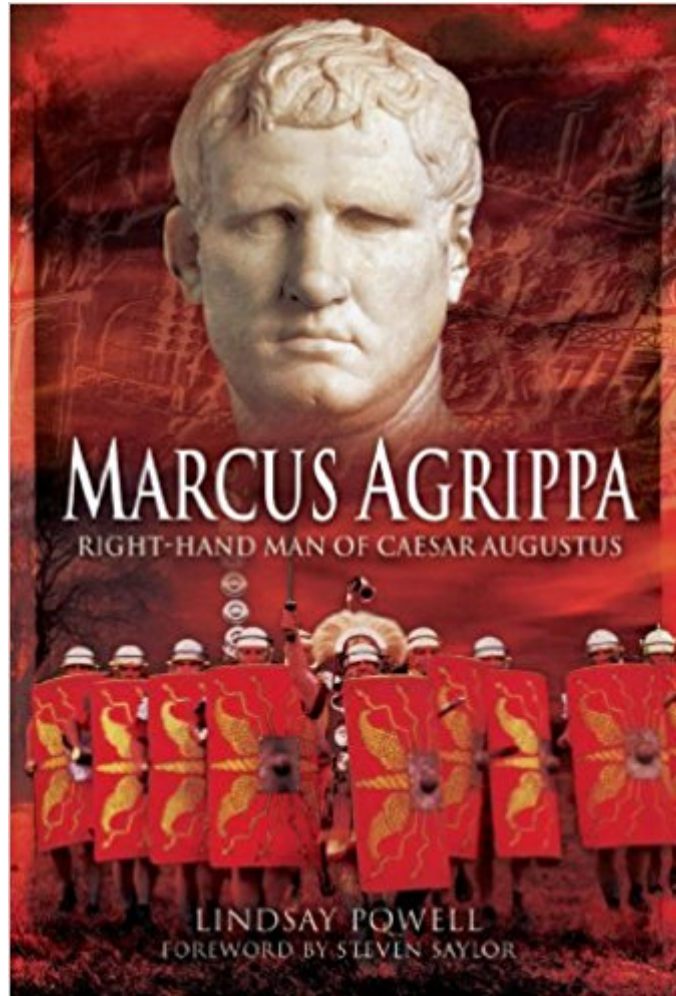


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Marcus Agrippa: Right-Hand Man Of Caesar Augustus



Synopsis

Marcus Agrippa personified the term 'right-hand man'. As Emperor Augustus' deputy, he waged wars, pacified provinces, beautified Rome, and played a crucial role in laying the foundations of the Pax Romana for the next two hundred years - but he served always in the knowledge he would never rule in his own name. Why he did so, and never grasped power exclusively for himself, has perplexed historians for centuries. In his teens he formed a lifelong friendship with Julius Caesar's great nephew, Caius Octavius, which would change world history. Following Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March 44 BC, Agrippa was instrumental in asserting his friend's rights as the dictator's heir. He established a reputation as a bold admiral, defeating Sextus Pompeius at Mylae and Naulochus (36 BC), culminating in the epoch-making Battle of Actium (31 BC), which eliminated Marcus Antonius and Queen Cleopatra as rivals. He proved his genius for military command on land by ending bloody rebellions in the Cimmerian Bosphorus, Gaul, Hispania and Illyricum. In Gaul Agrippa established the vital road network that helped turn Julius Caesar's conquests into viable provinces. As a diplomat, he befriended Herod the Great of Judaea and stabilized the East. As minister of works he overhauled Rome's drains and aqueducts, transformed public bathing in the city, created public parks with great artworks and built the original Pantheon. Agrippa became co-ruler of the Roman Empire with Augustus and married his daughter Julia. His three sons were adopted by his friend as potential heirs to the throne. Agrippa's unexpected death in 12 BC left Augustus bereft, but his bloodline lived on in the imperial family, through Agrippina the Elder to his grandson Caligula and great grandson Nero. **MARCUS AGRIPPA** is lucidly written by the author of the acclaimed biographies *Eager for Glory* and *Germanicus*. Illustrated with color plates, figures and high quality maps, Lindsay Powell presents a penetrating new assessment of the life and achievements of the multifaceted man who put service to friend and country before himself.

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Customer Reviews

This is a book I have been waiting to read for a long time. One reason was that there are few biographies written on this character, despite his importance. Among the two that I know of, one is in French, and it is over thirty years old (by JM Roddaz, 1984). The other is in English, by Meyer Reinhold, but it is even older (1933). Moreover, both are out of print and hard to get your hands upon unless you have access to a well-stocked University Library with perhaps a specialisation in Roman history to boot. A second reason for waiting and a reason why there are few biographies on this exceptional man is that not very much is known about him. At times, he deliberately refused some of the honours offered to him, and triumphs in particular, making him stand out as a rather non-typical Roman. He also seems to have been very discreet about his family background, to say the least, but also about many of the events in which he took part. As many other prominent Romans, he did write memoirs, but these are lost and nothing survives of them, not even through other sources. The point here is that it is difficult to write a biography of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, and this shows throughout most of the book written by Lindsay Powell. Instead of a real biography, it should rather be seen as a "life and times" of Agrippa, the "perfect" right-hand man of Octavius/Caesar without whom he would never have been known as Augustus Caesar, or even, at times, almost as a biography of Augustus. This can occasionally become problematic, with the book reading more like a history of Rome between 44 BC and 12 BC, the year of Agrippa's death. Another little issue that does not help reading this book is the text's presentation.

This is a book that I have anxiously hoped would be published for several years now. I first became aware of the character of Marcus Agrippa from the role in the HBO mini-series Rome. For personal hobby reasons and historical interest, I've been reading about ancient Rome for several years now. In regards to the book, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this piece and believe that the author did an excellent job in detailing this story with the limited information available. As many others have noted, the book seems short on actual facts in regards to Agrippa. In fact, much of the book seems to be about Augustus himself. Augustus was the leader of the Republic and consequently, his story

has survived in greater detail. Yet as pointed out in this book by Powell and other authors that have written about Augustus, few can imagine the regime prospering to the extent it did in the aftermath of so much civil war and strife that ended with Actium (31 BCE). The story of Agrippa must in many cases be read between the lines of the accomplishments of Augustus. Agrippa's abilities to resolve difficult problems such as overcoming Pompeian pirates, foreign adversaries in Iberia and Germania, and general - even seemingly mundane structural and administrative improvements for Rome's water supply and sewerage removal are all impressive. These feats seem all the more impressive in that the man accomplished so much, yet did so without need for constant glorification from the senate or population. His friendship to Augustus seems to have been the primary driver for such intrinsic motivation to succeed. Very different from the stereotypical Roman statesman throughout the centuries who lacked such personal restraint to constantly feed an enlarged ego based upon military conquest and civic improvement.

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