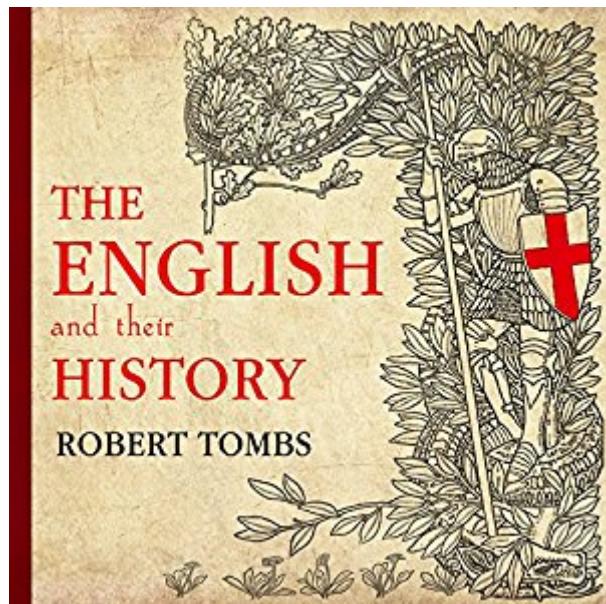


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# The English And Their History



## Synopsis

Robert Tombs' momentous *The English and Their History* is both a startlingly fresh and a uniquely inclusive account of the people who have a claim to be the oldest nation in the world. The English first came into existence as an idea, before they had a common ruler and before the country they lived in even had a name. They have lasted as a recognizable entity ever since, and their defining national institutions can be traced back to the earliest years of their history. The English have come a long way from those first precarious days of invasion and conquest, with many spectacular changes of fortune. Their political, economic, and cultural contacts have left traces for good and ill across the world. This book describes their history and its meanings, from their beginnings in the monasteries of Northumbria and the wetlands of Wessex to the cosmopolitan energy of today's England. Tombs draws out important threads running through the story, including participatory government, language, law, religion, the land and the sea, and ever-changing relations with other peoples.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I learned about the book from a reviewer in the Economist who claimed that "there was not a lazy sentence in the book". If there is, I didn't find it in 989 pages of text and notes. I just loved it. I so hated to put it down that I spent an extra hour going through his endnotes and suggestions for further reading. He has a gift for historical narrative. Many historians seem to think their readers know nothing and spend so much time on setting the stage, defining terms, and reciting facts that

they bore you to death in the first chapter. At the opposite extreme are historians who think their audience is primarily specialists they debate at conferences and who kill you with minutia and tendentious disputation. Tombs is the truly the "mama bear" who gets it just right. He just seems to have an instinct for knowing when and where to bear down and/or lighten up in his narrative. Also, he doesn't judge the past by the insights and values of the present, a common failing of modern and post-modern historians. He doesn't flaunt his preferences; neither does he hide them. His judgments of things English are nearly always presented in a comparative perspective. He offers what must be dozens of "historical factoids" but without interfering with his narrative and nearly always relating such data to a regional or historical context. I think he did a particularly good job of explicating the factual and moral complexities of the English civil war and the later battles between Whigs and Tories, both in terms of ideas and personalities. If he gets just a tiny bit partisan about English virtues, it might be in his extensive coverage of English opposition (often costly) to the slave trade and chattel slavery. But then again, who could blame him? Read the book. You won't be disappointed.

There will always be an England! As a confirmed Anglophile I enjoyed this immense doorstop of a book. Dr. Robert Tombs Professor of History at Cambridge University teaches us about English history from the days of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms to 2014! Tombs writes in a fine narrative style easily comprehended by the average reader who has some basic knowledge of the broad sweep of English history,. The book covers all the reigns of the English monarch as well as such seminal events as:a. The Norman Conquest of 1066.b. The impact of the Protestant Reformation in England.c. The English Civil War of the 1640s.d. The literature of England from Shakespeare to Dickens to modern novelists and playwrights.,.e. The development of modern English is chronicledf. Major wars from Napoleonic to World War I and World War II are covered with insight.g. The book contains excellent maps and photographs.h. Tombs shows us how democracy was established in Englandi. The rise of the British Empire and the impact of Victorian culture is dissected with skill. A short summary is impossible for such an important book. The work will serve well as a college textbook or a great read for those interested in English life. A long but anything but dull book! Rule Britannia!

This is not a history of England and I see that some reviewers are confused on this point. Even some of the reviewers on the book jacket are mistaken. It is a book about the English and "their history," as the author makes clear, and thus there is abundant history with the author's

commentary. Not all periods of English history are given equal space but what has been selected is judiciously done. This was not the book I expected to read but I am nevertheless delighted to read it. First of all, the author is a superb writer which is what led me to this book after reading some of his articles in English newspapers. Second, there are what I would term "historical gems" throughout the book -- information about English history and historiography that the casual reader would not easily find elsewhere. The author provides copious notes in the back of the book for those of us who want to read further. For those of us who enjoy reading about English history and already are familiar with it this book is well worth reading for its cogent summaries, historical gems and author's commentary.

I am not English(American) but a bit of an Anglophile, so I enjoyed reading Mr. Tombs long and often tedious history of the English. I learned that "English" is not synonymous with "British". I was enlightened regarding the long enmity with the French; it took an even bigger Booger (Germany) to drive them together. I also enjoyed the English perspectives on the American Revolution, which differ from the many American-authored accounts I have read. The book is not written for the casual reader. It is well that am retired, for I would not have had the time or patience for it. It is as I have said, sometimes tedious, delving into aspects where I have little interest. It is also exciting, action-filled and violent, as much of English history was. A scholarly work for whomever takes the time to devour it.

A very well written chronicle of centuries of English history, which include facts, anecdotes and 'literary narratives' that we have then adopted in our own understanding of history. I found this to be both entertaining and full of erudite commentary, which helps to provide a perspective on so many contemporary issues - Ireland, Commonwealth, Brexit etc etc. A very worthwhile tome for all budding or amateur historians who wish to acquire a deeper understanding and 'responsibility' of how we got to where we are today!

a long slog but very insightful the authors preface tells about his approach and it is spot on. get it and read it.

An excellent historic overview I used to complement my literature studies in English. Very good read as a general history book as well.

Excellent

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