The Agricola; and the Germania; Study Guide

The Agricola; and the Germania; by Tacitus

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Plot Summary

The Agricola and the Germania, by Cornelius Tacitus, serves two purposes as a historical document. First, the book serves to pay tribute to one of the greatest commanders over Britain in Roman history, that of Commander Agricola. Due to his status as Agricola's son-in-law, Tacitus tells the story of Agricola's rise to power over Britain using both his own personal experiences with the man as well as stories from Agricola himself. Although Tacitus is limited in his knowledge of geography and military history, his knowledge of the life of Agricola is unmatched in any other tribute. Tacitus tells of Agricola's early years in training for the military, his rise in the ranks, and his unparalleled victory over the British rebel forces at the time. Finally, he tells of Agricola's fall from grace with the ruling Emperor of Rome, and his eventual death. Tacitus' use of style and description within the story show Agricola not just as a military force, but as a kind and tempered military genius.

In the second part of the book, Tacitus tells of what he believes to be the greatest threat to Rome, that of the people of Germany. Described as being of Celtic, Gaul, and indigenous decent, the people of Germany are described first in terms of their dress, traditions, and overall culture. Tacitus stresses their overwhelming sense of family, their abilities to fight, and their passion for freedom several times, showing his belief that these forces make the people of Germany particularly dangerous. He also describes each tribe separately to show their differences, as well as to tell readers which tribes are loyal to Rome, and which are a threat to Roman society. While his descriptions of geography and historical reference are again lacking in this book, his accounts of the people of Germany and their traditions are accurate and form one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the people of Germany during this time.

The Agricola and The Germania are two very different stories, but both have similar undertones. The Agricola, a homage to a great military leader, serves both as a eulogy and as a lament against the tyrannical Emperors of Rome who rewarded military achievement with disgrace and disapproval. The Germania serves both as a character analysis of the inhabitants of an unknown region, and also as a warning to Rome about the power of freedom and self preservation. Both stories are written with a lack of geographical or historical precision, but these shortcomings are overcome through Tacitus' strong writing skills and passion for his country, and their survival.

Introduction

Introduction Summary and Analysis

The Agricola and The Germania is a book containing two distinctly different stories of Rome. In Agricola, Tacitus tells of the glory of one man's rise to power through military achievement, and his subsequent downfall as a result of the jealousy of the Emperor of Rome. The Germania, on the other hand, tells of the people of ancient Germany, and serves as both a cultural examination as well as a warning to the people of Rome that the German inhabitants are a force to be reckoned with.

The Introduction, by Harold Mattingly, begins by noting that the Agricola was one of the most famous governors of Roman Britain, and that Germania was written to describe the "great people that had already begun to be a European problem." The first section of the Introduction, I, is an account of the life of the writer, Tacitus. Born in 56 A.D in Rome, Tacitus was born into a life of the military and government, but also served to write some of the most compete accounts of history at the time. Having married the daughter of Agricola, his account of Agricola's military career is complete with not only historical details, but personal details as well. Section II tells the short military account of Cn. Julius Agricola. Agricola was a military career man, and held high appointments throughout his life, but is most remembered for his unrivaled hold over Britain. Section III tells of the structure of the novel, noting it follows the tradition for biographies written at the time. Mattingly also suggests the book may have held political themes aiming at moderation, but notes this is only a minor theme. Section IV describes the shortcomings of Tacitus' account of Britain, including his lack of detail about the people, the landscape, and the surrounding islands, as well as his lack of detail regarding their ways of life prior to Roman intervention. Section V discusses the state of Britain before Agricola was sent to the area, as Julies Caesar, Augustus, and Caligula all played with the idea of conquering Britain, but all failed until Claudius in A.D. 43. Over the course of time, more and more of the island came under Roman rule until Boudicca, Queen of Iceni, swept over Roman forces. Paulinus, however, took the island back. In VI, the author describes Agricola's governorship over Britain, beginning by noting he was appointed to the area in 78 A.D. He defeated North Wales, advanced from Chester to York, and as far as Tay in Eastern Britain, established a number of forts, consolidating the Forth-Clyde line, and advanced from Soloway Firth to the Galloway peninsula. Further, he advanced through coastal areas, and defeated the Caledonians. Mattingly notes here that his descriptions of the lands won by Agricola are to give readers an idea of the scope of his success, since Tacitus rarely mentions place names. In VII, Mattingly notes that shortly after Agricola's recall from Britain, several forts fell to rebel forces, showing the true abilities of Agricola as a tactician in battle. Section VIII states that during Agricola's time in Britain, there were four primary legions of the Roman military, those of the Augusta, Hispana, Germina, and Valeria. Again, Mattingly notes Tacitus' failure as a historian by failing to ever mention a single legion in his tale of Agricola's success in Britain.

IX begins the discussion by Mattingly about the portion of the book known as Germania. He points out that this book is a classic study of people, and includes an analysis of the character, customs, and geography of the people seen as a threat to the Roman empire. However, Mattingly also points out it appears, at least in some small portion, to be a statement against the degeneration of the Empire at the time of the writing, that of 98 A.D. Tacitus, Mattingly believes, takes a view against emperor Trajin's reluctance to conquer Germany, but does so through undertones in the book. Mattingly points out that although Tacitus underrates the importance of trade with Germany and exaggerates many aspects of their lives, his narration of their existence is still a reliable one that has held true throughout history. In X, Mattingly describes the historical relationship between Germany and Rome. Until 113 B.C., the German people were mistaken often as the people of Gaul. At that time, though, the Cimbri and Teutoni attacked Italy, taking over the northeast. However, they proceeded to attempt to take Spain and were defeated. For nearly forty years, the Germans remained silent. Augustus years later attempted to advance on the Elbe, and succeeded in inuring the Germans to Roman way of life. However, left in the hands of Varus, void of military ability, the German rebels ambushed and destroyed the Roman army. In 68 A.D., German rebels joined forces with Abatavian forces to demoralize the Roman armies on the Rhine. After a brief uprising of the Gauls, the rebels began to waver. In eastern Germany, there were tensions, but they were brief and not as close as those in west Germany. In all, history showed Tacitus to be correct in his warnings about the force of the German people.

In XI, Mattingly discusses the early Roman empire, mostly in terms of her rulers. Caesar's downfall as Dictator in 44 B.C. led to the rise of Octavian, known now as Augustus, who restored the Republic to order and harmony, and established the Empire. Tiberius, his step-son, took over the empire on Augustus' death, but was never a popular ruler. Upon his death, the Empire fell to Gaius, known now as Caligula. His ambition to become a god on Earth along with his tyrannical rule nearly ended the Empire, and resulted in his murder. On his death, Claudius was appointed emperor, and it was under him that Britain was overtaken. After his murder by his wife, his step-son Nero became emperor. Nero was popular, but his rule was that of "debauchery, waste, and cruelty." When he committed suicide, Galba rose to power. The Germans, however, refused to swear allegiance to him and found their own emperor, Vitellius. On Galba's death, Ortho became a prime candidate for emperor, but had to win over Vitellius. After a short campaign, Ortho committed suicide, leaving the empire to Vitellius. At the same time, Vespasian was proclaimed emperor of Judaea and the Balkans, and soon held the entire Empire. Vespasian restored the Empire and suppressed several revolts by the Gauls, and it was he who sent Agricola to Britain. Vespasian was succeeded by his son Titus, who soon perished, and then Domitian, his second son. Domitian was cruel and suspicious, and not well liked, and it was he who removed Agricola from his British post, much to the chagrin of the Roman people.He was assassinated, and Nerva, a lawyer, took his place as emperor. Nerva was a weak but well liked ruler, and passed the throne to Trajin. His was succeeded by Hadrian, and it was under his rule that Tacitus perished. Mattingly points out that it is clear through an examination of these rulers that the family rule from Augustus to Nero and from Vespasian to Domitian was the downfall of the Empire, and that it was only through responsible appointment, such as with Nerva, that the Empire was allowed to succeed.

In XII, Mattingly explains that while the citizens of Rome believed the Empire was still a Republic, the transition of certain powers from the Senate to the Emperor seem to show otherwise. The Emperor was the supreme holder of military command, could sole-handed convene the Senate and initiate legislation, and held other special powers reserved only for him. At his beck and call were the Senate, the Knights, the freedmen, and the slaves. The Roman people clearly had less control than they believed. Section XIII explains that the provinces of the empire were guarded by the military, and ruled by the Senate and officers appointed by the Senate. In XIV, Mattingly closes the Introduction with a brief description of the army and the fleet of the Empire. The army was composed of legions and auxiliary troops stationed on the front lines of provinces. The legion consisted of foot soldiers as well as horses and auxiliary services, and was divided into ten cohorts, which was further divided into three maniples, and then into two centuries. The centurions were the primary force of the legion. The auxiliary infantry was split into cohorts, commanded by colonels. The garrison of Rome was composed of the praetorian guard, or the corps d'elite, the urban cohorts, and the watch. The fleet, an inferior service by far, were generally not Romans.

While the Introduction to the book is nearly as long as Agricola itself, it is vital to an overall understanding of both books in the novel. Since Tacitus fails to provide readers with any military history or background of the roman Empire, Mattingly's provision of such details helps readers to understand the true achievements of Agricola. Additionally, his explanation of the account of German history helps readers to understand not only why Tacitus found it necessary to write about the people of Germany, but also explains why his tone is somewhat foreboding in many areas of the book.

Agricola

Agricola Summary and Analysis

Tacitus begins his account of the life and career of Agricola by pointing out that many men have had their lives set on record in an effort to overcome the apathy of the age, and to show the true nature of a man. He reminds readers that many eulogies in the past have later been seen as capitol offenses when the people within the tales become public enemies. Tacitus notes this is no longer a problem, but also notes that the people of the Empire have wasted fifteen years as they battled for freedom.

Tacitus starts his written eulogy with the birth of Gnaeus Julius Agricola in Forum Julii. Agricola was born into military and governmental service through his father, and enjoyed culture and liberal arts through his mother. He served his military apprenticeship in Britain, where he showed himself to be both personable to his troops and able in military tactics and war. Tacitus notes that Britain at the time was in a perilous state, as the campaign struggled to survive. From there, Agricola returned to Rome where he entered his career in office, and married Domitia Decidiana, which brought him further up the social ladder. He was elected quaestor, and assigned to Asia. During the reign of Nero, Agricola wisely remained loyal, but silent. Under Galba, he was assigned duty to track stolen property. Throughout all of this period, it seems, Agricola resisted the temptations such offices and locations had to offer, and made himself well-known and liked throughout Asia and Rome. Agricola was sent to enroll recruits and was put in charge of the twentieth legion, a problematic legion in need of order and authority, which Agricola handed down with mercy and a strong hand. Tacitus notes that Britain was being ruled as a province by Vettius Bolanus, who was unfit for such a large task. Agricola therefore learned under Bolanus to be patient and obedient, despite ambition. On his return to Rome, he was placed in charge of Aquitania as a stepping stone to consulship. Agricola, according to Tacitus, was agreeable and just, and could be dignified and serious but also relaxed. He avoided rivalry, sullenness, arrogance, bickering, and anything else he felt was undignified. In less than three years, he was called for consulship of Britain. It was during this time, Tacitus notes, that he himself became betrothed to Agricola's daughter.

Tacitus describes Britain as being parallel to Germany on the east and Spain on the west, while Gaul lies to the south. The island, he explains, is open to the north. While his description of Britain is now known to be somewhat inaccurate, it should be pointed out that other writers at the time knew these inaccuracies. As such, Tacitus shows here his lack of concern for geographical accuracy. He describes the native people of Britain as barbarians with reddish curly hair, large limbs, swarthy faces, and attributes these characteristics to a blending of the Spanish and the Gauls. He notes they are spirited and challenging, with a strength in infantry and chariot fighting, but a weakness in cooperative military excursions. During this section, Tacitus describes the movement of the sun across the horizon, and notes the "flat extremities of the earth", showing again his lack of knowledge and detail about the world. The people, he claims, readily submit

to military service but resent any abuse. Here, Tacitus describes the history of Britain as Mattingly did in the Introduction, but without any real detail, further showing the need for Mattingly's informative descriptions of the Roman/Britain history.

It is important to note here, however, that Tacitus does speak about the treatment of the Britain's by the Romans, and their lament about their condition. He states the Britons began to feel as through their submission led only to slavery, violence, greed, and lust. Tacitus states they claimed that in war, the spoils went to the more courageous, but that in slavery, the weak and cowardly were able to take as they pleased, since the slaves had no recourse. Under such thoughts, the Britons rose up under Boudicca, but were defeated by Paulinus. Under Trebellius, the Britons learned to enjoy vices, which halted rebellion. However, the Roman troops, accustomed to war, grew bored and began mutiny. Bolanus replaced him, but the situation did not improve. Petilius, however, conquered much of the territory, and Frontinus subdued the warlike nation of the Silures. It was at this time, Tacitus notes, that Agricola came to Britain. The soldiers had just finished a long campaign, and the rebels were ready to attack the relaxing Roman armies. Agricola, however, entered and led his men up into the hills, defeating the Odrovices that threatened the plains. Shortly thereafter, he attacked the island of Anglesey to reduce their rebel forces. With these victories in hand, Agricola quickly rose to be extolled as a brilliant governor. Agricola, however, was determined to stop the rebellion at the heart and sought to find the cause of the problem. He began to enforce discipline on the ranks to stop the looting and improper treatment of the native Britons. Such actions glorified him in the eyes of the Britons, and made them appreciate peace. The following year, Agricola focused on social betterment. He built temples, housing, public squares, and gave rewards to those willing to work. Education was mandated, as was training in the Latin language. During the third and fourth year, Agricola sought to secure the northern territories and succeeded. During his fifth year, he crossed the Annan river and overtook unknown tribes that resided there, and during his sixth year, overtook the tribes even further beyond. Using his fleet, Agricola attacked the northern areas from both sides, ensuring success. The natives of Caledonia, however, rose up in arms. Agricola, hearing of their plans, sent forth three divisions, which forced the enemy to attack the ninth legion instead. Agricola quickly sent his troops to assist, and the enemy retreated. During the same time, the Britons began to ward off German raiders. While seemingly unrelated to the story, this small passage serves as a precursor to the account of the Germans given by Tacitus in the next book. The following summer, Agricola lost a son, and silently grieved, showing again his strength as a man of the military.

The same summer, his army reached Mount Graupius which was occupied by the Britain forces. More than 30,000 soldiers awaited the Roman military. Calgacus, a leader of the British force, gave a rousing speech about liberty, freedom, hope, the fight against tyranny, and the sheer brevity and passion within the British men. He spoke of the rape of British women, the killing of British children, and the loss of British lands to the Roman invaders, and encouraged his troops to have courage, faith, and a belief that the cause of Britain would give rise to a show of support from the Gauls, other Brits, and the Germans. Following the speech, Agricola gave his own to the Roman soldiers, which briefly discussed their previous triumphs, and the agonizing life they would have if

the battle were lost. He urged the men to fight despite a clear disadvantage of numbers since their tactics were superior, their weapons mightier, and their cause more just. The two armies faced one another, and missiles began to fire. The battle was short, and ended with the British army scattering to the woods with nearly 10,000 casualties to the 360 Roman deaths. The following day, the soldiers noticed the silence of Britain, and made their way north to camp for the winter. Here, Tacitus enters as fact his opinions of how Emperor Domitian reacted to the success of Agricola. He presumes Domitian was disturbed by Agricola's fame and victory, and that he knew the danger of having a subject exalted over an Emperor. However, Domitian appears to have waited to show his concern, as he complimented Agricola on his success, and allowed an impression that Agricola was to be awarded Syria in his retirement. However, upon his return to Rome, such appointment did not occur. Around him, armies were lost at the hands of incompetent commanders, and Agricola's name rose even higher. When the time came for Agricola's ballot for the proconsulship of Africa or Asia, Domitian's men are said to have threated Agricola into refusing the position. Domitian, seemingly the forgiving Emperor, allowed Agricola to retire. Upon Agricola's death not long after, the public flocked to his support upon the belief he was poisoned. Tacitus states there is no evidence, but does note an increase in freedmen and men of the Empire at his residence. Domitian was named co-heir of the estate.

Tacitus notes Agricola lived his life as a handsome man with charm, vigor, triumph, and grace. Tacitus expresses gratitude that he did not live to see the Senate under siege, the Empire at risk, or Domitian in his tyranny. He expresses profound grief at not being able to see Agricola for many years prior to his death, and at the loss of an opportunity to hear his dying words, and to give him the comfort he deserved. He finishes his written eulogy by hoping Agricola is at peace, and hopes for his forgiveness. He notes his strong affection for his father-in-law, and tells all to revere men like Agricola not through statues that fade with age, but through the memory of their actions and deeds, as Tacitus himself has attempted to do.

Germania

Germania Summary and Analysis

Tacitus begins by noting the German people are separated on all sides by water or mountains, making them virtually isolated. Tacitus explains that he believes the Germans to be indigenous to the area, simply because the area is difficult to access. The Germans worship the god Tuisto, whose son Mannus is the father of the race and father to three sons, Ingaevones, Merminones, and Istaevones. Each of these became the name of a tribe within the country. The country is named after the first people to find the area, the Germani. Their songs, Tacitus noted, included reference to Hercules, Ulysses, Laertes, and other Greek-based gods. Tacitus notes the inhabitants have a chant before battle that both terrifies the enemy and kindles courage. He claims them to be of pure blood, with blue eyes, red hair, and large frames. The country is said to be of forests or swamps, depending on the area, with good soil and live stock. They place little value on metals, have little interest in gold, and have little iron. Their common weapon, the spear, is made of wood, but their shields are of metal or wood. Few have any other armor, and many enter battle naked. Tacitus refers to the military as the "Hundred," since the best warriors are chosen to form a hundred man force. Kings are chosen by birth, but do not have absolute power, and commanders are chosen by their valor. Family is of utmost importance to each clan, and the woman often got to battle with the men to tend the wounds and to rouse their men to battle. Additionally, women are seen as prophets and holy creatures.

The Germans are also said to worship Mercury, Hercules, and Mars, and often include humans in their sacrifices which take place in holy areas outside, such as woodlands or groves. Casting lots is done by marking several strips of bark, throwing them onto a white sheet, and having a priest randomly choose three to read. Omens and warnings are also discovered by tending horses, and noting their neighs and snorts. Minor matters are dealt with through chiefs at meetings held in the evenings of new moon or full moon. This Assembly also hears criminal cases, and issues punishments, which include execution through hanging, pressing, fines of livestock, and other punishment. The Assembly also elects magistrates. Germans transact all business armed, but are not allowed to be armed until they show competence for arms use. When a man is of age, he is given a spear and a shield. Tacitus notes this is much like the ceremony in Rome of the presentation of the toga. Rank in society is determines through birth, wealth, and power. If a chief is killed in battle, no soldier can leave the field until the enemy is destroyed. Tacitus states "The chiefs fight for victory, the followers for their chief." War is common, and actually desired, since renown is won only through battle, and plundering allows further gains. When not at war, the men hunt and relax in idle. They do not live in cities but instead in small, close-knit villages that are built with considerable space between each wooden and clay building. Storage is built in caves underground. The Germans dress in a cloak with a brooch or thorn fastener, and often nothing else. Undergarments are considered a luxury, but some may also wear the skins of animals often decorated with color. Women wear garments with purple patterns

that are sleeveless on top. Marriage is sacred and monogamous, except for a few chiefs who choose more wives. The dowry is given by the husband to the bride, and often consists of oxen, swords, shields, and other possessions that are to be handed down from generation to generation. Adultery is severely punished, and women who stray are never allowed to marry again. The children are brought up with the slaves to learn hardiness and strength, and are not rushed into marriage. Nephews are highly prized, but heirs are always the sons and daughters.

These heirs inherited not only the wealth of the parents, but also the feuds and friendships of the family. Hospitality is prized above all else, and it is common for a man to attend a feast uninvited and to be warmly embraced. Feasts are often called for celebrations or debates, and always include vast amounts of liquor made from barley. Excessive drinking is not considered disgraceful, and many are killed or wounded during feasts. However, the Germans, Tacitus notes, are unable to refrain from openly expressing their opinions when drunk, and many decisions are made while in this state. The food at the feasts is generally wild game, fruits, curdled milk, and in some cases vegetables. Tacitus notes they would be easy to defeat if given enough drink. They gamble with dice, and the loser is often sold into slavery. Slaves, however, are not similar to those in Rome. German slaves have their own homes and households, and are only required to produce a certain amount of grain, livestock, or other material to the master, much like a tenant. Flogging or punishment of slaves is highly unique. The division of land is done within the entire community, although Tacitus notes the Germans do not take advantage of their lands but only grow corn, and only use three growing seasons. Funerals are not grand in nature, and involve in-ground burial, atop of which the arms and horse of the individual are thrown into the fire. Grief is short, but mourning periods are long.

The next section deals with the differences between the tribes of Germania. He mentions several tribes, including the Helvetii and Boii, both of Celtic decent, the Aravisci and the Osi, both of the Pannonia area, the Treviri and Nervii, claiming to be indiginous to the area but believed to be of Gaul decent, the Vangiones, Triboci, and Nemetes, also of Germania, and the Ibii, of Agrippinenses decent. The bravest of the tribes according to Tacitus are the Batavi near the Rhine island. They are allied to Rome, and are generally only used by them in war, as are the Mattiaci. Beyond these tribes are the Chatti, whose country is less open, and the people are logical and hardy. Their chiefs are elected, and they are well organized. The men of the Chatti, upon maturation, have long hair and beards, which they then shave over the bodies of their first kill. Those who will not fight remain unshaven, thereby showing their cowardly nature. Iron rings are worn, and removed only when they have killed a man. The Usipi and Tencteri skill in horsemanship, and their horses serves as they inheritances. The Chamavi and Angrivarii are the closest tribes to the Tencteri. To the northwest are the Frisii, whose territory extends to the ocean. To the north of Germania is the Chauci tribe, who have nearly overpopulated their territory. They are the noblest of the tribes, and tend to be more secluded and less warlike. To the south of them lies the Cherusci tribe, who are known for their peaceful nature. Near the sea are the Cimbri, whose warriors are well known for their fighting abilities. Tacitus notes it has taken Rome over two hundred years to even come close to overtaking Germany, and even now, he notes,

Rome has lost more great men in battle with Germans than with any other country, and learned far more lessons.

The Suebi, Tacitus continues, are not a single tribe, but a group of separate tribes that make up over half of Germany. Their hair is combed sideways and tied into a knot on the top of the crown, now often referred to as a top-knot. The oldest tribe of the Suebi are the Semnones. All tribes pay tribute to the Semnones through a human sacrifice within a certain holy grove. The Langobardi of the Suebi are fierce warriors even though their population is few. There are several tribes who worship Mother Earth, believe she takes part in human affairs, and therefore pay tribute to her for days at a time to ensure peace. Closer to Rome lie the Hermunduri, which are allies of Rome and trade with Roman citizens within Rome itself without guards. To the south of these tribes are the Cotini and Osi, neither of which are German, but Celtic instead. As foreigners, they pay the Quadi and Sarmatian tribes to live within Germany. The Naharvali lie to the north, and are known for their worship of Alci. Next to them are the Harii, known for strength and trickery. They dye their bodies and attack and night to ensure victory. The Gothones, near the Harii, are known for their autocratic government, and next to hem, bordering the sea, are the Rugii and Lemovii, who are known for their use of round shields and short swords. The Suiones, closest to the sea, are known for their power as well as their fleets, with boats having prows at either end so as always to be ready to enter the sea. Their rowlocks are movable to allow swift changes in direction. Additionally, all weapons of the Suiones are guarded, and only given in times of war. At the end of the sea, where Tacitus note the world ends, lie the Acstii, who worship the Mother goddess, wear emblems of the wild boar, and who use clubs instead of iron. They are farmers by nature, but also raid neighboring areas for amber, which they then sell to Romans for high prices. Bordering them to the east are the Sitones, who are distinguished easily from others, as they are ruled by women. Tacitus notes that he believes this places them below common slaves.

The final tribes mentioned are those of the Peucini, Venedi, and the Fenni, or the men and woman on the outskirts of the world. They are said by Tacitus to worship nothing, to be savage and inbred, and to be content with their lives in a way most men are not. Their woman are equal in their viciousness, and all are "unafraid of anything that man or god can do to them." Tacitus closes the book by noting that beyond these tribes lies the stuff of fables, of which he has no knowledge or opinion.

Notes, Bibliography, and Glossary

Notes, Bibliography, and Glossary Summary and Analysis

The final thirty pages of the book are dedicated to the notes and glossary section of the book. Intended primarily for classical students, the notes section discusses certain translations of phrases within the original manuscripts, and explains how and why such translations were made. These explanations focus on phrases which can have multiple meanings, and often are explained as being translated a specify way to follow Tacitus' style of writing. Within these notes, there are a few clarifications for the common reader, such as clarifications pertaining to areas of land described in the book and historical references to which the text refers than may be unclear to the untrained reader. The bibliography section lists a few texts to which interested readers can go for more information. Finally, the glossary section gives specific dates pertaining to the lives and careers of those mentioned in the book.

Characters

Tacitus

While not a character in the novel, Tacitus, the author, is the primary source of information for the book, and the entire story is told through his eyes. As such, his personality and viewpoint become a vital part of the plot line, and become intertwined with the factual information presented within the stories. As the son in law of Agricola, Tacitus' insights into the man are much more personal, and it is because of his loving presentation of the story that the reader is able to grasp the greatness that lie within Agricola. On the other hand, it is also because of this emotional connection that Tacitus sometimes states his own opinion as fact, thereby misleading the reader. His discussion of the price paid to show allegiance with a bad emperor, his hints that the Emperor had Agricola killed, his certainty that Agricola was denied the right to retire while serving within the military, and his opinions of the German threat to Rome all play a vital part of the storyline, and give substance to the military life of Agricola and the simple descriptions of the German people. Without this insight, the novel would simply be a recount of military strategy and a lesson in cultural differences. Tacitus' warnings to Rome about the power of freedom, the threat of the British and the German people, and the danger of a bad Emperor all play a most vital role in both the entertainment and the historical value of the book.

Agricola

Agricola was born into a military life in Rome, and spent his boyhood learning both how to be a refined citizen of Rome and how to be a soldier. After serving his apprenticeship in Britain, Agricola went on to serve several positions within the military, but is best known for his influence on Roman expansion in Britain. As a military leader, he was both strong and just, and handed out necessary punishment to soldiers with a sense of mercy. He commanded respect, not because he himself asked for it, but because his actions were those of a true leader. Throughout his career, he always sought to do the right thing for his men, for Rome, and even for those he fought against. Agricola believed heartily in the idea that Rome was meant to rule the world, and that it was this destiny that should be his life's work. He spent over seven years in Britain, first putting existing Roman strongholds into order, and then expanding the territory. He assisted in gaining the trust of the British already in occupied areas, and built forts that were nearly impenetrable. His final claim to fame was the virtual end to British opposition with his decisive victory of British rebels at Mount Graupius. He retired shortly thereafter, and at the demands of the Emperor, did not retire while in military service, but instead, in quiet seclusion.

Domitian

As the Emperor of Rome at the time of Agricola's victory over Britain, Domitian played a vital role in the eulogy, although his role was tainted slightly by Tacitus' telling of events. It is clear that Domitian tended to dislike anyone within the Empire who was held in higher regard within the public eye, and Agricola certainly held this position. Thus, although it is unsubstantiated, it is likely that Tacitus' assumption of events within the novel occurred. If so, Domitian called Agricola back from Britain shortly after his victory so as to end his reign of power in the military. While he outwardly praised Agricola, his actions, including a prompt dismissal of Agricola upon his homecoming, told of his own anger at the man. Additionally, his own staff talked Agricola out of taking a military post at the end of his career, showing again his fear of losing admiration to Agricola. While Tacitus' theories that Domitian had Agricola poisoned are without proof, it is easy to imagine such a suspicious, selfish man doing such a deed. Either way, it was Domitian who ended the extraordinary career of Agricola.

British Rebels

While never discussed individually, the British rebels played a huge role in the story of Agricola. Always viewed within the book as a single enemy, the British rebels are said to be a blend of the Gauls, the Germans, and the Spanish, with red hair, blue eyes, and large bone structure. Tacitus describes them as being full of spirit and particularly resistant to the idea of slavery or abuse. They work hard in their fields, and if paid properly and treated with respect, Tacitus believes they are of little threat to the Empire, since their weapons are inferior and their civilization less united. While the speak the same language, they fight in clans, making them easy to defeat, according to the author. Additionally, their lack of organization gives Agricola the ability to mount an assault on the British at Mount Graupius, virtually ending all rebellion at the time.

German People

While the entire second section of the book is dedicated to describing the people of Germany, they are again spoken of as a large group, or smaller sects within the group, rather than on an individualized basis. However, Tacitus makes it clear in Germania that these groups of people pose a serious threat to the Roman Empire, and are a force that will need to be dealt with. They are described as being native to Germany, with no outside influences. They are good fighters, and value their freedom above all else. They are farmers, although they work less hard than Romans, and in some cases, are savages. In their limited attacks of Roman occupied areas, Tacitus notes they are highly successful, and will be challenging to defeat.

Fenni

The Fenni tribe are a German tribe Tacitus describes within the novel at great length, showing his fascination for them as a people. He describes them as savage and poor nomads, who have no civilized method of speaking. They have no homes, ho proper weapons, and no horses, but instead move across the far north of Germany, killing and looting anyone in their path. They at wild herbs, dress in animal skins, and sleep on the ground. More interestingly, and proof of their insanity according to Tacitus, their women are equal to their men in nearly all aspects. Tacitus notes they are afraid of nothing, and as such, do not even have a god. This alone, according to Tacitus, is enough to make them extremely dangerous.

Boudicca

While a minor character in the story, Boudicca serves as a prime example of the threat of British rebels against Rome. As Queen of Icini, Boudicca had a personal vendetta against Roman soldiers as they had raped members of her family. She slowly built up an army of British rebels, and attacked the Roman army in small groups, nearly winning the war. Tacitus points out they did not fight in anger, but for a righteous cause, which helped to fuel their passion, which was the most dangerous weapon. As it were, the British army stopped the move of Boudicca, but not before the British rebels heard of her success.

Trajan

Trajan was the Emperor who followed Nerva who replaced Domitian, and who helped Rome pull herself back onto her feet. Trajan's rule over Rome lasted over 17 years, and was successful not only in further expanding the empire, but also in replacing the oppression of Domitian. Where Domitian sought to silence the philosophers and writers of the time, Trajan sought to give Rome a new age of liberty. It was under Trajan that Tacitus was able to write both Agricola and Germania. Without his open and liberal rule over Rome, these stories of the Roman Empire may not have been published.

Batavi

The Batavi are another of the German tribes Tacitus describes. They are considered the most brave of the Gaul tribes, and more importantly, are one of the only German tribes that openly trades with Rome. Thus, while considered almost slaves to Rome, they are not taxed, are free from imposts and special levies, and are used by Rome only when a strong, brave, non-Roman fighting force is needed. While they do not play a major role in the novel, they are an example of the extensions of Rome into Germany.

Suebi

The Suebi are not a single tribe of German peoples, but instead encompass several tribes who live within the same geographical area. While each has their own unique attributes, they appear to fight as one single unit against the Roman Empire. This alone is their importance, in that several times, Tacitus speaks of the sheer number of them, and the force they can muster if fighting as a single team against a common enemy. They are terrifying in appearance, in that they wear their hair in a knot on top of their head to give them more height, and they fight well, showing again the possible threat to Rome.

Objects/Places

Britain

In the book, Britain refers to the entire island that is often called the British Isles. This is the area Agricola governed over and helped to secure throughout his military career.

Germania

Germania, in the book, describes the country that is between the Rhine, the Danube, and the mountains, and was the focus of Tacitus' warnings to the Romans about enemies of the Empire.

Rome

At various points in the novel, Rome either refers to the city of Rome, or the Empire of Rome, which covered much of Europe in late A.D.

Inhabitants of Germania

As the main topic of the second book, the inhabitants of Germania are basically described as being warlike, uncivilized animals whose passion for freedom would be the downfall of the Roman Empire.

Emperor

The Emporer of Rome was the holder of military command, food supplies, treasury, state religion, and could sole-handed convene the Senate and initiate legislation, and held other special powers reserved only for him. At his beck and call were the Senate, the Knights, the freedmen, and the slaves, making him the ultimate commander of all areas of Roman life.

Inhabitants of Britain

Believed to be a cross between Spainards and the Gauls, the inhabitants of Britain were, according to Tacitus, spirited freedom fighters who fought against all odds to avoid slavery.

Legions

A legion in the Roman military was a brigade of soldiers consisting of foot and horse soldiers, as well as auxiliary service. These legions were divided into cohorts, the cohorts into maniples, and the maniples into centuries. The soldiers of the legion consisted of Roman citizens using the finest Roman weapons.

Auxiliary

The auxiliary portion of the Roman military was made up of individuals not Roman by birth. These individuals often wielded their own native weapons, and were used in areas of war. These groups were broken into cohorts, as well, of 500 men.

Mount Grapius

Mount Grapius was the location of the final battle between Agricola's army and the British rebels in their fight to remain free from Roman rule. During the battle, nearly 10,000 British rebels were killed, whereas only 560 Romans perished.

Gaul

To the east of Germany, Gaul was known to be a country of great warriors and fierce fighters. Some of these individuals migrated to Germany, and some to Britain, according to Tacitus, forming the basis for the fighting forces within those countries. Over time, however, the Gauls' lack of war-like conditions caused their passion to die, according to the author.

Themes

Roman Expansion

At the time of both Agricola and Germania, the Roman Empire was expanding at an alarming rate. According to Tacitus, the people of Rome firmly believed it was their destiny to rule the world, and their place to be at the center of all things, regardless of the freedoms of others they may have trampled upon. The entire fame of Agricola was based on his expansion of Rome throughout Britain, Wales, Caledonia, and beyond. Several Emperors had toyed with the idea of expanding Rome into Germany as well. It was this desire, however, that Tacitus attempted to discourage through his writing of Germania. Whereas Agricola discussed the relative ease of expanding into Britain because of the temperament of the British rebels, Tacitus noted a far different personality within the Germans, and warned that these people would be far more difficult to overcome. While the military generals and Emperors of Rome believed they could overcome any enemy, Tacitus knew, both from his own military experience as well as that of his father in law, Agricola, that the German rebels were far more dangerous because of their devotion to home life, freedom, and passion for battle. It was these characteristics that eventually stopped the Roman expansion, and eventually led to the downfall of Rome.

Freedom

In both Agricola and Germania, as well as in even the Introduction, the topic of freedom is plain and vivid. In the Introduction, Mattingly points out that while Roman citizens believed they were free and a part of a Republic, it was in fact the Emperor and the Senate who held all the power within the Empire. Tacitus too noted this in his common criticisms against various Emperors and their power to silence the people of Rome. He even admits to following and agreeing to bad practices in an effort to remain on the positive side of cruel Emperors for fear of being put to death. As such, it is clear that while Rome was expanding and removing the freedoms for other nations, they in fact were not even free themselves. In addition, the British rebels fought for their rights to remain free. During Agricola's reign over Britain, he too realized the power of a sense of freedom, even if that sense is only imagined. He aimed in his second and third year in Britain to gain the trust of the British by helping them to build statuses of freedom, such as schools, churches, and town centers. Even these symbols, build on the false pretenses of a sense of freedom, were able to quiet the British for a time. Tacitus notes that the British would rebel against any form of slavery or abuse, and indeed, during the rousing speech of the British at Mount Graupius, the speaker notes several times that if the British are to die, they should die fighting for their freedoms.

Finally, Tacitus' descriptions of the German people show a strong sense of freedom. Tacitus sees this, rightfully, as one of the only threats to Roman expansion. The German population base their entire existence on their freedoms, and will easily fight to the

death to preserve those freedoms. Several times throughout history, the German people rose up and slaughtered those who attempted to remove those freedoms, even on a limited basis. Even those who traded with the Roman Empire such as the Batavi, did so to retain their freedom from taxation and a ruling body of Roman government. It is clear, throughout the novel, that a person's sense of freedom, whether real or imagined, plays a vital role in their willingness to cooperate with government and societal standards.

Cultural Differences

Tacitus uses the theme of the differences in cultures to explain both the British and the people of Germany. In terms of the British population, Tacitus believes the population to be less civilized, less educated, and less able than the people of Rome, although they are similar in decent. He notes that their religious faiths are similar, as are their customs and willingness to work. However, he notes there is a major difference in the way the population perceives the government. He notes that Romans are content to sit back and let their elected or appointed rulers govern their existence, whereas the British believe in the power of the citizens themselves. He also believes they are weak to the influence of Rome, and that they succumb easily to seduction and temptation. Tacitus also uses cultural differences to explain not only the differences between the Romans and the Germans, but also between German tribes. He completes a comparison of religion, racial background, material possessions, government, military, family structure, cultural traditions, dress, and everyday life, and concludes that the Germans are a threat to Rome. What Tacitus fails to realize that readers can easily see today is that the Roman citizen and German citizen were really not that different after all. Both believed highly in the sanctity of freedom, believed in their own destiny, and believed they were superior to all others. Whereas Rome saw Germany as a threat because of their unwillingness to submit to Roman rule, Germany saw Rome as a threat because of their desire to control outside populations.

Style

Perspective

As an author, Tacitus has strengths as well as weaknesses that are apparent within the text. Tacitus does have a strong personal relationship with Agricola, and as such, has a unique understanding of the man behind the military achievements. He is able to give details other writers may not be as fortunate to know, and therefore presents a more cohesive description and biography. On the other hand, this personal relationship also has a tendency to bias some of Tacitus' views. Even minor achievements become massive in the mind of Tacitus, and his focus remains only on glorifying his beloved father-in-law. This tight focus, along with a lack of military and geographical information, makes for incomplete details regarding the units Agricola controlled, and areas Agricola conquered, or even served within. The true attraction of the book lies in the admiration of Agricola by Tacitus, and in the strong idealistic faith in Rome that Tacitus clearly portrays through his words.

As a historian, Tacitus cares little for geography or military history, and often interjects personal opinion as fact. This is seen clearly in his account of people of Germania. While his descriptions are detailed, there is little support for many of his claims, and he does not pretend to give credibility to his facts, but instead seems to assume the reader either knows such support, or assumes him to be credible. While parts of his descriptions are well known facts, there are other areas, such as his opinions of tribes run by women, that are clearly opinions he presents as facts. The overall impression left is that of a combination of fact and legend that serves primarily to glorify the German people.

Tone

Tacitus' tone throughout both books is drastically different. In Agricola, his tone is often admiring, in that he is describing the achievements of a man he clearly cares for deeply. This tone serves to make the book more enjoyable and personal, as well as to let the reader truly experience not only the rise of a military leader, but also the tragedy and sorrow of the man himself. In areas, his tone becomes accusatory as he speaks of the jealousy of the Emperor, and the unsupported belief that the Emperor had Agricola poisoned. In Germania, Tacitus' tone changes slightly to be one of awe and a certain level of interested disgust. While Tacitus clearly admires the fierceness and sheer power of the German people, he also finds them somewhat primitive in their way of life and customs. This mixture of emotion serves to show the reader the true power of the German rebels, and allows the reader to share in the admiration of their strengths.

Structure

The book is broken into four primary sections, those of the Introduction, Agricola, Germania, and the Notes, Bibliography, and Glossary sections. These sections are unequal in length. The format of each section is standard, with separate chapters within each. The Introduction flows through an explanation of the author, the characters within the novel, and the historical and geographical information necessary to understand the books. Agricola consists of 46 very small chapters of unequal length, and follows a standard pattern of a eulogy, that of an introduction, history of Agricola, account of his rise to military power, a discussion of the British people, the final battle of Britain, and Agricola's fall from grace. The Germania follows a pattern similar to other historical accounts of a culture, which include an overall description of common characteristics, traditions, and behaviors, followed by a more advanced look at individual subcultures. This book is also broken into 46 small, unequal length chapters. The notes, bibliography, and glossary sections are separated by topic, and are in standard format. In total, the book is 175 pages, and includes two maps.

Quotes

"As a historian, Tacitus has several obvious defects. He is often amazingly careless about geography and military history. He is not deeply interested in the man in the street. He is not always just, as, for example, when he hints, on very slight grounds, that Domitian poisoned Agricola. He permits himself an occasional sneer at the enemies of Rome, more suitable to cheap journalism of any age than to a serious work of history." -page 11.

"To the question whether the Germania is reliable we can give on the whole an affirmative answer. Tacitus is at fault here and there: for example, he underrates the importance of Roman trade with Germany and exaggerates the German disregard for gold and silver. But his evidence on many points, such as German amour and dress, has been brilliantly confirmed by archaeological evidence." -page 28.

"History in the main has justified the forebodings of Tacitus. Germany, often triumphed over, was never conquered. The time came when no skill in defense, no valor in the field, no subtlety in diplomacy - and finally not even the discord among the Germans themselves - could avail. Destiny at last pressed the empire too hard. The barriers broke and the barbarian tides flooded in." - page 34.

"Famous men of old often had their lives and characters set on record; and even our generation, with all its indifference to the world around it, has not quite abandoned the practice. An outstanding personality can still triumph over that blind antipathy to virtue which is a defect of all states, small and great alike." - page 51.

"Rome of old explored the utmost limits of freedom; we have plumbed the depths of slavery, robbed as we are by informers even of the right to exchange ideas in conversation. We should have lost our memories as well as our tongues had it been as easy to forget as to be silent." - page 52.

"Yet our human nature is so weak that remedies take longer to work that diseases. Our bodies, which grow so slowly, perish in the twinkling of an eye; so too the mind and its pursuits can more easily be crushed than brought to life again. idleness gradually develops a strange fascination of its own, and we end by loving the sloth that at first we loathed. Think of it. Fifteen whole years - no small part of a man's life - taken from us." - page 53.

"When duty had been discharged, he completely dropped his official air. As to sullenness or arrogance, he had long overcome any tendency to such faults, and he had the rare faculty of being familiar without weakening his authority and austere without forfeiting people's affection. To mention incorruptibility and strict honest in a man of his caliber would be to insult his virtues. Even fame, which often tempts the best of men, he would not seek by self-advertisement or intrigue. he avoided all rivalry with his colleagues and all bickering with the procurators; for he considered it undignified to win such battles and ignominious to be beaten." -page 59.

"At last, the enemy were routed by the efforts of the two armies - the one striving to make it plain that they had brought relief; the other that they could have done without it. Had not marshes and woods covered the enemy's retreat, that victory would have ended the war." - page 77.

"But there are no more nations beyond us; nothing is there but waves and rocks, and the Romans, more deadly still than these - for in them is an arrogance which no submission or good behavior can escape. Pillagers of the world, they have exhausted the land by their indiscriminate plunder, and now they ransack the sea. A rich enemy excites their cupidity; a poor one, their lust for power. East and West alike have failed to satisfy them. They are the only people on earth to whose covetousness both riches and poverty are equally tempting. To robbery, butchery, and rapine, they give the lying name of "government"; they create a desolation and call it peace." - page 81.

"Though he was not permitted to see the dawn of this blessed age and the principate of Trajan - a consummation of which he often spoke to us in wishful prophecy - yet it was no small compensation for his untimely cutting off that he was spared those last days when Domitian, instead of giving -the state a breathing-space to recover from one blow before the next fell, rained them upon its head so thick and fast that its life-blood was drained as though by a single mortal wound." -page 97.

"But representations of the human face, like that fact itself, are subject to decay and dissolution, whereas the essence of man's mind is something everlasting, which you cannot preserve or express in material wrought by another's skill, but only in your own character. All that we loved and admired in Agricola abides and shall abide in the hearts of men through the endless procession of the ages; for his achievements are of great renown. With many it will be as with men who had no name or fame: they will be buried in oblivion. But Agricola's story is set on record for posterity, and he will live." - page 99.

"And to say nothing of the perils of that wild and unknown sea, who would have been likely to leave Asia Minor, North Africa, or Italy, to go to Germany with its forbidding landscapes and unpleasant climate - a country that is thankless to till and dismal to behold for anyone who was not born and bred there?" - page 102.

"It stands on record that armies already wavering and on the point of collapse have been rallied by the women, pleasing heroically with their men, thrusting forward their bared bosoms, and making them realize the imminent prospect of enslavement - a fate which the Germans fear more desperately for their women that for themselves." - page 108.

"Drinking bouts lasting all day and all night are not considered in any way disgraceful. The quarrels that inevitably arise over the cups are seldom settled merely by hard words, but more often by killing and wounding. nevertheless, they often make a feast an occasion for discussing such affairs as the ending of feuds, the arrangement of marriage alliances, the adoption of chiefs, and even questions of peace or war. At no other time, they think, is the heart so open to sincere feelings or so quick to warm to noble sentiments." - page 120.

The Fenni are astonishingly savage and disgustingly poor. They have no proper weapons, no horses, no homes. They eat wild herbs, dress in skins, and sleep on the ground. Their only hope of getting better fare lies in their arrows, which, for lack of iron, they tip with bone....Yet they count their lot happier than that of others who groan over field labor, sweat over house-building, or hazard their own and other men's fortunes in the hope of profit and the fear of loss. Unafraid of anything that man or god can do to them, they have reached a state that few human beings can attain: for these men are so well content that they do not even need to pray for anything." - page 141.

Topics for Discussion

Tacitus shows several times throughout the novel that he is inaccurate in his descriptions of landscape and historical fact. Do you feel this inadequacy in his writing harms the intentions of the book Agricola? Explain your answer.

Agricola is said to have achieved many things throughout his time in Britain. Which do you believe was his greatest triumph? Explain your answer, using examples from the book.

Why do you believe Tacitus chose to leave all military references to specific troops and military groups out of the novel? Do you think his reasoning helped his eulogy to Agricola, or harmed it? Please be sure to support your answer using situations from the book.

Do you believe Tacitus admired the British, or looked down upon them? Using examples from the book, support your answer.

Throughout Germania, Tacitus talks about the German people in a very general sense. Discuss at least three aspects of the German lifestyle that Tacitus writes about, and compare them to our lives today.

Tacitus discusses German feasts in great detail. Write a summary of what a German feast may have been like, and be sure to include reasons the feast may have been called, events at the feast, foods and drinks at the feast, and topics of discussion and actions throughout the feast.

The final tribe discussed in Germania is that of the Fenni. Tacitus describes these individuals as nomadic savages with no god, but claims them to be the happiest of all. After reading Tacitus' description of the Fenni, why do you think he believes this group to be happier than others? Do you think he is correct in his assumption?