

ANCIENT HISTORY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

On Saturday 14th April the prestigious Classical Association prize worth £5,000 will be awarded to Tom Holland. He is the author of the best-selling, critically acclaimed history *Rubicon*, for which he was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize, and *Persian Fire*, a thrilling account of the Greco-Persian Wars in the Fifth Century B.C.

The prize aims to encourage all forms of promotion of Classics in the UK. At a time when the study of the Ancient world is attracting increasing attention in schools, accessible books about the period are an important means of furthering interest in the Greeks and Romans.

An accomplished radio personality in Britain, Tom has also written a highly acclaimed series of adaptations for Radio 4 of Herodotus's *Histories*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as advising on a range of television programmes. He has also written a short novel, *The Poison in the Blood*, based on Greek myth, and novels on subjects ranging from vampires to paleontology.

Previous winners of the prize include Barbara Bell for the *Minimus* series that has introduced Latin into primary schools across the UK and Hugh Lupton and Daniel Morden the story tellers.

TOM HOLLAND'S WORK: A SUMMARY

Rubicon (2003) tells the dramatic story of Julius Caesar's extraordinary rise to prominence, painting a vivid portrait of the Roman Republic at the climax of its greatness - the same greatness which would herald the catastrophe of its fall. Reviewers praised Tom Holland's ability to bring to life a strange and unsettling civilization, which yet holds up a mirror to our own society. 'Explosive stuff ... a seriously intelligent history ... [written] with élan and gusto ... It is a history for our times ... Wickedly enjoyable' (Peter Jones, *BBC History Magazine*). 'Holland paints a vivid social portrait of the Roman world ... Ideal bedside reading for George W Bush' (Max Hastings, *Sunday Telegraph*).

Persian Fire (2005) takes us further back in time, to 480 BC, when Xerxes, the King of Persia, led an invasion of mainland Greece. Tom Holland gives a brilliant account of Persia's rapid rise to power, and unexpected, catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Greeks. Not only was this the very first 'clash of Empires' between East and West - the West's first struggle for independence and survival - but it provides a thought-provoking parable for our own days. Reviewers called it 'Confident, fluent and accessible, and with salutary lessons for our own times, this is history at its best' (*The Times*); 'Astonishing well written ... Holland vividly describes the crash of metal and bone at Marathon' (*Guardian*); 'Gripping and authoritative ... An awe-inspiring story of the struggle for freedom' (*Express*).

Tom Holland's most recent book, *The Poison in the Blood* (2006), takes Classical myth, rather than history, as its inspiration. It tells the story of the fateful arrow, poisoned with the blood of the Hydra, that led to the agonising death of the great hero Herakles and eventually shot Paris, prince of Troy.