

Figure 1. Ancient Greek Inscription from Pergamon. (Photograph by Emily Brophy.)

Monuments of Memory: Cicero's Rediscovery of Archimedes' Tomb

Emily Diana Brophy

Figure 2. Statue of Hercules in Antalya Archaeological Museum. (Photograph by Emily Brophy.)



Introduction

- Powerful Romans were concerned with the memories of them that would live on into the future
- As a great Roman statesman of the 1st century BC, Marcus Tullius Cicero was no different.
- Cicero relayed the anecdotal account of his rediscovery of Archimedes' tomb to solidify the impact of his political career and ensure his legacy as one of Rome's greatest statesmen

Figure 3. Aspendos ancient theater. (Photograph by Emily Brophy.)

Early Political Career

- Spent many years being trained in philosophy and rhetoric
- Elected quaestor in 75 BC and sent to Sicily
- Gained a reputation in Sicily for being fair and honest
- While in Sicily, sought out the lost tomb of legendary mathematician, Archimedes

Figure 4. Amyntas rock tombs. (Photograph by Emily Brophy.)

Use of Comparison in *Tusculan Disputations*

- *Tusculan Disputations* includes a discussion on morality as a requirement for happiness
- Cicero uses a series of comparisons between wicked men and virtuous men to emphasize this point
- Audience would have expected the story of Archimedes' death in comparison to the prior story of the death of a wicked tyrant
- Cicero included the anecdote of his discovery of the tomb instead
- Suggests motives for inclusion of the anecdote beyond the philosophical discussion of the dialogue

Figure 5. Statue of Cicero. (Photograph by Jebulon, *Statue of Cicero Courthouse, Rome, Italy*, Public Domain.)

Cicero as the Subject

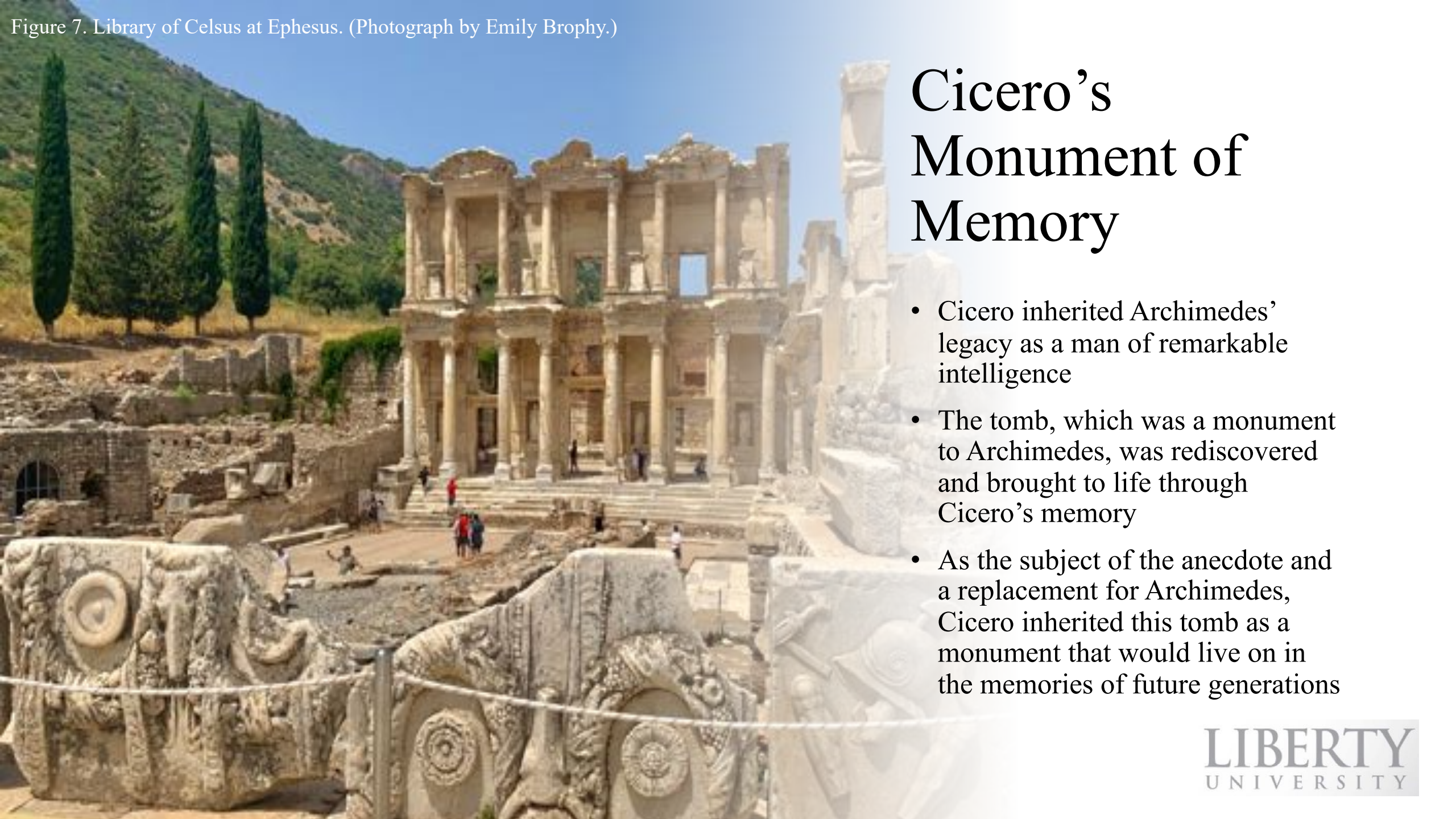
- Archimedes mentioned by name only once: “I will present you with a humble and obscure mathematician...called Archimedes.”
- Cicero placed in the forefront of the language used to recount the story
- “I discovered,” “I remembered,” “I examined,” “I found”
- These verbs intentionally chosen to highlight Cicero’s *gravitas* and inquisitiveness that rivaled Archimedes’

Figure 6. Roman tunnel at Pergamon. (Photograph by Emily Brophy)

Cicero as Archimedes

- By purposefully ignoring the audience's expectations and inserting himself as the subject of the story, Cicero essentially equated himself with Archimedes
- In the larger rhetorical framework of the dialogue, this makes Cicero the virtuous man who is compared to a wicked one
- This likening fulfilled Cicero's childhood dream, which was to be a great Roman hero
- However, he was not a traditional one

Figure 7. Library of Celsus at Ephesus. (Photograph by Emily Brophy.)



Cicero's Monument of Memory

- Cicero inherited Archimedes' legacy as a man of remarkable intelligence
- The tomb, which was a monument to Archimedes, was rediscovered and brought to life through Cicero's memory
- As the subject of the anecdote and a replacement for Archimedes, Cicero inherited this tomb as a monument that would live on in the memories of future generations

Cicero's Legacy

- Recognized as a Roman hero during his lifetime and afterwards
- Livy, 1st century BC: “[Cicero] was a great and memorable man. One would need a Cicero to sing his praises.”
- Pollio, 1st century BC: “[Cicero’s] works, so many and so fine, will last forever.”
- Augustus, 1st century BC: Cicero was “an eloquent man, and a patriot.”
- Cicero was successful in establishing a legacy for himself that would last far after his lifetime

Bibliography

- Cicero. *Letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero: With his Treatises on Friendship and Old Age*. Translated by William Melmouth. New York, NY: P. F. Collier, 1909.
- Cicero. *Tusculan Disputations*. Translated by C. D. Yonge. Project Gutenberg, 2005. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14988/14988-h/14988-h.htm>.
- Everitt, Anthony. *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003.
- Jaeger, Mary. *Archimedes and the Roman Imagination*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Jaegar, Mary. "Cicero and Archimedes' Tomb." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 92 (2002): 49–61.
- Rawson, Elizabeth. "Cicero the Historian and Cicero the Antiquarian." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 62 (1972): 33-45.