



Master of Rome

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A stirring adventure novel set amid the tumultuous clashes between the Roman and Carthaginian empires, battling for control of the Mediterranean, north Africa and Rome itself.

Atticus, the young Greek captain, is now a commander of the growing Roman navy, blockading a port near Tunis, when the Roman legions suffer terrible defeat by the triumphant Carthaginian army, spearheaded by the elephant charges. He and his ships escape together with the main body of the Roman fleet out manoevred by the more skillful Carthaginians and then caught and almost completely annihilated by a terrible storm.

Atticus and his crew are among the handful of survivors and being the messenger of this news to the Senate in Rome brings Atticus into political troubles, almost as stormy as the sea. He begins to feel not only that a Greek will never be accepted by the Romans but also that the behaviour of many, both politicians and soldiers, is such that he is not sure that he wants to be a Roman.

Full of dramatic battles by land and sea, led by tremendous characters on both sides, MASTER OF ROME is a powerful novel, the third in this bestselling series by a born storyteller.

Master of Rome Details

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From Reader Review Master of Rome for online ebook

Kyle Moore says

I really enjoyed the master of the seas series. I wish there were more books like this, if there is I have yet to find them.

Somnath Sengupta says

Easily the best book in this series. Masters of the Sea has been an exciting journey. John Stack's writing style was really rough in his first book but with every book he has improved and by end of the series, he is as good as some of the established writers of his genre. In Master of Rome Stack is firmly in control of pacing of his story, he controls it well, often following splitting climaxes with a more subtle exploration of psyche of some of his characters.

Historical fiction of this particular type often has a winning formula by combining superb action with historical setting. Characterization is something rare. I have read more than half of Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe series and Paul Doherty's Hugh Corbett series, along with all four books of Conn Iggulden's Conqueror series. None of these authors explored their main characters as Stack fleshes out Atticus Perennius. His constant conflict by being part of a society that judges him on his origins and not on his ability is handled really well. Despite being an antagonist Gnaeus Scipio is probably the second most explored character. Despite conforming to some of the Roman stereotypes he is again a character that readers will find intriguing.

Master of Rome shows the might of Rome at its devastating best. The Romans lose, time and again yet always gather their resources and always come back stronger, shocking their enemies. Despite internal differences Roman society came out united when it came to tackling Carthage. The Carthaginians lacked this. Their ploy of fighting on two fronts destroyed their chances in First Punic War. This contrast is highlighted multiple times by the author.

Stack did lack the skill in vivid descriptions of his historical setting. However, in course of these three books he makes up for it thanks to his attention to his characters and developing them well.

Chris F says

Like book one in the series I found this good, but not great. The second in the trilogy was the best in my opinion.

Robin Carter says

Anyone who knows me will have heard how bad I thought John Stack's first book was, and this is because I compare it to Scarrow, Iggulden, Riches, Douglas etc.. it being a debut is no excuse, it was juvenile and

poorly executed in comparison in my opinion, it really annoyed me because the period of Rome is one that needs to be written, and deserves to be written well.

Captain of Rome was an improvement, and to be honest it was an improvement I swore I would never read, but I did, and I'm glad I did because it has meant that I have read Master of Rome, finally I think John Stack is writing what I want to read.

Lets face it many of you may disagree with my feelings about book one and two, but that's what a personal review is about, your own feelings about the book and the writing, not about the author or any personal animosity etc, just the book and the words and do they work.

This book sees "Atticus, the young Greek captain, who is now a commander of the growing Roman navy, blockading a port near Tunis, when the Roman legions suffer terrible defeat by the triumphant Carthaginian army spearheaded by the elephant charges. He and his ships escape together with the main body of the Roman fleet out manoeuvred by the more skilful Carthaginians and then caught and almost completely annihilated by a terrible storm. Atticus and his crew are among the handful of survivors and being the messenger of this news to the Senate in Rome brings Atticus into political troubles, almost as stormy as the sea. He begins to feel not only that a Greek will never be accepted by the Romans but also that the behaviour of many, of the politicians and soldiers, is such that he is not sure that he wants to be a Roman"

This is just pure action, but tempered with the introspective look at what it is to not be Roman in the Roman world, to be the outsider to always be looked at as an outsider, and this in a time of war is magnified because all outsiders are suspicious no matter how much they have sacrificed for Rome, this book is crammed with emotion and battles, and is just what I wanted to read, finally a great book set in this period of Rome. (Parm)

Stephen says

Winning a naval war against the Carthaginians is such a pain in the ol' gluteus maximus. Invade Africa, threaten their very capital, and what do they do? They break an entire Roman legion with a handful of elephants. Seriously, who uses elephants? Why can't they just use horses like decent people do? And if losing a legion to some rampaging beasts from hell wasn't bad enough, a consul of Rome commanding has vanished (either imprisoned or trampled by elephants, maybe both -- who knows?) and the fleet sent to rescue him has just had itself ripped and blown and sucked to kingdom come by some freak storm. Okay, maybe it wasn't such a freak storm -- a Greek captain warned them about sailing across the Med in this season -- but what do Greeks know? Besides, Rome has a Destiny, one not to be cowed by storm gods and elephants! (What do you mean, hubris? That's a Greek word, go away.)

Master of Rome opens with Rome's pride enduring several setbacks, partially out of rotten luck (seriously, elephants?) and partially out of its own stupidity. These are not happy times for Rome, what with the consuls missing, the fleet smashed, one army eradicated in Africa and another stranded in Sicily. The Carthaginians may be fighting some enemy of theirs in the Africa interior, but they are doing a pretty good job at holding the Romans at bay -- and by the throat. And there's no easy fix. From day one, the Romans have been at a disadvantage fighting the Carthaginians on the sea, seeing as the sons of Phoenicia are second only to Greeks in seamanship. But earlier the Romans, at Greek captain's prompting, installed devices on their ships that let Rome bring its advantage on land (the hard-to-break line of legions) to the sea. Those devices seriously diminish Roman ship's ability to withstand storms at sea, though, and if you have commanders who laugh in the face of thunderclaps, maaaaaybe you don't want to unbalance your ships. That was the thought of the

Roman navy, who refused to sail after seeing the great weakness in action. That means instead of forcing the sea to adopt to them, they must...adopt themselves to the sea. It's very un-Roman. Fighting man to man, like barbarians? That's not how enemies of Rome were broken!

Atticus Perennis is the aforementioned Greek captain whose advice is usually on the nose but always resented by Roman politicians who, by right of being born on the Italian peninsula rather than the Greek, are manifestly superior. A cretin named Scipio is particularly resentful, obsessed with maximizing his own power, and spends the entire book turning Roman misfortunes into a path to power for himself, one he can use to finally rid himself of that rotten Greek who keeps winning battles. So Atticus, stalwart captain and our faithful main character, must contend against a talented Carthaginian general (Hamilcar Barca), a loathsome Roman political lead, and the entire character of Rome itself, with its contempt and mistrust of all things Greek. (Part of that is snobbery, but on the other hand Greek mercenaries do keep setting things on fire and thwarting Roman sieges.) On top of that his best friend has bailed on him because said buddy's family is dead against him dating their daughter, best friend's sister. And Atticus wants to give up, because Rome isn't worth all this. Sure, it's not very hero-like, but he doesn't know he's a hero. He's just a man with a ship, a ship of friends and compatriots who have weathered every storm with him. In the end fate serves up a few twists and turns that allow him to make peace with his inner demons, and allow Rome to inflict its own kind of peace on the Carthaginians.

Master of Rome ends the Punic War naval trilogy, and on a happy note. It had to end that way, of course: Rome won the Punic Wars, all three of them. But victory has never been quite certain in this series, nor served in the usual way; in here, in Master, what I thought to be the final battle turned out to be yet another wreck for Rome. Stack is able to fit a lot of plot into a few pages, executing dramatic reverses in close quarters. It makes for exciting reading, especially considering the characters. The Carthaginian general is Atticus' foe, but not quite a villain; he's a proud son of Carthage who views Rome, rather properly, as his enemy. Rome makes for a good enemy, too, being a malevolent and wracked by petty politics even now, centuries before Caesar and the empire. Beyond the military action, on land and sea, this series has delivered some personal crises as well, as Atticus struggles to resolve why he keeps fighting for a republic that hates him, while at the same time he and his best friend have that Greek-hound-dating-my-sister issue to work out. It's been most enjoyable, so much different from what one might expect from Roman books, and I look to read John Stack's other work, namely Armada.

William Carter says

A great end to a three book series.

Mary says

The glamor surrounding Hannibal and his amazing trek through the Alps with a cadre of elephants during the Second Punic War has captivated history buffs for so long that the First Punic War has been virtually overlooked by many historical novelists. Likewise, although many authors have written thousands of pages about Rome's fierce legions, Rome's first tentative efforts to build a navy and develop seamanship that would eventually rival Carthaginian mariners who had ruled the Mediterranean for centuries have been largely ignored as well. But Irish author John Stack has redressed both of these oversights in his "Masters of the Sea" series of novels.

Although a relatively new author, Stack demonstrates a command of the history of the era and the cultures involved coupled with the crucial ability to people his stories with vibrant personalities as well. I have little doubt that Stack will eventually be ranked among such bestselling historical fiction writers as Conn Iggulden and Harry Sidebottom.

Furthermore, I found Stack's ability to conjure up the terrifying ferocity of an ancient naval engagement with its splintering oars, screaming crewmen, shuddering timbers and gore-slickened decks absolutely riveting. I definitely plan to go back and read the other books in this series.

For complete review see: <http://ancientbooks.blogspot.com>

Richard says

I've always held a fascination for Roman history, so this slice of blood, honour and betrayal from the Cathaginian Wars enticed me in for two reasons. Firstly, the focus on the Roman Navy is new; secondly, the mid-Republican era is underdone.

So the read itself is interesting, dramatic and engaging enough. Stack is certainly no Patrick O'Brian or Bernard Cornwall when it comes to historic fiction with a military emphasis, but he does turn the page. Great for the beach, a long flight or some easy escapism.

Margareth8537 says

Enjoyed this. Interesting position for Atticus who is regarded by the Romans as a barbarian because he is Greek, and who doesn't really feel Roman although he has served them since he was a boy sailor.

Having seen him develop the corvus and bring about Roman victory this book shows him having to meet other challenges.

JoTownhead says

Prefect Atticus captains his galley with flair and skill, identifying opportunities with the eyes of an 'outsider' ie not Roman-born. On land, Centurian Septimus' bravery and decisiveness prove key skills. Their mutual respect and friendship endures, albeit strained, and the political manouevring in Rome continues to engross. A super third novel in the series - hopefully not the final one.

Stuart says

Kept up the pace to the end. Do we look forward to a further series including Hannibal?

Stephen Dawson says

Difficult to put my finger on what I found lacking about this, but nothing about it quite grabbed me, somehow. That there is little new from the earlier volumes is perhaps part of the problem.

Burt says

First Punic War. The Romans won. Lots of historical liberties taken with the entire series. Villans too Black; heroes too white. At times it seems like Snidley Whiplash v. Dudley Dooright only with angst. Three books and he never tripped to the fact that the Roman Navy, and the Carthaginian too, never used slave rowers. Stack did minimize the chains, however. Forced writing and, once again, abominably edited with regard to spelling and syntax. Still, the Roman Navy done 75% correctly is better than no Roman Navy at all.

David says

The third book in John Stack's 'Masters of the Sea' series, this continues the story of Atticus from the previous two novels. As I've said before, it's an interesting setting - the Roman Navy during the First Punic War - due to it's relative unfamiliarity to the reader: we're all aware of Hannibal crossing the Alps (which was during the Second Punic War), and of the might of the Roman army, but I can think of very few other books dealing with their navy!

This starts with the Roman army defeated at Tunis, and then details the repercussions from this defeat and various other naval battles the fleet participates in. The novel also covers a long(ish) period of time: the events within are, sometimes, maybe a year or so apart.

Readable enough, but not a brilliant piece of writing.

Basil Tulbah says

a fun read within a historically accurate setting
