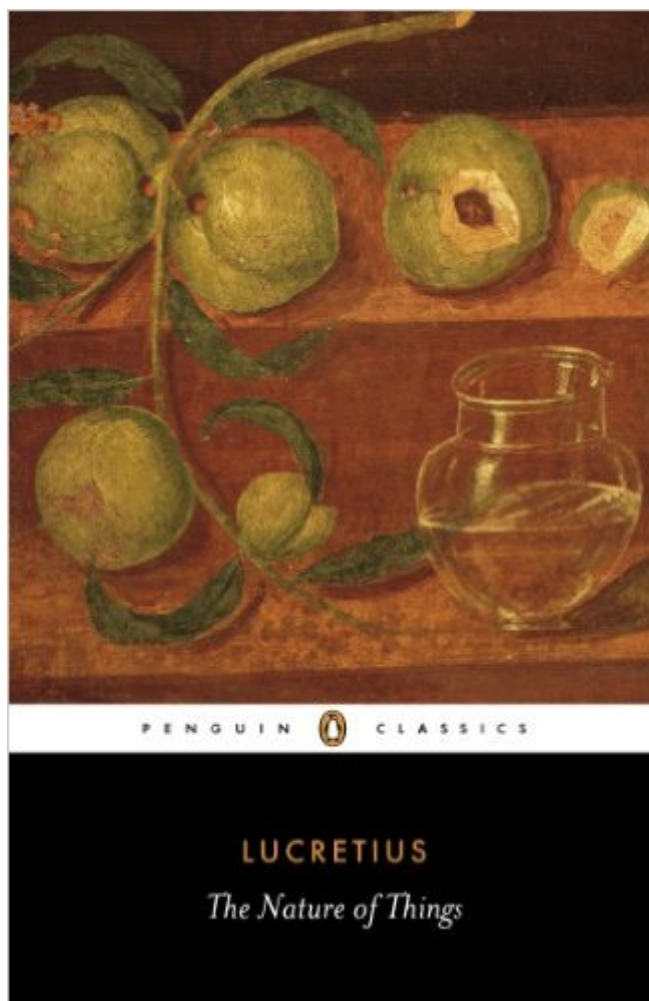


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The Nature Of Things (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The acclaimed new translation of the classic poem at the heart of Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve*. Lucretius' poem *On the Nature of Things* combines a scientific and philosophical treatise with some of the greatest poetry ever written. With intense moral fervour he demonstrates to humanity that in death there is nothing to fear since the soul is mortal, and the world and everything in it is governed by the mechanical laws of nature and not by gods; and that by believing this men can live in peace of mind and happiness. He bases this on the atomic theory expounded by the Greek philosopher Epicurus, and continues with an examination of sensation, sex, cosmology, meteorology, and geology, all of these subjects made more attractive by the poetry with which he illustrates them. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

ABOUT DE RERUM NATURA--THE NATURE OF THINGS Stephen Greenblatt, in "The Swerve: How the World Became Modern" re-ignited interest in a long poem by Titus Lucretius Carus, who lived around the time of Augustus. As Greenblatt tells the fascinating story, the papal secretary,

Poggio, searching for old Latin and Greek manuscripts, found a tattered copy of the previously unknown *De Rerum Natura* in an alpine monastery. Master of church theology, calligraphy and Latin, Poggio recognized the fiery nature of Lucretius' work and gave thought to the fiery nature of the Inquisition. Copies of the manuscript circulated at first only cautiously and only to a few trusted friends. Lucretius' ideas, expressed in noble poetry, challenged thinking of earth as divinely created for the use of man and of a Creator to be worshipped in awe, fear, and trembling. Lucretius, following Greek philosopher Epicurus & his school, sees everything evolving from the dance of atoms, infinite in number in an infinite space. These irreducible entities cannot be divided, created, or destroyed. The atoms are unceasingly in random motion. Some collide & veer off; some collide and stick. These atomic clusters form other clusters; and over enough time and enough collisions, they form all we know, from galaxies, gastropods and us. When we die, the bonds dissolve, and the atoms continue the eternal dance of creation, evolution, dissolution. There are, writes Lucretius, no gods and if there were or are, they have no interest in us. So there is no reason for us to sacrifice Iphigenias for fair winds so the Greek fleet can sail from Aulis to Troy, no reason to be afraid of or worshipful to the gods, and no reason, for ourselves to fear of death or anticipate some future mystic bliss.

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