



A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles

Philip A. Stadter

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Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* is one of the outstanding works of ancient biography. Called by some a coward and others a boor, Pericles was a genius as a statesman. He ruled Athens like a monarch between 441 and 430 B.C., a period of great political and intellectual achievement. In the first comprehensive commentary in this century on Plutarch's text, Philip Stadter explores both the literary and historical aspects of this extraordinary work, which is included here in Greek in its entirety.

In an extensive introduction, Stadter considers the broad questions of the biography's structure, its place and importance within Plutarch's body of literary works, and its relation to its companion piece, the *Fabius Maximus*. He discussed Plutarch's historical method and argues that the biographer's innovative and thorough use of sources, especially contemporary histories, make *Pericles* particularly valuable to modern scholars.

Examining the literary devices that shape and organize the work, Stadter analyzes the Greek text line by line. A detailed study of word usage and meaning complements grammatical and lexicographical notes that make the peculiarities of Plutarch's Greek accessible to readers unfamiliar with the original text.

This evaluation of Plutarch's biographical technique is exceptional in its combination of archaeological, epigraphical, and historical analysis. *Pericles* emerges from the discussion as a masterpiece of later Greek prose and biography. Stadter's thorough and insightful analysis secures the importance of this text as both a work of literature and a vivid depiction of the society, culture, and politics of fifth-century Athens.

Originally published in 1989.

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