



# **A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900**

*Andrew Roberts*

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In 1900, where Churchill ended the fourth volume of his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, the United States had not yet emerged onto the world scene as a great power. Meanwhile, the British Empire was in decline but did not yet know it. Any number of other powers might have won primacy in the twentieth century and beyond, including Germany, Russia, possibly even France. Yet the coming century was to belong to the English-speaking peoples, who successively and successfully fought the Kaiser's Germany, Axis aggression and Soviet Communism, and who are now struggling against Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.

Andrew Roberts brilliantly reveals what made the English-speaking people the preeminent political culture since 1900, and how they have defended their primacy from the many assaults upon them. What connects those countries where the majority of the population speaks English as a first language—the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies and Ireland—is far greater than what separates them, and the development of their history since 1900 has been a phenomenal success story.

Authoritative and engrossing, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900* is an enthralling account of the century in which the political culture of one linguistic world-grouping comprehensively triumphed over all others. Roberts's *History* proves especially invaluable as the United States today looks to other parts of the English-speaking world as its best, closest and most dependable allies.

## A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900 Details

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# **From Reader Review A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900 for online ebook**

## **Sammy says**

Morally bankrupt and startlingly ignorant, most offensively when Roberts is putting forward the truthful elements of where Enlightenment reason bests Middle East irrational superstition but doing so with a philosophy at best alarming, at worst absurd!

Perhaps a more in-depth review once my soul calms; in the meantime, Professor Stephen Howe sums up my case: [http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-ent....](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-ent...)

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## **Robert Monk says**

I got about twenty pages into this before I realized that it wasn't my kind of book. It's essentially a triumphalist account of how neato-keen the English and the Americans have been since 1900, and how they're behind everything good that's ever happened in the world. It includes detailed defenses of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, and a joyful explication of how the 80s were the greatest decade in human history. So of I kept reading it, because it's important to read stuff that doesn't just reinforce one's existing prejudices. The last couple of chapters, about periods that I'd actually lived through, had me hoppin' mad, but that's okay.

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## **Brett Goguen says**

Was to pro english. To read it you will find out that the english discovered and invented everything, I think even the wheel and fire!

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## **Rudyard Lynch says**

Before I praise I'd like to say that this book is not for everyone. If you are not already a history buff, this book will not give you a balanced image. He might spend 5 pages on Hollywood's portrayal of British people in 1990s and dedicate a sentence to the North Africa campaign. On the other hand, I don't think the author intended this book to be an authoritative history of the English Speaking Peoples in the 20th century, but more a side history to give a new perspective.

What this author does really well is facts and a new perspective. As a history buff I've learned more facts and anecdotes from this book than any other I read this year/ He is the master of writing interesting stuff that wills tick in your head. The author has a very conservative slant, but he backs up every point he makes with valid and unwarped facts and his arguments are convincing. With this genre of books being normally so overwhelmingly liberal, this is a breath of new perspective. He says a lot of politically incorrect stuff, but the majority of it is actually true, but awful. The book is very well written and I couldn't see myself forcing myself to read through any parts. In conclusion, if you are a history buff, i highly recommend reading this. If you are not a history buff, don't read this book, you won't know half the things he are talking about.

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## Bill says

amazingly right wing, revisionist history. monumental bias. took my breath away at times. but you need to understand how others can interpret the same historical events so differently. when he started to excuse the Amritsar massacre i had serious temptation to burn the book, but then took it as a personal challenge to read every word.

you need to be of stern stuff to read this. you will get fed up of reading how superhuman yet overly humble the english speaking are. try to glean insights around the propaganda.

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## Jason says

This is an attempt to further the work that Churchill did in his four volume History of the English Speaking Peoples, 60 years ago. The thesis of the two is similar – to show how the various nations arising from the common descendants of the British Empire are uniquely qualified to meet world challenges together. Churchill put the emphasis on a common language, history, government, particular type of Christianity, civic liberty. Roberts is far more polemical than Churchill, as he is aiming his work at contemporary detractors of his thesis.

Roberts, an popular English historian, divides his work into four challenges that the English speaking peoples faced largely together: Prussian militarism, Fascism oppression, the communist threat and the modern crisis dealing with Islamic radicalism. I am largely sympathetic to not only how he laid his book out, but his effort to point out how the unique qualities that the English speaking peoples have in common has aided them to arise and fight these adversaries. So in his sense, Roberts is telling a history by common culture, framed against various conflicts, in the midst of contemporary intellectual battles in the Western world against the unique qualities of Anglo civilization.

Yet, Roberts makes his case too hard, and goes too far in his attempt to write the wrong ways history has been understood, and to shine light on where credit is due. He is personally, almost in an ad hominem way, opposed to just about everything Irish. He gives little credit to the influence of Canada in mediating British vs. American disputes. He defends harsh military action, particularly in British India, far beyond what they can be defended. The inaccuracy of some his facts can be irritating to the reader as well.

This is a book worth reading, because Roberts attempts a very hard job, in showing the wide scope of all the major ways that the English speaking peoples literally turned the tide against real evil in the 20th century, and advanced civilization. There are some glaring weaknesses, and the polemical, rather than pure historical slant of this book makes this less than a classic work.

Also, you have to wonder if you can put the post September 11th events on the same category as the world wars and the Cold War conflicts, as Roberts attempts to do, especially considering the great lengths that he goes to show how serious a threat those three prior conflicts were to civilization. There is little that Roberts will not defend, and at times his writing is rambling, and lacks coherence.

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## Josh says

It's hard to summarize this book. Covering the history of the English speaking peoples from 1900-2005 is a formidable task. Roberts tackles the task in a bold and unabashed style. He is polemical but particular with his arguments, and I am often - but not always - persuaded by them. As a Christian reader, my greatest unease with this book is Roberts' labeling of the English speaking people as the last great hope for mankind. Since I regard that office as already held by Another (and better) hope, I think Roberts is blind to some key failures of his earthly hope.

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## Kaiser\_matias says

Factually wrong, poorly edited, written in a way that ignores half his own thesis, and just a weak argument overall, the only redeeming part is that I got it really cheap years ago (I was swayed by the title, which reflects on Churchill's famous series, of which Roberts meant to have a sort-of sequel).

The main point in the book is that the English-speaking peoples (UK, US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, West Indies, but not Ireland and the rest) faced four major threats since 1900 (Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, Communism, Islamic Fundamentalism), and worked together to ensure they defeated them all as "the last best hope for Mankind." However Roberts pays next to no attention to the minor parties here and effectively could have, and should have, just written about the UK and US, as in the 650 pages of this book Canada, Australia, and New Zealand probably get less than 20 pages (and Canada isn't mentioned once after the Second World War).

He's got numerous facts wrong, from claiming Canada had no policy restricting Chinese Immigration at the start of the century (the various Chinese Immigration Acts, which created the head tax, would argue otherwise), notes that the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was dropped at 8.15pm (it was in the morning), Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1994 (it was 1990; he was elected president in 1994), and perhaps most egregiously, a photo of the aftermath of 9/11 claims "11 September 2003." Poor editing also says in successive paragraphs that Operation Barbarossa happened along a 1000, then 2000, mile front, and notes that the UK's entry into the EEC had a negative effect on trade with the Commonwealth, notably Australia, but fails to expand on that in any way.

Roberts is also not afraid to attack nearly every public figure, especially the British prime ministers Clement Atlee and Edward Heath. Heath especially doesn't seem to have been able to do anything right, and Roberts spends pages going on tirades against his various policies and perceived failures as prime minister. Similarly he criticizes US President Jimmy Carter for being one of the worst to hold that office, though fails to really establish a point. The exceptions to this are Thatcher and Reagan, the two of which sound like demigods to Roberts (who is an ardent Thatcherite).

He also constantly accuses "the Left" of ruining everything throughout the century, without expanding on who this group is, and it sounds conspiratorial often. This is especially apparent after the section on Watergate, where he outright accuses Hollywood of creating the idea of fear and distrust in the government amongst the populace, leading to all sorts of issues, or so he claims.

Roberts also reduces his own thesis by going on his personal crusades against issues: for instance on the Suez Crisis, rather than noting the contribution of Canada to helping end it (and giving Canada a mention, which would advance his idea that it was all the English-speaking peoples working together, not just the US and UK), he attacks Anthony Eden and his failings to preserve the British Empire, spending pages arguing that the Empire should have remained, and attacking the weakness of the UN as a body. This lack of representation of non-US and UK figures is really apparent throughout the second half, when as noted Canada is not mentioned once, despite having some major events occur (the last prime minister mentioned by name was Mackenzie King, who retired in 1948); Australia gains a few mentions but only because of its involvement in Vietnam and Iraq, while New Zealand faces a similar fate as Canada.

Roberts also downplays the major atrocities that the US and UK committed throughout, arguing that colonisation of the Philippines, for example, was good for the locals, as it civilised them. He argues that anything bad was not really that bad, often invoking the Holocaust or the Gulag as a comparable, but when one has to use the worst excesses to defend the policy, it is likely not a good policy. He also argues that the Iraq War was justified, and even insists the US and UK should have invaded faster, while trying to justify a connection between 9/11 and Iraq (something even Bush and Blair have moved away from).

The quality of work is also apparent in the sources used throughout. Often Roberts will cite unnamed historians and quote them, neglecting to cite them; he will rarely give a name to a quote from a historian, though a few do occur throughout. The bulk of his sources, however come from the *\*Times Literary Supplement\** and other newspaper-based sources, which while a respected source of news and opinion, is hardly something to base a serious history off of.

Overall, it reads like a poorly-written, hastily-done work, and should not be considered a reputable book on anything related to its perceived topic. As Roberts himself notes in the introduction, "this book is emphatically not intended to be a comprehensive history of the English-speaking peoples, which would be impossible to write in one volume and anyhow probably rather dull to read;" he should have taken his own advice and avoided the topic altogether, for this sorry excuse of a book desecrates the idea of such a subject and is an insult to the works of Churchill.

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## **Stephen Hayes says**

This is a strange book. It purports to be a continuation of Winston Churchill's work of the same title, which ended at the end of the 19th century. I haven't read Churchill's work, so I can't compare it with that, but the point of view of the author seems to be set at the end of the 19th century; I can only describe it as "neojingoism". It's the kind of outlook I could imagine my grandfather having, if he'd been alive today, and not experienced any of the intervening period since the beginning of the First World War. Perhaps one could also call it neo-Edwardian. It reminds me of the song, I think by Flanders and Swan:

The English, the English, the English are best  
I wouldn't give tuppence for all of the rest.

And that is the viewpoint that permeates the whole book.

In spite of this quaint anachronistic approach, however, the book is quite well written, and for the most part, not boring, and at times entertaining. At least, since the author makes his own point of view obvious, one is forewarned about some of the biases. There are quite frequent asides for sermonettes on the virtues of

capitalism or the English-speaking peoples, or pointing out the vices of lesser breeds who don't share the virtues of the English.

Roberts rightly deplores the use of hyperbole in describing atrocities committed by English-speaking peoples. I must say I agree with him about the too-easy flinging about of terms like "Holocaust" and "genocide" for events that are nothing of the kind, and that the over-use of such terms diminishes the seriousness of the events that such terms were coined to describe. But Roberts spoils his argument by his own exculpatory descriptions, when he says (on page 312f), "However bad the late-Victorians might have been it is a gross error of judgment to compare anything they might have inadvertently done to the deliberate Holocaust against European Jewry in the 1940s." It's the "might... inadvertently" that gives the game away. The message is clear: they couldn't have done it, because they were English, of course, and even if they did do it, they did it in a fit of absence of mind.

Roberts describes in considerable detail the horrific injuries caused by the poison gas Saddam Hussein used against Kurdish insurgents, but glosses over the injuries caused by the atomic bombs dropped by the English-speaking people on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (justified, of course, since they were English-speaking). And not a word about the response of the English-speaking peoples to insurgents in Fallujah.

Towards the end of the book (p. 636) he posts a disclaimer: "It is emphatically not that the English-speaking people are inherently better or superior people that accounts for their success, therefore, but that they have perfected better systems of government, ones that have tended to increase representation and accountability, while minimising jobbery, nepotism and corruption." Unfortunately, however, in the other 647 pages he seems to be trying to create the impression that it is precisely because of their innate superiority that the English-speaking peoples have done what they have done.

One of the other curious things about the book is that when dealing with Commonwealth participation in the two world wars, South Africa has been almost entirely written out of the story. There is mention of Australia, and New Zealand, and the place Gallipoli in WW I holds for them. There is mention of Canada and Vimy Ridge. There is mention of the West Indies and Eire. But not a word about South African troops, of Delville Wood or the sinking of the *Mendi*. This omission is so consistent that it sticks out like a sore thumb.

All history is selective, and historians select and emphasise the points that seem most important to them, and give less emphasis to other points. But this is not merely a matter of less emphasis; it seems to be a conscious and deliberate exclusion, and one wonders why.

The book is hardly a history, in the sense of a coherent narrative. There are occasional illuminating stories about particular historical incidents, but little to connect these with others. Huge chunks of history are skipped over, and anyone reading this to get a view of an era is likely to get a very distorted picture.

Throughout the book the author seems to be wanting to have his cake and eat it. He argues that *realpolitik* is more important than occupying the moral high ground, but then says that *realpolitik* **IS** the high moral ground, if its practitioners are English-speaking, of course. So, for example, he says of the detente policies in the Cold War in the 1970s:

*Detente* had anyhow meant very different things in the East and the West. The West saw it as a way of lowering tension, 'in the hope that it might disengage from the dreadful and even apocalyptic tests of strength it was inflicting on the rest of the world'. By contrast, in 1976 Leonid Brezhnev stated, '*Detente* does not in any way rescind, nor can it rescind or alter, the laws of class struggle. We do not conceal the fact that we see in *detente* a path towards the

creation of more favourable conditions for the peaceful construction of socialism and communism.'

But where is the contrast? It is clear that both sides saw it as a breathing space that might create the possibility of getting what they wanted relatively peacefully without Mutually Assured Destruction. Brezhnev's words could be paraphrased to precisely express the attitude of the West: '*Detente* does not in any way rescind, nor can it rescind or alter, the laws of the free market. We do not conceal the fact that we see in *detente* a path towards the creation of more favourable conditions for the peaceful construction of capitalism and the market.'

And in the 1980s it was the West, under Reagan and Thatcher, that resumed the arms race -- something that Roberts clearly approves of, since they were English-speaking and Brezhnev was not.

Towards the end, the "history" label wears very thin indeed. It is an undisguised political rant. The author says very little about what happened, and a great deal about why it was right that it should have happened the way it did (if the English-speaking people were responsible). The contradictions multiply. It is a good and noble thing to speak the truth to power, unless that power happens to be American, Then it becomes anti-Americanism, which is, in the author's view, a Bad Thing.

So reading the book gives me the queer anachronistic feeling that a contemporary of my grandfather (who served on the British side in the Anglo-Boer War in an irregular unit called Loxton's Horse) had fallen asleep on 31 December 1900 and, like Rip van Winkle, woken up a century later with his Victorian-Edwardian jingoism intact, and decided to write about the previous century from that point of view.

It's like a parody of a parody. There are several books that parody the simplistic history of school history textbooks. There was an English one called 1066 and all that and a South African one called Blame it on van Riebeeck. The latter noted that in the 19th century in the Eastern Cape there were nine Kaffir Wars, and that these wars had Causes and Results. And it tabulated the wars with their causes and results:

1st Kaffir War - Cause: the Kaffirs

2nd Kaffir War - Cause: the Kaffirs

and so on for all nine.

And yes, there were school history books in the 1940s and 1950s that took that approach.

But Roberts is writing a book for adults, yet adopts the same kind of simplistic approach. In any war that the English-speaking peoples were involved in, there are no nuances, there is no ambiguity, there are Causes -- the non-English-speaking people (the Boers, the Germans etc), and there are Results: the English-speaking people won, and saved the world for democracy, capitalism, and *realpolitik*.

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## Sam says

What was I thinking when I picked up this bloated book, almost absent-mindedly, along with several other lighter fictions this past winter? This "history" is more an imperial neocon fantasy than a serious examination of the complex forces that empowered and challenged the English-speaking world in the last century. I was really hoping for a comparative study of the histories of the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. (One will not find here many kind words for the Irish, those unruly, Catholic louts.) I found it most

interesting that Roberts feels that the English-speaking world of the 20th Century will look to future generations not as separate nations with a common tongue, but more like an empire, like the Roman Empire looks to us now in hindsight. So in love with the English is he.

Historians should be truth seekers. Historians should apply rational forensics to documented events. I do believe that the West has made many great contributions to human civilization, but please don't just say that some of the greatest injustices of the 20th Century were just unavoidable or necessary evils. Roberts strikes me as the sort of elitist historian that writes what ever he feels will cheer up the home team. These little vignettes of his should have been serialized in "Parade" magazine...or printed on the back of sugar packets!

I did try my best to look past the rosy-tint of his jingo-narrative. I found myself jumping forth to the index more than usual. I was indeed interested in some of the snapshots of New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, but they were too few. As for the United States, Roberts makes some astonishing claims. If I am to believe my own eyes, FDR was an early neocon. There's not as much on Hoover as I might expect, either. Hmmm. After 300 pages of very tenuous historic comparisons, I skipped to the sections on Vietnam and Iraq where the real doublespeak begins right where it left off. Shame on leftists and liberals and the Clintons? Check. The Invasion of Iraq was based on "bad intelligence" but worth it? Imperialism is a necessary evil to spread civilization? Check.

I would only recommend this to the Bush White House Book Club -- expiration date January 19th, 2009. Because if you are looking for a good explanation as to how the Bush Administration could have possibly justified the war in Iraq, this is the polemic for you.

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### ♥ Ibrahim ♥ says

I love the way he writes, analyzes history events and drawing lessons from them. I love his being patriotic and I can't help but say with him, "I am English too!" You are bound to love everything he is about and his outlook on American-English history. I can read this book over and over again and still find huge pleasure reading it.

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### Christopher Craig says

The author obviously has a point of view, but really all authors do and at least he is up front about it. My only complaint about the book is that he flatly states "the New Deal worked" (though I'll note he avoids peddling the counter-historical assertion that democracy was about to fail in the US before Roosevelt) while criticizing Attlee for wasting Marshall Plan moneys that could have been used on reconstruction on Taylorist plans that look to me substantially similar to the New Deal.

He also deserves the complaints that he doesn't like the Irish and that he is a fanatic anglophile, almost always believing the English are in the right. This certainly shows in his book, but he gives evidence to back up his positions and honestly you should have figured that out from the title.

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## Todd Stockslager says

Review title: Fundamental decency

You may approach Roberts simultaneously vast and dense subject with some trepidation, as I did until I realized that my concern over such a potentially pejorative title reflected my unlettered ignorance, not Roberts' unprincipled linguistic imperialism. I was quickly shamed to realize that in fact Roberts book is intended to serve as a companion to and continuation of Winston Churchill's four-volume history of the English-speaking peoples up to 1900, and thus stands on firm historical ground.

At the turn of the 20th century, the English-speaking peoples are defined this way in a letter that Roberts quotes (p. 6):

Local freedom around a common center (British crown)

Common interests expressed as a common law

Common language expressed in a common literature

Shaped by common Christianity

While his argument is not primarily financial (these statistics make their appearance on p. 574), Roberts' reports a startling fact that cements his argument about the solidarity, ascendancy, and beneficence of English-speaking people's very well: The gross economic worth of the world's population whose first or second language is English is almost four times that of the next language group (Japanese), and larger than that of the rest of the world combined.

In fact, Roberts posits two key drivers of the political, military, cultural, and financial ascendance of the 20th-century English-speaking peoples--open capital markets ruled by law, and technical superiority in aviation (beginning in the first half) and computer/information technology (in the second half). The motivator that projects these superiorities onto history: individual freedom, applied with moral and ethical moorings, to personal benefit.

Sure, there have been times when the English-speaking peoples have been stupid, self-seeking, isolationist, war-mongering, terroristic, fascistic, and evil, as Roberts points out along the way. But he also takes pains to point out and correct mistaken perceptions of anti-English historical, political, and nationalistic motivation: far more often the English-speaking peoples have been smart and ethical in their actions, defending peace, prosperity, and respect for peoples and law that benefits every nation and language group on earth. If you are inclined toward socialism, communism, or anti-British/-American feelings of any political or cultural stripe you should read and study Roberts closely to understand and hopefully agree with some if not most of his arguments, but you will most likely not--and most likely not like much of what you read if you do. Roberts' arguments may seem profoundly conservative and pro-British or pro-American at times, but they are so well-argued and validated that it is hard to admit other than that he is in the main correct. His Britishness comes through most clearly as he points with quiet pride to the high-water mark of British world domination (the moment the German fleet was scuttled at the end of The Great War), and a quiet sense of loss at the point of ascendancy of America in the "Special Relationship" (1943 planning for the European invasion).

Another simple but profound observation Roberts makes (which I have observed first hand on business trips into the UK) is a side effect of the disintegration and moving apart of the British Commonwealth nations and the movement of the UK into the European Union: while former European enemies who faced each other on battlefields in two great world wars go through the faster lines with less scrutiny set aside for the European union, allies from Canada, Australia, and other Commonwealth nations who fought side-by-side on those

same battlefields stand in the slower lines with greater scrutiny reserved for immigration from other countries. Yes, that may be a small thing, but it is a powerful reminder of lost solidarity and common purpose amongst the English-speaking people to the detriment of all the world's nations and people.

With such broad scope, Roberts narrative is not a day-by-day or even country-by-country history, and at times seems to resort to headline-scanning and quick-cut editing to move the narrative along to keep its mass down to a book that can be printed in one volume and still be held in the hand! Roberts constructs his main narrative around the four main threats to the English-speaking peoples: Prussian militarism in World War I, Fascist aggression in World War II, Soviet Communism in the Cold War, and Islamic Fundamentalism in the war against the West that began in the 1990s and reached its high-water mark with the September 11 attacks. While the English-speaking peoples lead the battle against all of these threats and defeated them, in this last battle Roberts says that "the English-speaking peoples' fundamental decency was allowed to compromise their safety."

Roberts thesis, and whether you agree with it, can be neatly summed up in his use of the argument without quotes of irony or sarcasm around it.

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### **Will James says**

An absolutely vast and - unashamedly - biased account of the last 100 years of English-speaking history. Whether you agree with Roberts or not it can't be denied that he has chosen a narrative and just run with it. I can't say I'm entirely convinced that every single event in the 20th century can be explained through the prism of the 'English-speaking Peoples' but it sure is an interesting notion nonetheless.

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### **Geoffrey says**

This books is filled with the most insignificant details that inexorably weigh down its significance. As a progressive, I was hoping to find a history book that would serve as a good balance to my own views, fill me with salient anecdotes, insights, and viewpoint from the right of center, but I was sadly let down. This book is studded with historical information of little use to a proper understanding of 20th century events. After a 130 pages, I gave up, notwithstanding a promise to myself that I would endure the worst to complete it. It simply is not worth my time, energy, or even need for self-flagellation in the face of the author`s mighty intellect, to finish this book.

I could care less what the rates of population loss due to World War I conscriptions among the various British Commonwealth nations. Nor am I particularly interested in reading who wagered a bet on Churchill`s rise in the British political system, nor the so many other hundreds of other insignificant details of this boring book.

Perhaps if the writer had a better sense of proportion as to what is important in laying out the history of the so called English peoples, and didn`t indulge himself in the impertinent anecdotes culled from the back pages of 100 year old London newspapers, this book would have some saving graces. But he`s more interested in displaying some weird perception of the importance of insignificant events than in explaining any of the causes for the great wars, conflicts, issues of the 20th century. And mostly he just doesn`t get it.

Take women`s rights for example. He just doesn`t get the suffrage movement, nor its validity. All he sees is that with the woman in the workforce, wages can be manipulated low. He`s so misogynistic, he doesn`t see the need for feminine pride, a woman`s right to her place in society that would be fulfilling for those women who have more to give than just breastfeeding the tots. And these comments are from a man, and I find him offensive. He doesn`t get it, never will, the book is a pile of crap.

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