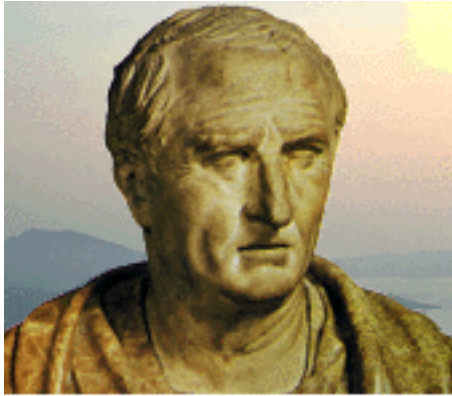


M. TULLIUS CICERO (106-43 B.C.)



Cicero was born on January 3, 106 B.C. of a rich and well connected *equus* from Arpinum in the hills south of Rome. He received an excellent education, saw military service during the Social War in 90/89, and later studied under the greatest Roman jurists of the age. After a trip to Athens and Rhodes from 79 to 77, he returned to Rome to pursue a public career. Although he was the first of his family to enter the senate (a *novus homo*), he rose quickly through the ladder of offices (*cursus honorum*) and with his successful prosecution of Verres for extortion in Sicily in 70 B.C. became the leader of the Roman bar.

Cicero was elected counsel for 63 B.C., defeating the patrician candidate Catilina. Embittered by this electoral setback, Catilina and his associates formed the much-discussed "Conspiracy of 63 B.C.," which is said to have aimed at the overthrow of the senatorial government, the murder of the consuls, and a general proscription of Catilina's enemies. Cicero denounced the conspiracy in a series of speeches (the *Catilinarians*), forcing Catilina to flee Rome and join his confederate Manlius, who had raised a small army near Florence. Catilina attempted to escape across the Apennines to Cisalpine Gaul but was brought to battle in January 62 B.C. and killed.

For the remainder of his life, Cicero strove to create a *concordia omnium* - a coalition of broad segments of Roman society against the great warlords of the late Republic (Pompey, Caesar, Antony). He refused an invitation to join the First Triumvirate in 60 B.C. and was driven into exile in 58. He was allowed to return to Rome in 57 and became a reluctant supporter of the First Triumvirate until civil war broke out between Pompey and Caesar in 49. Cicero followed Pompey to Greece in the spring of 49, but after the defeat at Pharsalus in 48 B.C., he returned to Rome, withdrew from political life, and dedicated his talents to literary work.

After Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C., Cicero emerged from retirement and attempted to rally the Senate and reestablish the old forms of the Republic. But he was no match for the ruthlessness of Octavian, Antony and Lepidus. He fell victim to the proscription of the Second Triumvirate and was slain while attempting to flee Italy on December 7, 43 B.C.

Cicero's writings were popular in his own day and soon became required reading in Roman schools. His florid and complex style was much admired by rhetoricians, while his philosophical works provided Latin with a sophisticated vocabulary necessary for speculative thought. His popularity continued during the Middle Ages and he is still widely read today, though his style has become somewhat foreign to modern tastes.