CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Histories

Tacitus · *c. 100–110 · W. Hamilton Fyfe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912; Project Gutenberg #16927)*

Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. So Tacitus turns from that long past to the year of the four emperors. The hosted text is W. Hamilton Fyfe's 1912 English. For grades 10–12. Quote the history, not only the introduction and notes.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What happens to truth, and to a state, in a year of civil war and four emperors, and how should a school read Fyfe's Tacitus as a moral history rather than as a mere catalogue of violence?

"Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. After the"

Book I, Preface

Tacitus, in W. Hamilton Fyfe's 1912 English, will begin with the second consulship of Servius Galba and Titus Vinius, A.D. 69. He first says that the long republican story has already been well told, and that after Actium truth suffered from flattery and from hatred. The Histories are a narrative of civil war, and of what power does to character. Teach them that way, for grades 10–12, with gravity. No spectacle of the deaths. Quote Fyfe's sentences, and be careful of the printed line-numbers that sit in the margin of some lines. This file is The Histories, not The Annals already mapped elsewhere.

KEY CHARACTERS

Tacitus
The historian, who first tells why truth became hard after Actium, and then narrates the year 69

Servius Galba, and Titus Vinius
The consul-pair with whom he proposes to begin

Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian
The other figures of the year of the four emperors; teach them as Tacitus writes them

The armies
On the Rhine, in the East, and in Italy; not a background only

A LONG PAST ALREADY TOLD, AND A YEAR THAT SPOILED TRUTH

> *"Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. After the"*
>
> Book I, Preface

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Fyfe, 1912

THE FILE AS A WHOLE

The title-pages in this file are Tacitus, The Histories, translated with introduction and notes by W. Hamilton Fyfe, Fellow of Merton College, two volumes, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912, PG #16927. Introductions and notes are present; quote the history.

- Keep the translator's name.
- For grades 10–12. Gravity.
- This is The Histories, not The Annals of Imperial Rome already in the library.
- Some lines carry a marginal number; do not copy those numbers into a quotation as if they were Tacitus's words.

> *"Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. After the"*
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> Book I, Preface

02

After the 820 Years

BOOK I, THE PREFACE

Tacitus will not retell the republic. After Actium, he says, truth suffered, partly from ignorance of a politics that was no longer a citizen's concern, partly from flattery or hatred of the ruling house. Between malice and servility the record was spoiled.

- The sentence about the 820 years is exact, and is free of the marginal '1' that sits in the previous sentence after "second." Quote this clean sentence.
- Teach the claim about truth as a civic warning.
- A.D. 69 is the year he proposes to begin.
- 10–12.

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> Book I, Preface

03

Galba, and a Year of Four Emperors

BOOK I

The narrative begins with Galba's second consulship, and with Titus Vinius his colleague. The year will not stay with Galba. Teach the sequence, and the characters, without making the civil war a spectacle.

- Gravity. No gore on the map.
- Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian belong to the year as Tacitus gives them.
- The armies on the Rhine and in the East are part of the story, not a background only.
- Finish the books this file actually holds.

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> Book I, Preface

04

Truth, Flattery, and Hatred

THE HISTORIAN'S WARNING

Tacitus names the two corruptions of history under an emperor: flattery, and hatred of the ruling house. A school should slow down there. The book is among other things a lesson in how a record is spoiled.

- This is why the preface is not skippable.
- Teach it as a warning about speech and power, not as a sneer at all empire.
- Quote Fyfe.
- 10–12.

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> Book I, Preface

05

This English, Not The Annals

THE EDITION

The Annals already have a map in this library, from a different file. Keep the two works distinct, and keep Fyfe's wording in this one.

- Clarendon Press, 1912.
- The 820-year sentence is the right first quotation (the preceding sentence is interrupted by a marginal number).
- Not a later popular retelling.
- Gravity throughout.

> *"Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth. After the"*
>
> Book I, Preface

Civil War | Truth Under Power | Flattery, and Hatred | Four Emperors | A Historian's Caution

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. This is W. Hamilton Fyfe's 1912 Oxford translation of Tacitus, The Histories, PG #16927, not The Annals already mapped in this library. For grades 10–12. Gravity. No spectacle of the deaths.
2. Quote the preface's clean sentence: "Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period beginning with the foundation of Rome, and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with no less ability than truth." The preceding sentence, about Galba's second consulship, is interrupted in this file by a marginal line-number; do not copy that number into a quotation.
3. After Actium, Tacitus says, truth suffered from flattery and from hatred. Teach that warning.
4. The year is A.D. 69, the year of the four emperors. Teach the sequence; finish the books this file holds.
5. Quote Fyfe, not another English silently substituted.

Quotations are verbatim from the W. Hamilton Fyfe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912; Project Gutenberg #16927), Project Gutenberg #16927, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/tacitus-the-histories/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.