

Augustine of Hippo

by Simonetta Carr

with Illustrations by Wes Lowe



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Augustine of Hippo

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MAP CREATED BY TOM CARROLL

As you read this book, you can follow Augustine's travels on this map.

Introduction



During Augustine's life, the Roman Empire ruled most of what are now Europe and the Middle East. It was divided into two parts: the Western Roman Empire (with Rome as its capital) and the Eastern Roman Empire (with Constantinople as its capital). Augustine lived in the Western Roman Empire.

Augustine was born on November 13, 354 A.D. His full name was Aurelius Augustinus. We call him Augustine of Hippo because he spent most of his life in the city of Hippo Regius, in North Africa. He is still considered one of the greatest thinkers who ever lived. Even people who are not Christians admire the way in which he explained things that cannot be seen and touched, like faith, God's grace, and love.



Augustine

No one knows what Augustine looked like. The earliest portrait that we still have today was done about two hundred years after his death. As you see in this book, artists imagined Augustine in their own special way.

CHAPTER ONE

Growing Up



Augustine's birthplace was a small town in Northern Africa named Thagaste. Today, the whole region around Thagaste is called Algeria. It was a very green area, full of farms, and olive and wheat fields. Augustine grew up like many children in the Roman Empire. The books he studied were mostly written in Latin, which was the language spoken in ancient Rome.



Fields in Algeria, similar to those Augustine would have seen as a child



The emperor Constantine

After Jesus' resurrection, Christians were often persecuted and killed by the Roman government. All that changed about forty years before Augustine's birth, when Emperor Constantine made Christianity a legal religion. Then, Christians actually received so many privileges that other people did not have, that many said they were Christians even if they really did not believe. Augustine's father, Patricius, did not believe in Jesus, but his mother, Monica, did, and taught her children to do the same.

Augustine studied in Thagaste and in a nearby city until the age of sixteen. Because he was very smart, his father decided to send him to Carthage, the largest city in that region, to study law and the art of giving speeches.



Augustine stole pears from a neighbor.

Speaking well in public was a very respected skill in those days. Anyone who wanted to have an important job in society as a politician, teacher, lawyer, or church leader, had to learn how to speak clearly and to convince others that what he said was true. Patricius knew that if his son could speak well he could make a good career in this world. Being a small government officer in Thagaste, Patricius did not have enough money to send his son to Carthage right away, so Augustine had to spend about a year at home.

As a teenager with nothing better to do, Augustine spent a lot of time with a group of naughty friends, looking for fun and playing all kinds of pranks. One night, they went into a neighbor's field and stole a bunch of pears from his tree. They ate a few and, since they really did not care about the pears, gave the rest to the pigs. Later, Augustine looked back at this time of his life. He was surprised as he realized that he had stolen those pears just for the pleasure of stealing. This showed him how much we all, left to ourselves, tend to sin.





Some ruins of ancient Carthage