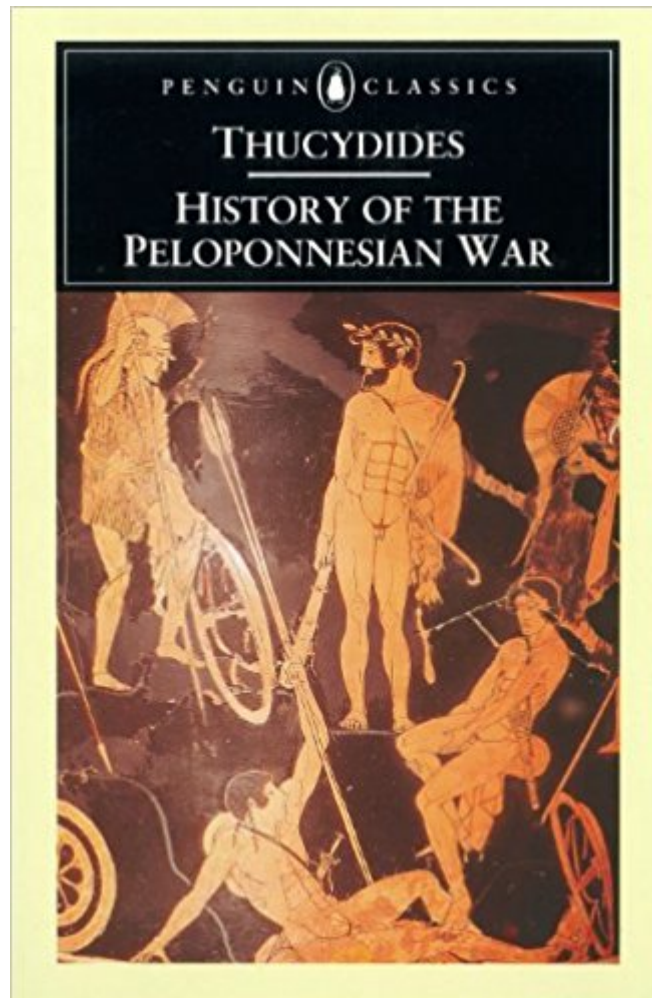


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History Of The Peloponnesian War



Synopsis

Written four hundred years before the birth of Christ, this detailed contemporary account of the struggle between Athens and Sparta stands an excellent chance of fulfilling the author's ambitious claim that the work "was done to last forever." The conflicts between the two empires over shipping, trade, and colonial expansion came to a head in 431 b.c. in Northern Greece, and the entire Greek world was plunged into 27 years of war. Thucydides applied a passion for accuracy and a contempt for myth and romance in compiling this exhaustively factual record of the disastrous conflict that eventually ended the Athenian empire. 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are four main translations of Thucydides available for the English reader: Thomas Hobbes' 1628 version. Although made over 300 years ago this translation is still considered a classic by many in the English-speaking world. Hobbes is best known for writing "Leviathan" that classic work on Politics that all College students in the Western world for the past 200 years had to read. Do you like Shakespeare? If so give this edition a try. Hobbes vigorous and lively Jacobean English prose will enchant those more literary minded souls - however, Hobbes version has been noted for some inaccuracies due to his lack of proper understanding of the original Greek language text. William

Smith's 1754 translation. Most know of Crawley and Hobbes works but Smith's excellent 18th century version has been almost forgotten. I think you can only get it in a used edition on abebooks dot com. Smith's prose is as majestic as you expect for a 18th century translation. While a bit hard to read for most modern readers Smith's prose is worth the effort if you stick with him. Some things were not meant to be "dumbed down". I compare reading Smith's Thucydides to plowing through Whiston's translation of Josephus. The mid-Victorian (1874) Richard Crawley version is the one that most English speaking people were familiar with until the Penguin Books edition came out. This is a much easier version to understand than the Hobbes and Smith translations. While still retaining a very formal prose style it captures the Greek much more accurately than any previous version. This translation has the best balance between literary style and accuracy to the original text. This is the edition that many of our Grandparents and Great Grandparents read in school or College. Modern Library puts out a very affordable edition. Rex Warner's Penguin edition. This is the version offered here. Warner is excellent for those who want to avoid the archaic and more challenging prose of Hobbes, Smith, or Crawley. He is very clear and lucid in his rendition of the text. This edition is more suitable for modern readers who want an easy to read prose that maintains accuracy. I think that Warner's translation is the only serious rival to Richard Crawley's version. For those of you who are first embarking on your exploration of Thucydides I would recommend this edition.

"History of the Peloponnesian War" is, superficially, merely an account of a war that happened centuries ago, the Peloponnesian War, between Athenas and Sparta. Of course, you might think that the subject is trivial to you. After all, how important can a book like that be?. Well, if you were to think that, you would be enormously mistaken. To start with, this book is a milestone you need to be aware of. Thucydides, its author, is very possibly the first modern historian. He tried to explain the causes of the Peloponnesian War, without reducing its complexity by saying that the gods had motivated it. Thucydides doesn't follow the easy path; instead, he searches those causes in human nature, and in power. He doesn't weave tales, but tries to write History. It is rather astonishing how objective this Athenian was when he analyzed the war, and all that happened immediately before it. He examines methodically many events, paying special attention to facts. The author also gives his opinion from time to time, but he doesn't judge whether an action is good or evil: he merely shows that those that have power can use it as they see fit. Due to that, Thucydides is called by many the first realist theoretician. I was especially taken aback by how well he expresses his ideas regarding the fact that "power makes right" in the Melian debate. I don't agree with him, but I cannot deny that

he makes a powerful case, and that his point of view is shared nowadays by many noteworthy thinkers. It is important to point out that in "History of the Peloponnesian War" you will find a painstaking account of many things that actually happened, but also some speeches that weren't made by the actors, but could have been made by them. To explain that more clearly: Thucydides wrote some political dialogues and monologues that allow us to understand some aspects of the conflict (and many of his ideas) better. The introduction to this edition also highlights that the author sometimes made up some of the speeches (from the data he had), and was present when others were pronounced. My favorite speech is the one made by Pericles, in honor of the men who died during the war. In that discourse, he explains why those men fought and died to defend Athens, and what Athens meant not only for Athenians but also for Greece. This book isn't easy to read, but it is well-worth the effort. The translation is quite good, so that will make your task a little easier. If you don't feel like reading this book all at once, try to read it little by little. The results will be the same, but you won't feel dismayed by the need of finishing it immediately. Also, if you can, try to relate some of Thucydides' themes to our modern world. You will find that easier than you might think, and it will make you pay more attention to what you are reading. You are likely to be very surprised, for example, at how similar some of nowadays' justifications for taking advantage of power without paying attention to justice are to those that Thucydides already made a long time ago. On the whole, I highly recommend this book :) Belen Alcat

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