



It's All Greek to Me: From Homer to the Hippocratic Oath, How Ancient Greece Has Shaped Our World

By Charlotte Higgins

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“It's All Greek to Me is so readable, with a directness and clarity that's enormously engaging. . . . What an excellent book.” — Phillip Pullman

An informative, smart, and very amusing narrative about the enormous influence Greeks and Greek culture have had on the rest of the world, from art to architecture to literature to politics to love.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Touring the literature of ancient Greece, Higgins, formerly a Guardian journalist on the arts beat, revels in her mission to introduce Homer, among others. Wryly if candidly describing her treatment as a “bluffer’s guide,” Higgins offers a companionable start on the monumental significance of the Greek classics, so if one can’t tell Sappho from Sophocles, this is the place to start. Higgins begins, however, with *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and shuttles between them throughout the volume as she alights on the topics of the gods, mortality, morality, love, war, politics, science, and women—the gamut of inquiry about human nature undertaken by the authors whose names resound through the ages, from Hesiod to Thucydides to Plato. Focused especially on the fifth century BCE, Higgins highlights the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War as the milieu of intellectual ferment in the Hellenic world and, in colloquial language, strives to inspire her audience to experience the pleasures Higgins does when she reads the classics. Populist, enthusiastic, and informed, Higgins can fan an ember of interest into a flame. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

“Higgins delivers digestible précis and peppy plot summaries. . . . A love letter to ancient Greece.” (The Telegraph)

“A highly entertaining bluffer’s guide to Greek culture, philosophy, and politics.” (Sunday Times (London))

“With a marvellous display of knowledgeable enthusiasm and a keen talent for compression, (Higgins) shows just precisely why the Greeks matter.” (The Guardian)

“Higgins takes on classical Greek, covering politics, barbarians, love, epic and ethics, all done with panache and sly wit.” (Scotland on Sunday)

“Higgins’s sparky style makes her subject matter so palatable that . . . her readers may not feel the need to seek out the classics because she has distilled them all too well.” (Time Out London)

“In *It’s All Greek to Me*, Charlotte Higgins does a great job in conveying the heart of Greek culture to a general audience. Perfect for the stocking.” (Mary Beard, History Today)

“[It] is so readable, with a directness and clarity that’s enormously engaging. Every generation needs to rediscover the Greeks: and Charlotte Higgins has provided this one with a wonderful map of the territory and all kinds of help on the way. . . . What an excellent book.” (Phillip Pullman)

“A completely excellent guide to Greek poetry, drama, philosophy, history and culture. Philip Pullman has said that he would put it into every school and every teacher-training course and I’d echo that. . . . Highly entertaining as well as informative.” (A.N. Wilson, Evening Standard)

From the Back Cover

Why is ancient Greece important? Because, quite simply, if we want to understand the modern Western world, we need to look back to the Greeks. Consider the way we think about ethics, about the nature of beauty and truth, about our place in the universe, about our mortality. All this we have learned from the

ancient Greeks. They molded the basic disciplines and genres in which we still organize thought, from poetry to drama, from medicine to philosophy, from history to ethnography.

Packed with useful facts, including a timeline, a "mythology for dummies," a who's who, a guide to Homer's epics, and a handy map for those struggling to know their Lemnos from their Lesbos, *It's All Greek to Me* is an entertaining and insightful tour through the world of the ancient Greeks. Why are some laws Draconian? What is an Achilles' heel? Why were the Spartans spartan? Charlotte Higgins provides these answers and more, arming average readers with the knowledge they need to understand the Greeks and their tremendous contributions to our lives. This book aims to unlock the richness of a fascinating culture and place it where it should be—in the mainstream of life.

Users Review

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Laura Wilson:

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Kai Martin:

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