

Firstly, the book provides a clear historical overview of the occupation of Hadrian's Wall and the chronology and geography are easy to follow. The situation and functions of Hadrian's Wall are contextualised, with the authors pointing out that Hadrian's Wall was only part of the Roman frontier, with the frontier itself extending far beyond that. A map is provided in the introduction which is helpful for understanding the location of finds. This book emphasises that Hadrian's Wall was far more than just a

military frontier: it was a hub for military and civilian life, with its finds offering unrivalled insight into the social, religious, economic, military and civilian interactions between individuals during its 300 years of occupation. Indeed, the authors do not stop at the end of the Roman period, but instead consider subsequent occupations of Hadrian's Wall and the evidence from the period after the Romans were said to have left the island.

Secondly, the choice of objects sets this book apart. The artefacts discussed have been judiciously chosen, ranging from well-known and exquisite items to recent, rare and intriguing mystery finds. Even seemingly mundane objects are presented in such a way that they offer a personal and intimate window into the lives of those living on the Wall. Whilst the content is by nature from a military context, the authors have made great efforts to reflect the diversity of those living on the Wall as well as the communities and lives outside of the military settings. This is a really refreshing approach to what we know was a diverse period of occupation and is explored successfully through the themes chosen in the chapters. The objects are considered thematically in several dedicated chapters: communities and homes; dress and appearance; eating and drinking; security, business and pleasure; and finally, belief in life and death. Those which do not fall into a clear category find themselves in the penultimate chapter, titled 'Unknowns'. This collection of mystery objects was a welcome and thought-provoking addition to the themes already considered in the previous chapters, with the authors suggesting possible uses for weird and wonderful unidentified Romano-British objects, and inviting the reader to consider the contexts of production and purposes. The final chapter, entitled 'Last Days of the Roman Wall' provides an interesting exposition of the end of the occupation of Hadrian's Wall and considers the changes which inevitably took place over the three centuries of its occupation. The chapter extends its scope beyond what is considered the official end of Roman rule in Britain, acknowledging the uncertainty of events in the early 5th century and the archaeological evidence for occupation and activity at the site beyond this date. For example, the granaries at Birdoswald were converted and eventually replaced with structures which may have been feasting halls, well into the 5th century. The inclusion of details about Anglo-Saxon England allows the significance of Hadrian's Wall to be fully appreciated in its context and prompts the reader to consider what subsequent periods of occupation may have made of Hadrian's Wall.

Thirdly, the book is easy to navigate and there are usually colour illustrations or photographs on most double pages. In many

respects it is verging on a museum catalogue, or is reminiscent of a book accompanying a special exhibition. The focus is very much on what the artefacts, archaeology and objects can tell us, rather than making those items fit to the usual narrative. Where the conclusions are unclear, they are left open for future study rather than whittled out of the narrative altogether. *Living on the Edge of Empire* is far more than a collection of colour plates and commentary; this is a book which encourages scrutiny of source material and allows its readers to engage with the archaeological record themselves.

The fourth and final commendable aspect of this book which I would like to highlight is its usefulness for school teachers and those planning educational trips to Hadrian's Wall. The appendices contain a helpful index of museums and sites to visit (Appendix 1), such as Arbeia South Shields Roman Fort and the Tullie House Museum, as well as suggestions for further reading in Appendix 2. For each site or museum, Appendix 1 includes practical details such as the address, website, what can be found in each location, and whether or not there is an admission fee. This could save hours of research for those planning trips. Appendix 3 is also particularly useful for students or teachers wishing to find out more about the objects included in the book. Figure references are followed by the name of the object, the site at which it was discovered, the museum which holds that object, and the accession number. This is clearly a considered and carefully planned book, designed to be accessible for students and teachers, as well as those with an interest in Roman Britain. It is an enjoyable and easy read, with a few surprises along the way, and comes highly recommended.

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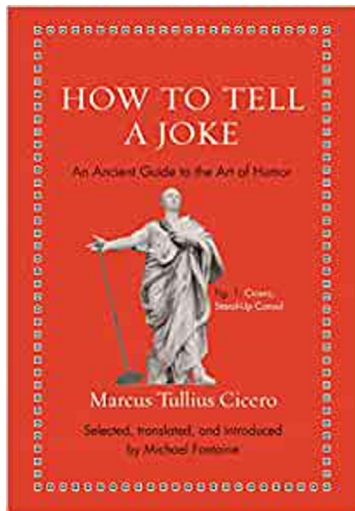
Marcus Tullius Cicero: *How to tell a joke. An ancient Guide to the Art of Humor*

Fontaine (M.) (ed., trans.) Pp. xxxiv + 292.
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How to Tell a Joke is the latest in the Princeton series 'Ancient Wisdom for Modern Readers'. In this new addition to the series, Professor Michael Fontaine starts with, what to the modern reader and avid watcher of stand-up comedy is a simple question. Can the art of humour be taught? Can a person be taught to be funny?



Professor Fontaine does not follow the route that a reader in books about humour would follow normally to answer this question; instead he lets two of the greatest specialists in oratory in Ancient Rome answer the question, namely Marcus Tullius Cicero, statesman, philosopher and one time Consul of the Roman Republic, and Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, better known as Quintilian, who held the chair of teaching Rhetoric at Rome some 150 years after the death of Cicero.

These two men answer the question of humour in a very different way from the mere point of making an audience laugh for the sake of comedy and entertainment. Their goal is the rhetorical and oratorical use of humour. *How to tell a Joke* is then not a recipe for comedy but for the strategic deployment of wit to disarm opponents in the political or the legal sphere. There is the famous legal saying that I have heard from all over the world: 'If your case is based on the facts, you hammer on the facts; if your case is based on the law, you hammer on the law, and if you have nothing then you must hammer on the table!'

Essentially then this book outlines how you hammer on that table - how to sway the audience and even the judge in your favour by using all the skills of rhetoric and oratory including humour when you have nothing in your favour. Fontaine masterfully introduces us to this by his wonderful translations of *De Oratore* and the *Institutio Oratoria*. His translations make the Latin very accessible to the modern reader who might not have any skill in translation at all. This modern translation also makes the language of Cicero and Quintilian come alive to the reader. Even if you don't particularly find the sayings funny or even passingly amusing, it gives you a glimpse of the Roman sense of humour, barbs, quips and the workings of extraordinary jurists in a court playing to a captive audience. Fontaine says so in his own words: 'Styles of translations vary. Some are literal, other go for the gist. This one goes for the jest ... I've wracked my brains to find equivalent words, names, puns, phrasings, and cultural counterparts to make the jokes as funny in English as they are in Latin.'

Fontaine shows how Cicero thought about humour and how he used it. After the long dialogue in *De Oratore*, Cicero hands down this remark '...those who want to master jokes for public speaking need to be imbued with a certain - almost innate - sense of humour'. It becomes clear to the modern reader that Cicero meant you must have some form of talent to make people laugh. Cicero in his own defence speeches did not follow the rules of using humour as oratory - it was not that Cicero did not know the rules of etiquette, but was rather oblivious towards them: he just frequently overstepped this mark earning him poorer praise than was expected; additionally some severely derogatory insults, wrapped up in his witticisms, could well have been a contributing factor to his murder. If we read this wonderful book and read some of the history of Cicero, we come across a man who was indeed a good lawyer, a good statesman, and even a great philosopher, but we also recognise that very modern trait in Cicero - that he says things at the wrong time. We would say, perhaps, Cicero had no filter!

Whereas, when Fontaine presents us with Quintilian, we immediately recognise the professorial image of the teacher of rhetoric. Although it is clear that Quintilian much admired the style and persona of Cicero, he does not quote him verbatim; instead, he expands on the ideas that Cicero puts forth. Another difference between the two naturally is that Cicero wrote in the form of a dialogue, while Quintilian writes to us in the essay form. Quintilian, just like Cicero, feeds jokes into his essay. What one might in the beginning have thought to be a very studious piece of work on oratory, Quintilian would sprinkle with humour. If you were a reader of this piece of work you might be tempted to just look for the jokes and forget the important lessons about oratory and rhetoric that Quintilian really wants to teach.

Fontaine does go out of his way to make the works of these two men very accessible but he also knows the important lessons that they need to convey about humour. Verily, yes, he does make the language modern, but it loses none of its punch in handling formidable Latin texts. What Fontaine has created here is a way for an ordinary reader to come in contact with an aspect of oratory and rhetoric and then to come away from it feeling smarter if not funnier!

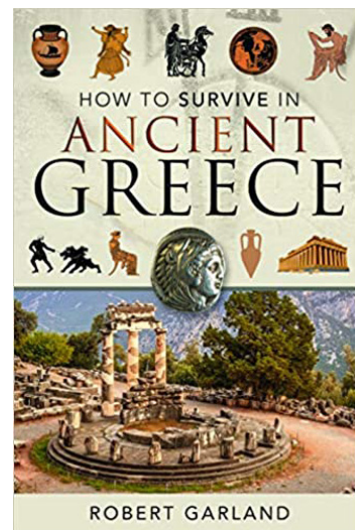
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How to Survive in Ancient Greece

Garland (R.) Pp. 153, Pen and Sword History, 2020. Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 1526754703

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As a certified teacher of Latin and Greek, for 22 years it saddened me that none of the schools at which I worked asked me to teach Greek. Until now! Currently I am teaching an 8th Grade Ancient Greek elective. Thus, *How to Survive in Ancient Greece* provided me with a timely and wryly humorous brush-up of Greek culture as well as the highlights of Ancient Greek history. The conversational tone of the author's voice draws the reader in and retains their attention, unlike the Greek History books of my own

high school days. If I was teaching a Classical Civilisation class or an Ancient History class rather than a CI-focused Greek language elective, I would absolutely use this book as a resource in no small part due to its accessibility and the author's way of approaching the less savoury aspects of Greek life. For example, Garland approaches the treatment of women and enslaved people factually, but