Alexander the Great: A Very Short Introduction

Hugh Bowden

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Alexander the Great: A Very Short Introduction demonstrates the profound influence the legends of Alexander's life have had on our historical understanding of him by focusing on the evidence from his own time. Aged just 20, Alexander the Great became king of Macedon in 336 bc; he died aged 32. During his reign, he conquered the Achaemenid Persian Empire, the largest empire that had ever existed, leading his army from Greece to Pakistan, and from the Libyan desert to the steppes of Central Asia. He had a profound effect on the world he moved through and his achievements became legendary both in his lifetime and in the centuries that followed.

Ancient Greece: A Very Short Introduction

Paul Cartledge

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Ancient Greece: A Very Short Introduction takes the polis as its starting point and uses the history of eleven major Greek cities to illuminate the most important and informative themes in Ancient Greek history, from the first documented use of the Greek language in around 1400 bce, through the glories of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, to the foundation of the Byzantine empire in around ce 330. Ancient Greek civilization was defined by the city, the polis, from which we derive ‘politics’. It is above all this feature of Greek civilization that has formed its most enduring legacy, spawning such key terms as aristocracy, oligarchy, tyranny, and — last but by no means least — democracy.

Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction

Jonathan Barnes

Print Publication Year: 2000 Published Online: Nov 2015 Publisher: Oxford University Press
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Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction argues that Aristotle’s influence on the intellectual history of the West is second to none. His various doctrines and beliefs were purveyed as received truths, and his ideas, or their reflections, influenced philosophers and scientists, historians and theologians, poets and playwrights. The structure as well as the content of Aristotle’s thought was influential — even those determined to reject Aristotelian views found themselves doing so in Aristotelian language. This VSI examines Aristotle’s scientific researches, his discoveries in logic and his metaphysical theories, his work in psychology, ethics and politics, and his ideas about art and poetry, placing his teachings in their historical context.

Classical Literature: A Very Short Introduction
William Allan

From popular histories through to reworkings of classical subject matter by contemporary poets, dramatists, and novelists, the classical world and the masterpieces of its literature continue to fascinate readers and audiences in a huge variety of media. Classical Literature: A Very Short Introduction explores what the ‘classics’ are and why they continue to shape our Western concepts of literature. It provides a concise, lucid, yet broad overview of classical literature. Presenting a range of material from both Greek and Latin literature, it illustrates the variety and sophistication of these works, and considers examples from all the major genres.

Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction
Helen Morales

Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction explores the rich history and diverse interpretations of classical myths and examines how classical myths are used and understood in both high art and popular culture. The influence of classical myths can be found in the temples of Crete, skyscrapers in New York, Arabic poetry, Hollywood films, psychoanalysis, the Bible, and New Age spiritualism. The myths of ancient Greece and Rome seem to exert a timeless power over us. But what do those myths represent, and why are they so enduringly fascinating? Why do they seem to be such a potent way of talking about ourselves, our origins, and our desires?

Classics: A Very Short Introduction
Mary Beard and John Henderson
We are all Classicists. We come into touch with the Classics daily: in our culture, politics, medicine, architecture, language, and literature. What are the true roots of these influences and how do our interpretations of these aspects of the Classics differ from their original reception? Classics: A Very Short Introduction begins with a visit to the British Museum to view the frieze that once decorated the Apollo Temple at Bassae. Through these sculptures, it prompts consideration of the significance of Classics as a means of discovery and enquiry, its value in terms of literature, philosophy, and culture, and its importance as a source of imagery.

The Etruscans: A Very Short Introduction
Christopher Smith

This book explores Etruscan history, culture, language, and customs and examines the controversial debates about their origins, placing them within the geographical, economic, and political context of the time. From around 900 to 400 bc, the Etruscans were the most innovative, powerful, wealthy, and creative people in Italy. Their settlements were powerful, and their influence extended into northern and southern Italy, including Rome. Their archaeological record is both substantial and fascinating, including tomb paintings, sculpture, jewellery, and art. However no literature of their own has survived, so we have to understand them entirely through the eyes of contemporary and later ancient writers. This account seeks to understand the way the Etruscans were perceived and described, and also to insist on the possibility of a diachronic historical understanding of their civilization. The volume ends with an account of the influence of the Etruscans from the middle ages on, showing how the distinct discipline of Etruscology has grown up, and what may be its future.

The Hellenistic Age: A Very Short Introduction
Peter Thonemann

Drawing on inscriptions, papyri, coinage, poetry, art, and archaeology, The Hellenistic Age: A Very Short Introduction opens up the history and culture of the vast Hellenistic world, from the death of Alexander the Great (323 bc) to the Roman conquest of the Ptolemaic kingdom (30 bc). It navigates the power struggles and wars in the three centuries that followed the conquests of Alexander. In this age of cultural globalization, a single language carried you from the Rhône to the Indus. Narrative close-ups of individual cities, including
the Greek city-states with the earliest federal governments, and kings from Sicily to Tajikistan who struggled to meet the challenges of ruling multi-ethnic states, are provided.

Herodotus: A Very Short Introduction
Jennifer T. Roberts

Herodotus: A Very Short Introduction explores the recurring themes of Herodotus's work. Like Homer, he set out to memorialize great deeds in words; more narrowly, he determined to discover the causes of the wars between Greece and Persia and to explain them to his fellow Greeks. Herodotus brought his literary talents to bear on a vast, unruly mass of information gathered from many interviews throughout his travels. All aspects of his work are discussed, including his fascination with origins; his travels; his view of the world in relation to boundaries and their transgressions; and his interest in seeing the world and learning about non-Greek civilizations.

Homer: A Very Short Introduction
Barbara Graziosi

Homer’s mythological tales of war and homecoming, the Iliad and the Odyssey, are widely considered to be two of the most influential works in the history of world literature. Yet their author, ‘the greatest poet that ever lived’, is something of a mystery. Homer: A Very Short Introduction considers Homer’s famous works, their composition, and their impact on readers throughout the centuries. It also shows how scholars’ notes on ancient manuscripts still influence our interpretation of Homer’s work today. Homer’s poems have inspired artists, writers, philosophers, musicians, playwrights, and film-makers. Exploring the main literary, historical, cultural, and archaeological issues at the heart of Homer’s narratives, this VSI analyses the enduring appeal of Homer and his iconic works.

The Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction
Christopher Kelly

The Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction covers the history of the empire from Augustus (the first Emperor) to Marcus Aurelius, describing how the empire was formed, how it was run, its religions and its social structure. It examines how local cultures were ‘romanized’ and how people in faraway lands came to believe in the emperor as a god. This
VSI also examines how the Roman Empire has been considered and depicted in more recent times, from the writings of Edward Gibbon, to the differing attitudes of the Victorians and recent Hollywood blockbuster films.

The Roman Republic: A Very Short Introduction
David M. Gwynn

‘The Roman Republic’ describes the rise of the Roman Republic from its humble beginnings and explores its legacy in the modern world. How do the social and cultural aspects of the Republic resonate in modern-day literature and film? How do the literary and historical sources help us to better understand the Republic's dramatic rise and fall? Examining the political structure of the Republic and reflecting on the values and beliefs held by Romans of the time, it traces the legacy of the Republic through the Empire and the early Christian church to the Renaissance and the eighteenth-century revolutions in the USA and France.

The Trojan War: A Very Short Introduction
Eric H. Cline

The Trojan War: A Very Short Introduction investigates two major questions: did the Trojan War take place and, if so, where? This VSI suggests that, although a Trojan War (or wars) probably did take place, it was fought for economic and political reasons. This formed the nucleus for the story that was eventually recorded by Homer. In addition to Homer, this VSI examines other treatments of the story from classical times. It also surveys the archaeological attempts to document the Trojan War through excavations at Hissarlik, Turkey, especially the work of Heinrich Schliemann and his successors.