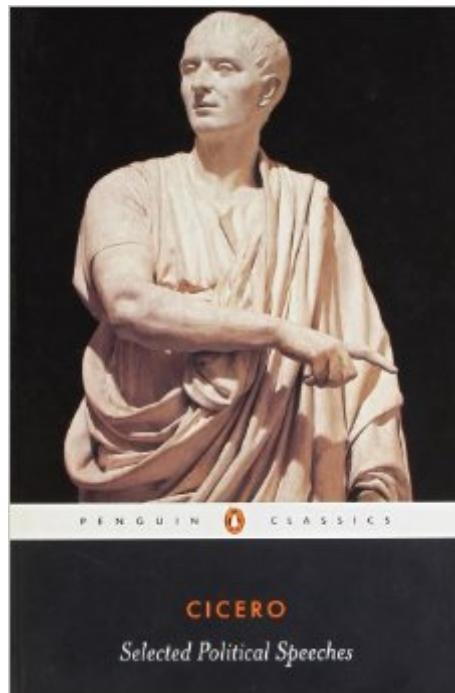


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Cicero: Selected Political Speeches (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

As the Roman Republic lurched to its close, amid corruption, ruthless power struggles and gross inequality, Cicero produced some of the most stirring and eloquent speeches ever written. Whether he is quashing the Catiline conspiracy, defending the poet Archais or railing against Mark Anthony in the Philippics - The magnificent speeches in defense of liberty that cost him his life - Cicero vividly evokes for us the cut and thrust of the Roman assembly, Senate and court rooms. This excellent modern translation also enables readers to understand why Cicero was for centuries a major influence on prose writers and political thinkers of ever kind. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

In its last days, the Roman Republic was a wild and woolly place. Popular thugs like Lucius Sergius Catilina (Catiline) and Publius Clodius Pulcher saw in the shifting vacuums of power an opportunity to flout the law and win power and riches at the expense of their fellow countrymen. Standing squarely in their path was a Roman Senator, Marcus Tullius Cicero, who knew how to win men's minds with his powerful speeches and who had a fanatical dedication to maintaining the rule of law

in the face of anarchy. The art that Cicero practiced is not held in great repute today: We tend to distrust a man who can marshal cogent arguments and dazzling rhetoric in support of a cause. Consider, however, how remarkable it is that so many of Cicero's orations, letters, and other writings have survived today. Not only were his speeches eagerly read by his contemporaries, but early Christian monks saw in the great orator a basically moral, even if Pagan, writer whose work was worth saving in the scriptorium. Among his own speeches, Cicero most highly rated his four blistering attacks on Catilina. My own personal favorite is "In Defence of Titus Annius Milo." In it, the wily orator shows he had a strong streak of Johnny Cochrane. The Tribune Publius Clodius Pulcher had been one of Cicero's most determined enemies and at one time had him banished for his advocacy of executing the leaders of Catiline's conspiracy. When Clodius is killed attempting to bushwhack a rival, Cicero jumped to defend the accused murderer. In a letter, Cicero had bragged, "Let me tell you that it was I who produced the necessary darkness in the court to prevent your guilt from being visible to everyone."

~Cicero: Selected Political Speeches~ is a great anthology of select speeches of the famed Roman statesman. Marcus Tullus Cicero, the great Roman orator and statesman, expressed principles that became the bedrock of liberty. He was adamant that the law is legitimate only when it is consistent with transcendent standards of liberty and justice. He emphatically held the moral obligation of government to protect liberty and private property. Historian Murray Rothbard, heaped praise on Cicero, as "the great transmitter of Stoic ideas from Greece to Rome... Stoic natural law doctrines heavily influenced the Roman jurists of the second and third centuries A.D., and thus helped shape the great structures of Roman law which became pervasive in Western civilization." Cicero rejected political violence as the tool of tyrants and demagogues. He spoke out against political violence, and even sounded mildly like Polybius in decrying Roman imperialism: "It is a hard thing to say but we Romans are loathed abroad because of the damage our generals and officials have done. There is now a shortage of prosperous cities for us to declare war on that we can loot them afterwards... Do you know of any single state that we have subdued that is still rich?" Cicero's renown also emanated from his powerful oratory. He took a sterile Latin language, invigorated it with Hellenic finesse, and made a few neologisms along the way, and made it into a poetic language. Among the pagans, I found Cato the Younger to be a better exemplar, but Cicero is really worth reading about. Cicero turned to a pragmatic realpolitik as he realized his endeared Republic was in shambles culturally, morally and politically. Maybe, it was practical. That's debatable. Maybe, I'm hopelessly idealistic like Cato. I don't know.

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