

## Best Lucretius translation?

**Post by “Rolf” of June 19, 2025 at 8:40 AM**

I’m looking to pick up a copy of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* while I wait for DeWitt’s book to arrive. Does anyone have a recommendation for a translation?

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**Post by “Don” of June 19, 2025 at 8:45 AM**

LOL "Best" is a loaded question. Most literal? Most readable? Prose adaptation or poetic translation? There are a lot of good translations online. My suggestion would be to explore those first.

As an aside, my first full read through was Stallings, but that can be a polarizing translation.

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**Post by “Cassius” of June 19, 2025 at 9:05 AM**

Don is correct. I think most people would agree that the current leading translation by one of the foremost leading scholars is Martin Ferguson Smith's [Hackett Publishing version](#). You can find that lots of places inexpensively.

I know you're looking for a printed edition so I won't focus on the three we have [here](#).

Also check here, and let's add further longer comments there to add to that discussion:

[Versions of the Text of Lucretius](#)

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**Post by “Joshua” of June 19, 2025 at 10:08 AM**

Loeb edition by Rouse, and revised by Smith, is great for the Latin facing text alone.

Verse translation? Rolfe Humphries.

I should make a tier list one of these days.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of June 19, 2025 at 10:28 AM**

fyi...Just for fun, we have this sub-forum:

[Versions of the Text of Lucretius](#)

...and this thread:

Thread

[Favorite Translation of Lucretius](#)

### **Just a little poll while I was doing some work...**

Eikadistes

January 24, 2023 at 2:38 PM

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### **Post by “Rolf” of June 19, 2025 at 1:37 PM**

[Quote from Don](#)

LOL "Best" is a loaded question. Most literal? Most readable? Prose adaptation or poetic translation?

Haha, fair point! “Favourite” would’ve been a better word.

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### **Post by “Rolf” of June 19, 2025 at 1:38 PM**

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Loeb edition by Rouse, and revised by Smith, is great for the Latin facing text alone.

Verse translation? Rolfe Humphries.

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Thanks Josh - I'll look into Humphries' translation. I'd like to read something in verse, though I understand it might be less faithful than a more direct translation? He does have a great name, though. 😊

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**Post by "Rolf" of June 19, 2025 at 1:39 PM**

Any suggestions for audio readings?

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**Post by "Joshua" of June 19, 2025 at 1:41 PM**

Glad you asked! [Charlton Griffin on Audible](#) reads the Humphries version. It is excellent.

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**Post by "Cassius" of June 19, 2025 at 3:01 PM**

[Quote from Rolf](#)

Any suggestions for audio readings?

Joshua's response to this is my view too.

Were it not for the Charlton Griffin rendering on Audible, this forum might well not exist. It was \*the\* turning point for me in my decision to devote more time to studying Lucretius. I'd rank the Dewitt book up there in the same category of major influences, but it turns out that I

needed the motivation of hearing Lucretius read in Griffin's booming voice to really motivate me.

I can't recommend the Griffin audio (which is a reading of the Rolfe Humphries translation) highly enough.

And as a comment on the Humphries verse rendering, I've found that one the best for me too. Even his rendering of the title: "The Way Things Are" strikes me as the best "tone" to reflect how forceful Epicurean philosophy can be.

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of July 1, 2025 at 8:59 AM

In my opinion ... I have a soft-spot for **Humphries'** style, though I don't think it's the most educational. It speaks to me personally, and provides me with a poetry that I find entrancing.

**M. F. Smith** is definitely going to be your best, contemporary resource. He writes in prose, or adapted free verse, and does not impose a rhyme schema on the literature. He is usually my go-to if I want to understand, conceptually, what Lucretius meant by a stanza. He's great with annotations, too.

The one weak spot I note with Smith is that he has a tendency to employ contemporary, technical jargon to refer to Epicurean physics, and, more and more, I think it's a bit anachronistic.

To remedy that, I recommend Munro. He has a great way of translating the "fundamental seeds of reality" using words besides "atoms" and "particles" that is refreshing, and, in my opinion, more authentic to how a Roman would have experienced the poem 2,075 years ago. Granted, Munro's vocabulary is a tad older, and reads as a bit more dated than Smith's more recent work.

If you like a good, familiar rhyme schema, try **A. E. Stallings**. I like his flavor.

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### Post by “Don” of July 1, 2025 at 1:48 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

try A. E. Stallings. I like his flavor.

"Her" 😊

[A. E. Stallings - Wikipedia](#)

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### Post by “Eikadistes” of July 1, 2025 at 1:59 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A. E. Stallings?wprov=sfla1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._E._Stallings?wprov=sfla1)

Right on! I had no idea.