

Voltaire: The Universal Man

Derek Parker

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Voltaire: The Universal Man is the dramatic life of a key Enlightenment figure, and France's greatest philosopher. Francois Marie Arouet (pen name Voltaire) was born on November 21, 1694 in Paris. He left school at 16 and soon made friends among the Parisian aristocrats where his humorous verses made him a favourite in society circles. However, his satirical wit got him in trouble and he was exiled from France on several occasions, imprisoned twice in the Bastille, and beaten by chevalier de Rohan-Chabot's men after making a public remark which caused that gentleman to look foolish. When back in France Voltaire, who was a millionaire by the age of forty, restored the run-down Chateau de Cirey and began one of the greatest intellectual and romantic relationships of the 18th century with Emilie de Breteuil. Under the patronage of Madame de Pompadour, he became official royal historian. Yet, upon his death, he was denied church burial. In 1814 a right-wing religious group stole his remains and dumped them in a garbage heap.



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