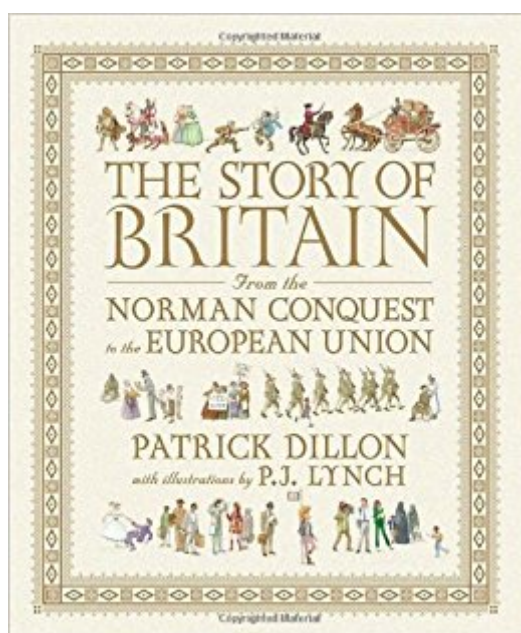


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# The Story Of Britain From The Norman Conquest To The European Union



## Synopsis

Stunningly illustrated by P.J. Lynch, Patrick Dillon's accessible narrative brings the dramatic history of a nation to life. The history of Britain is a thrilling story of kings and queens, battles and truces, discoveries and inventions, expansion and diplomacy. From William the Conqueror's arrival in 1066 to the end of the twentieth century, *The Story of Britain* celebrates the rich diversity of a people and culture, as well as the events, good and bad, that have shaped Britain and the world over the past thousand years. Royals, commoners, warriors, and scientists have all had parts to play, and each of their stories is told here in lively, lucid language appropriate for a young audience. Timelines summarize each era in a quick-view format between each section, while bite-size chapters and full-color plates make this history easy to pick up and hard to put down.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After an introduction that opens with the Roman invasion of Britain and speeds through the next 11 centuries, this hefty volume officially begins with the Norman Conquest and provides a chronological history of England and, to a lesser extent, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The writing is mainly factual, but its short chapters take a narrative approach and include some quotes that are apparently invented; no sources are given at all. Although the occasional fact is questionable (America's Declaration of Independence is credited to Washington as well as Jefferson), Dillon offers plenty of solid history as well. Printed in color, Lynch's fine paintings brighten

the four-page illustration sections that open each of the six sections. The book's design features a handsome jacket and a ribbon bookmark. However, most pages are text-heavy and illustrated only with the occasional map or, in each section's time line, small black-and-white pictures. Though not a replacement for more authoritative volumes, this book offers a very readable introduction to an enormous subject. Grades 6-8. --Carolyn Phelan

Patrick Dillon says, "I first fell in love with history through stories, and, thirty years later, found that they were stories my children loved, too. I wanted to show that what happened in the past happened to real people and to explain how the stories I loved made us who we are today." He lives in London. P.J. Lynch is one of the most talented illustrators working today. He is a two-time winner of the prestigious Kate Greenaway Medal, and three of his books, including *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey*, have been awarded the Christopher Medal. He lives in Dublin.

well organized, includes timelines and some maps, clear chapter titles. excellent to-the-point overview for those of us trying to get a grasp of the general history of Great Britain. it is a young adult read but way better than lengthy, wordy, over-puffed-up adult reads. I bought this to keep as a personal reference as I read more about this country and its history. the library wanted back the copy I had borrowed!.

Best comprehensive history book for the FAMILY. My husband and I loved the one page summary of anything that's ever happened in Britain. My parents ordered this book after staying with us for a few days because they were so impressed! I tell everyone who is planning a trip to the UK with children to BUY THIS BOOK!

This is an excellent comprehensive history of Britain from the Norman Conquest to the present. It is so well-written and an easy read that history buffs would enjoy it for the fun of it, and neophytes will learn a great deal from it. I originally purchased it for my 15-year-old for a school project, but I found myself reading it from cover to cover and loving it. Give it a go - it's worth the read!

Written by Patrick Dillon and illustrated by P.J. Lynch, "The Story of Britain" is a chronological account of Britain's history, from the arrival of Julius Caesar to the present day. It also includes plenty of chapters on Scotland, Ireland and Wales, though the emphasis is on England and its relationship with its people, its immediate neighbors, and the rest of the world. Divided into seven

parts, the book goes through eleven centuries worth of history, starting with a brief introduction that covers Britain's earliest history (55BC to 1066) and then starting properly with the arrival of William the Conqueror. From that starting point, the book contains the following chapters: "The Middle Ages" (1069 - 1492), covering the Norman Conquest, the Plantagenets, the Hundred Years War, the Black Death and the War of the Roses; "The Tudors" (1487 - 1603), covering Henry VII, the Reformation, Bloody Mary, and Queen Elizabeth; "The Stuarts" (1605-1690) covering the Civil War, the execution of King Charles I, Oliver Cromwell and the Restoration; "The Georgians" (1692 - 1815) covering colonization, the American and French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte and the Battle of Waterloo; "The Victorians" (1812 - 1914) covering the Industrial Revolution, Queen Victoria, the Crimean War and the Edwardians; and finally "The Twentieth Century" (1914 - 1999) covering the two World Wars and their aftermath. And that's just scratching the surface. Dillon also mentions hundreds of other people, events and places, though in saying that, the sheer density of the subject matter means that only the barest details can be explored, and some famous figures are only name-dropped. Yet Dillon does not simply recount historical events, but also takes a few chapters to explore the changing mentalities of people as the world changed around them: concepts such as the Renaissance, the rise of scientific experimentation, different philosophies, the Romantics, technology, and what they all did for political, social and economic development. Specifically for children, "The Story of Britain" is a narrative account of the most important events in Britain's history, often personifying the various countries (ie, "Britain thought..." or "Ireland said...") or using dramatic license in order to convey information (ie, the deaths of the young Princes Edward and Richard are overheard by a boatman rowing toward London Bridge) or descriptive phrases to provide immediacy: "Freedom was in the air, like the smoke from a bonfire that spreads from street to street to make people all over town raise their heads." In much the same tone, Dillon makes many comparisons to the present day in order to better illustrate the points he's trying to make, as when describing the Irish Famine: "Today, most people in Britain and Ireland don't know what it is like to starve. They don't know how it feels to have an aching belly at dinnertime but no dinner to eat, so that the ache grows into a pain. They don't know what it is like to wake in the morning and find the pain still there, sharper and crueler. Children don't know what it is like to ask their parents for food and be given nothing." Dillon focuses on the themes of freedom, representation and human rights, being careful to emphasize the importance of things such as the Magna Carta, the Reform Act, the end of slavery and the suffragettes - in fact, this entire book could be described as Britain's centuries-long journey toward equality and liberty for all. Furthermore, if the book has a message to impart, it's that of the importance of tolerance and the dangers of power.

Often Dillon adds his personal wisdom to the text, and has no qualms about judging the past by today's standards. At one point he says: "Too much power spoils people, and the British had too much power," and later: "Religion stops people from thinking fairly when it makes them sure they're right and everyone else is wrong," as well as "Wise decisions can bring lasting peace, but bad ones lead to centuries of bitterness." Such comments would be disallowed in an adult's reference book, but here they are welcome morals for young readers to absorb. But despite the grim nature of many of the events explored here, Dillon keeps up a sense of optimism, getting across the sense that importance lies not with the fact that slavery, imperialism, war and exploitation existed, but that people - and eventually entire countries - decided that such things were wrong and should be stopped. As the book lengthens, he often makes comparisons; demonstrating how history repeats itself, either tragically: "Revolutions often go wrong. They start with high hopes but end in confusion and fear, and when everything has fallen in to chaos, people turn to the strongest man they can find to rescue them. That was what happened after the civil war in Britain, when Oliver Cromwell took control. And when the French Revolution ended in terror and death, the French turned to an army general called Napoleon Bonaparte." Or ironically: "Eisenhower decided to invade Normandy, from where William the Conqueror had attacked Britain a thousand years before...some of the soldiers remembered being rescued from Dunkirk four years earlier. Now they were going the other way, to win France back again." Or to provide insight: "Today we know plague is spread by fleas carried on rats, but doctors in those days didn't know where it came from and had no medicines to cure it." As well as this, the book is filled with italicized quotes from famous people, including Geoffrey Chaucer, Queen Elizabeth I, Shakespeare, Issac Newton, Charles Dickens, Horatio Nelson, Winston Churchill, plus many more, and Dillon explains the origins of several words and idioms such as "boycott," "Exchequer", and "a man with a South Sea face." Illustrations are done by the wonderful P.J. Lynch, who has provided several striking watercolors depicting everything from the murder of Thomas Beckett to Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar. I've been a big fan of P.J. Lynch's illustrations for many years; my only complaint is that there isn't enough of them here! If you're on the lookout for a well-written, beautifully-designed history book, then "The Story of Britain" would make a fantastic gift for a budding history buff. It is elegantly formatted, with maps and timelines included at the end of each section, as well as a ribbon bookmark and a comprehensive index.

Although it seems to be written in the style of a fairy tale book for children, I found this book to be surprisingly encompassing and vivid despite its short pages. Each era or major event/element of an era with its primary historical figures is talked about in always 1-2 page summaries. Amazingly, the

timeline still flows well enough, the roles of people explained enough that the telling of the history moves very smoothly and explanatorily. You'd think that for a short overview of the past millennium of British history, that there are some things that wouldn't be mentioned. Yet somehow, all the key points are there, and the storytelling format also provides an exceedingly effective view of history as how it came to be rather than simply a series of facts. Even if it might be for children (I'm actually not so sure what the author's original intention was!), this is a wonderful read for anyone who simply wants a concise or introductory read to British (or more specifically, English) history.

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