PLUTARCH’S LIFE OF PUBLICOLA

PLENARY ANNOTATED STUDY GUIDE

THE PLENIARY PLUTARCH SERIES

VOLUME 1
PLUTARCH’S LIFE OF PUBLICOLA
Annotated Study Guide

Translated from the Greek by Aubrey Stewart and George Long
Annotated and Expanded by Rachel Lebowitz
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Plutarch was a Greek historian who lived c. 45-120 CE. He is said to be the very first “biographer” and he wrote biographies of Greek and Roman men in his book Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans. But he didn’t just write about the accomplishments of these men, he also wrote about the smaller happenings of their lives in order to give us a glimpse into their characters. This is why Charlotte Mason included Plutarch in her curriculum. It is about evaluating character.

What makes a person great? What makes a person weak? What makes a tyrant? Plutarch shows us that it is the small decisions in a man’s life that make up his character. We then get to see the consequences of those decisions. Plutarch does not judge for us. He lays the man’s life before us and we are left to judge. It truly is a remarkable way to study character and morality.

Charlotte started her students in Citizenship Studies in Form 2B, or about 4th grade. The student spent a whole year reading Stories from the History of Rome by Beesly. This prepared the student for Plutarch by providing the context of Ancient Roman society. Then in Form 2A, or 5th grade, the student started reading one of Plutarch’s Lives every term. This is the foundation of her character/citizenship teaching. It is not to be missed.

How To Use This Plenary Guide

This Study Guide comes with the original text translated from the Greek. You do not need to purchase anything else to study Plutarch.

There several sections written by The Plenary to help the student:

- The Introduction gives you biographical information about Plutarch himself.
- A “Who’s Who” is included to help you understand the key players in Publicola.
- A Prologue sets the scene in Lesson 1 and will give you essential background information to begin your study of Publicola.
- The Epilogue in Lesson 12 wraps up the Study Guide, connects it to more modern events, and gives the student some important ideas to think about.

Lessons 2-11 include the original text by Plutarch as translated by Stewart and Long. The text has been edited to remove anything unsuitable for students. You can feel comfortable about handing this Study Guide to your student for independent use.

For ease of reading, the original text is in the inner column and The Plenary annotations are in the outer column. The annotations define vocabulary words and phrases and includes pronunciations. The annotations also provide context to allow you to fully understand Plutarch’s frequent references to the people, places, and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. All annotated words are in bold type. The goal is to highlight the text so that readers may gain a deeper understanding of it for themselves.

In addition, as you read through the Plutarch Study Guide, you will find references to other resources that connect to the story of Publicola. These include classic paintings, poems, and other items that help further illustrate the text. It is my intent to provide you with these additional resources to bring your Plutarch study alive. All of the additional resources are free and can be found on the Plutarch Resources page of The Plenary website under the heading of PUBLICOLA RESOURCES. I encourage you and your
student to take advantage of these additional resources. If you would like high resolution images, printed copies of the paintings and additional background information on each painting, I also offer a Publicola Picture Study as well.

**Translation**

The Plenary has chosen to use the translation by George Long and Aubrey Stewart for all Plutarch Study Guides. The Long translation is easier and more accessible for today’s students, which will make the subject of Plutarch easier for you to implement in your home.

Unlike the translation by Thomas North, which is a second translation of the French translation done by Jacques Amyot in 1559, Long and Stewart translated Plutarch’s *Lives* from the original Greek. This makes the Long translation more accurate.

George Long was a professor of Greek and Latin at University College in London. He was a major contributor to *Smith’s Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, and also wrote for the companion Biography edition. Aubrey Stewart was a Fellow at Trinity College in Cambridge, England. Together, they translated Plutarch’s *Lives* from the original Greek into several English volumes from 1880-1882.

**A Thank You**

I hope you will find this Plenary Study Guide helpful in better understanding Plutarch and implementing it in your home.

For more help and many free resources, please visit The Plenary website at CMPLENARY.COM.

Sincerely,

Rachel Lebowitz
WHO WAS Plutarch?

Plutarch, or Plutarkos in Greek, was an ancient Greek historian and philosopher. He is most well-known for his two works, *Parallel Lives* and *Moria*.* Plutarch* lived in the little town of Chaeronea, Greece, from approximately 45-120 CE. His family appears to have been well-established there and his father was also an author and philosopher. From several passages in Plutarch’s writings, we know that he studied at the Academy of Athens, which was founded by Plato. But the most important event in his life was his journey to Rome. It was during this time that Plutarch officially became a Roman citizen and changed his name to Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus. During this trip he did most of his research that would later become his book, *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, commonly known as *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch published the biographies as pairs, one Greek life with one Roman life, in an attempt to compare and contrast the two lives for their virtues and their failings. For example, the *Life of Publicola*, a Roman Aristocrat, is paired with the *Life of Solon*, a Greek Athenian, both of whom were Statesmen.

Plutarch’s *Lives* has been preserved through the centuries and has been translated from the original Greek into many other languages. The first translation from the original Greek was done in French by Jacques Amyot in 1559. Just 20 years later, Thomas North published the first edition in English. North did not translate directly from the Greek, but instead used Amyot’s French translation to publish it in 1579. North’s English edition immediately became very popular in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Shakespeare used North’s edition as source material for some of his historical plays, including *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*, as well as references to Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus* for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Plutarch’s influence spanned beyond England as well. People have always read Plutarch. His readers include George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Theodore Roosevelt, just to name a few.

But why should we read Plutarch? What does the modern student gain from reading such an ancient text? What can we learn from a man who lived so long ago? Only a few of the men...
he wrote about are still known to us, such as Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great. Most of the names represented in Plutarch’s Lives are completely unknown to the contemporary culture of today. Even Plutarch himself is not well-known except among scholars. So why read his stories?

Although Plutarch himself belongs to the ancients, his lessons are timeless. He was more concerned with documenting men’s characters than their deeds, and that is what we have to learn from Plutarch: the value of discerning character.

Plutarch was quick to point out that he wrote biographies, not histories. In his Life of Alexander, Plutarch stated that a man’s character is often revealed in subtle ways:

“a man’s most brilliant actions prove nothing as to his true character, while some trifling incident, some casual remark or jest, will throw more light upon what manner of man he was than the bloodiest battle, the greatest array of armies, or the most important siege. Therefore, just as portrait painters pay most attention to those peculiarities of the face and eyes, in which the likeness consists, and care but little for the rest of the figure, so it is my duty to dwell especially upon those actions which reveal the workings of my heroes’ minds, and from these to construct the portraits of their respective lives, leaving their battles and their great deeds to be recorded by others.”

And it was in his intro to the Life of Timoleon that he wrote:

“It was for the sake of others that I first undertook to write biographies, but I soon began to dwell upon and delight in them for myself, endeavoring to the best of my ability to regulate my own life, and to make it like that of those who were reflected in their history as it were a mirror before me. By the study of their biographies, we receive each man as a guest into our minds, and we seem to understand their character as the result of personal acquaintance, because we have obtained from their acts the best and most important means of forming an opinion about them. What greater pleasure could’st thou gain than this? What more valuable for the elevation of our own character?”

Character – other people’s and our own. That is what Plutarch urges us to consider.
PLUTARCH’S

LIFE OF PUBLICOLA

Plenary Annotated Study Guide
We shall take Publicola, who was honored with this name by the Romans, his original name having been Publius Valerius, a supposed descendant of that Valerius who in ancient times was especially instrumental in making the Romans and Sabines cease to be enemies and become one people; for it was he who persuaded the two kings to meet and make terms of peace. Valerius, a descendant of this hero, was a man of eminence in Rome, which was then ruled by the kings, because of his eloquence and wealth. He always spoke boldly on the side of justice, and assisted the poor and needy with such kindness that it was clear that, in case of a revolution, he would become the first man in the state.

Tarquinius Superbus, the king, had not come to his throne justly, but by wicked and lawless violence, and as he reigned tyrannically and insolently, the people hated him, and seized the opportunity of the death of Lucretia, after her dishonor, to drive him out. Lucius Brutus, who was determined to change the form of government, applied to Valerius first of all, and with his vigorous assistance drove out the king.

After these events Valerius kept quiet, as long as it seemed likely that the people would choose a single general to replace their king, because he thought that it was Brutus's right to be elected, as he had been the leader of the revolution. However, the people, disgusted with the idea of monarchy, and thinking that they could more easily endure to be ruled by two men, proposed that two consuls should be chosen. Valerius now became a candidate, hoping that he and Brutus would be elected; but he was not chosen. Brutus, instead of Valerius, whom he would have preferred, had as a colleague Tarquinius Collatinus, the husband of Lucretia, who was not a better man than Valerius, but was elected because the men in power at Rome, seeing what intrigues the exiled king was setting on foot to secure his return, wished to have for their general a man who was his sworn personal enemy.

Valerius, disgusted at the idea that he was not trusted to fight for his country because he had not suffered any personal wrong at the hands of the king, left the senate, refused to attend public meetings, and ceased to take any part whatever in public affairs, so that people began to fear that in his rage he might go over to the king's party and destroy the tottering

PUBLICOLA

PLATOCRATES

LESSON 2

THE REPUBLIC

PUBLICOLA /pub-LIH-coh-lyuh/
Publius Valerius is Publicola’s given name. He earned the nickname of Publicola later in his life. Keep in mind that Plutarch refers to Publicola as Valerius until Lesson #5.

The Romans and the Sabines, a tribe located to the north of Rome, fought each other in a succession of wars started by an incident called the Rape of the Sabine women.

Insolence (noun) - disrespectful and rude behavior

The office of Consul was the highest political office of Ancient Rome. Two Consuls were elected each year and served together for a one-year term. Each Consul had veto power over the other Consul’s actions.

Brutus and Collatinus are elected the first Consuls of Rome in 509 BCE.
edifice of Roman liberty. Brutus suspected some others besides
him, and proposed on a certain day to hold a solemn sacrifice
and bind the senate by an oath. Valerius, however, came
delightfully into the Forum, and was the first to swear that he
would never yield anything to the Tarquins, but would fight for
liberty to the death, by which he greatly delighted the senate
and encouraged the leading men of the state.

His acts too, immediately confirmed his words, for
ambassadors came from Tarquin with specious and seductive
proposals, such as he thought would win over the people,
coming from a king who seemed to have laid aside his insolence
and only to wish for his just rights. The consuls thought it right
that these proposals should be laid before the people, but
Valerius would not permit it, not wishing that the poorer
citizens, to whom the war was a greater burden than the
monarchy had been, should have any excuse for revolt.

Specious (adj) - misleading in appearance

PLENARY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. Why do you think the people chose Collatinus as Consul?
2. How are consuls different than kings?
3. What would the U.S. government look like if we had adopted a style of government that had two Presidents instead of one?
4. Brutus restates the oath he made at Lucretia’s death, but this time he does it publicly. Why do you think he repeated it and made other citizens take the oath as well?