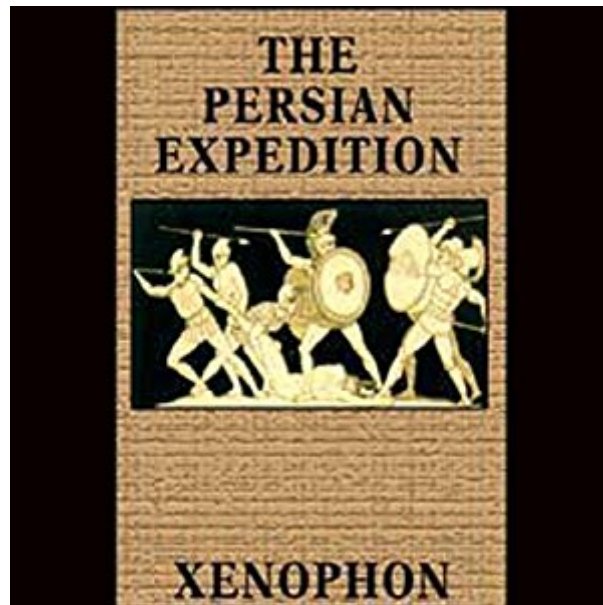


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# The Persian Expedition



## Synopsis

Xenophon, after being exiled from Athens, spent the last years of his life hunting, writing, and recalling in his books the great days of the Persian expedition. This record of one of the most famous marches in history contains an account of the day-to-day life of ordinary men and soldiers. It demonstrates how Greek theories of government and morality worked out in practice - for with his admiration for the great, Xenophon had a rare ability to understand and describe the outlook of lesser men. His own fortunes, too, are intensely moving. Cool, calculating, brilliant, and intensely pious, he is one of the most fascinating characters of history, and his account of his own doings is so far from being self-conscious that he seems to be one of the very few Greeks whose ways and manners have been accurately documented. Translated by Rex Warner.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Xenophon's *Anabasis* (or "The Persian Expedition", as it is called here) is a classic tale of adventure, and a model of precise style on par with the more familiar works of Roman authors like Julius Caesar (*De bello gallico*) and Tacitus (*Germania*). Like Caesar, he uses simple, straightforward language, and the language reflects the character of the man who helped lead 10,000 Greek mercenaries through hostile territory: a man of clear values, determination, ambition, and a strong sense of honor. With Tacitus he shares an interest in odd details and in strange customs of foreign people: "a four days' march of sixty miles took him to the river Chalus, which was a hundred feet in breadth and full of large tame fish which the Syrians regarded as gods and would

not allow anyone to harm them. (They think the same way about pigeons.)".Xenophon's story has an immediacy and clarity that is truly amazing given the fact that he wrote it down 30 years after the events took place, and that we read it today, almost 2,400 years later. The Italian writer Italo Calvino captured the vivid yet factual tone of the Persian Expedition very nicely when he remarked that reading the book today "is the nearest thing to watching an old war documentary which is repeated every so often on television or on video." (Calvino's essay can be found in his collection of essays "Why Read the Classics?") Although the story is a never-ending succession of visual details and action, it is never boring. Xenophon writes succinctly, sprinkles small anecdotes, portraits of soldiers, speeches, and interesting details over the text, and peppers the story with exotic details. Certain passages of the Persian Expedition reminded me of Hemingway's "A Moveable Feast".

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