



# Caligula

*Robert Graves*

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## Caligula Robert Graves

Published by Penguin for more than sixty years, the author and scholar Robert Graves wrote two of the greatest historical novels of the twentieth century: *I Claudius* and *Claudius the God*. Written as Claudius' autobiography, they follow his progress from a stammering figure of fun to the ruler of the Roman Empire. Here, in extracts from both books, he describes the glory and decadence of the mad Emperor Caligula's reign - an age of wild debauchery and whimsical cruelty.

## Caligula Details

Date : Published 2005 by Penguin Books

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Author : Robert Graves

Format : Paperback 58 pages

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# From Reader Review Caligula for online ebook

## Sam Quixote says

Caligula is an extract from two of Robert Graves' historical novels, I, Claudius and Claudius the God, focusing on the mad Roman emperor as told from the perspective of his uncle Claudius. It's one thing to read an historical account of Caligula by Suetonius, quite another to read a dramatized account by a skilled 20th century novelist.

The opening scene instantly grabs the reader. Claudius is summoned to Caligula's bed chamber in the middle of the night. Kneeling before him, Caligula languidly waves his sword around Claudius as if pondering whether he should kill his uncle, announcing casually that he's ascended to godhood. It's brilliantly written so that we immediately know two things: Caligula is menacing/dangerous, and he is totally bonkers.

From there it's a rich and compelling revitalisation of history as we see Caligula's debauched and vicious reign vividly brought to life through Claudius' fictional autobiography. Caligula is characterised as utterly unstable, his personality swaying from fearful, child-like vulnerability to cruel rages with always a veneer of sneering arrogance beneath the surface. He's a fascinating figure to read about because his insanity led to such unpredictable and strange actions.

He lashed together thousands of ships so he could ride his horse, Incitatus (whom he would later try to make a consul), across them, in a ridiculous display of his "godhood" – he can "ride across water" like a god! A storm would later destroy hundreds of ships meaning food imports were severely reduced leading to thousands starving. Later on he would call Claudius and some senators up to his palace in the middle of the night. Fearing they were going to be executed, they were astonished to find the emperor putting on a private show just for them, dressing up and singing!

Graves superbly builds up the tension until Caligula's tyrannical rule was no longer tenable. He was assassinated in a style similar to his ancestor, Julius Caesar, and Claudius is made emperor, against his will.

At roughly 50 pages, it's a short book and serves more as a taster for Graves' longer historical novels, but it is nevertheless an engrossing vision of one of the Roman Empire's most famous tyrants, well-written, informative and entertaining.

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## Ian McHugh says

A quick introduction to Graves' more substantial novels. Wonderfully written with great pace.

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## Arezu Wishka says

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### Babak Habibi says

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### Swati Daftuar says

Fifty odd pages of Head Spinning Crazy. This is a single longish auto ride worth of madstuff. I Liked it, a lot.

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### Zeynab Babaxani says

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### Glen says

Wonderful little book that gives interesting insights into the work of Robert Graves ...

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### Chris says

"In May 2005 Penguin will publish 70 unique titles to celebrate the company's 70th birthday. The titles in the Pocket Penguins series are emblematic of the renowned breadth and quality of the Penguin list and will hark back to Penguin founder Allen Lane's vision of 'good books for all'. Published by Penguin for more than sixty years, the author and scholar Robert Graves wrote two of the greatest historical novels of the twentieth century: I Claudius and Claudius the God."

This tiny book is simply an extract. If you've already read I Claudius and Claudius the God, you've read it all before. If you haven't, what are you waiting for?

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## Coenraad says

After recently reading about the exploits of characters such as Adolf Hitler and Reinhardt Heydrich, as well as the leaders of the first Crusade, this account (in the guise of historical fiction) of the last days of the Roman emperor Caligula leaves me slightly irritated: he spent huge amounts of money for frivolous entertainment, subjected thousands to bizarre emotional and physical violence and abuse, and declared himself a god. Was he really mad? He could have been, but given his power and loyal support by certain groups of guards, he seemed untouchable. Finally a group of people carried out a plot to kill him; they then convinced his uncle Claudius to replace him. Robert Graves describes all of this from the perspective of Claudius in an almost cool, almost unconnected tone. It is easily readable: the writing seems not to have aged since the original publication of the novels from which this text is excerpted during the 1930s.

Robert Graves se portret van die waansinnige Caligula tydens die laaste dae van sy heerskappy (hy is deur 'n groep opponente vermoor) word vaardig en vlot vertel vanuit die perspektief van sy oom en opvolger, Claudius.

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## Pam says

The distant past seems to be, well, very distant now. Sometimes it's hard to imagine stories like these aren't fairytales at all. That things actually happened.

Anyway, this is bloody gruesome. It certainly isn't one of those bedtime stories for the little ones. And I think Caligula got what he deserved.

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## Afkham says

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## Mary Arkless says

Told by Claudius, the book gives a view of personal experience with the mad Roman emperor Caligula.

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