself with them. Together, though, Pompey, Crassus and Caesar had the power to do as they wished and could bypass the Senate. Caesar would begin his Consulship by trying to push through a land-reform bill, but the elites opposed him with all their power. Caesar then appealed directly to the People, an unusual act which marked a turning point in Roman history. The pressure he marshaled broke the elite opposition and the bill passed. But Caesar continued to push forward, provoking more class resentment.

Cicero was increasingly disturbed by Caesar's actions and made a public speech against the First Triumvirate (Caesar, Pompey and Crassus), which he realized later was a mistake. Caesar did not comment but let Clodius "off his leash". Clodius's status was changed to Plebeian; he could now be a Tribune. Cicero had to retreat from public life to tour his villas. While in Rome, the First Triumvirate's alliance became public knowledge and grew unpopular. When Caesar's Consulship ended, however, he had achieved all his aims and took a position as governor of much of the Empire's Eastern territories and set out to conquer present-day France and Belgium.

When Caesar left, Clodius became Tribune and announced a political program that aimed to gain the support of the people of the city. He did not seek revolution like Catalina, however. Instead, he created a simmering, but constant "standing gang" that could commit violence as they liked. They would be his power base when his Tribuneship ended. It is unclear what his goals were. Cicero protected himself by allying himself with a Tribune who vetoed Clodius's reforms, so Clodius and Cicero made a deal—Cicero would not block Clodius's reforms and Clodius would not launch a prosecution. But Clodius broke the deal and passed a law that would prosecute Cicero; Caesar was happy to use Clodius as a weapon. Cicero went into mourning and the actions of Clodius and Caesar became exposed; public opinion started to swing towards Cicero but the Tribune's gangs still harassed him. Cicero left the city and Clodius passed a bill effectively forcing him into exile. Cicero's letters indicate that he suffered something of a mental breakdown.



Chapter 7, Exile, The Rise of Caesar, 58-52 B.C.

Chapter 7, Exile, The Rise of Caesar, 58-52 B.C. Summary and Analysis

While Cicero was depressed in exile, affairs in Rome only became more complicated. Clodius turned his attention to undermining Pompey. His allies on the Tribune fought back and their gangs killed each other in large numbers. Due to the struggle, Pompey backed Cicero's recall. Caesar finally gave his reluctant consent as well. Clodius's mobs scared people too much. The entire political class ultimately backed the recall and Cicero returned triumphantly. However, Rome was so politically unstable that Cicero was quickly drawn back into backroom legislation and electioneering. Clodius still sought to destroy him. The First Triumvirate was breaking down, as events in Egypt set Pompey and Crassus against one another.

Cicero spent his time putting his finances back together, avoiding Clodius and maintaining political stability. But Caesar was plotting in the periphery of the Empire to regain power, since he had gained capital through great victories in battle. He made agreements with Pompey and Crassus again; the latter two men would serve as Consuls in 55 B.C. and Caesar would back them with soldiers. Cicero felt compelled to support them; he realized he could no longer have a freestanding political role or be rendered irrelevant or worse. Caesar and Pompey returned him from exile, after all, and he owed them. Cicero gave an extravagant speech on behalf of Caesar. It is clear from Cicero's letters that he was depressed. And the Triumvirate made use of Cicero's skills as a lawyer over the next three years. History has deeply criticized Cicero for his behavior during this time, even though he had little choice.

While being publicly used by the Triumvirate, Cicero turned much of his attention towards his private life, literature, philosophy, friends and family. Over the next year, Caesar ingratiated himself to Cicero by lending him and his brother money, because Clodius had destroyed their finances. Caesar began to regard Cicero as almost family. Caesar even dedicated a book he wrote on Latin Grammar to Cicero. Family life went well but civil disorder and corruption continued in Rome. The only center of power was the unconstitutional First Triumvirate. In 53 B.C., Crassus was brutally killed in battle, however. Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife Julia died in childbirth, along with her son. The year 52 B.C. began gloomily. At the beginning of the year, Clodius's recent conflict with a contemporary named Milo came to a head and led to Clodius's death. Pompey was asked by the Senate to rally troops to impose law and order on the chaos that ensued in the city. Milo was placed on trial and Cicero was chosen as his defense. However, Clodius's supporters created an uproar and embarrassed Cicero, causing him to give the worst performance of his professional life. Milo was exiled.

As the year 52 B.C. came to an end, strains between Pompey and Caesar grew; political stability relied on their alliance. While Cicero may have benefited from the strain, it could easily have caused civil war.



Chapter 8, The Ideal Constitution, Writing about Politics, 55-43 B.C.

Chapter 8, The Ideal Constitution, Writing about Politics, 55-43 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero began to turn towards writing about politics from 55 to 43 B.C., starting with a book on oratory in November 55 B.C., defending the practice of rhetoric. While Cicero was more famous for his oratory and had a reputation for writing too much, these books were well received. He also wrote books in dialogue form called *On the State* and *On Law*. The focus of *On the State* (published in 51 B.C.) was on the ideal constitution and the ideal citizen. It required a lot of work. Cicero has one of his characters, Scipio, argue that the best government combines monarchy, aristocracy and democracy as the Roman constitution does. This theory of the mixed constitution has had great historical influence. However, Cicero did not detect problems in the Roman constitution, only in the virtue of those entrusted with protecting it. *On the State* contains some of Cicero's greatest prose and was popular but had little political impact. *On Law* was never finished. In the book, Cicero repeats his major theme that oratory can have a moral force when used properly.



Chapter 9, The Drift to Civil War, 52-50 B.C.

Chapter 9, The Drift to Civil War, 52-50 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Pompey and Caesar continued their alliance into 52 B.C. Caesar was slated to return to Rome in 48 B.C., when he could expect to become Consul. At that time, the statute of limitations would run out on any purported illegal conduct for breaching the law during his Consulship in 59 B.C. Pompey still had control of military forces as Consul, however. Conflict was brewing. Pompey began to make preparations to block Caesar's ascent to power with a few subtle moves and reforms. Plutarch maintains that at this time both Caesar and Pompey had decided to try to get rid of the other. While personal conflict was part of the struggle, much of it was a tension over whether to modernize the Republic's governing institutions. In this time, Cicero was dragged into governing Cilicia in modern-day southern Turkey. He still performed admirably. But he found political conflict all around him, despite constantly preaching moderation and compromise. His deepest instinct was to support the Senate against Caesar. In 51 B.C., Cicero arrived in his new province, hopefully only for a year. He was intent on separating his administration from the previous one run by Clodius's brother and struggled to collect sufficient armed forces to police the realm. He also led a brief campaign to maintain supremacy in Parthia, which was a success. All the while he paid attention to developments in Rome. At the end of the year, he finished his governorship and in 50 B.C. left for Rome, though he did not arrive until January 49 B.C.



Chapter 10, A Strange Madness, The Battle for the Republic, 50-48 B.C.

Chapter 10, A Strange Madness, The Battle for the Republic, 50-48 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero was depressed about the present conditions and how to react. In the conflict between Caesar and Pompey, he preferred Pompey but cared most about saving the Republic. He fought to secure compromise to maintain peace; he and his allies were able to reveal public support for it. Pompey tried to convince Cicero to side with him to prepare for Caesar's return. He believed that Caesar would simply conquer town after town with his loyal armies. Cicero nearly agreed and thought that Caesar would ambush Pompey before he was ready. And indeed, Caesar crossed the Rubicon and did just this. Pompey abandoned Rome and the opposition to Caesar was confused. Cicero tried to remain neutral so he could later negotiate peace; he feared the constitution would be destroyed no matter who won. Caesar sought Cicero's help as a propaganda agent, but Cicero resisted. When Caesar took Rome and ransacked the Treasury, Cicero was disgusted.

Cicero was miserable and wished to escape from Italy. The great Roman leaders like Caesar and Marc Antony disappeared, as did members of his family. But Cicero disappeared nonetheless and receded from public view for a year. On Caesar's second trip to Rome, he was elected to his second Consulship but he spent his time going back and forth between Rome, both governing and pursuing Pompey. On August 9th, 49 B.C., Caesar's inferior force caught up with and routed Pompey. Pompey fled.

Pompey's allies were devastated and Cicero despaired that Caesar had won. Quintus and his son, furious with Cicero for his poor decisions, pursued Caesar to make peace with him. Cicero had nowhere to go but to Italy.



Chapter 11, Pacifying Caesar, The Last Gasps of Republican Rome, 48-45 B.C.

Chapter 11, Pacifying Caesar, The Last Gasps of Republican Rome, 48-45 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Cicero was not able to return to Rome, not due to Caesar but because Marc Antony wanted to review his collaboration with Pompey. Cicero had to wait for Caesar's return. Pompey had fled to Egypt but Pharaoh's royal advisers had Pompey killed before he reached land to ingratiate themselves to Caesar. When Caesar received his severed and pickled head, he cried. In the meanwhile, Quintus and his son blamed Cicero for their siding with Pompey; Cicero wrote to Caesar to confirm this out of a spirit of reconciliation.

After Pompey's death, Caesar withdrew from view for months, caught up in a war with the Egyptian Court. Cleopatra was, at this time, in her late teens and would seduce first Caesar and then Marc Antony. Cleopatra and her younger brother were co-rulers and she seduced Caesar to help her win power in 47 B.C. Internal quarrels and instability continued throughout the Empire in the meanwhile. Cleopatra gave birth to Caesarion before he left, likely their son. Cicero was isolated in Brundisium in the meanwhile and wanted to leave. Caesar's attempts to quell disorder took him through town and Cicero met with him privately. Apparently Cicero was given the ability to go wherever he wanted. At the same time, things had been going very poorly with Terentia; after returning to Rome in 47 B.C., Cicero divorced her, ending their thirty year marriage. In the meanwhile, Caesar continued to fight against rebellious partisans and won. When Caesar defeated Cato, Cato committed a rebellious and heroic suicide which was a major blow to Caesar's reputation. Many started to see Caesar as having a conspiracy against the state.

When Cicero returned to Rome, it was much changed. He no longer had a role and many famous figures were dead or absent. Cicero was sixty and had to find another livelihood. He started making friends and wrote often, spending time at Tusculum from time to time. He taught oratory and socialized. Caesar in the meanwhile continued quelling rebellions and Cleopatra somewhat scandalized him by coming to Rome and bringing Caesarion with the new Dictator. The Senate extended Caesar's dictatorship by ten years. Caesar expanded the Senate to include many new peoples from the empire in order to dilute the influence of any one senator. He also passed many reforms and was surprisingly moderate. Cicero stayed busy politically, often advising Caesar and currying his favor. His aim was to achieve the mixed constitution he defended in *On the State*.

In 46 B.C., Cicero remarried; he found a wealthy teenage ward of his named Publilia, but her youth was something of an embarrassment. A month or two after he was married, his beloved daughter Tullia died. Cicero was completely destroyed. In that time



he wrote *Self-Consolation*, one of antiquity's most celebrated works but that has been lost. He retreated to Astura, a villa of his where he could mourn privately. Publilia had said that she was pleased that a rival for Cicero's affection had been removed and Cicero could not tolerate this and divorced her. After several months, Cicero started to recover.

By mid-45 B.C., the civil war was over. Caesar won, though 100,000 Roman citizens had died. The Republic had died as well, because Caesar was not identical with the State. He was not interested in addressing constitutional matters either, only on further conquest. Cicero and Caesar remained on good terms.



Chapter 12, Philosophical Investigations, Thoughts on the Nature of Things, 46-44 B.C., Chapter 13, Why, This Is Violence!, Plots and Conspiracies, January—March 44 B.C.

Chapter 12, Philosophical Investigations, Thoughts on the Nature of Things, 46-44 B.C., Chapter 13, Why, This Is Violence!, Plots and Conspiracies, January—March 44 B.C. Summary and Analysis

The Republic was lost and Cicero turned from politics to writing. He wrote more between 46 and 44 B.C. than during the entire previous sixty years of his life. Cicero wrote on many subjects. First, he set out to defend oratory against recent criticisms against the style in which he was raised. He also wrote philosophy, though he was not an original thinker. Instead, he translated the major ideas from Greek philosophy into Latin, an invaluable service to the rest of history. In this way, Cicero was able to share the ideas of Greek philosophy, summed up in his writings in books like the *Academic Treatises* and the *Hortensius*, with the future Western World. Due to his writing, Cicero greatly expanded his reputation as a thoughtful writer and scholar. Towards the end of his life, Caesar noted that Cicero's accomplishments won him more fame and glory than a general marching in triumph because he extended the frontiers of Roman genius.

Respectable opinion thought that Caesar had a duty to restore the constitution. But he still believed that a strong executive authority should replace the squabbles of the Senate. Caesar also knew that he had enemies; and indeed, he did. Conspiracies began a year after the Ides of March, 44 B.C. As is well known due to Shakespeare's popularization, Cassius (Caius Cassius Longinus) was one of the main conspirators against Caesar; he hated Caesar mainly for personal reasons. Eventually sixty people were involved in the conspiracy. The conspirators started to praise Caesar excessively in order to diminish the seriousness of genuine admiration and it was working. It is not clear whether Caesar wanted to remain Dictator for Life or whether he wanted to be Consul legally; he was personally depressed and his health was deteriorating. He even became suspicious of Brutus. And, again, as is well known, Caesar was assassinated by a flurry of conspirators, though only one blow was fatal. Panic ensued though it quickly calmed down so that Brutus could address the people. The crowd that surrounded Brutus and Cassius was sympathetic to their claims that Caesar had to be assassinated.



Chapter 14, The Heir, Enter Octavian, March-December, 44 B.C.

Chapter 14, The Heir, Enter Octavian, March-December, 44 B.C. Summary and Analysis

Caesar was dead, but Brutus and Cassius had made no preparations for the aftermath, for which they have been criticized from soon after Caesar's death to the present day. Marc Antony was still around, a young man in his thirties, and could claim to rule. Some thought he should have been killed as well, however, including Cicero. The Senate gave immunity to the assassins, but let Caesar's laws stand as legitimate. At the funeral ceremony, Antony gave the funeral oration and a riot broke out; the Senate house was burned. Cicero was frustrated with the incompetence of the assassins, though he agreed with their actions and thought Antony was the prelude to a new autocracy. Irritated that he had no influence, he left the city.

By the end of April, Caesar's heir came to Italy; Octavian had been born when Caesar was Consul in 63 B.C. Octavian soon took action to assert himself as Caesar's political heir, not only his personal one. The atmosphere in Rome grew uneasy, since Octavian had many supporters. Antony, however, was not ready to give up a claim to power and a quiet tension evolved between the two of them. The two men had nothing in common and hopes of compromise were destroyed. Cassius and Brutus left Rome.

On August 31st, Cicero returned to Rome; the crowds were happy to see him. He was admired and his influence returned as he was seen as one of the few senior statesmen who was competent. He began to stand for the stability of the previous order. Cicero now displayed a new ruthlessness and clear-mindedness which he attributed to his philosophical studies. He immediately started to build a coalition to restore the Republic. Antony launched a furious public attack on him and Cicero responded in kind with his famous speeches, the Philippics. The Philippics made clear, however, that Cicero was too divisive to unite the Senate. Cicero withdrew to the countryside. The standoff between Antony and Octavian continued.

In the countryside, Cicero continued to write, including his *Duties* and a piece titled *Friendship*. On October 31st, however, Octavian wrote to Cicero and asked him to ally the Republican leadership with him against Antony. But Cicero was wary of Octavian's immaturity and ceaseless pestering. He would also have to engage in unconstitutional actions to aid Octavian and he did not know if Octavian could be trusted. So Cicero kept his distance and Octavian's march on Rome was a fiasco. Antony's troops arrived days later but some of his troops mutinied and the balance of power started to shift towards Octavian. Antony had to withdraw but he had not been defeated. Tension resumed. On December 9th, Cicero returned to Rome and gave his third Philippic on January 1st, arguing that Antony was an enemy of the state and that Octavian should be regularized. The Senate mostly agreed. In the fourth Philippic, Cicero explained all the political

details of the situation to the people and roused the spirits of the Senate. But Atticus's letters indicate the Cicero was becoming coarser and yet over the next six months he became the first man in Rome.



Chapter 15, Cicero's Civil War, Against Marc Antony, January—April, 43 B.C., Chapter 16, Death at the Seaside, The End of the Republic, April—November, 43 B.C., Chapter 17, Postmortems

Chapter 15, Cicero's Civil War, Against Marc Antony, January—April, 43 B.C., Chapter 16, Death at the Seaside, The End of the Republic, April—November, 43 B.C., Chapter 17, Postmortems Summary and Analysis

Cicero's fifth Philippic argued that the attempts by the new Consuls to negotiate with Antony failed to recognize his aggressive intentions. He also fought for increased power for Octavian, though Octavian was still in a weak position leading his father's legions, because they were of divided loyalties. Yet Cicero's support helped. Cicero had become the guiding power behind the government. Many authorities informed Cicero of their activities. Cicero's next two Philippics continued to press against compromise with Antony. Towards the end of January, however, Antony returned to the Senate and made counterproposals though they were defeated. Cicero had grounds for optimism in his political war against Antony, though he faced a setback when some of his allies misbehaved and were condemned. Cicero pushed for war with Antony and Antony urged negotiation and argued that Cicero was engaging in a policy of divide-and-rule. But events had proceeded too far to stop a conflict.

When battle began, Antony was twice defeated and the Caesarian faction was broken. Antony was out of the game and Brutus and Cassius controlled the eastern half of the empire. Cicero was pleased and began work on restoring the Republic. Only Octavian stood in his way. But for now the Senate was supreme.

Fate intervened when Cicero was finally victorious. His ally and general Pansa died of a wound, creating a power vacuum. Rome was in disarray until it had an election and the Republic had no executive authority. Octavian took command of Pansa's legions. And the Senate had no Consul. Cicero, however, led the Senate forward and had Antony declared a public enemy. Many did not consider Octavian's position, despite being an ally of the Senate. The Senate became complacent now that Antony was effectively defeated. It looked as if Cicero's hopes of restoring the Republic were collapsing, since he was criticized for cultivating Octavian, even by his friends. Cicero had hoped to turn on Octavian should he have claimed too much power, but now it seemed that he would



be unable. Cicero was exhausted and despaired. Some of Octavian's legions changed sides to Antony. And Octavian defected from the Republican cause, as anyone could have predicted. Cicero felt he had no choice but to go along with it.

Octavian now sought the Consulship, but Cicero resisted. People thought Octavian wanted to avenge his father with power. Octavian marched on Rome in August and demanded being made Consul and repealed the decree of outlaw upon Antony. The Senate was unmoved until Octavian approached and it panicked. There was now no stopping Octavian; Cicero tried to get Octavian to agree to a joint-Consulship but Octavian was uninterested. Octavian was made sole Consul on August 18th. Caesar's assassination was made a crime and a tribunal was put together to try the conspirators. Cicero was given permission to stay away from the Senate; he seemed to have lost heart. There would be no more fighting between Octavian and Antony.

Cicero's strategy of dividing the two had failed and attempts were made to unite them. They succeeded, allying to pursue Brutus and Cassius in the east. They then appointed a three-man Constitutional commission, which historians called the Second Triumvirate, including Lepidus as a junior partner. History seemed to repeat itself. Their political opponents were mowed down, even friends and family. Quintus and Cicero were placed on the list. Quintus and his son were killed before they reached Astura. Cicero then disembarked and started to walk to Rome. It is unclear why he did this; perhaps he wanted to go to Octavian's home to negotiate a pardon or even kill him. But he soon turned around and let his servants take him to his villa near Formiae. He then went into his house to rest, believing that he would die. Eventually a small party of men, led by a Military Tribune, caught up with him.

Cicero did not run at the end. He demanded that Herennius, the lead soldier who found him, cut off his head properly and offered him his neck. Herennius hesitated but eventually slit his throat. After three sword strokes and sawing, Cicero's head was removed and hands cut off. Popilius, the Tribune, was pleased. Antony was pleased as well. All agree that Cicero died with bravery and professionalism. Cicero's death was received in different ways. Antony was delighted at the death of the man he hated.

Contemporary historians of the people assessed him well, but felt that Cicero's life had tragedies and errors. Many thought he erred in insisting so vigorously that Antony be removed. In the eyes of the author, Cicero was a statesman and public servant of incredible ability and was perhaps the greatest orator of any age. His life may have ended with his career in ruins but he was clearly a man of principle, particularly when he refused to join Caesar. His goal of restoring traditional political values never wavered, save partly when he gave way to using unconstitutional means to do so. The problem for Cicero, in the author's view, is that he did not understand why the Roman Republic was torn apart. Caesar realized that the excessive checks and balances of the Republican Constitution prevented effective government. Cicero saw politics in personal rather than institutional terms. Cicero was often insecure and nervous; he was too temperamental. It is also hard to gauge his personal life. His philosophical writings, however, are masterpieces, despite their unoriginality.



Cicero attracted loyalty after his death. His servant Tiro wrote a biography of him. Marcus, Cicero's son, loved him and defended his name. Cicero's friend Atticus stayed in hiding and avoided being put on the list of assassinations. He stayed on good terms with Octavian and Antony. He shared his correspondence with Cicero with others and many survive.



Characters

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Cicero was one of classical antiquity's greatest statesmen, intellectuals, philosophers and politicians. Born in 106 B.C., just prior to the birth of Julius Caesar, Cicero grew up in an aristocratic family in Arpinum, a town outside of Rome. As he grew up, he received an elite education in Rome, studying philosophy and rhetoric. Cicero soon thereafter began his career as a lawyer, gaining fame for his work as a defense attorney and an excellent orator after winning a series of high profile cases. He was then elected to the Senate in 76 B.C., quite a rise for a man not from a family of Roman patricians. In 63 B.C., Cicero became Consul. While Consul, Cicero became named "the father of his country" for uncovering and thwarting the Catalinarian conspiracy. Cicero was also well-known for defending the Republican government of Rome and its constitution against revolution and autocracy.

Cicero's influence vanished when Caesar came to power and he was happy when Caesar's autocracy came to an end. Cicero gradually reentered public life and after several years ardently attacked Marc Antony to prevent him from gaining dictatorial power of his own. For opposing Marc Antony, Cicero was hunted down and killed once the conflict he fomented between Octavian and Antony ended. Throughout his life, Cicero displayed a noble character despite being plagued by emotional turmoil and family troubles. He also wrote a number of important works on oratory and politics and translated much of Greek philosophy into Latin.

Julius Caesar

Only a few years Cicero's junior, Julius Caesar was early on Cicero's good friend and a friend of his family. Their lives were intertwined in a number of ways and their careers and fame rose together. However, over time Cicero and Caesar's interests grew apart when Caesar's desire for power led him to abandon loyalty to the Roman republican form of government. Caesar's prowess as a military general led him to gain great fame, as much as the great Roman general Pompey. Together with Crassus, they led the First Triumvirate until Crassus was eclipsed and Pompey and Caesar began to plot against one another. Eventually their scheming led to civil war. Caesar was too politically and militarily shrewd for Pompey and ultimately brought about his death, becoming the first Dictator of Rome.

History has not been kind to Caesar and the author, Everitt, claims that there were ways in which Caesar was wiser than Cicero. Cicero believed in the "good man" theory of government. If government worked poorly, it was because bad men ruled. Fixing the problem involved replacing the men in government with good men. But Everitt claims that Caesar realized that the Roman Empire needed strong executive government and that the constitution was too full of checks and balances for effective government to



prevail. Thus Caesar saw that the Roman government had a structural problem, not merely that it lacked great and virtuous leaders.

Quintus Cicero

Quintus Cicero was Cicero's brother and constant companion and ally with rare exception.

Atticus

Titus Pomponius Atticus was Cicero's best friend; they corresponded often and hundreds of their letters survive.

Catalina

Catalina was a Tribune and ardent opponent of Cicero who was willing to use violence to bring about a people's revolution against Roman elites.

Marc Antony

Once the assistant to Caesar, Antony was a powerful senator and Cicero's mortal enemy. Cicero's Philippics were directed against Antony and led to him being branded a public enemy. But Antony had the last laugh, becoming a member of the Second Triumvirate and having Cicero executed.

Octavian

Octavian was the heir of Julius Caesar and for a time Cicero's pawn in his battle against Antony. Cicero hoped to use Octavian to restore the Roman constitution and used unconstitutional means in order to do so. But Octavian ultimately turned on him.

Tullia

Cicero's beloved daughter Tullia died in childbirth, tearing him to pieces psychologically.

Terentia

Terentia was Cicero's wife of thirty years whom he divorced for mysterious reasons.



Pompey

The great Roman general Pompey was Cicero's ally and a member of the First Triumvirate with Caesar until he and Caesar came to blows, leading to civil war.

Brutus and Cassius

The leaders of the conspiracy to assassinate Julius Caesar were Brutus and Cassius.



Objects/Places

Rome

Rome was the center city of the Roman Empire and the setting of most of the major events of Cicero's life.

Tusculum

Tusculum was the location of Cicero's favorite villa and where he often retreated during times of controversy.

Arpinum

Arpinum was Cicero's hometown and the hometown of his family.

The Forum

The Forum was the political and religious center of Rome where the Senate was located.

The Senate

The collection of Roman Senators that was the ruling body of the Roman Empire until Caesar became dictator was called the Senate. Cicero was a senator and believed in senatorial supremacy.

The Consulship

The leading office within the Senate was the consulship; the Roman Senate had two Consuls a year who switched power each month. Cicero served as Consul.

Tribunes

The office within Roman government that represented the masses was called Tribune. Catalina made great trouble for Cicero and Roman elites as a Tribune.

Oration

Cicero was not only one of history's great orators but a great theoretician of oratory.



Writing

Cicero was a great writer and translator of Greek thought into Latin.

Popularis

Popularis were the leaders within the Roman Senate who relied on tribunes and popular elections for their power.

Optimates

The Senators who supported the old Republican order were called optimates.

Patricians

Patricians were rich Roman aristocratic families inordinately powerful in Roman society.

Autocracy

The rule of a single individual is autocracy. Caesar was an autocrat and Cicero opposed autocracy throughout his life.

Civil War

Civil War broke out several times within the Roman Empire during Cicero's life, including after the formation of the First Triumvirate and the inception of the Second Triumvirate.



Themes

Restoring the Republic

While author Anthony Everitt is often critical of Cicero's actions as a politician, he still thinks that Cicero is the greatest statesman in the history of the Roman Republic. Why? Because he was both principled and shrewd about acting in accord with his principles. Cicero was, regarding the issues of his day, a moderate conservative. He did not reject reform in principle but thought that the Roman system of government was the most perfect system of government ever devised. In his book, *On the State*, Cicero argued that the Roman system was so excellent because it combined the best features of the three fundamental types of government: monarchy, democracy and oligarchy. While he saw that it had many checks and balances, with good personal leadership, Cicero thought most practical and structure problems could be overcome.

Thus, Cicero continuously fought to restore the governmental institutions of the Republic throughout his entire career. In his early career, he fought against corruption. In the middle of his career, as Consul, he prevented Catalina from bringing about a democratic revolution. And when Caesar came to power, Cicero did what he could to support a return to Republican government, cheering Caesar's assassination and reentering public life in the hopes of preventing autocracy from reasserting itself. In the end, Cicero's goal of restoring the Republic became so strong that he was willing to engage in unconstitutional means in order to achieve it, including supporting Octavian's rule despite its illegality.

Triumph and Tragedy

Cicero, the author notes, was a man of complex emotional states. He was easily thrown emotionally off-kilter and was known to become depressed easily. Cicero did not handle defeat well, often retreating and drawing deep into depression. In many ways, Cicero's own life exhibited the same ups and downs in its events as it did in his emotional states. Much of Cicero's life is spent in Rome, building or rebuilding his reputation. But in other cases, Cicero wanders the Roman Empire, spending time in retreat at his various villas, meeting with allies trying to seize power in Rome from the outside and avoiding capture and assassination.

Cicero has to tango with Catalina as Consul, and ultimately defeats him, but Caesar has Cicero exiled and Cicero must lie in waiting until the conspirators have killed him in order to return to Rome. Cicero withdrew from public view when his beloved daughter Tullia died, only returning when his writing led him to recover. Cicero also fought hard against Marc Antony in Rome and almost succeeded in preventing him from coming back to power. It was only due to the freak accident death of two of his generals that his plan to use Octavian to restore the Republic failed. In the end, Antony had the last laugh since he was able to pass a proscription against Cicero and have him executed, with



one of his Tribunes sawing off his head. Most know how Roman history went after Cicero's death: autocracy completely replaced the Republic and lasted until the collapse of the Empire. In this way, Cicero ultimately died a tragic death despite a life of accomplishment.

Integrity

Cicero sought his whole life to restore the Roman Republic and protect it against revolution and dictatorship. He also experienced many triumphs and tragedies in his relatively long life. But one element that characterizes Cicero that should be brought out is his integrity. It is without doubt that Cicero liked fame and adulation and that he was insecure and easily hurt. It is true that he could often be petty and hold a grudge, as he did against Antony, which arguably led indirectly to his death. But Cicero was resistant to backroom deals and in many cases refused to engage in corrupt practices even when it would have benefited him. The author is most impressed that Cicero declined to join the First Triumvirate when a place was offered to him. Here Cicero could have been one of four major figures in power in Rome; perhaps he even could have used that power in order to bring back more republican institutions. But he thought the Triumvirate was corrupt and illegal, so he declined.

Cicero seems to have lost integrity after Caesar's death. This is not to say that he was more easily corrupted or that he loved power more. Instead, he became more ruthless and desperate to save the Republic as he aged. Perhaps his weakest moment came in his decision to side with Octavian against Antony. While Cicero's aim was to use Octavian to restore the Republic, he violated his own constitutional principles to try and achieve his lifelong dream.



Style

Perspective

Author Anthony Everitt is presently a visiting professor in visual and performing arts at Nottingham Trent University. Everitt has written at length on European culture and has written several popular books on Roman history, including biographies of Augustus and Cicero. Everitt was also the secretary of the Arts Council of Great Britain. It seems that Everitt's aim in writing his biography of Cicero is to bring him back from obscurity. There have been times in history where Cicero was considered a figure of great importance. He undoubtedly was important in the history of Western philosophy as a transmitter of Greek philosophy. But he, like so many other Roman intellectuals, failed to make real philosophical advances during the history of the Empire unlike the Greeks before and the Christians after him. It was Cicero's work as a politician that Everitt aims to rehabilitate then. Cicero is also seen as a master orator, given his historical reputation but few realize the key role he had in attempting to thwart the destruction of the Roman Republic and the life of integrity he led with respect to his aim.

In Everitt's view, Cicero was the architect and defender of the mixed constitution, the constitution that seeks to combine the best of the three major forms of government and thereby avoid, to some extent, their weaknesses. As a constitutionalist, Cicero was a massive influence and hero and as an orator, he continues to influence speeches into the present day.

Tone

Anthony Everitt's work on Cicero is meant to be an overall rehabilitation. He often pushes back against criticisms of Cicero advanced by historians both ancient and contemporary. Cicero should be seen as more important given how close he came to achieving his aim of restoring the Republic, for how influential his work on Roman political institutions was and how hard he consistently fought for his principles. However, the tone ebbs and flows with the highs and lows of Cicero's life and with Everitt's varying interpretations of Cicero's triumphs and tragedies. The description Everitt gives of Cicero's early life and rise to fame through his work as a lawyer has a tone of admiration and anticipation, since it is clear that Cicero is destined for great things, even without knowing his future reputation. Cicero's work as Consul is described in somewhat mixed terms, since while Cicero regarded himself as an excellent Consul, Everitt did not see his defeat of Catalina as the greatest of historical accomplishments.

The tone turns darker when the Republic is being threatened with destruction when the Triumvirates come to power, when Cicero is on the run, when civil war breaks out, and so on. It is also darker and more depressed when Cicero suffers personal tragedy. It lightens when Cicero rebounds from defeat but ultimately the tone of Cicero: The Life



and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician ends with a note of sadness, given Cicero's failure to restore the constitution and the way he was treated just after his death.

Structure

Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician is structured chronologically. Each chapter covers a discreet period of time and unfolds the relevant time period gradually. The author divides the book into unmarked subsections that make different points or cover distinct subplots. The book contains seventeen chapters and is fairly sizeable. The first chapter, "Fault Lines", sets the historical context for Cicero's birth, giving the political history of his day and explaining how the first cracks in Rome's constitutional structure had already appeared. Chapter two reviews Cicero's childhood in detail and Chapter 3 takes Cicero into his early law career. Chapter 4 details his early political and foreign offices and his rise to become a senator.

In Chapter 5, Cicero becomes Consul and defeats Catalina, though the conflict is not resolved until Chapter 7. Chapter 8 discusses Cicero's idea of the ideal constitution. Chapter 9 takes the story forward into the lead up to civil war between Caesar and Pompey, which continues from Chapter 10 to Chapter 13, when Caesar is assassinated. Chapter 14 introduces Octavian, Caesar's heir, and explains how he quickly came to prominence. Chapter 15 reviews Cicero's attempt to destroy Marc Antony and to use Octavian to restore the Republic. Cicero ultimately led to Civil War between Octavian and Antony. This backfires against him in Chapter 16, where Cicero is killed after a proscription is issued by Marc Antony. Chapter 17 is a "post mortem" that reviews Cicero's historical legacy.



Quotes

"This was the self-defeating political system that Cicero and his contemporaries inherited. As boys and young men they witnessed the demolition gangs move in." (Chapter 1, 20)

"Always be the best, my boy, the bravest." (Chapter 2, 21)

"Today the eyes of the world are upon you. This man's case will establish whether a jury composed exclusively of Senators can possibly convict someone who is very guilty—and very rich." (Chapter 4, 79)

"In less than twenty years, Cicero had risen from being a little-known lawyer from the provinces to being joint head of state of the greatest empire in the known world." (Chapter 5, 94)

"The present crisis was unlike anything he had faced before. Even the most sanguine mind would have been daunted. If we are to believe what he writes in his letters, he may have suffered something like a mental breakdown and seems to have attempted, or at least considered, suicide." (Chapter 6, 145)

"It is a sort of second life I am beginning. Already, now that I am here, secret resentment and open jealousy are setting in among those who championed me when I was away." (Chapter 7, 152)

"In one sense, a breakdown in relations between the two men would be welcome to Cicero, for it would lift what he saw as a serious threat to the rule of law; from another perspective, it might transform civil discord into civil war." (Chapter 7, 177)

"Cicero's constitutional writings reveal a humane conservatism. It says a great deal for his intellectual tenacity that he maintained his beliefs during the years when Caesar's astonishing career reached its climax and the pillars of the Republic finally came crashing down." (Chapter 8, 184)

"So far as Cicero was concerned, hostilities were now definitely at an end." (Chapter 10, 221)

"By far the most important factor driving Cicero, though, was the hope that after all, at the eleventh hour and defying all probability, the 'mixed constitution' for which he had argued in *On the State* and which had been Rome's glory might be reinstated." (Chapter 11, 239)

"Family estrangements troubled him and he had nearly been broken by Tullia's death, but he had struggled with all his might to regain his emotional balance. Tempered by the fire, he seemed to have acquired a new, steely resolve." (Chapter 11, 250)



"I have written more in this short time since the collapse of the Republic than I did throughout the many years while the Republic stood." (Chapter 12, 252)

"A pity you didn't invite me to dinner on the Ides of March! Let me tell you, there would have been no leftovers." (Chapter 14, 273)

"I did not mince my words, and, more by willpower than by oratorical skill, I recalled the weak and weary Senate to its old, traditional vigor. That day, my energy and the course I took, brought to the Roman People the first hope of recovering their freedom." (Chapter 14, 296)

"It had been a close-run thing, but Cicero's strategy had worked: the Republic was saved." (Chapter 15, 306)

"I will die in the country I have so often saved." (Chapter 16, 317)

"An eloquent man, my child, an eloquent man, and a patriot." (Chapter 17, 325)



Topics for Discussion

How did Cicero become a great orator and lawyer?

How did Cicero become a senator?

In your view, what was Cicero's greatest accomplishment?

Was Cicero a principled constitutionalist? When in his life was he most principled?
When in his life was he least principled?

What was Cicero's plan to restore the constitution during the conflict between Antony and Octavian? Why did it fail?

In Everitt's view, what were some of Cicero's flaws as a politician?

Do you think that Everitt underestimates Cicero's scholarly achievements? Was he really an unoriginal thinker?