



Working IX to V: Orgy Planners, Funeral Clowns, and Other Prized Professions of the Ancient World

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Vicki León, the popular author of the *Uppity Women* series (more than 335,000 in print), has turned her impressive writing and research skills to the entertaining and unusual array of the peculiar jobs, prized careers and passionate pursuits of ancient Greece and Rome.

From Architect to Vicarius (a deputy or stand-in)-and everything in between-*Working IX to V* introduces readers to the most unique (dream incubator), most courageous (elephant commander), and even the most ordinary (postal worker) jobs of the ancient world. Vicki León brought a light and thoughtful touch to women's history in her earlier books, and she brings the same joy and singular voice to the daily work of the ancient world. You'll be surprised to learn how bloody an editor's job used to be, how even a slave could purchase a *vicarius* to carry out his duties and that early Greeks had their own ghost-busters with the apt title of *psychopompus*.

In addition to stand-alone profiles on callings, trades, and professions, León offers numerous sidebar entries about actual people who performed these jobs, giving a human face to the ancient workplace. Combining wit and rich scholarship, *Working IX to V* is filled with anecdotes, insights, and little-known facts that will inform and amuse readers of all ages. For anyone captivated by the ancient past, *Working IX to V* brings a unique insight into the daily grind of the classical world. You may never look at your day-to-day work in the same way!

Working IX to V: Orgy Planners, Funeral Clowns, and Other Prized Professions of the Ancient World Details

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MAP says

For a little fluffy book, this was remarkably dense.

I think the main issue with it is that she doesn't just cover one culture (Greeks, Romans) but instead opted to cover SEVERAL cultures. Because of this we never really get a sense of what role the jobs played in the ancient culture or how they fit into the larger social tapestry -- because there simply wasn't enough time to explore full, rich explanations of 5+ different ancient cultures. So everything ends up feeling flat. I think she spent too much time being witty and not enough time providing history.

Too bad. I've been wanting to read this book for years.

Kara says

A hilarious look into what it was like to be one of the working class in the ancient world. Written in a breezy style, but everything is well researched.

Kathy Petersen says

Leon romps through the environs of the ancient world to explore how we might have been employed centuries ago. "Ancient" seems to be anywhere from the 2nd century BC to about 300 AD, and the world is primarily Greco-Roman with some other cultures occasionally wandering in. Although her research seems quite solid and competent and her information credible, she opts for clever bantering rather than serious discussion. It's all very light-hearted. I chuckled at the rhetorical "would OSHA approve?" and liked the image of Crassus as a "slimy politico"; but sometimes the wit gets a bit strained. Still, it was fun.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

A rather flippant guide to a variety of jobs from the ancient Greco-Roman world.

For a further review: <http://susannag.booklikes.com/post/62...>

Don says

BTW, U think txt msg abbreviations r new? In Roman times Scriptores, or signwriters, "often used key

abbreviations: VB meant 'a good man,' OVF meant, 'I beg you to elect him.'" Some jobs in Ancient Greece and Rome sound a bit strange to modern ears (Foretaster, War-Elephant Commander, Curse-Tablet Maker) but others are very familiar (Winemaker, Ticket Scalper, Librarian) showing us that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Vicki León writes in the same humorous but well-researched style of her popular Uppity Women series.

Chris says

Not as good as Leon's other books, though her humor is still there. Interesting though. I would hate to be an arm hair picker.

Nicole Yovanoff says

From the title I thought it would be an interesting read about weird jobs in ancient Rome and Greece, instead it was more about jobs in general. A little disappointing.

Not a bad read, but I found it lacking at times. Good information, but sometimes I felt the author was trying too hard to be funny when that is not her strength.

Sumi says

A very humorous look at jobs in Ancient Rome written in a style that is easier to read than just about any history book. Unfortunately sometimes so much cleverness can also get in the way of true enjoyment. I wish the author had sprinkled her wit a little less heavily. There is some good information buried within each entry, though and that's another thing in the book's favor.

Iset says

Vicky León's book is specifically designed to inform the reader about the careers and jobs of ancient people, with a particular focus on Greek and Roman employment. Some of the careers are fairly standard, for example the charioteer, physician, farmer and cook. Others are decidedly more obscure and little studied, such as the jobs of clock watcher, amulet maker, garum manufacturer, silphium importer and gymnasiarch. The book is packed with descriptions and explanations of 150 of these ancient careers and jobs, and as an extra is peppered with sporadic notable examples of the ancient individuals pursuing such careers.

However, the book is really more of an introductory work. The 150 listed careers barely scratch the surface of the plethora of forms of ancient employment, and each description is barely two pages long in this standard paperback sized book - barely more than enough to give a basic overview of what the job involved and perhaps a couple of examples of known individuals in the employment and a mention in passing of the archaeological and textual evidence which allows us to know about the job in question - and so functions best as an introductory book to one of the aspects of the ancient world, aimed at early to mid teens who are

perhaps just beginning an interest in history with a view to maybe studying it more in depth in their future education. The book is not written in a professional academic journal kind of manner but a humorous manner, so not a university level work or a challenge to read, but it can be enjoyed by historians of any stage of development. And that said, it does offer interesting tidbits of knowledge and facts about many obscure and esoteric ancient jobs.

Probably the most annoying aspect of the book was its constant use of cheesy Americanisms, which was really cringeworthy. I get that the book is meant to be a bit humorous and flow a bit more conversationally than most books, but there's no need to apply belittling modernisms to get the point across, to me these downplayed the actual seriousness of some of these careers. For example, using the word "oops" when talking about lost battles or Caesar burning down the Great Library of Alexandria, calling female gladiators "gals", having Caesar say the word "yikes", and generally using out-of-place phrases like "A-List celebs" and "cool". The end result is that it ends up making some events, which were serious and important business of their day, seem casual and even comical, downplaying their significance and ultimate importance in history.

A nice introductory work with some interesting obscure facts, but this is really a basic overview and also the liberal use of Americanisms throughout provides an inaccurate impression of events. Overall, enjoyable, just be aware of the humorous and introductory nature of the work.

Jenny Brown says

Tooth-achingly hip. The author has to drag in some current pop cultural reference on almost every page, as if she were terrified that readers might think her interest in ancient history means she was uncool. Uncool, apparently, also embraces anything that would hint at scholarship, like citing sources or not mixing up Greek and Roman references hundreds of years apart on a single page.

Most of the information in the book is a stripped down, dumbed down version of what you can find in almost any book on Daily Life in Ancient Rome (or Ancient Greece), but since the book is broken down by job title and each page-long section is unrelated to the next, it quickly become far duller than these books usually are. It's like reading a dictionary.

I gave up forty pages in. Much better choices covering the same material are *A Day in the Life of Ancient Rome* or, for those who want a touch of hipness that doesn't cloy, *Ancient Rome on Five Denarii a Day*.

Richard Derus says

Hell, what are we all complaining about?! At least we're not Roman aquarii, fishing around down in sewers or funeral clowns (we call those preachers these days) or bath slaves ewww ewww...a lot of careers in the ancient world weren't things that DeVry or Virginia College would prepare you for.

Vicki Leon, in the course of researching the ancient world for serious books, would run across these weird or simply obscure references to jobs that no longer (thank GOODNESS) exist. She kept her notes. She patiently accumulated information. And now, in this book (called "Working IX to V" in the USA), delivers an amusing, browsable capsule description of ~150 weird and wonderful ancient jobs. I chuckled and giggled my way through this book, using it as what Jerry calls a "between" book, and thoroughly enjoyed it all.

Don't plan to sit down to a long winter's afternoon of reading, and this book will repay your purchase price. Go on, have fun, and not incidentally learn just how much our ancestors were like us...they hated their jobs too!

Sterlingcindysu says

Another great book for reading pool-side (or come to think of it, a great bathroom companion!). I agree with the Goodreads community that this is a strong 3.5. Read best in bits and pieces.

A lot of ancient Roman info is packed in these pages and Leon does a great job of breaking it up with humorous drawings, biographies, and background info on everyday life. The idea that they oiled up their bodies ALL the time made sense when you realized there was no soap. Soldiers and gladiators got a nice pension package if they survived their jobs. And there were fast food joints then, who knew? None of the apartments had any cooking facilities so it's not as if most people had a choice.

Museum=home of the Muses.

Freelancers were truly people who used lances.

Colin says

A fun yet scholarly look at professions from the ancient world (primarily Greco-Roman cultures). Worth a look and a laugh; I do wish the book cited specific sources of information at times - but then, the book would be at least twice the size it is.

Craig Patton says

Fantastic book! As a lover of history I am drawn more to the everyday of the common person as I believe this is a way for us in our modern time to connect to those who lived so far in the past.

The best thing about this book is one gets learn about the type of jobs/careers that were available at the height of the Greek and Roman empires, many of which are, thankfully, no longer around today.

This book is also great for those who don't like to read about history as the stories about the jobs/careers and the tales of those who actually did the work are both fascinating and a little disturbing at the same time however; it's never dull and very entertaining.

Katie says

If this book were food it would be salad. A big, generous, endless salad for lunch, with peas and tomatoes

and cheese and onions and sprouts and garlic dressing and garbanzo beans. Do you like beets? It would have beets. Do you like arrugula? It would have arrugula. Only trouble is, it's so big, and you know it's too much, but you keep picking and nibbling and know you're going to get a stomachache later.

Leon's sure done her homework here. I know more than I ever knew anybody knew about sloggin' away in antiquity. Why didn't anybody tell me this stuff before? I ask myself. All the boring crap about armies and emperors and gladiators--why didn't anybody think I might want to know about the work of an orgy planner or a soul conductor or a parasite?

(Party entertainer and professional moocher. Martial, the poet? He was a parasite.)

Who knew there were Greek stand-up comics? Furthermore, who knew there was a collection of ancient Greek jokes still in existence? Leon includes two of them, and believe me, you've already heard them both.

One outstanding flaw of the book: Leon too often fails to explain technology when she is introducing the technician, or tell you the outcome of some dramatic event like a lawsuit. She tells you all about the water clock--except she expects you to know what it is, which I don't. Also, she's terribly vague about dates. She expects you to know when things happened, so you'd better be up on your history or have a good timeline handy.

Overall, though, she's a good storyteller, informative, and *funny*. There are a bunch of illustrations which have terrific captions, but also actually complement the text rather well.

What job would I like? Well...most of them sound rather dreadful, actually. Especially a lot of the women's jobs, so I won't limit myself. I've never been into food service, so that lets out a lot of Roman jobs, which is a pity since the tenements in Rome didn't have kitchens, leaving the inhabitants to eat all their meals out. Nor would I want to be a water-carrier, or an engineer, or a gladiatrix, or a physician, or a priest. I suppose the ultimate job for me--given the high likelihood of being a slave in any case--would be one of the Scythian "archer-cops" in Athens around 490 BC, who got to go around chasing latecomers into the assembly and whipping rowdies in the streets. Yeah!

This book would actually be a good resource for writers. How useful this would be, for instance, for a writer of fantasy, let alone historical fiction. Or for students. Wish I'd had it in my classics courses in college. Boy, could I have annoyed the professors, a minor hobby of mine back then, since I wasn't a stellar student.
