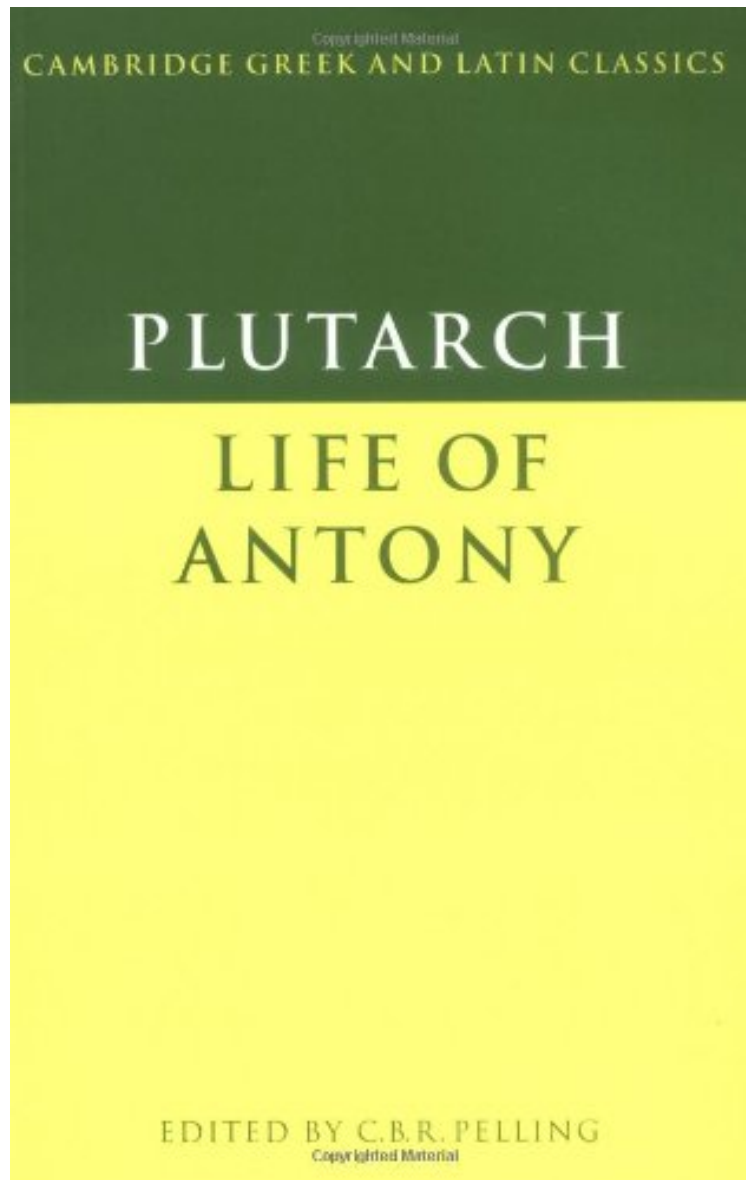


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Plutarch

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Plutarch : Plutarch: Life of Antony (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Plutarch: Life of Antony (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Compelling scholarship from Pelling. By Mr. William J. Kennedy This is an outstanding commentary on Plutarch's 'Life of Antony'. It includes an introduction of over 40

pages, the Greek text (no translation), and a very detailed commentary. The commentary offers grammatical and translation assistance where necessary (such as to correct common mistranslations) but is principally a historical commentary. This in my opinion is the primary value of the book. The period between the formation of the Triumvirate (comprised of Antony, Octavian and Lepidus) in 43 BC and Octavian/Augustus' assumption of virtually undisputed power around 27 BC is a turgid, neglected period that is distinctly lacking in sources. One of our best sources just prior to that time had been Cicero, who famously perished during the first acts of the Triumvirate - the proscriptions. As such, Plutarch's 'Antony' provides invaluable information for the events up until Antony's suicide in 30 BC following his defeat by Octavian at Actium in 31 BC. Plutarch's account, however, can be chronologically inaccurate, prone to artistic embellishment in order to enhance the personal characteristics he wishes to emphasise, and can leave out key events altogether when they don't suit his narrative. This is where Pelling comes to the rescue. He sorts out the chronology, provides exhaustive cross references to the other ancient sources that cover the period (especially Appian, Dio and Josephus), and in the appropriate places mentions the events that Plutarch has 'overlooked' (and why he may have done so). As an aside, in the relevant portions of the commentary, he discusses how Shakespeare based his 'Antony and Cleopatra' almost completely on Plutarch's 'Antony'. It is really no more and no less than the sort of exceptional and incisive scholarship one routinely expects (and receives) from Christopher Pelling. In short, if you either like Plutarch's 'Life of Antony' and want to know more (much, much more) about the whole history of the period, or you would like detailed historical and research assistance in unravelling the chronology and events of 43-27 BC then this is the book for you.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. C.B.R. Pelling's commentary on Plutarch's Life of Antony By Eustathios This is a review of C.B.R. Pelling's commentary on Plutarch's Life of Antony for the Cambridge green and yellow series. The other reviewer has articulated most of the essential points to be made about this generally excellent commentary, and to these I just want to add a few complementary thoughts based on my own experience reading through this book. Putting it very succinctly, the emphasis of this commentary is on illuminating how Plutarch has taken all the historical source material at his disposal and deliberately shaped it (and in many cases distorted it) to paint a portrait of Antony that smoothed out his very complex, often contradictory, and eminently human characteristics and transformed him (and those around him) into object moral lessons illustrating the advantages and pitfalls of various character traits. Identifying the historical "facts" at Plutarch's disposal is therefore an essential prerequisite for the commentator's analysis of Plutarch's manipulation of them, and much of the commentary is taken up with the analysis of Plutarch's sources (many of them lost) insofar as they can be accessed in the surviving primary sources for this period. But much of the discussion of history in this commentary is really a means to the end of understanding what Plutarch's process of composition is and what his literary aspirations are, and in answering these questions the commentator has produced a convincing and exemplary case study for how one can profitably approach issues of authorial intent and literary pretension in ancient works that are largely historical in content. The commentator also frequently cites parallels in other Lives in order to illustrate patterns in Plutarch's stylistic choices and his construction of narrative and character. Given this commentary's emphasis on historical and literary analysis, the amount of grammatical and lexical help provided is fairly minimal compared to what a reader might expect if he or she has used other entries in this series. Plutarch's Greek is not as difficult as that of Thucydides or Demosthenes, but it is somewhat more difficult than that of Xenophon, Lysias, or Plato, and for every paragraph section of Greek text there are generally about 1-3 notes dealing with grammatical or lexical difficulties that one must sift through the commentary's historical/literary analysis to find. I would estimate, then, that a reader would need at least 4 or 5 years of Greek reading experience to be able to use this commentary efficiently and profitably. It is also well to mention that the Life of Antony is among Plutarch's longest Lives. This edition has over 60 pages of Greek text and over 200 pages of very dense commentary. The introduction and the book's description make a point of claiming that this commentary will be useful for readers who are interested in Shakespeare's play "Antony and Cleopatra". The introduction and commentary proper are indeed very helpful in pointing out where Shakespeare has diverged from Plutarch's narrative and characterizations, and cross-references listed in the introduction identify all the places in the commentary where Shakespeare's play is discussed. In general, though, these discussions are very brief and make up only a very small portion of the commentary, and they will seem very opaque unless one reads Shakespeare concurrently with the Life of Antony or is already intimately familiar with the play. The introduction does an excellent job of providing the historical background and bibliography (through 1988, with a few addenda in later reprints) needed to appreciate the Life of Antony in the context of the historical period (1st-2nd centuries AD) in which Plutarch was writing and in the context of Plutarch's larger project in composing the Parallel Lives. Plutarch paired his Life of Antony with a Life of Demetrios Poliorketes, one of the many competing successors to Alexander the Great, and one of the sections of the introduction demonstrates how these two Lives act as a dyadic unit and thus offer important insights into one another. It would thus be ideal for any reader of this book to also acquire a copy of the Life of Demetrios as well. Unfortunately, there is no comparable commentary available on this Life (and very few readily available commentaries on Plutarch's other Lives), so a translation or a Loeb edition will probably have to suffice. Overall, this is a challenging but ultimately very rewarding commentary on an ancient author who is regrettably under-served when it comes to commentaries geared towards non-specialist readers. For advanced readers of Greek interested in Roman

history, ancient biography, and Plutarch's approach to composition, this book is therefore a unique and valuable resource.

Pelling presents the Greek text of Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, a work remarkable for its colorful narrative and vivid characterization of Antony and Cleopatra. Although mostly concerned with the literary merit of the *Life*, the text is accompanied by an extensive introduction that sets the work in its historical perspective and by detailed commentary that explains points of linguistic difficulty. Especially interesting is Pelling's discussion of the influence of the *Life* on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, whose conception of the character and destiny of its protagonist is almost wholly shaped by Plutarch's work.

Language NotesText: Greek, English