

The Twelve Caesars

By Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus

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From Julius Caesar to Domitian, this is a dispassionate and unbiased account of the turbulent history of Imperial Rome. Suetonius lived nearly thirty years of his life under the Caesars and much of his information comes from eyewitness accounts and contemporary archives. Here are Caligula's inauguration festivities - 'so splendid were the celebrations that 160,000 were publicly sacrificed during the next three months' - and his personal excesses - he committed incest with each of his three sisters in turn; the domestic life of Nero, who kicked his pregnant wife to death; and grisly Roman economies, such as feeding animals on the flesh of criminals to save the cost of butchers' meat. With the Roman emperors as his subjects, Suetonius was never short of scandalous anecdotes, but he took care to check his facts and what he recounts - improbable though it may often seem - is what happened. Translated by Robert Graves. Bound in full buckram. Wood engravings by Raymond Hawthorn.

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The Twelve Caesars By Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2022136 in Books
- Published on: 2005
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover

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