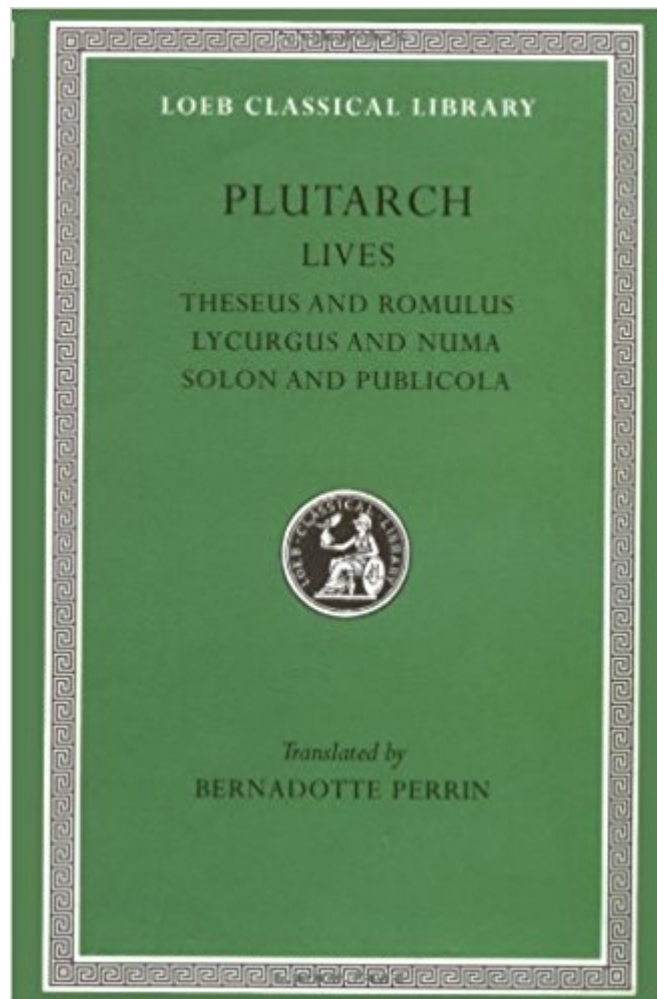


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Plutarch Lives, I, Theseus And Romulus. Lycurgus And Numa. Solon And Publicola (Loeb Classical Library®) (Volume I)



Synopsis

Plutarch (Plutarchus), ca. 45–120 CE, was born at Chaeronea in Boeotia in central Greece, studied philosophy at Athens, and, after coming to Rome as a teacher in philosophy, was given consular rank by the emperor Trajan and a procuratorship in Greece by Hadrian. He was married and the father of one daughter and four sons. He appears as a man of kindly character and independent thought, studious and learned. Plutarch wrote on many subjects. Most popular have always been the 46 Parallel Lives, biographies planned to be ethical examples in pairs (in each pair, one Greek figure and one similar Roman), though the last four lives are single. All are invaluable sources of our knowledge of the lives and characters of Greek and Roman statesmen, soldiers and orators. Plutarch's many other varied extant works, about 60 in number, are known as Moralia or Moral Essays. They are of high literary value, besides being of great use to people interested in philosophy, ethics and religion. The Loeb Classical Library edition of the Lives is in eleven volumes.

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Customer Reviews

Since there are so many of these darn things the review shall be divided into three sections. First, a brief description of the Loeb series of books and their advantages/disadvantages. Second shall be my thoughts on the author himself, his accuracy, as well as his style and the style of his translator. This is of course only my opinion and should be treated as such. The final part shall review what this particular book actually covers. The Loeb series date back to the turn of the last century. They are designed for people with at least some knowledge of Greek or Latin. They are a sort of compromise

between a straight English translation and an annotated copy of the original text. On the left page is printed the text in Greek or Latin depending on the language of the writer and on the right side is the text in English. For somebody who knows even a little Greek or Latin these texts are invaluable. You can try to read the text in the original language knowing that you can correct yourself by looking on the next page or you can read the text in translation and check the translation with the original for more detail. While some of the translations are excellent mostly they are merely serviceable since they are designed more as an aid to translation rather than a translation in themselves. Most of them follow the Greek or Latin very closely. These books are also very small, maybe just over a quarter the size of your average hardcover book. This means that you'll need to buy more than just one book to read a complete work. They are also somewhat pricey considering their size. The Loeb Collection is very large but most of the more famous works can be found in better (and cheaper) translations elsewhere.

This first volume includes some information about Plutarch's Lives, with information about their traditional order and chronological order. Also is an Introduction which discusses Plutarch's life and writings. Lastly, it includes three of Plutarch's comparisons. The first is Theseus and Romulus, the next is Lycurgus and Numa, and the last is Solon and Publicola. Each of the comparisons consists of three parts: the first two parts are short biographies of two historical people, one Greek and one Roman, followed by a comparison of the two. Not all that much is known about Plutarch or his life, but he has two sets of works which are well known. His "Morals" are, for the most part, his earlier works while his "Lives" (or "Parallel Lives") were written later. His focus on morals and customs from his earlier work shows itself in his biographical writings. Being Greek himself, Plutarch seemed intent on showing how the great Greeks of history were at least as those of Rome. Plutarch's "Lives" also include a large number of anecdotes, which again indicates that Plutarch was more interested in culture and morality, rather than historical fact. The first pairing is Theseus and Romulus. Each of the biographical sections covers the legendary lives of the subject. These are interesting discussions and good for reviewing the legends and lives of the figures, but it is the comparison section where one gets a better feel for the thoughts of Plutarch. It is here where Plutarch makes the case that Theseus sought out greatness when there was no need, but that Romulus needed to escape "servitude and impending punishment" and became "courageous out of fear" - a double quote as Plutarch is quoting Plato.

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