

Foundational Texts of Early Roman History

1. **"Annales" by Quintus Ennius** (c. 180s–169 BC): Epic poem narrating Roman history from the fall of Troy to Ennius's own day. Survives only in fragments.
2. **"Origines" by Cato the Elder** (c. 168–149 BC): The first prose history of Rome in Latin, covering Rome's origins and the Punic Wars.
3. **"Histories" by Polybius** (c. 150s–120s BC): Greek account explaining how Rome came to dominate the Mediterranean between 264 and 146 BC. Famous for its analysis of the Roman constitution.
4. **"Jugurthine War" by Sallust** (c. 41 BC): Monograph on Rome's war against Numidian king Jugurtha, exposing senatorial corruption and the rise of Marius.
5. **"The Catiline Conspiracy" by Sallust** (c. 42 BC): Sharp account of Catiline's failed coup in 63 BC, framed as a symptom of Rome's moral and political decay.
6. **"Commentaries on the Gallic Wars" by Julius Caesar** (c. 50s BC): Caesar's own narrative of his conquest of Gaul.
7. **"Commentaries on the Civil War" by Julius Caesar** (c. 40s BC): Caesar's account of the civil war against Pompey.
8. **"On the Republic" by Cicero** (c. 54–51 BC): Philosophical dialogue on the ideal Roman constitution. Survives only in part, including the famous Dream of Scipio.
9. **"Letters" by Cicero** (c. 68–43 BC): Vast collection of private and political correspondence offering an unmatched insider view of the late Republic.

10. **"Philippics" by Cicero** (44–43 BC): Fourteen speeches attacking Mark Antony after Caesar's death, ultimately costing Cicero his life.
11. **"On the Nature of Things" by Lucretius** (c. 50s BC): Epicurean philosophical poem capturing the intellectual climate and anxieties of the late Republic.
12. **"Rural Matters" by Varro** (c. 37 BC): Three-book dialogue on farming and estate management.
13. **"Aeneid" by Virgil** (29–19 BC): Epic recounting Aeneas's journey to Italy, giving Rome a foundation myth and legitimizing the Julian line.
14. **"Eclogues" by Virgil** (c. 39 BC): Ten pastoral poems set against the disruptions of the civil wars, including a famous prophecy of a new golden age.
15. **"Georgics" by Virgil** (c. 29 BC): Didactic poem on farming and rural life, read as a meditation on Italy's recovery from civil war.
16. **"Odes" by Horace** (23/13 BC): Four books of lyric poetry on love, friendship, politics, and the Augustan settlement.
17. **"History of Rome (The Annales)" by Livy** (c. 27 BC–AD 17): Monumental 142-book history of Rome from Aeneas to 9 BC. Thirty-five books survive, covering the regal period through the Punic Wars.
18. **"Geography" by Strabo** (c. 7 BC–AD 23): Seventeen-book Greek geography of the known world, rich in historical and ethnographic detail about Rome's provinces.

19. "**The Deeds of the Divine Augustus**" by **Augustus** (completed AD 14):

Augustus's own account of his achievements, inscribed throughout the empire and presenting his career as a restoration of the Republic.

20. "**Metamorphoses**" by **Ovid** (c. AD 8): Mythological epic tracing transformations from creation to the deification of Julius Caesar, ending in the Augustan present.

21. "**Fasti**" by **Ovid** (c. AD 8): Poetic calendar of the Roman year explaining the origins of festivals and historical anniversaries. Six books survive.

22. "**Compendium of Roman History**" by **Velleius Paterculus** (c. AD 30): Brisk narrative from Troy to Tiberius, written by a soldier who lived through the Augustan settlement.

23. "**Civil Wars**" by **Appian** (c. 165 AD): Five-book account of the crisis of the late Roman Republic. It covers Rome's internal conflicts from the Gracchi through Actium, irreplaceable for the periods where works from Sallust or other contemporaries are lost.

For broader context, several other authors illuminate this period without being strictly historians of Rome: **Plutarch's** *Parallel Lives* offers vivid biography of nearly every major figure from Marius to Antony, drawn from sources now lost; **Diodorus Siculus** wrote a universal history contemporary with the late Republic that preserves otherwise vanished accounts; **Dio Cassius** wrote an 80-book Roman history in Greek covering the Republic's fall in granular detail; and **Quintilian's** *Institutio Oratoria* captures how Romans themselves understood their rhetorical and political inheritance.