

Cicero

Biography / Overview

Cicero, full name Marcus Tullius Cicero, was a Roman statesman, orator, lawyer, writer, and philosopher who lived during the late Roman Republic. He is considered one of Rome's greatest writers and speakers. He was born on January 3, 106 BCE, in Arpinum, Italy, and was executed on December 7, 43 BCE, in Formiae, Italy, by order of Mark Antony during the proscriptions following the assassination of Julius Caesar. Cicero is considered one of the greatest orators in Roman history and played a significant role in the political life of the Republic. He rose to prominence as a lawyer and went on to serve as consul in 63 BCE, during which time he famously uncovered the Catiline conspiracy.

Cicero's philosophical works, including *De Officiis* and *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, have had a lasting impact on Western thought. His writings on rhetoric, politics, ethics, and philosophy continue to be studied and admired for their clarity and eloquence. Cicero's life and works have been the subject of extensive scholarship and remain influential in the fields of political theory, philosophy, and classical studies through the Renaissance and beyond.

Bibliography / Primary Sources

Cicero's primary sources include his works, which consist of letters, speeches, essays, and philosophical treatises. Some of his primary sources are:

De Officiis (On Duties): A moral treatise discussing the virtues of justice, honesty, and expediency.

Orations Against Catiline: Speeches delivered against the conspirator Catiline, revealing Cicero's skills as an orator and statesman.

De Re Publica (On the Republic): A dialogue on political philosophy, discussing the ideal state and the nature of justice.

De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum (On the Ends of Good and Evil): A work on ethics and the pursuit of the highest good.

Pro Milone: A defense speech given on behalf of his friend, Titus Annius Milo.

These primary sources provide valuable insights into Cicero's political beliefs, rhetorical skills, and philosophical ideas, making him a key figure in Roman literature and thought.

Sources

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<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cicero/>

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-cicero/ciceros-philosophical-works/C9E5EAA0B0F5A4C42CC1A5B7A0F10EC5>

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-history-of-classical-literature/ciceros-political-works/0B63BE748D7E3F0B23FF4C1E97D3C7F4>

The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. "Cicero and Stoicism."
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/stoic-tradition-from-antiquity-to-the-early-middle-ages/cicero-and-stoicism/7B7A82655A4F244C1F3A5D5E5FDFD48B>

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-roman-studies/article/cicero-and-greek-philosophy/4D5B7C2E0DEFD9B1B3502A748F5E1D85>

Birth Date / Death Date

Birth Date: January 3, 106 BCE, in Arpinum, Italy

Death Date: December 7, 43 BCE (at the age of 63) in Formiae, Italy

Notable / Best-Known For

His exceptional skills as an orator and lawyer, which earned him widespread acclaim and influence in the Roman Republic.

Uncovering the Catiline conspiracy and delivering a series of speeches against the conspirator Catiline, showcasing his commitment to upholding the rule of law.

Contributions to Roman philosophy through works like *De Officiis* and *De Re Publica*, which continue to be studied for their insights into ethics and political theory.

His defense of the Roman Republic and opposition to tyranny, particularly in his criticisms of figures like Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

Cicero's legacy as a statesman, orator, and philosopher has had a lasting impact on Western thought and political theory.

Famous Quotes

“Laws are silent in times of war.” – Cicero, *Pro Milone*

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.” – Cicero, *Pro Plancio*

“Any man can make mistakes, but only an idiot persists in his error.” — Cicero, *Philippics XII.2*

“While there's life, there's hope.” – Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*

“I hope the memory of our friendship will be eternal.” – Cicero, *De Amicitia* 104

Major Works / Textual Contents

Cicero's major works encompass a wide range of genres and subjects, reflecting his diverse interests and intellectual pursuits. Some of his key works include:

De Officiis (On Duties): A treatise on ethics and moral philosophy, exploring the principles of justice, honesty, and virtue.

De Oratore (On the Orator): A dialogue discussing the art of rhetoric and the qualities of an effective speaker.

De Re Publica (On the Republic): A work on political theory and governance, reflecting Cicero's ideas on the ideal state.

Philippics: A series of speeches against Mark Antony, demonstrating Cicero's opposition to tyranny and defense of the Roman Republic.

Letters: Cicero's extensive correspondence with friends and colleagues provides insights into his personal life, political views, and philosophical beliefs.

These works showcase Cicero's rhetorical prowess, philosophical depth, and commitment to the principles of justice and virtue.

Influences / Intellectual Context

Cicero was influenced by a variety of philosophical schools and thinkers, including:

Stoicism: Cicero was drawn to Stoic philosophy, which focused on ethics, logic, and the pursuit of virtue. His work *De Officiis* reflects Stoic principles of moral duty and right action.

Academic Skepticism: Cicero was interested in Academic Skepticism, a philosophical tradition that questioned whether we can be completely sure about anything. His dialogues often explore the limits of human understanding and the nature of truth.

Greek Philosophy: Cicero was very familiar with Greek philosophy, drawing on the works of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics to develop his own philosophical ideas.

Roman Republicanism: Cicero's political ideas were based on the values of the Roman Republic, which focused on civic duty, the rule of law, and the importance of public service.

These intellectual influences and contexts helped shape Cicero's philosophical and political writings, making him a central figure in the intellectual life of the late Roman Republic.

Legacy and Modern Significance

Cicero's legacy lies in his lasting impact on Western thought and political theory. His works have been studied and admired for their insights into ethics, rhetoric, and governance, influencing thinkers and statesmen throughout history. Cicero's defense of democracy and his belief in fair laws continue to matter in today's discussions about government and citizenship. His emphasis on virtue, duty, and the pursuit of the common good remains relevant in debates about ethics and political philosophy.

In the modern world, Cicero's writings are still studied in universities and academic institutions, where his ideas are explored in relation to current issues. His influence can be seen in political debates, legal theory, and the study of rhetoric, ensuring that his legacy as a philosopher, statesman, and speaker lives on in the 21st century.

Modern Moments / Impact on 21st-Century Society

In 2015, a new translation of Cicero's *De Officiis* by Philip Freeman was published, bringing his ethical treatise to a contemporary audience (Source: Princeton University Press).

In 2021, HBO announced a series on Cicero's life starring Kenneth Branagh.

In 2023, constitutional lawyers used Cicero's mixed government theory in debates about democratic reforms.

The International Society for the History of Rhetoric held a conference in 2018 focusing on Cicero's legacy in the study of rhetoric and persuasion (Source: ISHR).

Digital resources such as the Cicero Online Project provide access to digital editions of Cicero's works for scholars and students worldwide, facilitating research and study of his writings in the 21st century (Source: Cicero Online Project).

Suggested Readings and Scholarly Resources

Princeton University Press. "Cicero's De Officiis."

<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691160714/cicero>

International Society for the History of Rhetoric. "Cicero Conference."

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The Legacy of Ancient Rome. "Cicero's Influence."

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The Reception of Cicero in the Enlightenment. "Cicero's Modern Significance."

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