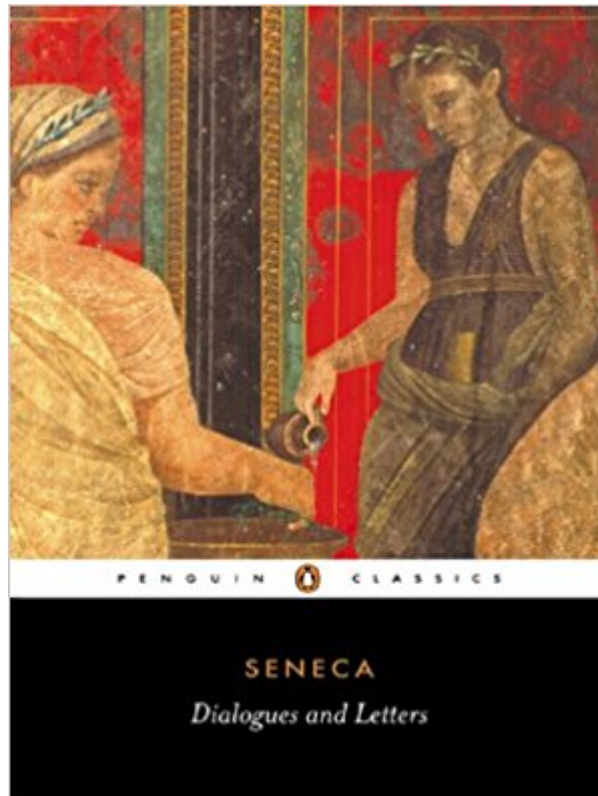




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Dialogues And Letters (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Included in this volume are the dialogues *On the Shortness of Life* and *On Tranquility of Mind*, which are eloquent classic statements of Stoic ideals of fortitude and self-reliance. This selection also features extracts from *Natural Questions*, Seneca's exploration of such phenomena as the cataracts of the Nile and earthquakes, and the *Consolation of Helvia*, in which he tenderly tries to soothe his mother's pain at their separation. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

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Lucius Annaeus Seneca, statesman, philosopher, advocate and man of letters, was born at Cordoba in Spain around 4 BC. He rose to prominence in Rome, pursuing a career in the courts and political life, for which he had been trained, while also acquiring celebrity as an author of tragedies and essays. Falling foul of successive emperors (Caligula in AD 39 and Claudius in AD 41), he

spent eight years in exile, allegedly for an affair with Caligula's sister. Recalled in AD 49, he was made praetor and was appointed tutor to the boy who was to become, in AD 54, the emperor Nero. On Nero's succession, Seneca acted for some eight years as an unofficial chief minister. The early part of this reign was remembered as a period of sound government, for which the main credit seems due to Seneca. His control over Nero declined as enemies turned the emperor against him with representations that his popularity made him a danger, or with accusations of immorality or excessive wealth. Retiring from public life he devoted his last three years to philosophy and writing, particularly the Letters to Lucilius. In AD 65 following the discovery of a plot against the emperor, in which he was thought to be implicated, he and many others were compelled by Nero to commit suicide. His fame as an essayist and dramatist lasted until two or three centuries ago, when he passed into literary oblivion, from which the twentieth century has seen a considerable recovery.

This is one of the most important books I've ever read and one of the very few I return to again and again in difficult times to reflect on its wisdom. Its surprisingly modern and reminds that although things change, much remains the same. Whether he's urging his readers to enjoy the moment or complaining about how much skin women 'these days' show, this is a fascinating and accessible read.

totally enjoyable read

The first book I ever read on philosophy - easy to understand and incredibly interesting. The more things change they more they stay the same.

If Seneca was not the greatest philosopher of the Silver Age, then he was the most reasonable and practical thinker Rome ever knew. For his natural, straight-forward system of applied ethics made philosophy a way of living for the whole of the Roman populace. Truly, it was not just the singular privilege of educated wealthy aristocrats and politicians to realize the Stoic ideal, but it was also within the power of uneducated slaves and lower-class-citizens to embody those virtues as well, as the example of Epictetus clearly shows. Now, here presented in this piecemeal selection of Seneca's works, one may first come to meet this exemplar of Stoicism face-to-face in every genre he ever wrote in, with the exception of his Tragedies and his only extant Satire entitled, The God Claudius. Furthermore, these short extractions from Seneca's relatively immense corpus of writings

are rich in allusion and anecdote, and they are packed with profoundly helpful advice on how to endure life's hardships and how to enjoy life's benefits to the fullest as well. This little volume will be a great introductory source for Roman Stoicism and it will compel readers to pursue the greater portions of Seneca's superb works. One may discover the complete surviving body of Seneca's writings in text and translation within the invaluable editions of the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard).

Great book. This collection by Penguin includes a piecemeal assortment of some of Seneca's work. This was my introduction to Seneca so I can't speak to its representation of his work. The essays and letters read in the classic proscriptive style of stoic philosophy (see especially the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius). It was filled with succinct proverbial exhortations that are memorable and penetrating. Seneca and the stoics provide more psychological self-help than most contemporary books in that genre. There is a reason some authors are still read after 2000 years. A quick read and for a worthwhile investment in time--at least for those who are new to Seneca. Some of my favorites: It is better to be despised for simplicity than to suffer agonies from everlasting pretense. Still let us use moderation here: there is a big difference between living simply and living carelessly. We should also make ourselves flexible, so that we do not pin our hopes too much on our set plans and can move over to those things to which chance has brought us without dreading a change in either our purpose or our condition, provided that fickleness, that fault most inimical to tranquility, does not get a hold of us. The greatest obstacle to living is expectancy, which hangs upon tomorrow and losses today.

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