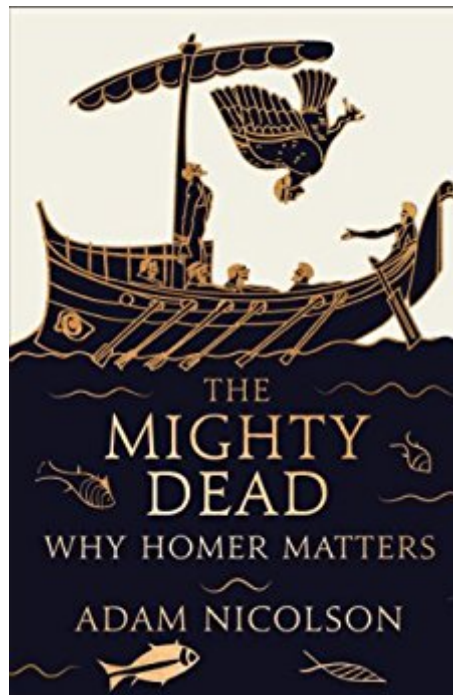




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The Mighty Dead: Why Homer Matters



Synopsis

Where does Homer come from? And why does Homer matter? His epic poems of war and suffering can still speak to us of the role of destiny in life, of cruelty, of humanity and its frailty, but why they do is a mystery. How can we be so intimate with something so distant? Longlisted for the 2014 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction In this passionate and deeply personal book, Adam Nicolson sets out to explain why these great ancient poems still have so much to say about what it is to be human, to love, lose, grow old and die. *The Mighty Dead* is a journey of history and discovery, sewn together by the oldest stories we have – the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which emerged from a time before the Greeks became Greek. As nomadic tribes of the northern steppe, they clashed with the sophisticated cities of the eastern Mediterranean. These poems tell us how we became who we are. We witness a disputatious dinner in 19th-century Paris and Keats finding in Chapman's Homer the inspiration to travel in the realms of gold. We go to Bosnia in the 1930s, with the god of Homer studies Milman Parry where oral poetry still thrived; to Spain to visit the possible site of Hades; to Troy, Ukraine, Syria and the islands of the Mediterranean; and to that most ancient of modern experiences, the open sea, in calm and storm. Reflecting on fathers and sons, men and women, on the necessity for love and the violence of warriors, on peace and war, youth and old-age, Homer is the deep voice of Europe, as dark as Mavrodaphne and as glowingly alive as anything that has ever been.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A sometimes prolix but totally engaging re-examination of the Iliad and the Odyssey, while bringing the stories into contemporary relevance. Brilliantly researched, laced with anecdotes, some of them brutally personal, Adam Nicolson convincingly argues for a reappraisal of the works' authorship and chronology. Thoroughly entertaining, the audio version is also highly recommended. Homer does matter.

What a talent Adam Nicolson has! It feels such a privilege to journey with him through this book, sharing his love of Homer and the insights he provides about Homer's work and its relevance to our own lives. A work of genius!

I had read a library copy of this book and liked it so much that I ordered a copy for myself so that I could refer to it whenever I wished.

Fabulous book! Totally engrossing.

It is fascinating stuff. It makes me really curious about what song the sirens sang.

A very well researched and insightful look at a wonderful piece of our past. Great read and informative references. Captured the essence of the tale.

I bought this book because of its title: Why Homer Matters. I wanted to know the significance of the Iliad and the Odyssey for our lives today. So I was expecting that question to be addressed throughout the book in a variety of ways. Instead, that question is saved for the last two or three pages. The answer provided is brief, poignant and post-modern. But the entire book builds up to those last two pages with the author passionately and poetically exploring the images, tensions, and terrors in Homer. This is a very subjective journey into Homer, informed by scholarship but daring to go its own way. Its start is a bit slow, making its way to Homer via Keats, and a few other spots are

over-extended, but I learned a lot along the way, and I see these two great epics in some new ways. Nevertheless, it's not quite the book I was hoping for.

The Mighty Dead, Adam Nicholson, William Collins, 2014, 314pp This is a literary book about the poems of Homer, investigating and analysing the story, the poetry, the background, the influences, and just about every aspect that you can think of. It is extremely well-written, and immerses you in the world of the Ancient Greeks in a way that a traditionally-written history book would have difficulty achieving. There are copious notes and references included here, but tucked away at the back without any indication in the text that is not *just* a book about poetry. I read it over three evenings, and didn't even notice they were there until I had finished. If you have any interest in the poems of Homer or their place in European culture, this is an excellent view of contemporary research, literary, linguistic, archaeological and whatever, but woven together into a magnificent verbal tapestry.

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