



Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I

By Peter Ackroyd

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Peter Ackroyd, one of Britain's most acclaimed writers, brings the age of the Tudors to vivid life in this monumental book. "Tudors" is the story of Henry VIII's relentless pursuit of both the perfect wife and the perfect heir; of how the brief reign of the teenage king, Edward VI, gave way to the violent reimposition of Catholicism and the stench of bonfires under "Bloody Mary." It tells, too, of the long reign of Elizabeth I, which, though marked by civil strife, plots against her, and even an invasion force, finally brought stability.

Above all, it is the story of the English Reformation and the making of the Anglican Church. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, England was still largely feudal and looked to Rome for direction; at its end, it was a country where good governance was the duty of the state, not the church, and where men and women began to look to themselves for answers rather than to those who ruled them.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review The Tudor era was pivotal in English history and remains of perennial interest to the general reader. Ackroyd takes on this much-written-about family history in his new, highly engaging book. His bona fides as an author to trust and enjoy rest on many well-appreciated nonfiction titles, including *London: The Biography* (2001), and compelling novels, among them *Chatterton* (1987), a historical novel about poet Thomas Chatterton (1752–70). Ackroyd's primary interest here is how the reformation of the English church came about. From the time when Henry VIII's desperation over the lack of a male heir compelled him to set aside his first queen, Catherine of Aragon, to when his second wife Anne Boleyn's daughter, the glorious Elizabeth I, died after a long, complicated reign that nevertheless brought peace to the land, Ackroyd presents in rich prose and careful explanations how the English Reformation was not a movement of the people but a personal project of King Henry, who, Ackroyd insists, remained, despite his removal of papal authority over the English church, an orthodox Catholic. Under his immediate heir, the boy-king Edward VI, England veered sharply Protestant, but Edward's elder sister, Mary I, during her brief occupancy of the throne, forced England back to full Catholicism. The genius of the next and last of Henry VIII's children, Elizabeth I, was to establish a middle course between these two extremes. --Brad Hooper

Review

"Peter Ackroyd's love of his subject shines through every page. This is a thrilling story that will delight readers interested in this period." *?San Francisco Book Review*

"While the author focuses on the politics of religious change, this is an accessible account, made even more so by anecdotes revealing the personalities of the main characters (e.g., Henry VIII became so obese that his bed had to be enlarged to a width of seven feet, and Mary Stuart wore crimson underclothes at her execution in 1587)." *?Publishers Weekly*

"A solid multivolume popular history: readable, entirely nonrevisionist and preoccupied by politics, religion and monarchs--a worthy rival to Winston Churchill's *History of the English Speaking Peoples*." *?Kirkus Reviews*

"Highly engaging.... Ackroyd presents in rich prose and careful explanations how the English Reformation was not a movement of the people but a personal project of King Henry." *?Booklist (starred review)*

"Peter Ackroyd is energetic and gifted enough to have mastered his sources and produced a sparkingly fresh account of Tudor England. ...Ackroyd has a wonderful eye for the telling detail, cameos that stick in the mind. ...If you want a finely written, racy account of the monster Henry VIII and his brood, a history book that really fires your imagination and is often so exciting that you cannot put it down, you should get this book." *?The Weekly Standard*

"Ackroyd presents the Tudors in a way frequently overlooked by other popular histories and novels, depicting them as a force that continues to affect both English and international societies today, rather than as an early-modern soap opera. ... Each player in this real-life historical drama is clearly drawn, their major contributions and connections made apparent without losing the thread of the overall themes. *Tudors* takes a comprehensive approach to early-modern English history that is rarely attempted, but is, in Ackroyd's hands, a success." *?Shelf Awareness*

“Ackroyd's thoroughly researched narrative of the notorious Tudors is colorful, engaging, and highly accessible to general readers.” *?Choice*

“Ackroyd writes with such lightly worn erudition and a deceptive ease that he never fails to engage.” *?The Telegraph (UK)*

“Superbly accessible and readable.” *?The Financial Times (UK)*

“Ackroyd clearly relishes the wicked glamour of the family which presided over the Reformation, saw off the Spanish Armada, founded the British Empire and left the country they ruled a great European power . . . Fluent and colorful.” *?Sunday Express (UK)*

“As so often in Ackroyd's books there are irresistible small details of everyday life in historic London.” *?Daily Express (UK)*

“Ackroyd's information concerning Cromwell provokes a different reaction from that gained by reading Hilary Mantel. . . . This is a fascinating read, an accessible history where the immense research is wittily presented and where the ideas are profound and moving.” *?The Newtown Review of Books(Australia)*

“[Ackroyd] has a matchless sense of place, and of the transformations of place across long stretches of time; he is also an inventive and playful English stylist.” *?Standpoint (UK)*

“Relaxed, unpretentious, and accessible.” *?The New York Times Book Review on Foundation*

“Ackroyd writes with such lightly worn erudition and a deceptive ease that he never fails to engage.” *?The Telegraph (UK)*

About the Author

PETER ACKROYD is an award-winning novelist, as well as a broadcaster, poet and historian. He is the author of the acclaimed *Thames: Sacred River* and *London: The Biography*. He holds a CBE for services to literature and lives in London.

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