

Pliny the Younger: A Life in Roman Letters

Early Life and Education

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus was born in Novum Comum, Italy, in 61 or 62 AD. His father, Gaius Plinius Caecilius, was a wealthy landowner and served as governor of several provinces. His mother, Plinia, was a member of the distinguished gens Marcia.



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by James W. Robinson

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Pliny received a traditional Roman education, studying grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy. He studied under the renowned rhetorician Quintilian and the philosopher Euphrates. Pliny also traveled extensively, visiting Greece, Asia, and Africa.

Legal and Political Career

Pliny began his legal career in Rome in the early 80s AD. He quickly rose to prominence, becoming one of the most successful lawyers in the city.

Pliny also held several political offices, including tribune of the plebs, praetor, and consul.

In 109 AD, Pliny was appointed governor of Bithynia and Pontus, a province in northern Asia Minor. He served in this position for two years, during which time he reformed the provincial administration and improved the lives of the people.

Literary Career

Pliny is best known for his collection of letters, which were published in ten books after his death. The letters provide a valuable glimpse into the social, political, and literary life of the Roman Empire in the early 2nd century AD.

Pliny's letters are written in a clear and elegant style. They are full of wit, humor, and wisdom. Pliny writes about a wide range of topics, including politics, law, literature, and philosophy. He also describes his travels, his friendships, and his family life.

Personal Life

Pliny was married three times, but he had no children. His first wife, Calpurnia, died young. His second wife, Pomponia Graecina, was a wealthy widow who brought a large dowry to the marriage. Pliny's third wife, Calpurnia Hispulla, was the daughter of his friend and fellow lawyer, Suetonius.

Pliny was a close friend of the emperor Trajan. He corresponded with Trajan on a regular basis, and he often advised the emperor on matters of state. Pliny also had friendships with many other prominent Romans, including the historian Tacitus and the philosopher Plutarch.

Death and Legacy

Pliny died in 113 AD, at the age of 52. The cause of his death is unknown, but it is possible that he died from a volcanic eruption that devastated the region.

Pliny's letters are considered one of the most important works of Latin literature. They provide a unique and valuable glimpse into the Roman Empire in the early 2nd century AD. Pliny's letters are still read and studied today, and they continue to be a source of inspiration and wisdom.



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