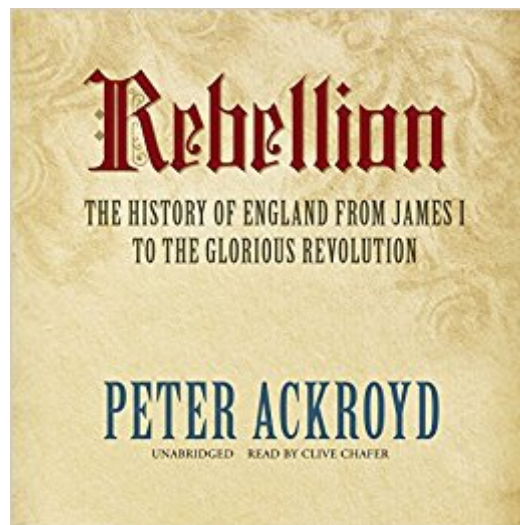




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# Rebellion: The History Of England From James I To The Glorious Revolution



## Synopsis

[Read by Clive Chafer] The third volume of Peter Ackroyd's History of England covers the Stuart dynasty, which brought together England and Scotland during a period marked by civil war and the killing of a king. Peter Ackroyd has been praised as one of the greatest living chroniclers of Britain and its people. In *Rebellion*, he continues his dazzling account of the history of England, beginning the progress south of the Scottish king James VI, who on the death of Elizabeth I became the first Stuart king of England, and ending with the deposition and flight into exile of his grandson James II. The Stuart monarchy brought together the two nations of England and Scotland into one realm, albeit a realm still marked by political divisions that echo to this day. More importantly perhaps, the Stuart era was marked by the cruel depredations of civil war and the killing of a king. Shrewd and opinionated, James I was eloquent on matters as diverse as theology, witchcraft, and the abuses of tobacco, but his attitude to the English parliament sowed the seeds of the division that would split the country during the reign of his hapless heir, Charles I. Ackroyd offers a brilliant, warts-and-all portrayal of Charles's nemesis, Oliver Cromwell, Parliament's great military leader and England's only dictator, who began his career as a political liberator but ended it as much of a despot as "that man of blood," the king he executed. England's turbulent seventeenth century is vividly laid out before us, but so too is the cultural and social life of the period, notable for its extraordinarily rich literature, including Shakespeare's late masterpieces, Jacobean tragedy, the poetry of John Donne and Milton, and Thomas Hobbes's great philosophical treatise, *Leviathan*. *Rebellion* also gives us a very real sense of the lives of ordinary English men and women, lived out against a backdrop of constant disruption and uncertainty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for Rebellion "Appropriately detailed, beautifully written story of the Stuarts' rise and fall - will leave readers clamoring for the further adventures awaiting England in the 18th century."

--KirkusÃ    (starred review) "Ackroyd is a wonderful storyteller, and he has a wonderful and vitally important story to tell... providing excellent insights into the character and motivations of several of the prime movers of events... He eloquently describesÃ    the development of literature, the ongoing religious controversies, and the evolving political sympathies and their effects on the lives and opinions of ordinary citizens." --BooklistÃ    (starred review)

Peter Ackroyd is an award-winning novelist, as well as a broadcaster, biographer, poet, and historian. He is the author of the acclaimed Thames: Sacred River, London: The Biography, and the first and second volumes of his history of England, Foundation and Tudors. He holds a CBE award for services to literature. He lives in London.

Brilliant recounting of Jacobean England. Peter Ackroyd details the rise and fall of the Stuart kings. He delves into the background of each king, describing the personalities and quirks that illustrated each of their reigns. The road to revolution is paved by the monarchy's growing distance with the population and disconnect with reality. From James I appointments of his Scottish favorites, to Charles I misguided sense of divine influence, the Glorious Revolution took root. Ackroyd writes of the times and the mindset of the people. His sumptuous descriptions are rich and colorful. His books are a window of an era, masterfully and wonderfully retold, leaving the reader with an understanding that events don't just happen, but are the outcome of our own deeds.

The turbulent 17th century in England required a strong king and a leader of men. The four descendants of Mary Queen of Scots proved to have none of that in them. It is ironic that Mary lost her head to Elizabeth, but her son became king after Elizabeth's death. James I was not a Hollywood image of a king. He was a man prone to slobbering, and "playing with his codpiece". Coming from Scotland, and the only child of Mary Queen of Scots, he brought much of that baggage with him, and with all four of these monarchs, he fought continuously for money that was not readily offered for his fine tastes. The one thing he is most remembered for was the creation of the King James Bible. That in itself is a most interesting story, and the author could have presented much

more information on this. His son Charles assumed the throne on the death of his father. Charles was a man of stubborn will, who thought way too much of himself, and foolishly aligned his throne with people not at all popular, such as the Duke of Buckingham. He had a running battle with a Parliament that increasingly sought to strip him of real power. It was so bad that Charles dissolved Parliament in 1629 for a long eleven years. It was only in April of 1640 that it was again summoned because the king needed money and the reception to this was not friendly. There was also great religious conflicts at this time. The dour Presbyterian Scots demanded no toleration of Catholicism and no acceptance of the more formal Church of England which infuriated Charles. To shorten the story, royalists and backers of parliament gathered armies. Charles I eventually was defeated and at the end of January 1649, his head was chopped off. For a period of time Oliver Cromwell assumed more of a military dictatorship, and eventually, they sent for Charles II, who had been living in Europe to assume the throne. He did and proved to be just as incompetent as his father and grandfather. With his death and no male heir, his brother James II took the crown and by 1688, he was toppled in the Glorious Revolution. It didn't help that James was Catholic which was a clear conflict with the majority of the people and those in power. There are many other good parts of the book. The author brings up information on the arts, the way people lived, and toward the latter part of the 17th century, the economic progress of England in so many ways that brought not only wealth, but general improvements in life for the English people. The book is very readable with generally short chapters that keep you moving along. There is a much going on during this period and Ackroyd does most of it justice in a fair manner. It could easily be four volumes or more, but nobody would read it, so I recommend it. Even if you have limited background in the history of this period, you will gain knowledge from this work and I thank the author for it.

Another wonderful addition to Ackroyd's series covering English history. Unlike his previous book, "The Tudors", which covered well-trod ground, this book covers the early Stuarts (James I, Charles I, the Cromwells, Charles II and James II), which historians don't seem to focus on as much (after all, how can you compare to Henry VIII and Elizabeth I?), so I learned a lot from this volume. Can't wait to see how far Ackroyd goes in the next volume (I'd guess maybe up to Victoria?)...

This period in England's history was much more interesting than I thought. The author provides a detailed account of the times in a narrative that goes beyond a list of events and dry facts to the real lives of the men and women who were the players in the events that unfolded in this turbulent period. The transformation of the British government is seen from the perspective of the people who

were part of the process, whether as parties seeking to make the changes happen, as bystanders caught up in the flow of events, or as part of the old guard who struggled to restore the power and position that had been held by the king or queen just a few decades earlier. This was a pivotal period in the history of England and this book offers a view of how the lives of all who lived through this period were affected. Steve Mitchell

A history that is very readable and well worth reading. Anyone who wants to understand western politics should study this book because the impact of "the common man" on decisions that affect a nation become much more appreciated. That is not to belittle the lopsided influence of Kings and Leaders with all their too human foibles, but getting the broader picture makes even the dumb decisions of Kings slightly more understandable. The sad reality of death without trial and wars over religion show that we have forgotten the lessons of history and thus are destined to repeat them.

Lucid and gripping, even though one knows "how it will turn out." Aykroyd is a terrific writer, who thoughtfully seasoned this book with sketches of the period, ranging from Sir Isaac Newton to Restoration comedy. Read this for either introduction to, or review of, the tumultuous decades leading to the Glorious Revolution.

An excellent and very well-written history, also witty in parts and inciteful. The author accomplishes a perfect combination of narrative and anecdotes. The men and women of the era are often allowed to speak in their own words, and are in that way and through description, fully formed people who come alive, which is not always easy to do in a history. I look forward to reading the other works of this eminent historian.

The third installment of Aykroyd's trilogy on the history of England is as good, if not better, than the first two. That is intended as high praise. It is a carefully researched, witty, and original chronicle of England in the 17th century.

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