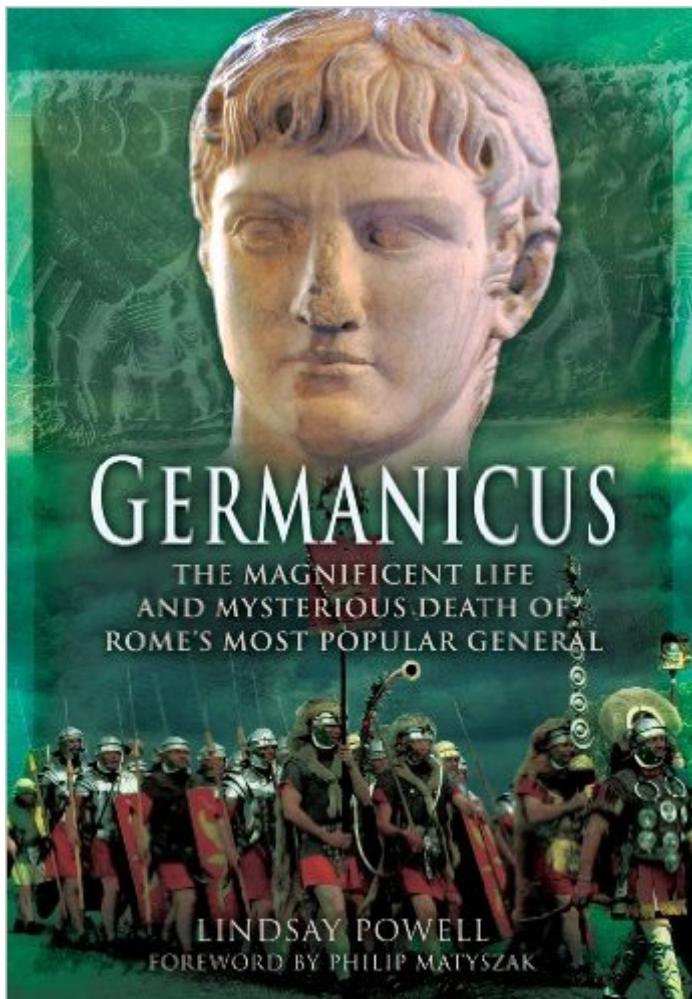


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Germanicus: The Magnificent Life And Mysterious Death Of Rome's Most Popular General



Synopsis

Germanicus (a.k.a. Germanicus Iulius Caesar) was considered by Romans as one of their greatest military heroes. His untimely death, in suspicious circumstances, ended the possibility of a return to a more open republic and ambitions for the outright conquest of Germania Magna (Germany). This, the first modern biography of Germanicus, is in parts a growing-up story, a history of war, a tale of political intrigue and a murder mystery. It is a natural sequel to the author's first book, *Eager for Glory*, which discussed the life of Germanicus' natural father, Nero Claudius Drusus, for the first time. Born in 15 BC, Germanicus grew up to be a skilled diplomat and bold soldier. Married to the granddaughter of Augustus (by whom he fathered the future Emperor Caligula) and responsible for avenging Rome's humiliating defeat at the Teutoburg Forest through victory at Idistaviso (AD16) and the recovery of one of the lost standards, his reputation and popularity were immense. The Emperor Tiberius, his adoptive father, granted him a triumph, but refused to let him complete the reconquest of Germania, sending him instead to command in the East. Did Tiberius feel jealous and threatened? Germanicus' fortunes waned when he fell out with one of Tiberius' appointees, Piso. His death in mysterious circumstances, aged 34, brought great outpourings of public grief and anger, with many suspecting murder on the orders of Tiberius. Piso was put on trial but he committed suicide – “or was he murdered? – before the senate could reach a verdict.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Part of the motivation here is just in the wake of *I Claudius* which made such a graphic impression in my early comprehension of Roman History. This book makes a detailed and coherent story out of a

relatively short 34-year life. Starts by recreating childhood and the usual rites of early manhood, including the service after his father's untimely death during a German campaign. He seemed to show a temperament and talent remarkably like his adoptive grandfather Augustus. Plus recognized ability as an orator performing in various court cases. Even wrote (or at least translated) some plays now lost to history. Much of the story comes from Tacitus and may include a strong bias against Tiberius. His military career starts in 6 AD with an expedition into Bohemia that is quickly diverted to confront a massive rebellion by the two Batavians in Illyria. Shows initiative and tenacity in dealing with the various tribes involved, as well as gaining insights into their local politics that he can use to his advantage. Just winding up the campaign in 9 AD when Varus and his legions are massacred by the treacherous Arminius. This requires Germanicus to participate in a massive reinforcement of the Rhine frontier to confront a Germanic incursion that does not arise. With Tiberius imperator, Germanicus becomes governor of Gaul, putting down a revolt in 13 AD, and then dealing with mutinous German border legions in 14. The German incursions may have been an ad hoc response in refocusing the discontented legions on a significant distraction. Next year he visits the Teutoburg Forest site, collecting bones and creating a tumulus, while recovering two of the lost eagles.

Review first posted on .co.uk on 20 October 2013

After writing a book on Drusus the Elder (Germanicus' father), Lindsay Powell has just published a book on the somewhat better known son. Both books have a lot in common, although this one is longer and more detailed, largely because we know more about Germanicus than about his father. Both were portrayed as war heroes and "wonder boys", chiefly because of their victorious expeditions in Germany. Both were dashing and somewhat rash. Both died young. While the father died accidentally, the son seems to have been poisoned, as he himself believed. There were however quite a few differences between them.

Germanicus Iulius Caesar, as he became named (his initial name was Nero Claudius Drusus, was heavily influenced by his father's glory and reputation. As the book shows at times, the son used the same tactics and strategies as the father had in Germany. Times had changed, however. While the father had set off to conquer and pacify "Germania Magna", the son was in fact conducting retaliatory expeditions against the tribes that had a hand in the destruction of Varus' legions. Also, the son seems to have lived to be a bit older than his father and had the time to be sent to the East as a king of "viceroy" to govern and settle a number of disputes. Germanicus, the grandson of Marcus Antonius the triumvir through his mother (Antonia), is also known for his family life and in particular his association and love match with Agrippina the Elder, the daughter of Agrippa (Augustus' right hand man when he was still only Octavian) and of Iulia, and his large family. His

uncle was Tiberius. His brother became the Emperor Claudius who succeeded his son nicknamed "Caligula" during his youth by the legions on the Rhine.

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