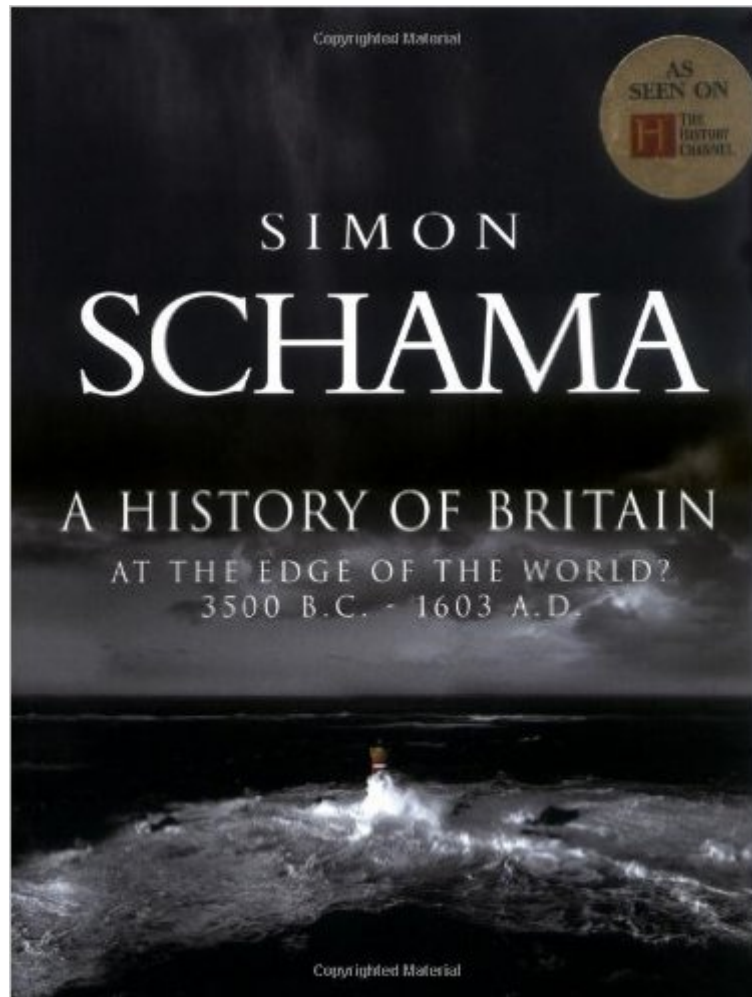


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A History Of Britain: At The Edge Of The World? 3500 B.C. - 1603 A.D.



Synopsis

Simon Schama's magisterial new book encompasses over 1,500 years of Britain's history, from the first Roman invasions to the early seventeenth century, and the extraordinary reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Schama, the author of the highly acclaimed *Citizens* and *The Embarrassment of Riches*, is one of the most popular and celebrated historians of our day, and in this magnificent work he brings history to dramatic life with a wealth of stories and vivid, colorful detail, reanimating familiar figures and events and drawing them skillfully into a powerful and compelling narrative. Schama's perspective moves from the birth of civilization to the Norman Conquest; through the religious wars and turbulence of the Middle Ages to the sovereignties of Henry II, Richard I and King John; through the outbreak of the Black Death, which destroyed nearly half of Europe's population, through the reign of Edward I and the growth of national identity in Wales and Scotland, to the intricate conflicts of the Tudors and the clash between Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. Driven by the drama of the stories themselves but exploring at the same time a network of interconnected themes--the formation of a nation state, the cyclical nature of power, the struggles between the oppressors and the oppressed--this is a superbly readable and illuminating account of a great nation, and its extraordinary history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I own a number of histories of Britain, and while I agree with most of the reviewers that this one is engaging, I am greatly disappointed in this book as a whole. The tone is easy to read, but the book's

substance has the consistency of belly-button lint. Light to the point of irrelevant in far too many places, this volume is a good read for anyone who wants a fast refresher of high school English history. It is weak on causal connections, explanations, and the intrigue that I think makes history so fascinating. Worst of all, its subtitle is completely misleading. I bought it primarily because it purported to cover pre-Roman Britain. Its subtitle, "A History of Britain at the Edge of the World 3500 B.C. - 1603 A.D." indicated to me that it would address that period. And so it does - for six and a half pages, three of which are completely take up by photographs of neolithic sites. This coverage hardly merits a subtitle touting the book as a history of Britain from 3500 B.C. Only one paragraph is dedicated to Julius Caesar's disastrous invasion attempts that failed two years in succession, and only two paragraphs talk about the British resistance to Claudius' successful invasion. Within two more pages, Hadrian's wall has already been built. The remaining 20 pages of the first chapter are a very general overview of the next 700 years. That's right: it takes only twenty of this book's nearly 400 pages to cover over 4,000 years of history.

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