

Selected Works Study Guide

Selected Works by Cicero

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Plot Summary

Cicero: Selected Works is a translated and edited compilation of some of the most famous writings of Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero (106-43 B.C.) was a famous statesman, orator and philosopher who lived during the end of the Roman republic and the rise of the Roman empire. He was seen as among the most brilliant and civilized 'old men' of the Roman republic, even during the rule of Julius Caesar. After the death of Hortensius when Cicero was a young man, Cicero was widely regarded as the greatest orator in the entire Roman world. Yet Cicero did much more than this. He wrote many works, philosophical, rhetorical (concerning rhetoric), political, legal and oratorical.

This work contains four of Cicero's most important works and twenty-four of his letters. The first chapter is his famous oration "Against Verres." There are a series of seven speeches that Cicero made against the infamously corrupt governor of Sicily, Verres. Cicero was then a young lawyer looking to promote his reputation. The first Against Verres speech is found in the book. The speech is intended to convince the jury to convict Verres for his crimes. The second chapter is a compilation of twenty-four of Cicero's letters. Cicero wrote over eight-hundred letters during his lifetime, but the editor of the book has selected twenty-four letters as a cross-section of his writings to friends, family and statesmen. The letters string together Cicero's struggles to protect the Roman republic from decay and to preserve Roman liberty despite the dictatorship of Caesar.

Chapter 3 records the Second Philippic. This is one of fourteen speeches that Cicero gave to defend himself against the rhetorical slander of Marc Antony against him. After Caesar is assassinated, Cicero returns to Rome but others are vying for Caesar's level of power - Antony is among them. Antony has viciously assaulted Cicero's character and political career. The Second Philippic has Cicero defend himself and launch a counterattack on Antony.

Chapter 4 is a reprinting of the third book of Cicero's famous work On Duties which is one of his most important works of moral philosophy, if not his most important. Cicero was a defender of the classical Greek moral philosophy of Stoicism and in the book he defends a version of Greek Stoicism advanced by a late Greek Stoic named Panaetius. The book is addressed to Cicero's son Marcus and concerns whether what is right and what is beneficial can ever conflict. Chapter 5 rounds out the book with a piece Cicero wrote towards the end of his life - On Old Age. On Old Age is a dialogue Cicero wrote between two young men and Cato the Elder on the costs and benefits of growing old. It reveals many of Cicero's reflections on aging.



Chapter 1, Attack on Misgovernment, Against Verres I

Chapter 1, Attack on Misgovernment, Against Verres I Summary and Analysis

In Verrem "Against Verres" is a series of juridical orations given by Cicero, who was serving as Prosecutor in a trial against the corrupt governor of Sicily, Verres. These speeches were given in 70 B.C. and there seven speeches altogether, five of which he could not give, as Verres had fled into exile. These speeches are highly political, particularly In Verrem I. Verres, despite his corruption, was well-connected. The people of Sicily despised him as did many in Rome; so, they backed Cicero. However, Verres's allies supported the famous orator and lawyer Hortensius against Cicero. The defense's strategy was to delay the trial as long as possible, until 69 B.C. when Hortensius and an ally would be elected to consulships and their friend Marcus Metellus elected praetor and president of the extortion court. Cicero would lose his case instantaneously. However, Cicero thwarts their strategy and gives In Verrem I against Verres anyway. It has become a historical classic.

Cicero opens by urging the jury to convict Verres because the jurors are despised by the people (they are senators). The reputations of the courts have been tarnished and are considered corrupt. To fail to convict Verres would be to confirm the suspicions of the populace and threaten an upheaval in the judicial system. Many are worried that Verres has the ability to bribe his way towards an acquittal. After making this crucial point, Cicero launches into a series of intense attacks on Verres action and character. Verres is not only a criminal, Cicero argues, but he has an incredible audacity that must be put down. Verres is "reckless" and "insane." He knows that Cicero is going to expose him and he has a strategy of delay to defeat him, Cicero tells the jurors. His vices in Sicily are true horrors. Sicily cannot be restored to its previous state, three years before Verres's governorship began. Cicero tells the jurors that a contract to buy them off has already been set up. They should take this as evidence of his corruption. He tells the jurors that the defense scheduled the court date in such a way as to make collecting evidence very burdensome for Cicero and that they were waiting, again, until 69 B.C. when they could make this all go away.

Cicero turns to attack Hortensius, accusing him of not taking the trial seriously. Cicero is out for Hortensius's reputation, so he attacks Hortensius for defending a wicked man and that this action threatens his patriotism. Cicero must oppose evil in order to defend the honor of the legal profession. He then returns to emphasize the political point of the oration - the jury must convict to retain the honor of the senatorial courts and to regain the trust of the people. He promises not to pull any tricky legal moves during the trial and argues that his procedure follows precedent. The speech ends with a brief list of

accusations against Verres - arbitrary and cruel actions against Roman citizens and allies, embezzlement and, indirectly, blasphemy.



Chapter 2, Cicero's Life and Letters, Selection from his Correspondence

Chapter 2, Cicero's Life and Letters, Selection from his Correspondence Summary and Analysis

Cicero was a master of letters, writing over eight-hundred during his life. They cover innumerable subjects and many are very revealing about him. Historians know more about Cicero's character than anyone in ancient history. The letters recorded in this chapter are a very, very small sample of Cicero's letters overall. They are written to many individuals; twenty-four letters are contained in the chapter.

The first letter is written to Pompey in Asia Minor from Rome in the summer of 62 B.C. Cicero notes that he was happy that Pompey was sent to Asia Minor and Pompey's last letter was greatly appreciated. He reports that the resolution of the Catalinarian crisis has made him look good to the people and he reminds Pompey that when he returns, he will see the same. He invites Pompey to be his political ally and friend, and flatters Pompey by claiming that his is greater than Scipio.

The second letter is written to Atticus on his way to Epirus from Rome in either June or July 59 B.C. Cicero notes that he has received several letters from Atticus. Atticus is waiting for news about the composition of the new Triumvirate. Cicero is concerned that no one will be free after the Triumvirate comes to power. During this period, however, there is much free speech. Cicero can hardly stand to write about politics, given the faltering freedom of the Roman republic. He notes that Caesar has invited him to join the Triumvirate and does not know what he is going to do.

The third letter is written to Cicero's wife Terentia, his daughter Tullia and his son Marcus from Thessalonica, November 58 B.C. He honors Terentia for being brave, regrets that Tullia has been 'plunged' into unhappiness and that Marcus has known only sorrow. He blames himself. He then instructs and advises them on family business.

The fourth letter is to Atticus from Antium in May 56 B.C. In it, Cicero complains of the treachery of the Roman leadership. He wanted to be part of an alliance but resisted and hates to have to participate in the 'deification' of either Caesar or Pompey (it is not clear from the letter). He then thanks Atticus for visiting his house. The fifth letter is written to Gaius Scribonius from Rome in the middle of 53 B.C. After engaging in some lengthy rhetorical questions, Cicero advises Gaius that he should aim to achieve honor and that while his rival is formidable, many have optimistic expectations for him.

The sixth letter is again to Atticus from Minturnae, on the 5th or 6th of May, 51 B.C. Cicero praises Atticus for some of his recent accomplishments and directs Atticus further; he then responds to Atticus's concerns about his family. The seventh letter is written to Marcus Caelius Rufus from Laodicea, on the 4th of April, 50 B.C. Cicero is



nervous about the provincial governorships and who will be appointed, but he is bored by the affairs of the province he governs. He relates that a war with the Parthians is fears and that some difficulties with panthers are being dealt with.

The eighth letter is written by Cicero, his brother Quintus and their sons to Tiro from Leucas, the 7th of November, 50 B.C. They encourage Tiro not to travel due to his health. They report having written to Curius, a man they regard as agreeable and kind. They thank Tiro for the services he performed for them. They claim that every friend of theirs is a friend of his and encourage him to get well.

Pompey wrote the ninth letter to Cicero from Canosa on the 20th of February, 49 B.C. He encourages Cicero to join him and the other consuls to play how to rescue the country. From Formiae, on the 24th of February, 49 B.C., Cicero regretfully informs Atticus that Pompey has revolted against Caesar (as displayed in the former letter). Cicero believes Pompey is in the wrong. This is the tenth letter. In the eleventh letter, again written to Atticus, from Formia on the 12th of March, 49 B.C., Cicero reports that he rarely relaxes and openly wonders in the letter what he should do now that Pompey and Caesar are tearing the country apart. He wonders if he should help overthrow tyranny or remain loyal to his country.

Cicero writes to Caesar in the 12th letter from Formiae on the 19th of March, 49 B.C. He recognizes Caesar's invitation to come to Rome to advise him and bring the Roman people together. He notes that he has always defended peace between Caesar and Pompey and asks Caesar how he can be good to them both. Caesar's previous letter is next, written on March 16th, April, 49 B.C. In the letter, Caesar invites Cicero to aid him for the sake of the empire.

The 14th letter is written again by Cicero to Atticus from Brundisium on the 12th or 13th of June, 47 B.C. He notes that Tullia came to see him and deliver his letters. He loves her deeply. The 15th letter goes from Cicero to Marcus Terentius Varro from Rome, early in 46 B.C. He does not know when he will see Marcus again but hopes to see him. Cicero sees that the country is in trouble but that now that he is in Rome he has re-established relationships with his books. They comfort him.

In the 16th letter, again to Atticus, Cicero speaks of his daughter Tullia's death, and decides to go home to Tusculum to cope. The 17th letter is also written to Atticus, this time from the Tusculum on the 7th or 8th of August, 45 B.C. He is surprised that Brutus has reported the Caesar has 'converted to the good party'. He thinks Brutus is a fool. He takes note of his disliked nephew Quintus. The 18th letter - to Atticus - is written from Puteoli, on the 19th of December, 45 B.C. He has acquiesced to having Caesar and his men stop at his house for dinner; he reports the mass festivities and that two thousand of Caesar's men showed up. In the 20th letter - from the Lanuvium on the 9th or 10th of April, 44 B.C. Cicero tells Atticus that he is consoled now that Caesar is dead and that the assassins are heroes. On the 18th of May, 44 B.C. Cicero sends the 21st letter to Atticus, proclaiming the goodness of Brutus's speech in Rome. The speech is elegant.



The 22nd letter, to Atticus from Antium on the 8th of June 44 B.C., reports Cicero's return to Rome and his meeting Brutus. He reports dissension there and a lack of satisfaction from the trip besides the quieting of his conscience. The 23rd letter is to Gaius Trebonius, written from Rome, around the 2nd of February, 43 B.C. He wishes that Gaius had invited him to a banquet and reviews his speech to the Senate on the 20th of December. He is happy with the new consuls, particularly Octavian. In the final letter, written to Lucius Munatius Plancus from Rome on the 20th of March, 43 B.C. He reports that Lucius's attitude towards the Republic pleases the Senate and the Assembly but Lucius's letter caused some dissension. He demands that Lucius identify himself with the cause of Roman freedom and warns that he may otherwise lose his position.



Chapter 3, Attack on an Enemy of Freedom, The Second Philippic against Antony

Chapter 3, Attack on an Enemy of Freedom, The Second Philippic against Antony Summary and Analysis

The Phillipics, of which there were fourteen, are improperly named. They refer to speeches given by a Greek orator, Demosthenes, which were given against Philip II of Macedon. Cicero's Phillipics also oppose and criticize a ruler - at this time, Marcus Antonius, who shared power with Caesar's nephew, Octavian. It has been six months since Caesar's assassination and all are afraid of political instability. Cicero returned to Rome after Caesar's assassination to find Antonius proposing honors to Caesar to the senate. Cicero is disgusted and does not come to the senate meeting. Antonius viciously lashes out at him. Cicero replies the next day with Phillipic I. He is outwardly polite but subtly attacks Antonius in a particularly brutal fashion. Antonius responds by publicly declaring his hatred of Cicero and demanding that he return to the senate. Cicero decides it is too dangerous to attend. Antonius then gives a speech (which we do not have) savaging Cicero and blaming him for all of Rome's problems - Clodius's murder, the Civil War and the assassination of Caesar. Cicero responds immediately by writing the Second Philippic. However, he never gave it, to avoid dignifying Antonius's accusations with a response. Eventually, however, Cicero releases the speech to circulate. Ultimately, however, Antonius is able to seize power with Octavian and Lepidus, ending the republic and lists various people to be killed. Cicero is among them and died a noble death.

Cicero laments that often in his life an enemy of the Roman people has attacked him. Marcus Antonius is simply the latest. Cicero begins by addressing Antonius's charge that he has violated their friendship. Antonius claimed that Cicero had done him a favor by not killing him. Cicero laughs at the idea that this is a favor or that he should show gratitude to Antonius for it. This only illustrates that Antonius a moron. Antonius is a bad friend, and insane.

Cicero then turns to defend himself against Antonius's accusations. Antonius accused Cicero of being a bad consul and blamed the death of Clodius, the Civil War and Caesar's assassination on him. First Cicero argues that many consuls thought him an excellent consul. They thought of him as the father of the republic after all. Many of these men have died, but there are men alive who approve of Cicero's consulship as well. And Antonius's consulship, in contrast, has been awful. Throughout the speech Cicero is insulting Antonius directly, calling him an idiot, arrogant, impudent and insane. Cicero turns to Antonius's accusation that he is responsible for the death of Clodius. In



actual fact, Antonius was the far bigger threat to him. Milo was the one who killed him anyway and an inquiry never accused Cicero of any wrongdoing.

Next Cicero addresses Antonius's claim that he caused the Civil War by accelerating the decline of Caesar and Pompeius's friendship. Cicero did advise Pompeius against Caesar but Cicero always supported peace and harmony, even after Caesar took over. Cicero also did not cause the assassination of Caesar. The claim against him was that Brutus, after he stabbed Caesar, called out to Cicero and congratulated him for restoring freedom to Rome. This was taken to imply that Cicero was in on the attack, but this, Cicero argued, was far from conclusive evidence. Cicero continues to review evidence in favor of Antonius's claim and dismisses it all. He also addresses several minor claims Antonius made against him. All of Antonius's arguments are nonsense, the ravings of a lunatic, Cicero argues.

Now Cicero turns to Antonius's record. He begins by arguing that Antonius has been corrupt since his childhood, that he bankrupted his father. He accuses him of sexual improprieties in his youth and implies that there are other improprieties that he cannot mention for the sake of decency. He reviews several other parts of Antonius's life, seeking to undermine his reputation at each stage. For instance, when Antonius was elected quaestor, he immediately ran off to support Caesar. Antonius gave Caesar an excuse to make war on his country. In fact, Antonius had a major role in starting the Civil War. Caesar even handed Italy over to Antonius in his absence. During this time, conditions in Rome worsened. Antonius was involved in the Civil War and killed Roman citizens, in contrast to Cicero who did not participate. The accusations continue at length, focusing on Antonius's during the Civil War and the poor quality of his consulship. He then turns to attack Antonius's allies and friends. Now that Antonius is in power, Cicero - for all these reasons - has no confidence in him to do anything but destroy the republic. He has even mismanaged Caesar's papers and allowed them to be bought and sold, nor did he review them in the first place. Antonius's return to Rome caused great panic for various reasons as well. Cicero accuses Antonius of not being truly loyal to Caesar.

And even to this very day Antonius displays his corruption, Cicero exclaims. He only hours earlier encircled the senate with guards to capture Cicero. He says that Antonius cannot last long due to the fact that he cannot be trusted. Further, he will be in fear of his own supporters, just as Caesar was. And of all the horrors Caesar inflicted on the Roman people, at least the people have discovered who they can and cannot trust. Antonius is not one of them. Cicero ends by asking Antonius to look over his country and how much harm he has done. He wants Antonius to make peace with his country. Cicero has defended the Roman people his entire life and would offer his own body to protect it. He has led his life well and been loyal to the republic. He wants only two things: that when he dies, the Roman people are free and that each person's fate "may reflect the way he has behaved towards his country."



Chapter 4, A Practical Code of Behavior, On Duties, III

Chapter 4, A Practical Code of Behavior, On Duties, III Summary and Analysis

This chapter contains an essay of wide and dramatic influence in the West, impacting thinkers from its publication down through the 19th century. It is a guidebook for how to behave properly in private and in public, and it is addressed to Cicero's son Marcus who was studying in Athens. The third book, which is printed here, covers what to do when what is right and what is to one's advantage conflict. Cicero argues that these clashes are never genuine and then proclaims that morality is supreme to advantage. He then outlines how moral right proceeds in actual practice.

Section I opens with a praise of Scipio and an exhortation to his son to find all of philosophy 'fruitful and rewarding'. He wants his son Marcus to hear nothing but his moralizing and argues that having a good career requires moral philosophy. Section I, 'A Practical Code' follows Panaetius, a Greek Stoic, in asking three questions with respect to moral obligations: (i) Is a thing morally right or wrong? (ii) Is it advantageous or disadvantageous? (iii) If apparent right and apparent advantage clash, what is to be the basis for our choice between them? Cicero intends to focus on the third question. He wonders whether the question should have been omitted for the Stoics and the Peripatetics (followers of Aristotle) both hold that advantage and right cannot conflict. The Stoic ideal is to live consistently with nature and that moral rightness just is doing what nature demands, and doing the right always then brings about one's good.

Goodness and rightness are synonyms but only perfect wisdom can see how. Those who cannot see are those to whom Cicero addresses his work. These men have 'middle' duties to become wiser and better. When men falter, they have duties of reparation or progress. These are of the 'second-type' of goodness for the Stoics. We can't weigh ideal right against advantage but this secondary right can be weighed against advantage. People often make such weightings and face situations of great difficulty. Cicero suggests that we need a rule which should follow the Stoics. The Stoics hold that advantage is the right - for it can only be advantageous if it is right.

In Section III, Cicero argues that it is unnatural to do wrong. He argues that society is a body that is united and that to do wrong disrupts society, just as the breaking of a part disrupts the body. Individuals must not harm one another for their own profit. This is universally valid. Further, the law governs gods and men alike; it treats all as equals. People should not covet one another's goods. Men who do wrong either do not understand that their acts are unnatural or will not agree that harms to himself are worse than wronging others. Is he beyond reason in this second case? Perhaps. Cicero maintains however that one could argue that the man does not understand his true



interest for the interest of each is the interest of all. When men act in their self-interest, society, with all of its advantages, falls apart.

In Section IV, Cicero considers objections from hard moral cases. Couldn't a man who was wise steal food to survive from someone useless? And couldn't an honest man steal clothes from a tyrant to stop from freezing to death? These cases are evil because robbery is unnatural and inhuman. Taking these items, however, would not be blameworthy because honest and wise men can contribute to their country. Neglecting common interest is the problem but these men can take for the common interest. But those who steal should be cut of from society.

Cicero maintains that an individual must always aim at what is right; and then he argues that Panaetius never held that the true right and advantage conflicted. Advantages impress but they were inferior to rightness. Men who think otherwise should reexamine their judgments.

Section V covers test cases in my and history, such as Plato and the story of the Ring of Gyges. In the story, a man has a ring that can make him invisible and can thereby secure his advantage without anyone knowing but a good man aims to do right regardless of whether anyone notices. Some philosophers maintain that this can't happen, but Cicero maintains that we should consider the case anyway because of what it can teach us. The invisible man should resist being tempted by his senses for his true good still tells him to do the right thing. Cicero then discusses real-world cases such as sacrificing for friends and he maintains that it is good to sacrifice for friends. Cicero continues to give examples, trying to show that those who thought doing wrong was to their advantage were incorrect.

Section VI covers test cases in business, such as a food shortage that gives an early-arriving salesman the chance to take advantage of higher demand. Should he tell the others? One could argue that the businessman is being deceptive but another could reply that he is simply not revealing what he knows. Neither side says that one should charge the price because of its advantages; instead they fight about what is right. Cicero then covers other cases.

In Section VII, Cicero discusses sharp practice and the law. Applying the law produces hard cases and requires choosing between bads and goods. Cicero discusses how to rule in cases of fraud and points out that the law requires that defects be declared and he discusses the origins of the law. Sharp practice - making money based on fraud - is not right nor is it good for the community. Law will always imperfectly mirror justice, however, since it is hard to know what Justice looks like in many cases. Justice demands that individuals be honest and not deceive. Sharp practice must go.

In Section VIII, Cicero discusses respected men at fault, analyzing the actions of those thought to be good. Should these men allow harm to come to themselves in order to avoid wrongdoing? The conflict, again, is an illusion. Some think that men can do as they see their interests and profits dictate, but Cicero denies this because many do not grasp that their interests are not advanced by injustice. Some object that when a prize is



of high value, wrong-doing can be excused. The only way to balance advantage and rightness is by rightness, however.

Section IX asks if honesty is always necessary. Sometimes, for instance, breaking treaties will be in the advantage of a country, if wrong. However, Cicero continues to maintain that this appearance is illusory. He also asks if promises must always be kept. He argues that a sick man can break a promise of payment in order to secure a drug for himself that will save his life. Promises made to others contrary to their interests can be broken. Promises need not always be kept.

Section X considers objections to heroism. Many heroes take actions unlike most men and that sometimes achieving a heroic advantage often turns out to be right, despite appearances. Cicero discusses many cases. Actions performed with bad motives can't be advantageous because the actions are wrong but otherwise sometimes noble actions for advantage can turn out to be right.

Section XI addresses the fallacy of pleasure. Sometimes getting pleasure involves wrongdoing. What is wrong with that? Cicero maintains that getting pleasure simply can never be to one's advantage if it is wrong. He then reviews the main argument of the book: nothing against the right can benefit one. Appearances to the contrary are deceptive. However, one must make tradeoffs between secondary duties and advantage, and these cases must be handled with care and careful judgment. Cicero presents the book to his son as a present and considers the book a great gift. He says that he would love to visit his son in Athens but he can't. He then says goodbye and asks his son to be good.



Chapter 5, Cato the Elder on Old Age, On Old Age

Chapter 5, Cato the Elder on Old Age, On Old Age Summary and Analysis

Cato the Elder on Old Age was written in 44 B.C. Cicero dedicated it to his friend Atticus. In the essay Cicero anticipates the views on old age of philosophers and scientists millennia after him. The book is staged in 150 B.C. and the main speaker is Marcus Porcius Cato the Elder, who was also called 'the Censor.' Cicero greatly admired Cato the Elder but admits that his Cato is probably not wholly true to the original. Cato is accompanied by Scipio Aemilianus and his friend Gaius Laelius. In the piece, Cato is 84 and Scipio is 35.

In the introduction, Cicero sets out his aims, to write an essay on old age. Most become old and the piece is written to console people as a result. He is excited to write philosophy about his age and reports that he will speak in Cato's voice.

In Section II, Scipio opens by praising Cato for not becoming wearisome when he becomes old. Cato responds that if you rely on life's blessings, you won't feel gloom. He encourages the elderly not to complain and notes that they are angry old age crept up on them. But they should have been more attentive. Cato simply had reasonable expectations. It is pointless to resist age. Laelius then says he and Scipio want to live to be old and so asks Cato to tell them how to endure old age.

Cato notes that his contemporaries often complain about age but they did not look on the goods of old age, such as freedom from the desire of physical pleasures. And their grumbling comes from their character, not their age because a person of bad character complains at every age. Old age has the advantage of the study and living in a decent and enlightened way. You also reap the benefits of building up mental skills your whole life. He then discusses the case of Quintus Fabius Maximus. He shows how old age can be happy. There are four reasons old age is regarded as unhappy - one loses the ability to do active work, the body is weakened, physical pleasures are removed and death is close. Cato will now review these four reasons to see if there is anything to them.

In Section II, Cato addresses the notion that old age takes one away from active work. He claims that this is true of activities suited for the young but not those suited for the old. He cites the various advisory and wisdom-oriented positions of the elderly. Some hate that memory is weakened in old age but he claims that exercise can stave this off. He claims that he can still remember many important things. Old age really can be lively and the old can learn.

In Section III, Cato consoles the elderly for losing strength. Cato admits that he has lost strength but that he has retained some and others do as well. He finds that speech,



however, can acquire improved properties and how one can engage in activities with young people to partake in their strength. Many bodily infirmities can be blamed on activities in youth not on old age alone. Men are also not made better by strength. If men lose vigor in old age, it is not expected of them. Age should be resisted to some degree but retaining control need not be an all out fight. In old age, one can still keep the mind strong, if not the body.

Section IV covers the pleasures of age. He believes that liberation from youthful pleasures is a gift. Old men lose sensual greed. The old man can more easily avoid lust and lust clouds intelligence and judgment. The weakening of the need for pleasure is a cause for praise. Cato reports that he has increased pleasure from conversation at parties because he no longer focuses so much on food and drink. He also appreciates toasts. Old people don't want to be tickled by their senses. However, youth does bring more pleasure, yet they are unimportant.

In Section V, Cato addresses the pleasures of farming. Cato enjoys it quite a bit and does not find the old age gets in the way of his enjoyment. He loves the productivity of the earth and make some observations about his favorite plants. He enjoys irrigation as well and gives other cases of the pleasures of farming.

Section VI covers honors and faults. Cato proclaims that being respected is the 'crowning glory' of being old. However, one must lay the foundations for this respect early on in life. And the elderly often get to go first with respect to many things. Those angry elderly people, those that complain, again have bad characters not due to age. In Section VII, Cato argues that death is not horrible and so its nearness is not so bad. If death destroys the soul, then it is no big harm and if it removes the soul, then probably death is a good. There are no third possibilities. Old people also do not have unique reason to fear death for the young can be killed. No one lives forever as well, so there is no need to hope for immortality. To die is in accord with nature as well. Cato argues that it is best to die with a clear mind and working faculties. The old shouldn't hold too fast to their memories of life or abandon them before it is necessary. The act of dying can be beautiful as well and having enough of life is possible.

Section VIII's topic is the afterlife and Cato then tells Laelius and Scipio what he believes about death. Being in the body is laborious, something imposed by fate. Human souls come from heaven and have their home there. Humans are only on earth to guard it and reflect on the divine order while there. Cato believes this not only through his own reasoning but from the reasoning of others. He believes that human souls function very quickly and remember everything; they have grand powers. The disembodied state is most like sleep and only in sleep can we see the future. The wisest die with peace. Cato then comments on how much he respected and loved Laelius and Scipio's fathers. He affirms that life has great advantages but that the life to come does as well. However, life should be seen as a hostel, not a home. Cato is excited to join all the divine souls and depart from corruption in the world. He will meet those he lost, particularly his soul. Even if he is wrong, it does not matter. Cato hopes that Laelius and Scipio will reach old age so that they can see that what he says is true.



Characters

Cicero

Cicero is the main character in all five chapters of the book, even if only as author. He is widely thought to be one of history's finest statesmen, philosophers, politicians and orators. Cicero was born in 106 B.C. just before the birth of Julius Caesar. He grew up rich but unlike most families, his did not have a role in politics. His education was that of an elite Roman citizen and had him study rhetoric and philosophy. He eventually became a lawyer and when he became famous due to his legal and rhetorical skill, he was elected to the Senate in 76 B.C. In 63 B.C. he became a Roman consul and ruled effectively. Throughout his life he defended the republican form of Roman government against dictatorship and had to flee Rome when Caesar came to power as a result. When Caesar was killed, he returned only to be killed some time later by Marc Antony.

In Chapter 1, Cicero is shown in his rise to power, in his famed assault on Verres, the corrupt dictator of Sicily. In Chapter 2, the reader will encounter twenty-four of Cicero's letters, revealing his struggles to be loyal to his country while protecting against the tyranny of Caesar. In Chapter 3, Cicero gives a famous oration defending himself against Marc Antony's slanderous attacks. In Chapter 4, Cicero has written his third book of *On Duties*, which addresses the question of whether the moral right can conflict with what is personally beneficial. Finally, in Chapter 5, Cicero gives his views of old age through a dialogue with Cato the Elder as its main character.

Cato

Cato the Elder is the main character in *On Old Age* and speaks more than any other character in the book save Cicero. Cato died over forty years before Cicero was born, living from 234 B.C. to 149 B.C. but Cicero uses Cato and what he knew of Cato in order to defend his views on old age.

Cato the Elder was from Tusculum, as was Cicero. He was a famous Roman statesman, often called Cato the Wise, Cato the Ancient and Cato the Elder. All of his family was known for military service and when he did not fight he farmed, as most of his family did. However, he was brought to Rome to serve in many public capacities, including Consul and Censor. Cato's reputation as a soldier was widespread and spent his later years rooting out political corruption in the Roman republic. He was strongly Stoical and against luxury and extravagance, worrying that it would corrupt Roman morality, and so he came to be seen as a protector of Roman culture. He was also a famous writer.

Cicero clearly admired Cato the Elder. Cato lived many years and Cicero speaks through Cato when Cato was eighty-four years old. In the dialogue, Cato argues that while growing old has some costs, it has many benefits that more than outweigh them.



The common complaints about age can either be effectively mitigated through examination or are due to factors other than age, such as reckless behavior or poor character. Towards the end of the dialogue, Cato speculates on the afterlife and believes that he has much to look forward to.

Marc Antony

A friend of Julius Caesar and future member of the Second Triumvirate, Antony tried to tear down Cicero's reputation so that he could rise to power. However, Cicero opposes his attacks in the Second Philippic.

Gaius Verres

The corrupt governor of Sicily who Cicero regarded as a tyrant. Cicero argues for his conviction and serves as prosecutor in his case in *Against Verres*.

Titus Pomponius Atticus

A Roman statesman who was a close friend of Cicero's. Many of Cicero's letters in Chapter 2 are written to Atticus.

Julius Caesar

The world-historical figure who became the first dictator of the Roman Empire. He was once friends with Cicero but they differed when Caesar came to power. Cicero rejoiced in his assassination.

Tullia Cicero

Cicero's daughter who died in February, 45 B.C. Cicero was stunned. Her death is an issue in Cicero's letters.

Marcus Cicero

Marcus Cicero is Cicero's son. *On Duties* is dedicated to him that he might become a good man. He was something of a drunk and a disappointment to his father. Later, after Cicero Sr.'s death, he became consul, which he shares with Octavian.

Gaius Laelius Sapiens

A character in *On Old Age* and admirer of Cato the Elder. He was famously close friends with Scipio Aemilianus, the other character in *On Old Age*.



Scipio Aemilianus

A character in *On Old Age* and admirer of Cato the Elder. He was famously close friends with Gaius Laelius Sapiens, the other character in *On Old Age*.

Quintus Hortensius Hortalus

A famous Roman lawyer and orator during Cicero's time. He defended Verres and in time Cicero's reputation overtook his.



Objects/Places

Rome

The capital city of the Roman republic and then the Roman Empire. Cicero spent much of his life there.

The Tusculum

Cicero's home city, which is today Alban Hills in Latium in Italy.

The Senate

The Roman Senate within the Roman Republic. Cicero was a famous member of the Senate until its dissolution.

The Courtroom

The Roman courtroom was where Cicero prosecuted Verres.

Verres's Plot

Verres had a plot to buy his acquittal that Cicero exposed to the jury.

Cicero's Letters

Cicero wrote over eight-hundred letters in his life, twenty-four of which are reprinted in Chapter 2.

The First Triumvirate

Julius Caesar did not destroy the Roman Senate overnight. He first formed a triumvirate which he initially invited Cicero to join. Cicero declined leading to his political exile. The Triumvirate came to include Caesar, Crassus and Magnus. It lasted from 60 B.C. to 53 B.C. when Crassus died.



Caesar's Assassination

Julius Caesar was famously assassinated by senators Cassius and Brutus. They killed him on March 15th, 44 B.C. Cicero hated Caesar's dictatorship for what it did to Roman liberty and Roman republicanism and rejoiced when he was killed.

Cicero's Code of Behavior

Cicero developed a Stoic-inspired code of behavior that is partly recounted in *On Duties*.

Cicero's Oratory

Cicero was widely seen to be the greatest orator in the Roman republic and then Roman Empire. Until the 19th century, his works on rhetoric were widely read by intellectual elites across the Western World.

Cicero's Writings

Cicero wrote on many topics, including philosophy, law, history, rhetoric, and politics. Many of his writings are reproduced in *Cicero: Selected Writings*.

Cicero's Philosophical Texts

Cicero wrote several philosophical works. The third book of his work in moral philosophy, *On Duties*, takes up Chapter 4.

The Roman Consulship

The Roman Consul was the top elected office that one could obtain in the Roman republic and the Roman Empire. There were two consuls at any one time and they ruled together. Julius Caesar effectively and permanently destroyed their power when he became dictator. Cicero served as Consul long before.

Old Age

Cicero argues in *On Old Age* that Old Age is not to be feared but welcomed.

Duties

Cicero was a man of duty to family, country and truth, if nothing else. He writes about duties at length in Chapter 4.



Themes

Justice for Tyrants

The whole first half of Cicero's Selected Works is a series of writings against tyrants. Thus, a major theme of Cicero's Selected Works is the desire that justice be done against tyrants who would destroy the Roman republic. Cicero is a lifelong patriot of the Roman republic, defending Rome's traditional republican form of government and the full range of liberty for Roman citizens. Whenever anyone is a threat to republican government and Roman liberty, Cicero opposes them, either in public or privately. Against Verres is Cicero's first public stand against a tyrant. Verres is the infamously corrupt governor of Sicily who has terrorized his people, imposed revenge rather than justice and used his position for personal gain. He is in every way a tyrant and unjust ruler, and as such, Cicero spares him no mercy in his accusations.

Cicero's letters concern many matters but two are relevant here. First, Julius Caesar seeks to become dictator of Rome but before that he subverts the Roman Senate by forming a triumvirate, which he initially invites Cicero to become part of. In the letters, Cicero struggles with doing his duty for his country through public service or by opposing Caesar's tyranny directly. For this reason, he is torn when Pompey asks Cicero to ally with him and he is also torn when Caesar invites him to become a member of the triumvirate. However, he is overjoyed when Caesar is assassinated. When Cicero returns to Rome, however, he eventually faces attacks from Antony on his character and political career. Cicero believes that Antony's attacks are merely a cover for Antony's desire to rule Rome as Julius Caesar did and so in the Second Philippic, Cicero defends himself against Antony's attacks and accuses Antony of dishonest, corrupt and tyrannical intentions.

Honor and Duty

Honor and duty are core themes of Cicero's life as a whole, much less his writings. Each piece of Cicero's in the Selected Works is strongly imbued with the ideals of honor and duty, regardless of its subject matter, time period or context. Against Verres upholds the standards of honor and the requirements of duty of Roman citizens and Roman governors against Verres's conduct. Most of Cicero's condemnation is rooted in his belief that Verres has failed to behave honorably time and time again and has violated his duties as a Roman citizen to defend and support his country and as a Roman statesman by ruling in a corrupt and tyrannical fashion. Cicero's letters are full of concerns about honor and duty. Cicero wishes to oppose Caesar, lamenting the destruction of Roman liberty that Caesar's rule has brought about. He feels loyal to his country, though, and believes that an honorable man may not be able to rebel against the ruler of his land.



Chapter 3 condemns Antony. Cicero is eager to defend his honor against Antony's attacks and show that he did his duty as Roman consul, a claim that Antony questions. He also attacks Antony's honor and character, along with accusing him of failing to do his duty as well. Chapter 4 is a book from Cicero's famous work *On Duties*, which of course has as its subject the very idea of duty and how to know what one's duty is. He commends the reading of the book to his son Marcus on the grounds that it will help him live an upright and honorable life. Chapter 5 speaks well of honor and duty, but particularly of the honor that one receives in old age if one has lived a good and upright life. Cicero believes that receiving these honors are among the greatest rewards of old age.

The Glories of Philosophy

The first three chapters of Cicero's *Selected Works* are not philosophical works, but the last two chapters reflect deeply on philosophical topics. Chapter 4, which is really Book III of Cicero's famous *On Duties* opens with high praise for philosophy and an exhortation to Cicero's son Marcus to pay attention to it. Cicero believes that the study of moral philosophy is absolutely essential for anyone who wants to live a good and upright life. Cicero argues that reflecting on the relationship, for instance, between utility or personal benefit and doing the right thing requires practical wisdom that can be gained through carefully studying cases and learning to judge them appropriately. These judgments must be guided by philosophical principles. Cicero argues that unless one understands, for instance, that rightness and true benefit cannot conflict, one can be led astray.

In *On Old Age*, Cicero reflects on the costs and benefits of old age through the mouth of Cato the Elder. He opens by explaining his strategy to the reader and how he aims to give comfort to those who are aged or who will live long enough to become aged. He uses philosophy to show that the common complaints about old age are often confused, exaggerated or attribute a cost to old age that is actually a cost due to something else, such as having a bad character. Philosophy not only helps one to understand that old age is not so bad but it is also a pursuit that can provide consolation to the elderly.

Style

Perspective

The book contains two perspectives, that of the translator and editor, Michael Grant, and that of Cicero's. Grant gives introductions to Cicero's writings at the beginning of each chapter and at the beginning of nearly all of Cicero's letters in Chapter 2. He also includes an extended introduction to all of Cicero's works, placing the works in their historical context, commenting on their main themes and forthrightly admitting difficulties in translation.

The core perspective of the book, however, is Cicero's. Each chapter is written at a different period of Cicero's life and so his perspective changes. *Against Verres* was given when Cicero was a young man eager to improve his reputation as a lawyer and orator. His perspective is one of urgent, sharp and articulate condemnation of a well-known tyrant and criminal. His letters give many distinct perspectives on then current events but all of them express a strong love of family and country, along with a passion for honor, the liberty of Roman citizens and a strong opposition to the tyranny of Caesar. However, he also worries deeply about betraying his country and resisting Caesar when he comes to power. The third chapter is given when Cicero is an older man, returning to Rome after Caesar's assassination. Antony has assaulted his character and his political career and he is eager not only to defend himself but to tear Antony to pieces in his speech.

The fourth chapter is written both as a work of moral philosophy and as advice to Cicero's son, Marcus. Its perspective is that of a man mesmerized by philosophy and intent on sharing its glory with his son. The final chapter, *On Old Age*, is written during Cicero's last years. Its perspective is ostensibly that of Cato the Elder as Cicero understands him but Cato expresses the wisdom that Cicero has acquired through growing old. Cicero sees old age as having many benefits and bringing one close to the afterlife.

Tone

The tone of the book is compound, with Cicero as that major contributor to the book's tone and the translator and editor, Michael Grant, as the minor contributor. Cicero's tone varies according to the type of document in which he is placed. *Against Verres* is a legal or 'juridical' oration, where the young Cicero rails against the tyranny of criminality of Verres. Its tone is bombastic, urgent, righteous, hyperbolic and dramatic. The same can be said of the *Second Philippic*, which is Cicero's defense of his political career against the attacks of Antony and his counterattack on Antony's accomplishments and character. The tone here is also bombastic, righteous, hyperbolic and dramatic, despite the fact that it is not a judicial oration. The point of both orations, however, is to convince



the audience that Cicero is good and that his opponent is bad so non-rational methods of persuasion must be employed.

Cicero's letters have varying tones. Some are simply cordial, while others are subtly or overtly political. Some are emotional, such as Cicero's letters to his family, while others are urgent and concerned, as are many of Cicero's letters to Atticus. Nearly all of the letters come off as sincere, however, no matter how revealing of Cicero they might be. The book *On Duties* starts and ends with an expression of love for his son and an exhortation to right behavior but the bulk of the work handles philosophical issues with great care. Cicero's tone is methodical, focused and measured. And in *On Old Age*, Cicero speaks through the mouth of Cato the Elder, and so speaks with a learned, wise, and tranquil voice that knows the facts of life.

The minor tone of Michael Grant, however, is one of a scholar organizing the texts of a great writer for public consumption. He gives clear, apparently unbiased explanations of Cicero's aims in his various works, along with helpful historical notes when relevant.

Structure

Cicero: Selected Works is a compilation of many of Cicero's most important writings. However, it not only contains Cicero's work but helpful commentary from the author, along with a lengthy introduction and several helpful appendices. The introduction covers Cicero's struggle against tyranny, his views on how humans can live together and cooperation, some struggles with translating Cicero and his fame in his time and afterward.

Cicero's works are then presented in two parts. Part One: *Against Tyranny* contains three chapters. Chapter 1 is called 'Attack on Misgovernment: Against Verres, I.' In Cicero's early career, Verres is the infamously corrupt governor of Sicily. Cicero is a young orator and lawyer who is in charge of prosecuting Verres for his crimes but he has been subjected to various legal and political obstacles to prevent Verres's prosecution. The speech rails against Verres's tyrannical behavior and chides him severely for his misconduct with regard to the trial.

Chapter 2 is called 'Cicero's Life and Letters: Selection from his Correspondence' which contains twenty-four letters that Cicero wrote throughout his life. These are only a small sample of the eight hundred letters Cicero wrote in his life but they are illustrative of Cicero's internal and external struggles with the tyranny of Julius Caesar. Cicero struggles with his family, his political alliances, his relationship to General Pompey, who challenges Caesar, his personal relationship with Caesar, his exile and his return to Rome following Caesar's assassination. Chapter 3, 'Attack on an Enemy of Freedom: The Second Philippic against Antony' is a speech the Cicero gives before the Roman Senate after Caesar's assassination that defends himself against attacks from Antony and responds with attacks on Antony's deeds and characters. He believes that Antony threatens to subvert the liberty of Roman citizens.

The book then transitions to Part Two: How to Live. Chapter 4, 'A Practical Code of Behavior: On Duties, III' reproduces the third book of Cicero's famous *On Duties*, a moral guidebook written for his son that was among the most famous works of moral philosophy up through the mid 19th century. It struggles with the question of how to handle apparent conflicts between what is right and what is beneficial. Chapter 5, 'Cato the Elder On Old Age: On Old Age' reprints Cicero's famous dialogue 'On Old Age' where through the mouth of Cato the Elder, Cicero philosophizes about the costs and benefits of growing old and meditations on the nature of the afterlife.

The book ends with four appendices, a list of Cicero's surviving works, some genealogical tables, a key for technical terms and various maps of the Roman Empire during Cicero's time.



Quotes

"At this grave crisis in the history of our country, you have been offered a peculiarly desirable gift, a gift almost too opportune to be of human origin: it almost seems heaven-sent. For you have been given a unique chance to make your Senatorial Order less unpopular, and to set right the damaged reputation of these courts." (37)

"He returned from his province - and then, instantly, he tried to buy up the whole panel of judges!" (43)

"I accuse Gaius Verres of committing many acts of lechery and brutality against the citizens and allies of Rome and many crimes against God and man." (57)

"Yet amid all this oppression there is more free speech than ever, at any rate at social gatherings and parties." (63)

"Should one stay in one's country even if it is under totalitarian rule?" (80)

"Yet come one, come all, the Ides of March are a consolation. Our heroes most splendidly and gloriously achieved everything that lay in their power." (91)

"Why is this my fate? I am obliged to record that, for twenty years past, our country has never had an enemy who has not, simultaneously, made himself an enemy of mine as well." (102)

"I see; your consulship is beneficent, mine was destructive." (109)

"Where could you possibly find a place in any community owning laws and law courts - since these are precisely what you have done your utmost to abolish and to replace by tyranny?" (139)

"Two things only I pray for. One, that in dying I may leave the Roman people free - the immortal gods could grant me no greater gift. My other prayer is this: that no man's fortunes may fail to correspond with his services to our country!" (153)

"Now, according to either doctrine, there can be no doubt whatever about one point: advantage can never conflict with right." (162)

"Here then, Marcus my son, is your father's present to you. Personally I consider it a substantial one!" (208)

"No praise, then, is too great for philosophy! - which enables this period in her obedient disciples' lives, like every other period, to be lived without anxiety." (214)

"When you hear protests of this kind, the trouble is due to character, not age." (216)

"To be respected is the crowning glory of old age." (238)

"When I leave life, therefore, I shall feel as if I am leaving a hostel rather than a home."
(246)



Topics for Discussion

Name and explain three of Cicero's problems with Verres.

Discuss three significant events covered in Cicero's letters.

What is the argument of the Second Phillipic? What is Cicero's defense of himself? What is his attack on Antony? Who has the better argument?

What does Cicero think of the conflict between advantage and morality? What is his argument? Do you think he is right? Why or why not?

What is Cicero's concept of secondary duties? How do they play a role in the argument? Does the distinction help Cicero's case?

What are the four reasons that Cato cites as the proposed negatives of old age? What does he say about them to lessen their impact? Do you find his arguments convincing?

Why isn't Cato afraid of death? What does he believe about the afterlife?