

Aulus Gellius

(ca. 125 AD—after 180 AD)

Aulus Gellius was a Latin author and grammarian, who was probably born and certainly brought up at Rome. He was educated in Athens, after which he returned to Rome, where he held a judicial office. He is famous for his *Attic Nights*, a commonplace book, or compilation of notes on grammar, philosophy, history, antiquarianism and other subjects, preserving fragments of many authors and works who otherwise might be unknown today.

Life

The only source for the life of Aulus Gellius are the details recorded in his writings. He was of good family and connections, possibly of African origin,^[2] but he was probably born and certainly brought up at Rome. He travelled much, especially in Greece, and resided for a considerable period at Athens. He studied rhetoric under Titus Castricius and Sulpicius Apollinaris; philosophy under Calvisius Taurus and Peregrinus Proteus; and enjoyed also the friendship and instructions of Favorinus, Herodes Atticus, and Fronto.

He returned to Rome, where he held a judicial office. He was appointed by the praetor to act as an umpire in civil causes; and subsequently much of the time which he would gladly have devoted to literary pursuits was occupied by judicial duties of a similar description. The precise date of his birth, as of his death, is unknown; but from the names of his teachers and companions he must have lived under Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius.

Writings

His only known work, the *Attic Nights* (Latin: *Noctes Atticae*), takes its name from having been begun during the long nights of a winter which he spent in Attica. He afterwards continued it at Rome. It is compiled out of an *Adversaria*, or commonplace book, in which he had jotted down everything of unusual interest that he heard in conversation or read in books, and it comprises notes on grammar, geometry, philosophy, history and many other subjects. One story is Androcles, which is often compiled into collections of Aesop's fables (but is not found there).

