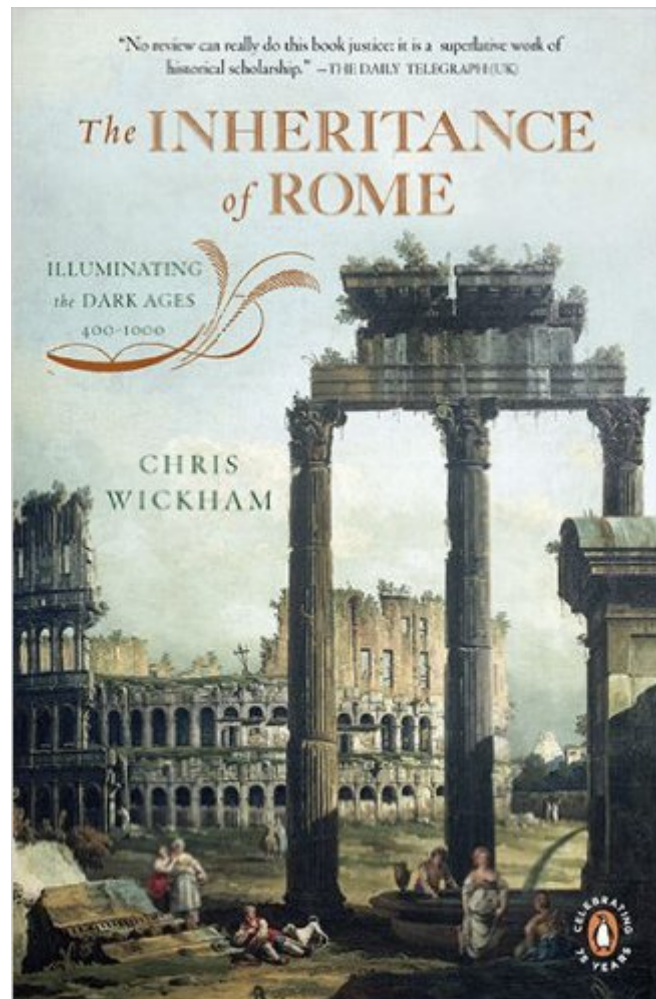


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# The Inheritance Of Rome: Illuminating The Dark Ages 400-1000 (The Penguin History Of Europe)



## Synopsis

"The breath of reading is astounding, the knowledge displayed is awe-inspiring and the attention quietly given to critical theory and the postmodern questioning of evidence is both careful and sincere."--The Daily Telegraph (UK)"A superlative work of historical scholarship."--Literary Review (UK)A unique and enlightening look at Europe's so-called Dark Ages; the second volume in the Penguin History of Europe Defying the conventional Dark Ages view of European history between A.D. 400 and 1000, award-winning historian Chris Wickham presents *The Inheritance of Rome*, a work of remarkable scope and rigorous yet accessible scholarship. Drawing on a wealth of new material and featuring a thoughtful synthesis of historical and archaeological approaches, Wickham argues that these centuries were critical in the formulation of European identity. From Ireland to Constantinople, the Baltic to the Mediterranean, the narrative constructs a vivid portrait of the vast and varied world of Goths, Franks, Vandals, Arabs, Saxons, and Vikings. Groundbreaking and full of fascinating revelations, *The Inheritance of Rome* offers a fresh understanding of the crucible in which Europe would ultimately be created.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a challenging book to read. There is so much information crammed into every page that you have to read slowly or you'll miss something. And there are 550 pages of this. Having the information crammed so tight doesn't exactly make for an engaging read, but it is worthwhile. This book covers the entire Dark Ages and a bit before, giving a broad overview of the period from the

5th Century Roman Empire to the end of the First Millennium. There is rather a sense of information overload when reading this. Too much is covered in too short a time. Considering how long the book is already I can't see what could really be done about that. Even with all the names thrown at you it feels as if the author is really holding back. The narrative sections dealing with the political history of the kingdom especially have an impressive number of indecipherable and hard-to-remember names forcing the reader to slow down. The narratives are the worst part of this book reading almost like an encyclopedia article. Part of this is no doubt due to the bared down nature of the sources.

Fortunately the chapters are reasonably short and the book will soon pass on to better topics. The author is at his best when describing trends or social conditions. Here he really shines and you can feel something of what it was like to live in these societies. Many of his choices of quotes are perfect, giving an idea of the feel of the society he's describing. The first Roman quote is probably the best. It comes from a children's Greek-Latin Primer and deals with Roman justice which was clearly a particularly chilling affair. The emphasis is always on discovering what changed and what caused these changes, as well as determining what made one culture different from another.

Many people refer to the period of 400-1000 as the "dark ages." After the fall of Rome, when society in Western Europe shut down, people went back to simple, primitive ways - terms like savages and barbarians are often used - as they squabbled and fought against each other, killing mercilessly for a bit of land; the only beacon of hope the growing light of Christianity. I've never been a fan of the term "dark ages," or all the connotations, thoughts, and ideas that people - historians and laymen alike - infer from it. Thankfully there is Chris Wickham: a Chichele Professor of Medieval History at the University of Oxford and author of *Framing the Middle Ages*. Wickham has worked hard to educate those who are unsure or simply don't that the period from 400-1000 was one of the most important growth period of ideas, invention, and thought in the history of Western Europe. *The Inheritance of Rome* does a fantastic job of explaining this in comprehensive detail with viewpoints from all of Western Europe, including the Near East with the Byzantine Empire. I won't lie to you; this isn't an easy summer read; it's a heavy book in every sense of the word; but if you're looking to educate yourself on what exactly was going on between the fifth and eleventh centuries in Europe, after reading *The Inheritance of Rome*, you will have amassed an impressive amount of knowledge and be able to defend yourself and the period against anyone who attempts to call it the "dark ages."

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