

Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors

By Peter Ackroyd

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The first book in Peter Ackroyd's history of England series, which has since been followed up with two more installments, *Tudors* and *Rebellion*.

In *Foundation,* the chronicler of London and of its river, the Thames, takes us from the primeval forests of England's prehistory to the death, in 1509, of the first Tudor king, Henry VII. He guides us from the building of Stonehenge to the founding of the two great glories of medieval England: common law and the cathedrals. He shows us glimpses of the country's most distant past--a Neolithic stirrup found in a grave, a Roman fort, a Saxon tomb, a medieval manor house--and describes in rich prose the successive waves of invaders who made England English, despite being themselves Roman, Viking, Saxon, or Norman French.

With his extraordinary skill for evoking time and place and his acute eye for the telling detail, Ackroyd recounts the story of warring kings, of civil strife, and foreign wars. But he also gives us a vivid sense of how England's early people lived: the homes they built, the clothes the wore, the food they ate, even the jokes they told. All are brought vividly to life in this history of England through the narrative mastery of one of Britain's finest writers.

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Editorial Review

From Booklist
Starred Review The first volume of Ackroyd's prospective six-tome history of England extends from Stonehenge to the extinction of the Plantagenet dynasty by Henry Tudor. The strongest impression Ackroyd acquired from his survey of land and time is that of the role that habit, custom, and contingency plays in shaping history. He repeatedly repudiates a view of English history as a conscious progression toward, for example, Parliament. Similar institutions associated with England, such as Christianity and common law, arise as incremental accretions in Ackroyd's accounts. His treatment of 1066 is characteristic. He concedes the consequentiality of the Norman conquest while emphasizing the persistence of native modes of life, such as the vernacular language that eventually, albeit not for three centuries, with Chaucer, supplanted the invaders' French as the language of society and the governing elite. The battles for the crown supply most of Ackroyd's narrative, but while the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses rumble on, the peasants till the soil, quaff ale, and periodically raise pitchforks and torches. The hugely popular Ackroyd's ease of erudition ought not to be missed. --Gilbert Taylor

Review
"[In] *Foundation*, his rambling, affectionate new history of the remote English past...the history that interests him most is the kind touching on national memory and a sense of place, 'about longing and belonging,' in his memorable phrase...In a narrative that is relaxed, unpretentious, and accessible, if at times somewhat hasty, he skillfully digests the work of others without cutting very deep with his own analysis. The early chapters, on the times before William the Conqueror, play especially to his strengths, as he draws on the findings of modern archaeologists who have advanced our understanding of how ancient Britons lived and how the various migrations and invasions changed the nation." --*New York Times Book Review*

"Ackroyd's trademark insight and wit, and the glorious interconnectedness of all things, permeate each page." --*Observer* (London)

"Ackroyd brings delightful but revealing details of the lives of the people from the past into the present." --*Sunday Express* (London)

"With *Foundation*, Ackroyd makes a compelling case to be the country's next great chronicler." --*Time Out* (London)

"This is an extraordinary book...Peter Ackroyd is arguably the most talented and prolific writer working in Britain today." --*Daily Express* (London)

"[Ackroyd] is a natural storyteller and a passionate historian, but his true skill lies in his acute eye for revealing interesting details." --*San Francisco Book Review*

"Ackroyd paints a portrait of early England that is both historically rich and compellingly human." --*Shelf Awareness*

"The strongest impression Ackroyd acquired from his survey of land and time is that of the role that habit, custom, and contingency plays in shaping history...The battles for the crown supply most of Ackroyd's narrative, but while the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses rumble on, the peasants till the soil,

quaff ale, and periodically raise pitchforks and torches. The hugely popular Ackroyd's ease of erudition ought not to be missed." --*Booklist* (starred review)

"Once again, Ackroyd exhibits his magic touch with the written word...Ackroyd's genius is in his focus on individual kings and on England alone, without Scotland, Ireland and Wales. He explains some myths, debunks others, and brings England's kings to life...Delightfully, with each king, Ackroyd summarizes their good and bad attributes along with delightful non sequiturs, such as the first use of the handkerchief. A true history of England tightly focused on the building blocks that made her." --*Kirkus Reviews*

"This popular history of England from prehistoric times through the reign of Henry VII, the first in a projected six-volume set, isn't a new story but it's a good one. The bulk of the book is a narrative about the kings, but the prolific Ackroyd discusses other kinds of history as well: there are chapters on how the English seasons passed, lost villages, crime and punishment, diet and health, etc...Ackroyd's judgments are unexceptionable." --*Library Journal*

Review

“Given his eye for detail and the near-mythic writing in books like *Thames: Sacred River,* Ackroyd’s latest—not surprisingly, a huge best seller in England—promises to be an original read. For all those Anglophiles.”—*Library Journal*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alan Levin:

This Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book will be information inside this guide incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors without we understand teach the one who examining it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't always be worry Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors can bring whenever you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even cell phone. This Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors having good arrangement in word along with layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

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