



# Papyrus: The Invention of Books in the Ancient World by Irene Vallejo



LITERATURE  
NEW YORK

Sun, April 23, 2023

## Venue

The Center for Fiction, 15 Lafayette Ave,  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

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## Admission

Free, [RSVP required](#). [Watch the livestream](#) on April 23.

## Credits

Photo by Santiago Basallo. With the support of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E).

On the occasion of Sant Jordi's Day, Spanish writer Irene Vallejo presents her international bestseller that recounts the birth of books.

The Sant Jordi Festival of Books & Roses in Barcelona is one of the most unique and colorful book fairs in the world, spilling bookstands and flower stalls up and down the boulevards of Catalonia. It celebrates Saint George, the dragonslayer, of whom legend claims that a rose bush sprang up from the drops of blood that fell from the wounded dragon's wing. A fitting context for the swashbuckling story of *Papyrus, The Invention of Books in the Ancient World*, written by Irene Vallejo.

Long before books were mass-produced, scrolls hand-copied on reeds pulled from the Nile were the treasures of the ancient world. Emperors and Pharaohs were so determined to possess them that they dispatched emissaries to the ends of the Earth to bring them back. When Mark Antony wanted to impress Cleopatra, he knew that gold and priceless jewels would mean nothing to her. Instead, he gave her books for her library—two hundred thousand. The long and eventful history of the written word shows that books have always been and will always be a precious—and precarious—vehicle for civilization. *Papyrus* is the story of the book's journey from oral tradition to scrolls to codices, and how that transition laid the very foundation of Western culture.

This event features a conversation with author Irene Vallejo, renowned translator of Greek and Roman classics Sarah Ruden, and translator of *Papyrus*, Charlotte Whittle.

## ABOUT THE WRITER



Irene Vallejo was born in Zaragoza in 1979, and she has been attracted to the Greco-Latin world since she was a child. She studied Classical Philology, and won the first National Award for Excellence in Academic Performance. In 2007, she completed the European Doctorate from two universities, Zaragoza and Florence, with a thesis on the Greco-Latin literary canon. Her first essay, focusing on the Latin poet Marcial, won the Society for Classical Studies Award for Best Research Paper.

She writes for various media. Her articles have been compiled in the anthologies *El pasado que te espera* (2010), *Alguien habló de nosotros* (2017) and *El futuro recordado* (2020).

In 2011, she wrote her first novel, *La luz sepultada*. The second, *El silbido del arquero*, was released in 2015. She also writes short stories and children's books. In 2019, she published *Papyrus. The invention of books in the ancient world*, which won the National Essay Award, among other recognitions.