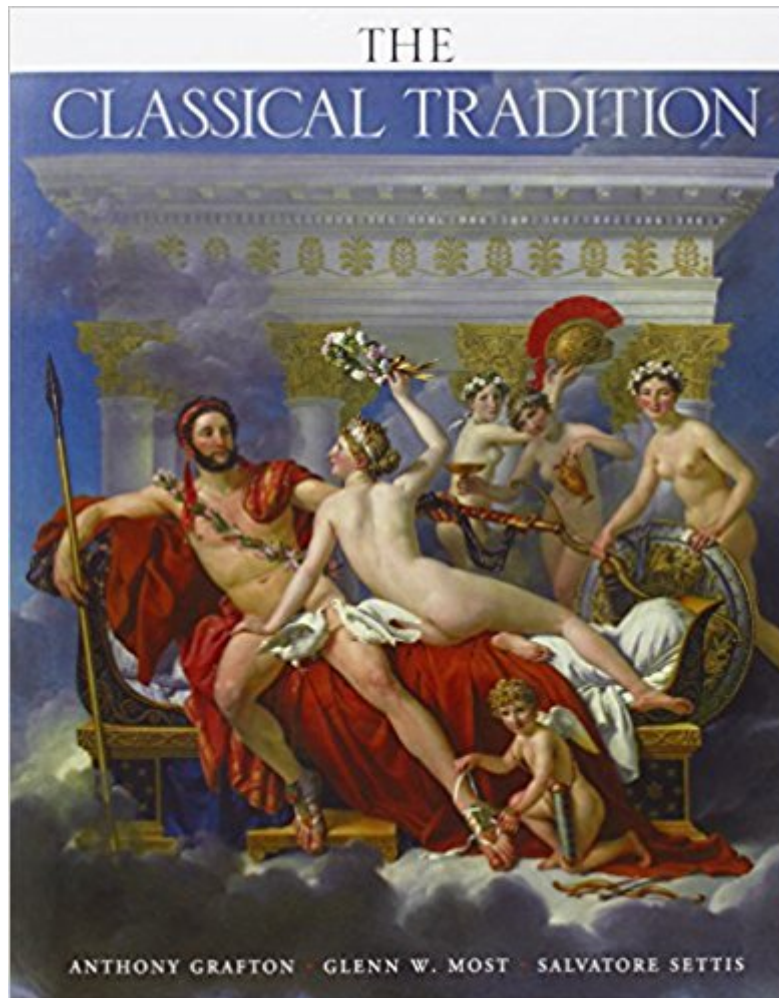




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# The Classical Tradition (Harvard University Press Reference Library)



## Synopsis

How do we get from the polis to the police? Or from Odysseus's sirens to an ambulance's? The legacy of ancient Greece and Rome has been imitated, resisted, misunderstood, and reworked by every culture that followed. In this volume, some five hundred articles by a wide range of scholars investigate the afterlife of this rich heritage in the fields of literature, philosophy, art, architecture, history, politics, religion, and science. Arranged alphabetically from Academy to Zoology, the essays are designed and written to serve scholars, students, and the general reader alike—they show how the Classical tradition has shaped human endeavors from art to government, mathematics to medicine, drama to urban planning, legal theory to popular culture. At once authoritative and accessible, learned and entertaining, comprehensive and surprising, and accompanied by an extensive selection of illustrations, this guide illuminates the vitality of the Classical tradition that still surrounds us today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Use of the adjective classical to modify, for example, architecture, dance, or education often denotes some form, style, type, or idea that is archetypal, foundational, ideal, or otherwise worthy of emulation, save by those who find the tradition limiting and wish to break out of the mold. Western cultures have often taken these classical forms from the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. Rather than simply defining some of these, this new reference work aims to provide a

reliable and wide-ranging guide to the reception of Graeco-Roman antiquity in all its dimensions in later cultures. Two examples illustrate this aim quite nicely. The entry for Portico begins with a definition of the Roman original and follows its use in architecture over the centuries. It also describes its lasting legacy as a street-side arcade that finds expression in the front porches of houses today. Gesture and dance describes how ballet grew out of Renaissance-era textual examinations of ancient dramatists and the subsequent desire to combine regulation of physical expression and an ideal vision of the body. These entries are joined by some 500 others, written by an international team of scholars and ranging in subject from Architecture to Zoology, Atlantis to Sparta, and Aeneas to Xenophon. The Classical Tradition demonstrates that vestiges of ancient Greece and Rome are to be found throughout Western societies and often where they might least be expected. The emphasis on the reception history of this rich heritage, showing how generations have glorified, vilified, misunderstood, and retooled this inheritance for their own purposes, makes it a unique resource and sets it apart from such reference standards as the Oxford Classical Dictionary (2003). Recommended for academic and large public libraries. --Christopher McConnell

--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Now here is a fabulous book--and a bargain to boot. Harvard has produced this gigantic volume, packed with color plates and essays by some of the greatest scholars alive, for the price of a couple of hardback thrillers. Better still, while The Classical Tradition may look like a work of reference, it's actually one of the best bedside books you could ask for. I know because I've been browsing around in it with immense pleasure...Certainly anyone even mildly interested in the Western cultural heritage will find The Classical Tradition a necessary purchase...[It] shows us how deeply the stories, iconic figures and ideas of antiquity succor our imaginations and still suffuse the world we live in. (Michael Dirda Washington Post 2010-10-14) Make no mistake, The Classical Tradition is exceedingly delightful...An esoteric tool for the scholar on the face of it, The Classical Tradition turns out to be a guide for living here, now, in the 21st century as we find it. (Morgan Meis The Smart Set 2010-11-05) A heady, hefty new single-volume reference...This is a browser's paradise...While Greece and Rome are no longer the foundation of education, classical scholarship has never been richer. (Steve Coates New York Times Book Review 2010-12-05) The Classical Tradition is a guidebook of great erudition that is notably well written and unexpectedly compelling. It definitely is not another of those solemn introductions to "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." Instead it is a lively compendium of the manifold ways in which the enduring creations of the classical tradition, and the Greek and Latin classics, have been imitated, adulated, denounced and

misunderstood--or understood all too well--over the past two millennia...Each article brings some unexpected insight or little known fact into the discussion, to illuminating effect...The scholarship is impeccable, but there is a donnish drollery in many of the articles...[A] marvelous guide. (Eric Ormsby Wall Street Journal 2010-11-22)Anthony Grafton's entry on Historiography is as elegant and learned as everything he does. So elegant and learned, in fact, that I wanted to read each and every essay he had written in The Classical Tradition...Being lost in this book can be invigorating. (Brendan Boyle New Criterion 2010-11-01)This absorbing and endlessly browsable compendium, edited by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis, explores the richness of our classical legacy through scores of essays, alphabetically arranged by subject, that illuminate our past, our present, and probably our future as well. (Barnes and Noble Review 2010-12-03)If, as some classicists say, our minds, bodies, government, law, medicine, arts, and fill-in-the-blank are unintelligible without an understanding of the Greco-Roman heritage, then do not waste another minute in ignorance and read this massive work, or at least selections of it, with urgency. A team of distinguished scholars--rivaling the number of warriors in the Battle of Thermopylae--dispenses knowledge and opinions on every imaginable topic under the Classical sun, connecting us to our ancient bloodline. (Christopher Benson First Things 2010-12-21)[The Classical Tradition's] catalogue of contributors is a who's who of classical scholarship and includes some of the best known scholars writing for an educated non-specialist public, such as Ingrid Rowland, Simon Goldhill, Mary Beard and Glen Bowersock...[The editors] have sourced not so much anodyne entries on set-piece subjects--the staple of any encyclopedia--as stories brightly told that move through time to relate, for example, the achievements of the Roman poet Horace as they were seen in the ancient world, followed by an assessment of his immediate influence on Latin poetry, and his considerable impact on subsequent poets from Petrarch to Joseph Brodsky, with a slight pause over the case of Byron, who loathed Horace after their encounters in school...The publication of this Harvard guide not so much to the classical past as to the uses we have made of it--its various metamorphoses--is in itself a cultural event. Consider it one among many markers of a contemporary re-attachment to the classical past. (Luke Slattery Australian Literary Review 2011-03-01)Eclectic rather than exhaustive, the compendium is less an encyclopedia than a buffet, in alphabetical order, of topics and glosses. There is, fortunately, no ideological consistency or purpose. The harvesting academics bring home a bumper crop to remind and instruct the reader of how the Classics are still central to the civilized intelligence; food for thought and primers of the imagination. (Frederic Raphael Literary Review 2011-03-01)Whether priced by the pound or the page, this hefty compendium is quite a bargain. Lead editor Grafton...is perhaps the perfect captain

for an ambitious work that attempts to capture, as the preface indicates, the "reception of Graeco-Roman antiquity in all its dimensions in later cultures."...More than 150 color images only add to the browsing pleasure. (B. Juhl Choice 2011-03-01) Entries of commendable clarity and range include those on Homer, on pastoral, on Catullus, and on the Argonauts. This is a valuable reference work, especially for those new to the classical world. (Victoria Moul Times Literary Supplement 2011-06-10) A stunningly wonderful compilation...Massive in length and unimpeachable in scholarship, it nonetheless manages to be endlessly absorbing, and often quietly entertaining into the bargain...I've pored over this book like a madman ever since setting hands on it and I've devoured enough to be certain that it's a masterpiece of concision, knowledge, judgment and dedication. It's clearly going to be a companion for life, and all the better for being well-nigh inexhaustible. (Bradley Winterton Taipei Times 2011-07-31) This magnificent compendium explicates the outsized influence Greek and Roman society, literature and myth has had on the medieval and modern European ages that followed, and in turn on the imperial culture exported around the world. The Greek gods and their attributes--from wise Athena and fierce Ares to bibulous Dionysus--are key elements in a worldview we still look back on, at once alien and familiar. A wonder of research and writing that connects both casual browser and scholar to centuries of learning. (Barnes and Noble Review 2012-01-02)

A thoroughly impressive book. It is more than a great reference book. It provides the historian and student of history with a clear guide of Roman and Greek antiquity that contributed to future cultures. Biographies, events, and terminologies are all in this indispensable book. Items in the book are listed alphabetically, making it user-friendly. I suggest using it as an introductory guide to whatever ancient texts you may be reading. For an example, reading Plutarch's Lives, I would find Plutarch, then, the listing covering the personality I was to read about. The book places events in perspective and in relation to other events occurring at the same time. If you are an historian, or just love history, this is definitely your book!

It's encyclopedic in feel and format, an A-to-Z compendium of topics (Astronomy, Collecting, Laocoon, Pederasty, Sports, Warfare). For each, a separate expert (and they pulled in dozens and dozens for this project), has written an encyclopedia-like entry on how that topic draws from or relates to the Classical world (Greece and Rome). Some lovely color plates, too. A hefty volume, something you can read from front to back (as I did) or just dipping in here and there.

This book has everything you need to completely understand books within which Western cultural references appear. Or if you have a deep love for the Classical World, you can find definitions, explanations, etc. for any reference within the entire tradition. Or anytime you have a few minutes, just open the book at any page and you will find interesting things to learn and enjoy. It's a must for any home library, and there may not be another one like this, or anywhere near this good.

Fills admirably the tremendous gap on the impact of classical events and personalities down to the present time. Was most recently useful to me while finishing up a talk on the American painter Benjamin West. Helpful articles, for example, on history painting, neo-classicism, Winckelmann, the Apollo Belvedere and on West too. Good and useful mentions also of West-contemporaries such as Cardinal Alessandro Albani, nephew of Martin XI, art dealer and the Curia's curator/ art authority. Grafton's great work is not only a detailed source, say, on the last generations, such as West's, to live and breathe Classical literature, history and art, but on the Renaissance humanists as well. I would take serious issue with one of the foregoing critics who complained that he could not find "Greece" in the index. I think he misses the point: "The Classical Tradition" is not about Greece, but about its impact. He should have persevered and read the entries under "Greek, Ancient; Greek, Modern; Greek Anthology; and Greek Revival." However, as one detractor justly complained, this is a heavy book. I wish it had been published in two volumes! FIVE STARS!!!

Very complex plot and characters, if you think the past has plot and characters. If you enjoy flipping through one volume encyclopedias, this one is a bargain. Fine group of editors and contributors.

This is a fascinating book. I love how the authors discuss not only the classical concepts, authors, literature, artifacts, etc. but also discuss how they have been incorporated into various cultures over time. They include references to great scholars who interpreted the classical tradition for their own times. The Oxford Dictionary of Classics is a fantastic resource if you want only the information about the classics themselves. If you want to know more about how the classics were used, transformed and reviewed over time, this is your book. If you are the kind of person who likes to read random articles in the encyclopedia or random pages in the dictionary, this is for you. We pick up the book and read a few articles at random, just for the fun of it. Always enlightening. If you are researching classical influences in a given period of history, let's say, the influences of the classical period on aesthetics over time, this is for you. The cover art is perfect, showing many aspects of the classical tradition - all in one painting. Well done.

This is a good motto for this book - 'make haste slowly'. It is so rich in information and so well written that you want to just barrel ahead, but there is so much to absorb and ponder that you don't want to go to fast. Why did they leave out Aesop? And Cincinnatus? The great thing is that you can add your own 'commentaries' as you go along. This book is a marvel.

book in its original shrink wrapped paper. a magnificent volume. recommend to all humanists, teachers of literature, art So glad I bought it, half original price

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