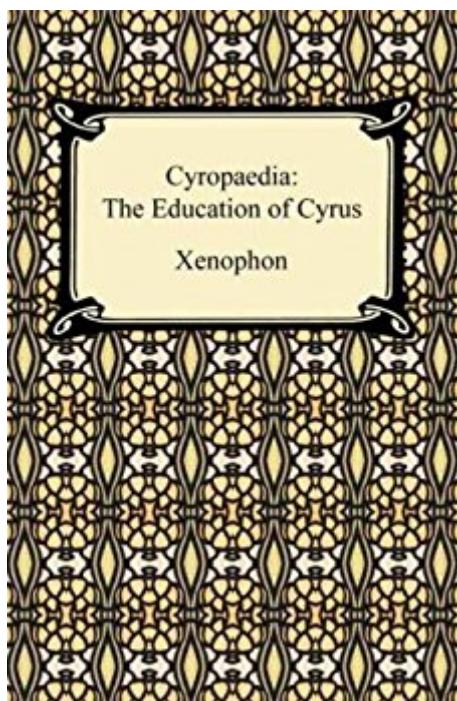


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Cyropaedia: The Education Of Cyrus



Synopsis

Written in the early fourth century BCE by a gentleman and soldier from Athens, "Cyropaedia" is an account of Cyrus the Great that escapes a simple genre placement. It is a sort of historical, political, biographical, fictional romance, encapsulating the sweeping type of narrative characteristic of Xenophon's works. The overall portrait of Cyrus is artistic, offering glimpses of this huge figure's character. Organized into eight books, the entire life of Cyrus the Great is told, from his descent and education to his stay in the Median court, and eventually his own kingship and monarchical views. Considered an important piece of literature by many historical figures, from Edmund Spenser to the Founding Fathers, "Cyropaedia" is an ancient text that contains a timeless relevance.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Not a great work of literature, but 5 stars for being really interesting and historically important. It isn't "the education of Cyrus"; it's a utopian novel about him. Xenophon was doing his own riff on Plato's Republic, by writing a fictional work about the ideal king. "Cyrus" here is modeled partly on the real Cyrus, partly on Agesilaus (king of Sparta in Xenophon's time), partly on Xenophon's ideas of the

ideal ruler. The book traces him from early childhood (toughened by being fed on dry bread and watercress), through his rise as a warrior, to his kingship and finally his death. Always he was Xenophon's ideal: moderate, thoroughly in control of himself and the situation, decisive, respectful of authority, respectful of people in general, and a real detail man when it came to military organization and later to ruling. This book is probably the world's first novel, certainly the first utopian one, and a superb statement of the old-fashioned conservative position. For Xenophon, as for old-time serious conservatives in my childhood, hierarchies are natural and necessary; one can and should rise by merit and competence; some people--those competent, dynamic ones--are born to rule, the rest are born to obey; the rulers have a huge responsibility to take care of everything and everyone, the ruled have a responsibility to do what their position affords them to do and to do it as well as possible. Not my philosophy, but there is a nobility to it utterly lacking in what passes for "conservatism" today (i.e., racist hate, religious bigotry, and above all crushing anyone weaker). One problem is the treatment of non-elite women; on p. 96 they are disposed of as chattels, like sheep--but on p.

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