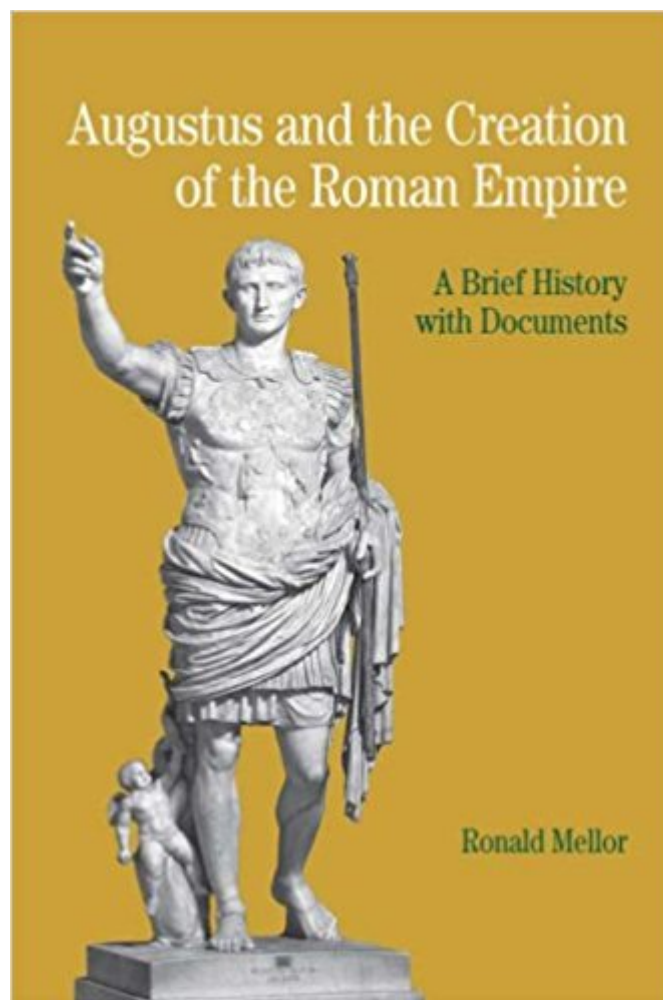




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# Augustus And The Creation Of The Roman Empire: A Brief History With Documents (Bedford Series In History & Culture)



## Synopsis

During his long reign of near-absolute power, Caesar Augustus established the Pax Romana, which gave Rome two hundred years of peace and social stability, and established an empire that would endure for five centuries and transform the history of Europe and the Mediterranean. Ronald Mellor offers a collection of primary sources featuring multiple viewpoints of the rise, achievements, and legacy of Augustus and his empire. His cogent introduction to the history of the Age of Augustus encourages students to examine such subjects as the military in war and peacetime, the social and cultural context of political change, the reform of administration, and the personality of the emperor himself. Document headnotes, a list of contemporary literary sources, a glossary of Greek and Latin terms, a chronology, questions for consideration, and a selected bibliography offer additional pedagogical support.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Mellor’s historical narrative is a masterpiece, a lucid page-turner that covers the most important aspects of Augustus and his principate. . . . Because it employs the actual words of participants and writers closer to the events and personalities reported, this book is an essential foundation for the study of the Augustan principate.” --Daniel H. Garrison, Northwestern University

RONALD MELLOR (Ph.D., Princeton University) is professor of ancient history at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he served as chair of the history department from 1992 to 1997.

Centering his research on ancient religion and Roman historiography, Professor Mellor has written seven books: *The Roman Historians* (1999); *Text and Tradition: Studies in Greek History and Historiography in Honor of Mortimer Chambers* (ed. 1999); *The Historians of Ancient Rome* (ed. 1997); *Tacitus: The Classical Heritage* (1995); *Tacitus* (1993); *From Augustus to Nero: The First Dynasty of Imperial Rome* (ed. 1990); and *Thea Rome: The Goddess Roma in the Greek World* (1975). Professor Mellor is the statewide Principal Investigator of the California History-Social Science Project, which brings university faculty together with K-12 teachers.

The purpose of this book is to detail the reign of Augustus by using original sources allowing students to form their own opinions. The target audience for this book is High School and beginner University students with minimal previous exposure to the Romans. This book demonstrates the value of original sources by including many primary source selections. The first third of the book contains a basic narrative of Augustus' rise to power and the actions that he took once he had it, while the second two-thirds consists of these original sources. By constructing the book in this way Dr. Mellor is able to provide a brief introduction to the time while still allowing students to form their own opinion through the use of the second section. The readers already understand the narrative before reading the sources so they can fit those documents where they belong instead of receiving them in isolation. The documents themselves are organized into sections that parallel his narrative. He mentions the documents from the second section in his narrative and in a way they are treated as extensive footnotes. When reading the narrative students can follow the references to find the document that support the author's conclusions. In this way students can not only learn how to interpret sources but see how they are used to back up statements. He also focuses strongly on Augustus' personality and the contradictions inherent in it in order to keep the work on a personal level which is more engaging to beginners than the mere facts of the reign. His choice of sources does cover quite a wide range. While he includes the typical narrative ones he also has sections on religion, the new elite, the army, the provinces, and the culture. Not all are given equal weight however. The section on the senatorial and equestrian elite is two pages long as is the one on the army. Social history is mostly ignored. Since the purpose of the book is to acquaint students with the original sources there is little mention of the secondary literature. What little there is consists of a section at the end of the narrative where he talks about how the attitudes towards Augustus changed from largely positive to negative in response to the rise of military dictators in the 1930s. Most of the sources used in this book come from many decades or even centuries after the time they are describing. The majority of his narrative comes from Cassius Dio (used 8 times) who wrote

over two centuries later. He uses even more Suetonius (used 14 times) to demonstrate isolated points. The feeling that they are using the words of contemporaries is somewhat deceptive in this sense. While they were still Roman authors they were writing about events long in their past. Perhaps the author was afraid to call the sources into question lest he confuse the readers but the impression left by his use of sources is that they are utterly reliable, if sometimes biased. He also went out of his way to avoid conflicting accounts of the same events. On the whole though his sources are from as close to the period as he can get them. He might not use them more than once or twice each but he does use enough of them that he gives students a broad range of contemporary documents to choose from. Cicero, Horace, Nicolaus of Damascus, Dionysius of Halicarnasus, Velleius Paterculus, Philo of Alexandria, Virgil, Ovid, Vitruvius, and Strabo are all sources that he uses at least once. Such a range of sources gives students a good idea of the varieties of opinions held in different parts of the Empire. Since he starts off with Augustus' view of his achievements and moves on to other people's opinions, readers will be able to temper Augustan propaganda with some less positive interpretations of his actions. Because of his focus on written sources he gives what is largely a senatorial view of history. While there are a few examples of inscriptions and a funeral oration the vast majority come from the wealthy and educated classes. Even the inscriptions deal with a senator and an administrator. This gives the students a view of Rome that is largely the way the Romans presented it. This makes sense given the purpose of the book but it removes the elements of source study and professional interpretation that are such an important part of history. This book offers the traditional view of the Augustan period. After the destruction of Carthage Rome began to be corrupted. The Senatorial order was a thin oligarchy ruling the country (badly) and a monarch was necessary to stabilize the country. Augustus was a true innovator and turned Rome from a city-state running an empire into a true Imperial power. This is essentially the same view given by Ronald Syme over 70 years ago in his seminal book *The Roman Revolution*. Its intent is not to create a new viewpoint but to explain the standard one to a new generation of students. Controversies tend to be avoided and played down leaving only the continual question of Augustus' personality and motivation. As a scholarly text this work is of limited value but as a beginner's introduction to the period it is invaluable.

Received this book in good condition. Some creases on the cover. Also the print is off... a lot of page numbers are cut off.. words are slanted. But it's readable. The words start to even out on the 6th chapter. Not sure if all are like this, or if I just got the lucky draw.

book came in fine condition

Great choice for a college student. Saved tons of money and in perfect condition. I would highly recommend this route over a local book store.

Well written and educational. It is a great way to learn about Rome without all the boring textbook accounts.

This book was bought as a college book. I bought it used. It was in very good shape. We have been very pleased.

Nice intro into Rome's glory years.

This book is an excellent resource for teachers and students studying the collapse of the Republic and formation of the empire. It offers a concise but clear account of the factors that caused Republican systems to fail and allowed Augustus to come to power, and an eloquent account of the consequences of this, as part of the introduction. Its real strength is in the wide range of sources it offers, with clear descriptions in the introduction of each source on their strengths and weaknesses/bias, plus useful explanatory notes. It is directed at students from their last year at high school through to about second or third year university students, although I could see post-grad students purchasing it as an easy reference book for primary evidence on such a key period in Rome's history. Short but immensely useful, offering FIFTY NINE separate primary source extracts. Well done to Ronald Mellor!

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