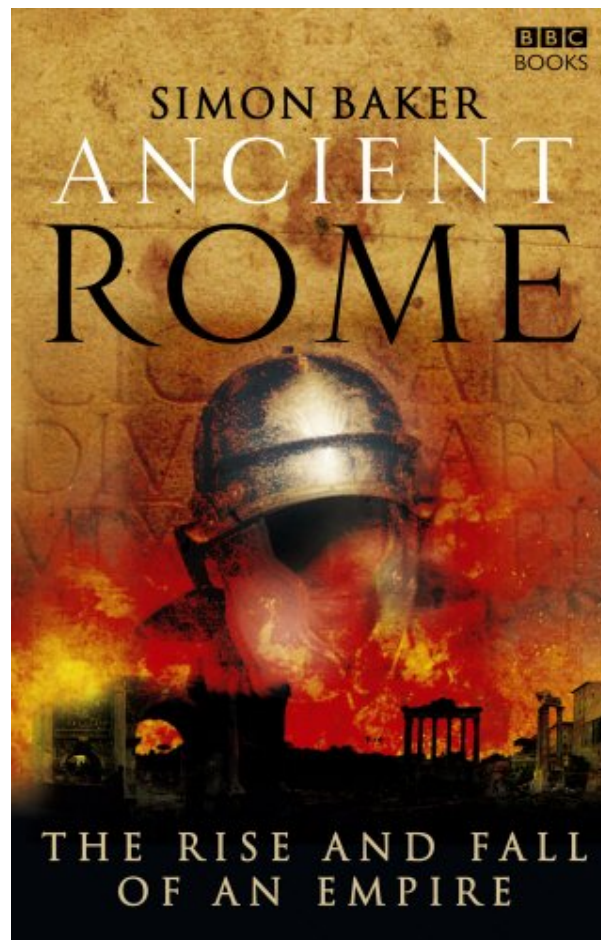
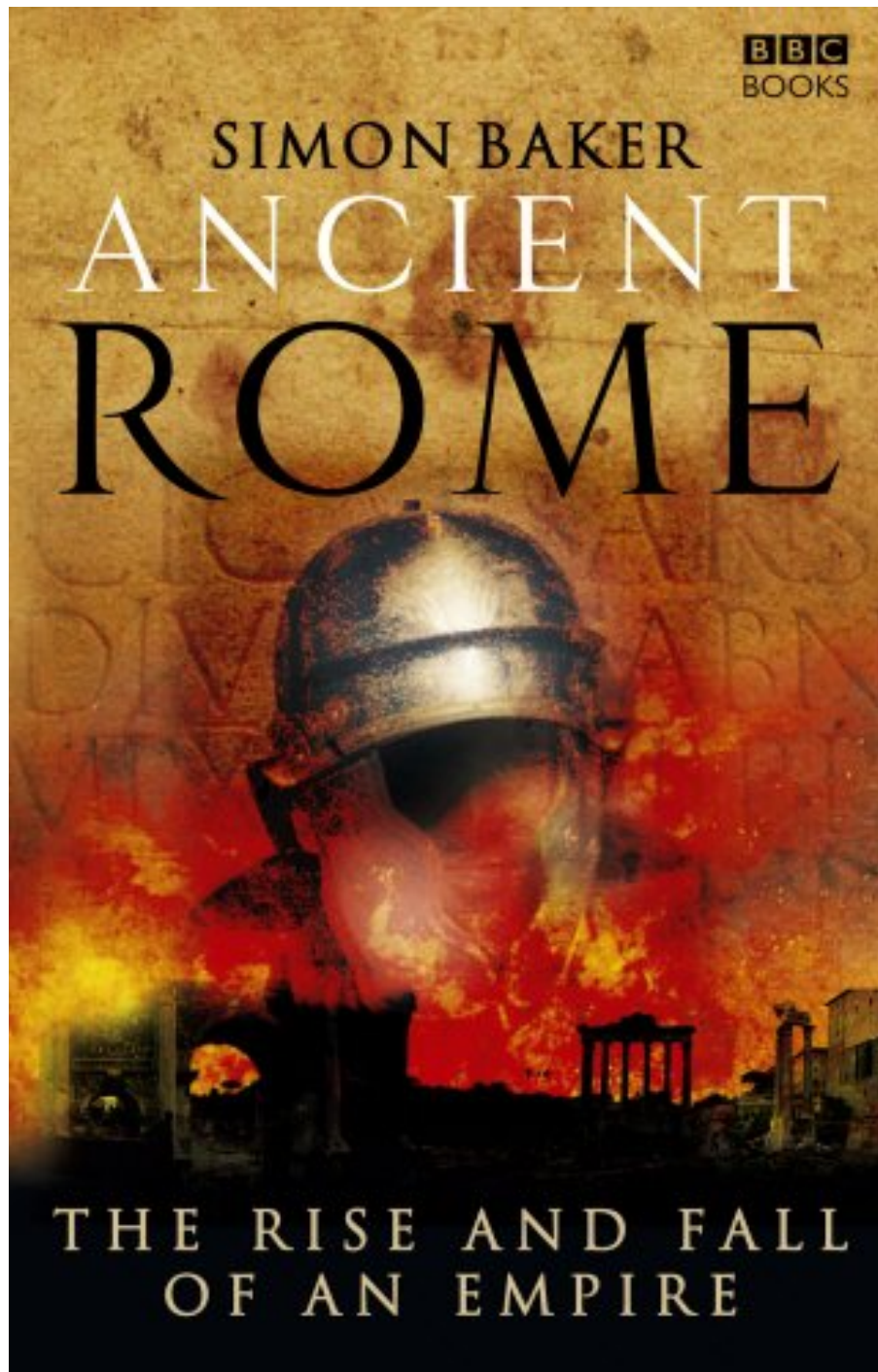


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"Effectively profiles several important figures from Rome's history . . . recommended for public libraries."

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About the Author

Simon Baker is a member of the BBC's award-winning History Unit where he has worked on a wide range of programs about the classical world. He was the development producer on the series Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of an Empire.

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Ancient Rome is the story of the greatest empire the world has ever known. Focusing on six turning points in Roman history, Simon Baker's absorbing narrative charts the rise and fall of a political machine unmatched in its brutality, genius, and lust for power. From the conquest of the Mediterranean in the 3rd century BC to the destruction of the empire at the hands of barbarian invaders 700 years later, we discover the pivotal episodes in Roman history. At the heart of this account are some of the most powerful rulers in history—men like Julius Caesar, Augustus, Nero, and Constantine. Putting flesh on the bones of these legendary figures, Baker looks beyond the dusty caricatures to explore their real motivations, ambitions, intrigues, and rivalries. The superb narrative, full of energy and imagination, is a brilliant distillation of the latest scholarship and a wonderfully evocative account of ancient Rome.

- Sales Rank: #36793 in Books
- Brand: Brand: BBC Books
- Published on: 2007-07-03
- Released on: 2007-07-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.30" w x 5.00" l, .71 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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133 of 134 people found the following review helpful.

Snapshots of Roman History

By Anibal Madeira

This book is the companion to the extremely interesting BBC docudrama series "Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of an Empire". The chapters are the same as the series episodes (although in a more logical chronological order), providing background and detail to the events. Reading the book and watching the

show, gives the layman a decent knowledge on the event or character and the following repercussions.

Obviously this work has limitations, but contrary to the usual works designed for the general public, Professor Simon Baker from Oxford gives us an unbiased and very accurate depiction of the events.

This work includes 16 pages of color photographs and a good bibliography providing ancient and modern sources for each separate chapters.

After a great introduction by Mary Beard (consultant to the BBC series, a renowned academic and the author of one of the greatest books on Roman History "Pompeii"), Professor Baker gives us a short introduction on the beginnings of Rome. Then the intrigue, adventure, treasons, great rulers and despicable autocrats of the roman world come to life in the following Chapters:

- I - Revolution (the affluence of wealth to Rome from the domination of the mediterranean area generated bigger social differences and conflicts; the rise of Tiberius Grachus and his death)
- II - Caesar (the death of the Republic) and August
- III - Nero (from promising ruler under Seneca and Burro, to an irresponsible and irreverent autocrat)
- IV - Rebellion (the Judean war and the rise of Vespasian) and Hadrian
- V - Constantine (a new paradigm)
- VI - The fall of Rome (and its dependence on external forces for protection)

The chapters focus not only on the events in themselves, but also on the background that led to them, the main characters and also what happened after the dust settled.

Obviously there are many important periods and personalities in roman history that aren't detailed in this work, but to introduce someone to this civilization that decisively influenced western culture, this book is perfect.

Highly recommended (both the book and the series).

75 of 77 people found the following review helpful.

Wonderful Overview, and interesting read...

By StringAndStompboxes

I am a post-graduate student who is writing his thesis on Marcus Aurelius (He was one of the so called 5 Good Emperors). Anyway needless to say I have studied the Roman Empire extensively. I read this book, because it was recommended to me by a fellow student. I was not going to read it, as it is a broad overview of a civilization that can hardly be expected to adequately fit into roughly 400 pages. To me it seemed a survey book for those wishing to get a general grasp of the time period, however curiosity got the better of me and I decided to read the book to see this authors take on the subject. Being a survey book I could see no other reason to read it. I was pleasantly suprised. I found the book to read like a novel. Overall the author nails the mood of the time period and inserts the facts needed for an introduction to what Ancient Rome was, where it came from, how it evolved, and the seeds of its undoing. I also enjoyed the period pieces that the author chose to write about, because to fit every major event in Rome's history into 400 pages would be impossible! Overall I found this book to be an excellent starting point for anyone wishing to learn about Ancient Rome, its culture, politics, military, and what Rome's accomplishments have meant to western civilization.

30 of 30 people found the following review helpful.

uneven

By Caraculiambro

I quite enjoyed this. I found it readable and instructive. One thing I've always done in the past when I wanted

to read an account of Roman history is I've always chosen books that were too scholarly and got bogged down in niggling details such as the precise difference between various public offices or laws. This book doesn't make that mistake: it's readable and never boring.

My only complaint would be that since this book was sort of rushed to press (I'm guessing) to coincide with the 6-part (?) BBC series of the same name, the author gives short shrift to stuff that's not actually part of the BBC series, even though it's important for Roman history. Dozens of pages about Nero but only a single paragraph about Caligula, for example -- even though Caligula is arguably more important in the history of the empire since it was during his reign that an omnipotent head of state really went off the rails for the first time.

Also very little on Sulla, for the same reason: the video version gives that period short shrift so this book does too.

I could think of many examples of this.

See all 195 customer reviews...

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