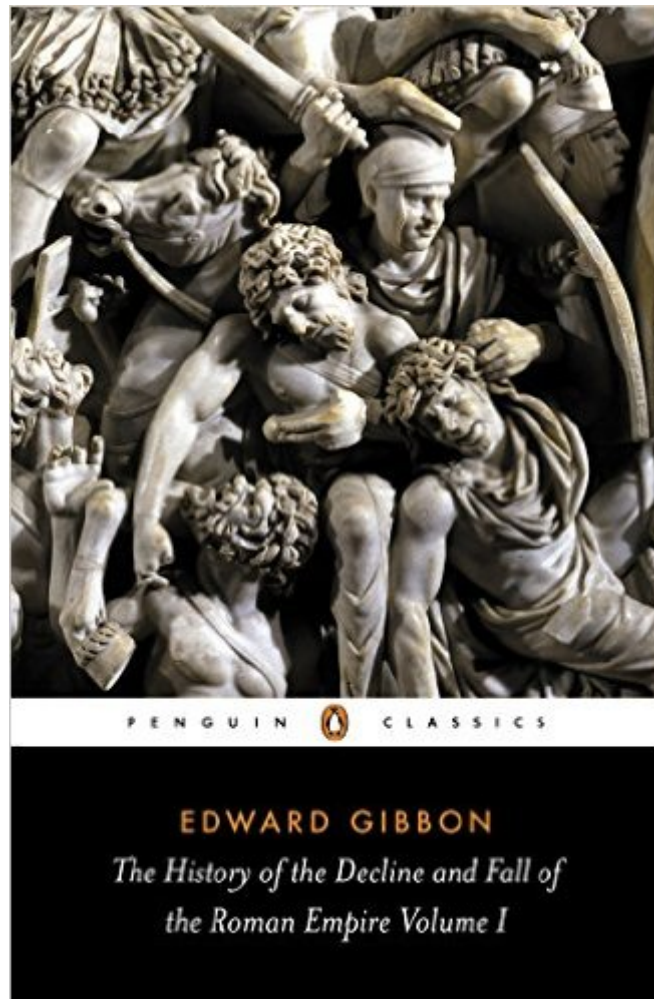


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The History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire, Vol. 1



Synopsis

Edward Gibbon's six-volume *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) is among the most magnificent and ambitious narratives in European literature. Its subject is the fate of one of the world's greatest civilizations over thirteen centuries - its rulers, wars and society, and the events that led to its disastrous collapse. Here, in volumes one and two, Gibbon charts the vast extent and constitution of the Empire from the reign of Augustus to 395 ad. And in a controversial critique, he examines the early Church, with fascinating accounts of the first Christian and last pagan emperors, Constantine and Julian.

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Customer Reviews

I do not recommend buying an edition of "The Decline and Fall" based upon price alone, because for many reasons, which will become clearer to you after reading this complicated and scholarly work, the editions vary in content and price, nor does price alone guarantee quality. For many hours prior to purchasing, I researched the numerous editions offered by different publishers and read reviews, and discovered a consensus among Gibbon fans in favor of Womersley's unabridged edition, in part because it includes a complete and unmodernized text, Gibbon's own comments and notes, and his famous Vindication, a final and thorough answer to scurrilous critics of his time. All of this is provided at a quite reasonable price, considering the length of the work (in excess of 1,300 pages), albeit in soft cover which I find makes a book easier to read, if slightly less durable. I recommend buying this new edition from , instead of the used editions also offered here, because many of them, I discovered after investigating, are not the same as this one I am reviewing (ISBN

0-14-043393-7, which is Volume I). Like I said, there are many editions of Gibbon's masterpiece floating about, old and new, of varying quality and content. The vendors' failure to disclose the ISBN in their descriptions prohibits any purchase by the discriminating. Just pay the seventeen or so bucks for the new book, which is dirt cheap for a work of this magnitude. There should be no need to defend Gibbon nor his work, which is simply the best I have yet read. I loved history as a boy, even while reading the simple and often stupid books offered in school.

Well, after more than a year of off and on reading I finally finished the first volume of Gibbon's vast chronicle and only have five massive books to go. All in all it has been a wonderful journey, tedious at times, but wonderful! This first volume was first published in 1776 and now, after over 200 years still stands as one of the great pillars in the cannon of Western Literature and of course is still a framework used by historians even to this day. There are of course three aspects of this work that need to be considered. The first of course is the history. Gibbon is considered by many as the first modern historian. He broke new ground (more about that later), and gives us a very good view of the Roman Empire as seen through the eyes of a man of his time. Secondly, this is most certainly a literary work of no mean quality. It is actually an absolute gem; a work of art is words. Third, there is the history of the history; the placing of Gibbons work as a historical event within itself, which is sometimes overlooked. Now sheer volumes have been written concerning this early study of the Roman culture, both critical and laudatory. I have great doubts that anything I say here will add to this mound of observations which have been gathering since the ink dried on the first printing of the work. I can only give you, the reader, my personal perspectives; keeping in mind that I am not in anyway a historian, theologian nor literary master. No, I am just a common 'good old boy,' living in the hills that likes to read, loves history and enjoys a reading challenge. I have a bound set of these books on my bookshelf and I must admit that they sat there for a couple of years.

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