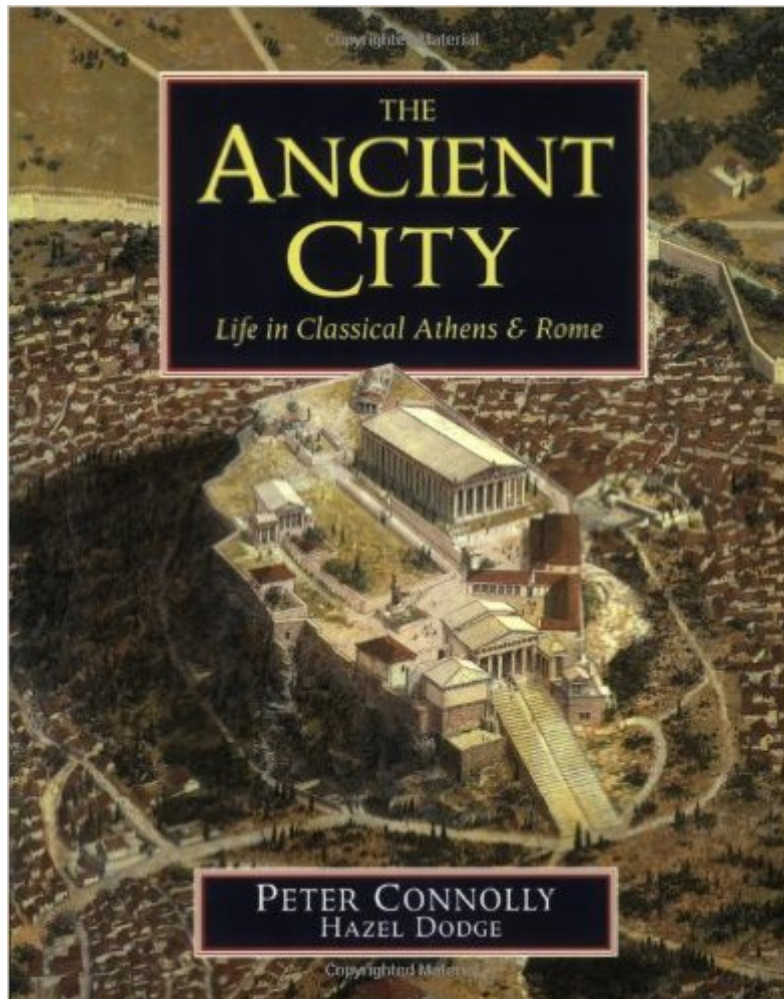


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The Ancient City: Life In Classical Athens And Rome



Synopsis

In this superbly illustrated volume, Athens and Rome, the two greatest cities of antiquity, spring to life under the masterful pen of Peter Connolly. All the historical and archaeological evidence has been seamlessly pieced together to reconstruct the architectural wonders of these mighty civilizations. Re-creating public buildings, religious temples, shops, and houses, Connolly reveals every aspect of life in glorious detail, from religion and food to drama, games, and the baths. In addition to the great monuments and moments of classical Greece and Rome, readers learn about a typical day in the life of an Athenian and a Roman. They read about and see the houses people inhabited; attend 5 day festivals and go to the theater; fight great battles and witness the birth of Rome's navy; visit temples and spend a day at the chariot races. The spectacular artwork and vivid descriptions provide a window into the fascinating history of these two extraordinary cities and civilizations. The Ancient City is the crowning achievement of Peter Connolly's distinguished career.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The two great western cities of antiquity come to life in this book superbly illustrated by Connolly. Divided into two parts, the first deals with Athens in the hundred years following the Persian Wars, which began in the 4th Century BC. Chapters cover the city's early history, the city's defenses, the development of democracy, daily and work life, domestic and religious architecture, celebrations and sports, and the history of Athenian theatre. Connolly's colour plates are plentiful, colourful and detailed, and bring the concise and detailed text to life. The construction techniques of the

Parthenon, the Erechtheum and common houses are illustrated, and styles of wall painting are shown. Part II covers the development of Rome from the reign of Augustus (27 BC - 14 AD) to that of Septimius Severus (193 AD - 211 AD). The early site of Rome on the Tiber prior to the Empire is covered, with chapters illustrating the transformation of Rome under Augustus, Roman law and the civil service, the aqueducts and ports of Rome, housing for the different social strata of the city, daily life, commercial activity, religion and worship, chariot racing at the Circus Maximus, the theatre, gladiatorial games at the Colosseum, Domitian's great palace, and the heated baths. The illustrations of architecture and construction of the many buildings included here are helped by the specialist scholarship of Hazel Dodge. The most breathtaking views to me are the birds-eye views of the two cities, Athens in the 4th Century BC dominated by the Acropolis, and Rome during Severus' reign dominated by the Colosseum, each with a small keyed index showing the major sites of interest. This book appears to have been written for adults as well as children, and like his earlier title 'Greece and Rome at War', features but expands on his earlier children's titles. Connolly's scholarship is renowned, and I recommend it to all students of the classical world.

Ah, so that's what it looked like; so that's where it fits! Visitors (in mind or fact) to the Cradle of Democracy or The Eternal City can consult Connolly's stunning views to great advantage in developing an historical mind's eye for place, and understanding how settings reflect and shape events. Although the glossy book is a bit oversize for travelers, it's a fabulous companion to history books (or modern novels and mysteries set in the Classical World, like those of Renault, McCullough, Saylor, or Davis!). The outstanding feature is Connolly's illustrations, which include both sweeping and minutely detailed views of cityscapes, and detail, cut-away, and exploded views of structures, often showing their original decorative colors. Also included by way of both illustration and documentation are a number of topographic models that provide the natural settings; building plans; ancient paintings and figured vases; several charts; and many photographs and drawings of remnants and artifacts. With all these aids you can think yourself far into the city. A really surprising amount of basic knowledge and trivia is presented graphically and in concise sections of text. The details are an utterly fascinating introduction to life and belief in Greek and Roman cities, and delve well below the level of the well-known archons and emperors. This results in a great conjunction between history and archaeology. Organization is largely topical for each city, Athens and Rome: brief political history, then material underpinnings of work, water, and daily life, then religion, and entertainments. Throughout, the authors illustrate and discuss successive changes to the fabric of each city, which help to make sense of the tattered bits and pieces you see today. Although the

present state of ruins, especially Roman, is often shown in photographs, I missed maps or overlays showing where the standing bits fit. A true fault is that maps and plans lack scales and compass arrows for orientation.

I wanted a basic overview text on Greek and Roman civilizations. Luckily I stumbled upon this book by Connolly and Dodge. The book is terrific. The layout is excellent. The writing is succinct and the text moves along smoothly. I now have a basic knowledge of Greek and Roman eras. I got a lot more out of this book by also reading Edith Hamilton's *The Greek Way*. However, I must confess, this book is far more interesting and keeps one glued. A joy to read. Very highly recommended.

Overall this book is a real treasure. The recreations of the cities are stunning as are the larger maps. It is very well written and easily read in two evenings. There are a few things that could use some improvement. For example in the section on aqueducts. They mention that the Aqua Marcia cost more than 180 million sesterces, however the only other mention of money is in regard to class membership (one needed 1 million to qualify for the senate and 400,000 to qualify for the equestrian class). None of the other aqueducts or buildings are given a price, so this number is meaningless. A paragraph on money should have been included. In several chapters they discuss different theories such as the operation of awnings, but in others they write only one theory, for example the origins of Mithras. Now I realize this is not the thesis of this book, but better care could have been taken. Far more serious is the misinformation on Roman Government pertaining to dictators. They don't mention the office at all except on a graph where they claim only Sulla and Caesar were dictators. (In a modern sense this may be true, but that's not the point.) The office always existed to be filled only in times of need, such as war. There were several dictators before Sulla. I would like to have seen more on engineering and logistics, things you don't get out of other history books. That aside this book is a lot of fun.

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