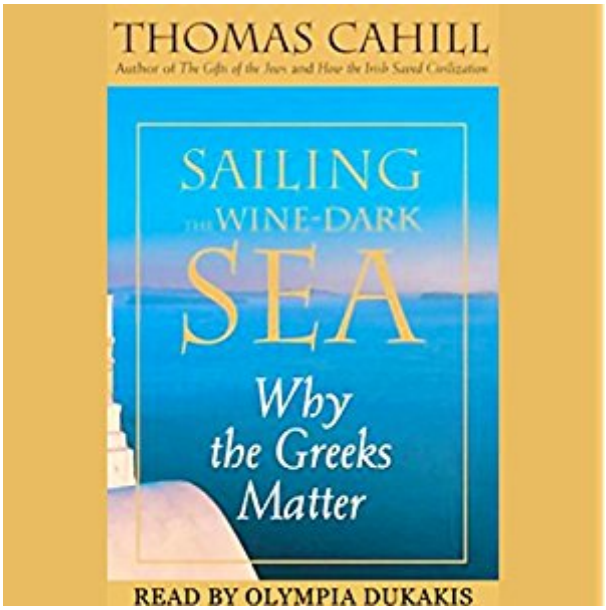
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Sailing The Wine-Dark Sea: Why The Greeks Matter



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Synopsis

In the fourth volume of the acclaimed Hinges of History series, Thomas Cahill brings his characteristic wit and style to a fascinating tour of ancient Greece. The Greeks invented everything from Western warfare to mystical prayer, from logic to statecraft. Many of their achievements, particularly in art and philosophy, are widely celebrated; other important innovations and accomplishments, however, are unknown or underappreciated. In Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea, Thomas Cahill explores the legacy, good and bad, of the ancient Greeks. From the origins of Greek culture in the migrations of armed Indo-European tribes into Attica and the Peloponnesian peninsula, to the formation of the city-states, to the birth of Western literature, poetry, drama, philosophy, art, and architecture, Cahill makes the distant past relevant to the present. Greek society is one of the two primeval influences on the Western world: While Jews gave us our value system, the Greeks set the foundation and framework for our intellectual lives. They are responsible for our vocabulary, our logic, and our entire system of categorization. They provided the intellectual tools we bring to bear on problems in philosophy, mathematics, medicine, physics, and the other sciences. Their modes of thinking, considered in classical times to be the pinnacle of human achievement, are largely responsible for the shape that the Christian religion took. But, as Cahill points out, the Greeks left a less appealing bequest as well. They created Western militarism and, in making the warrior the ultimate ideal, perpetrated the assumption that only males could be entrusted with the duties of citizenship. The consequences of their exclusion of women from the political sphere and the social segregation of the sexes continue to reverberate today. Full of surprising, often controversial, insights, Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea is a remarkable intellectual adventureÃ¢â ¬â •conducted by the most companionable guide imaginable. CahillÃ¢â ¬â„¢s knowledge of his sources is so intimate that he has made his own fresh translations of the Greek lyric poets for this volume. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the volumes in Cahill’s "hinges of history" series, about periods in Western history upon which our culture hinges. I read it along with the Iliad and the Odyssey, the plays of Euripedes, and a survey course about the Hittites and Myceneans. I think professional writers and teachers of Greek history might consider it a bit quick or facile, but as an accompaniment to the kind of non-professional immersion I have been doing, it is most useful. He brings in the relationship of the Myceneans and later Greeks to the influences surrounding the area, which were many and powerful. The Greeks and Athenian democracy did not occur in a vacuum.In the last chapter he makes some observations about our intellectual inheritance in modern forms which are certainly provocative and worth considering. I highly recommend this book and the rest in the series.

I really don’t care that this was a National Best seller. I found the level of writing in the book really oriented to a 5th grader. Additionally, the book felt very formulaic. I did not enjoy the casual language in a book that was supposed to be instructive on the significance of the Greek culture. I found the author’s approach definitely aimed toward tween and teenaged boys--lots of references to orgies and (my personal favorite) the use of the word "schlong." There have to be better written and more entertaining books on why Greek culture matters. Not worth the time to read or the money spent to purchase.

Awesome and very readable for the initiated and scholar as well as the average joe or Judy. Now I’ll read his other books in this series.

I started with "How the Irish Saved Civilization," loved it, and then went on to what I believe are the next two - Desire of the Everlasting Hills, and Gifts of the Jews. Each offered new spins on old topics that made each read fascinating.Not here. I guess Cahill likes poetry, because the Iliad and the Odyssey are the eyes through which he frames everything. And believe me, you’re going to be reading a lot of the Iliad and the Odyssey. In fact, much of the page count of this book is consumed by long, long verbatim pastes of both - pages-long pastes of both. And then characterizations of

both by other authors and poets, also pasted verbatim, consuming yet more page count.I guess the technique of copying and pasting huge chunks of another work into your own book could have been a plus had your own book said anything coherent, logical, or that followed some form of thematic narrative, like "we are like the Greeks because . . . " Or "the Greeks did this, did it well, and it survived to influence us."But good Lord, this book does nothing of the kind. Long stanzas of someone else's work, followed by gibberish supposedly making the grand point suggested by the title, but in the end sounding like Philosophy grad students taking "deeply" in a pub one night after a few drinks.This book is that bad. It is that incoherent. It is nonsense. Once I realized how bad it was, I read it anyway. It became entertainingly bad.

This book tells of the history of the Greeks, and it is impossible not to think of parallels to our own times. The Greeks indeed do "Matter", as the subtitle says, as they brought the world, and especially the West, philosophy, drama, and the first democracy ever attempted in history. It began over 2000 years ago and we learn of The Iliad and The Odyssey, and its meanings for us today. The author writes in a friendly style for the reader. He wants to reach more than only people who are especially interested in history. Perhaps your interest is politics, or the arts, the origins of Western drama, the many Greek Gods that had an assortment of human failings,or the coming of Christianity. What you will see, overall, are the Origins of Western Civilization.

"Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea" is the latest installment (2003) of Thomas Cahill's hinges of history series, which began with the delightful and insightful "How the Irish Saved Civilization." In this volume, Cahill conducts a brief if highly readable survey of classical Greek civilization to highlight its subsequent impact on the culture of the West. As Cahill lays it out, classical Greek civilization had an enormous influence on how the West approaches art, philosophy, drama, and government. The Greek willingness to think, discuss, experiment, and investigate was the basis for remarkable innovation in heroic sculpture, democratic self-government, a framework for natural and individual philosophy, and the dramatic and comedic schools of theater. Along the way, Cahill provides some insightful vignettes into the Greek psyche.Inevitably, a single volume treatment on such a complex subject as classical Greek civilization must simplify a great deal. Also perhaps inevitably, this volume lacks some of the almost intimate emotional empathy that drove "How the Irish Saved Civilization" and to a lesser extent, the "Desire of the Everlasting Hills." Finally, Cahill could not resist making a few sour remarks attempting to link the Global War on Terrorism to the Peloponnesian War that caused the downfall of the great city-state of Athens.This volume is

recommended to the reader already hooked on Cahill's hinges of history series, and those looking for a very readable survey on Greek civilization.

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