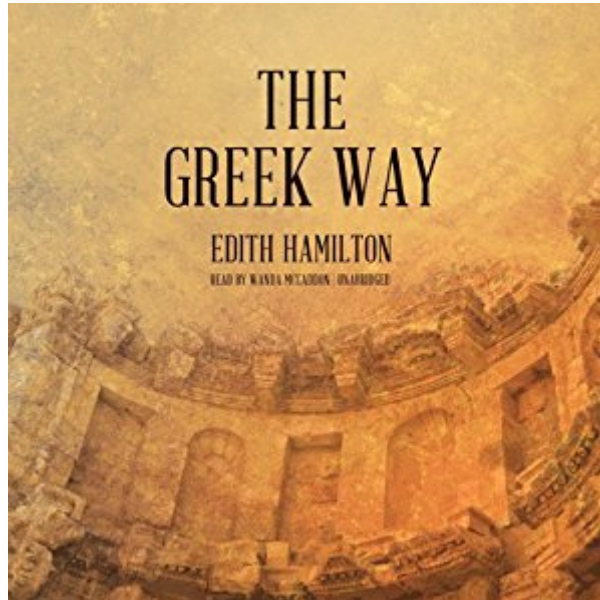




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# The Greek Way



## Synopsis

Edith Hamilton (1867–1963) buoyantly captures the spirit and achievements of the Greek civilization for our modern world. "Five hundred years before Christ in a little town on the far western border of the settled and civilized world, a strange new power was at work. . . . Athens had entered upon her brief and magnificent flowering of genius which so molded the world of mind and of spirit that our mind and spirit today are different. . . . What was then produced of art and of thought has never been surpassed and very rarely equalled, and the stamp of it is upon all the art and all the thought of the Western world." A perennial favorite in many different editions, Edith Hamilton's best-selling *The Greek Way* captures the spirit and achievements of Greece in the fifth century B.C. A retired headmistress when she began her writing career in the 1930s, Hamilton immediately demonstrated a remarkable ability to bring the world of ancient Greece to life, introducing that world to the twentieth century. The New York Times called *The Greek Way* a "book of both cultural and critical importance." --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Excellent book, scholarly and timeless, succinctly portrays the psychology and principles of the short lived Greek democratic republic. Little known unless a registered Kennedy administration researcher at the National Archives; John and Robert Kennedy used this book as a foundational guide in order to underpin their initiatives such as the civil rights movement. This book is referred to numerous times in discussion papers generated while they were in office. Robert Kennedy in particular loved this book and its author who passed away in 1963. Great read and reference.

I never studied Latin formally and my orientation to the Roman classics comes down to a 101 World Lit survey course in college that galloped through the antiquities faster than you can say "Virgil." It was time to fill in some gaps and I was pleased to see that Edith Hamilton, whose books were the wallpaper of school units on mythology in my baby boomer public schooling, had also written this book. I'd forgotten what a bright, unmannered voice she brings to the table, how lucidly she orders her information and how she can make it matter. For Hamilton, the Romans moved into the center of western culture, usurping the Greeks' place, from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd AD. In *The Roman Way* she looks at the exemplary writers and forms who have had a lasting impact on western culture, and she never wavers from the view that understanding the Romans is key to making sense of modern public and private life. Her purpose is to palpate the Romans themselves--their values and social systems--believing the best way to understand them is through their writing. She helpfully compares and contrasts Roman romanticism with Greek classicism throughout the book. Obviously, in an introductory text like this, not every writer can have his due; those to whom she pays the most attention are Plautus, Terence, Cicero, Horace, Catallus, Juvenal, Virgil and Seneca. Through them, she reveals the Caesars, the Claudii, the Stoics, the art, the bloody warfare, the greed, the corruption, gender relations, class structure, the political intrigues and paradoxes, and the empire's demise. Is this a complete concordance to the Roman canon? No. A comprehensive history? No. It's about getting a feel for who the Romans were and what mattered to them in their own words and why they continue to matter. It is a compelling overview made lively by Hamilton who does not look upon her topic as dead but rather quite vital.

Deep yet not dense, brief yet succinct, attractive and intelligent and not at all academic - a rare fluidity of writing that reveals a penetrating intelligence behind the pen, above all, a lovely way to enter the world of ancient Greece and discover why that era was unique and how it's achievements are especially relevant today. I have the book but also like to listen to the audible.com version that lets the mind wander as I listen. Her chapter on ancient tragedy defines just what tragedy means at the dawn of theater - Hamilton draws from modern sensibilities and literary criticism to offer a flowing description of just what tragedy is all about.

The book on Greek philosophy... a reference source... written in 1942 and is a standard... not a dry work... well thought out... one of the best books in my library.

I could not recommend this book more highly, especially to those who can appreciate classicists. I first read it in college at Nebraska Wesleyan and, as a devotee of the art form of Gilbert & Sullivan, I flipped when I discovered a huge section devoted to William S. Gilbert and Aristophanes as the two greatest satirists of all time. To this day, I point this up to all I can, hoping to encourage interest in Hamilton, Gilbert and Aristophanes. I have delivered two-person readings of the entire section (about 45 minutes in length) to various groups throughout New England. I am about to suggest that the same be done in a monthly meeting of the N.Y. G&S Society (why didn't I think of this earlier? I'm now 82!). But many of us in CT and MA have heard the reading of these delicious excerpts from the book. And the present generation is too busy with its computerized toys to even know what a classicist is! What a great holiday gift this would be for anyone in tune with high art. Robert Cumming

Here's kind of the overall, optimistic, idealized POV of the book, which I found interesting to read:[quote]For a hundred years Athens was a city where the great spiritual forces that war in men's minds flowed along together in peace; law and freedom, truth and religion, beauty and goodness, the objective and the subjective--there was a truce to their eternal warfare, and the result was the balance and clarity, the harmony and completeness, the word Greek has come to stand for. They saw both sides of the paradox of truth, giving predominance to neither, and in all Greek art there is an absence of struggle, a reconciling power, something of calm and serenity, the world has yet to see again.

A classical introductory book explores Greek art, philosophy, theatre, architecture, culture and language. Must read if you are interested in Greek history.

I always wanted to read this and finally did. Not intended to be "scholarship" but at the same time draws on her scholarship and then distills it to paint a picture of classical greek culture. She is trying to capture and convey an intangible across the barriers of centuries and cultures and language. She does a good as job as possible to show rather than simply describe - here the limits of translation surely remain the most formidable barrier. Nonetheless, I feel like I came away with a much greater understanding.

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