

London: A History (Modern Library Chronicles Series Book 18)



In its two thousand years of history, London has ruled a rainy island and a globe-spanning empire, it has endured plague and fire and bombing, it has nurtured and destroyed poets and kings, revolutionaries and financiers, geniuses and visionaries of every stripe. To distill the magic and the majesty of this infinitely enthralling city into a single brief volume would seem an impossible task yet acclaimed biographer and novelist A. N. Wilson brilliantly accomplishes it in *London: A History*. Founded by the Romans, London was a flourishing provincial capital before falling into ruin with the rest of the Roman Empire. Centuries passed before the city rose to prominence once again when William the Conqueror chose to be crowned king in Westminster Abbey. In Chaucer's day, London Bridge opened the way for expansion over the Thames. By the time Shakespeare's plays were being mounted at the Globe, London was a dense, seething, and explosively growing metropolis a city of brothels and taverns and delicate new palaces and pleasure gardens. With deftly sketched vignettes and memorable portraits in miniature, Wilson conjures up the essence of London through the ages: high finance and gambling during the Georgian age, John Nash's stunning urban makeover at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the waves of building and immigration that transformed London beyond recognition during the reign of Queen Victoria, the devastation of the two world wars, the painful and corrupt postwar rebuilding effort, and finally the glamorous, polyglot, expensive, and sometimes ridiculous London of today. Every age had its heroes and villains, from church builder Christopher Wren to jail breaker Jack Sheppard, from urbane wit Samuel Johnson to wartime prime minister Winston Churchill, and Wilson places each one in the drama of London's history. Exuberant,

opinionated, surprising, often funny, A. N. Wilson's London is the perfect match of author and subject. In a one short irresistible volume, Wilson gives us the essence of the people, the architecture, the intrigue, the art and literature and history that make London one of the most fascinating cities in the world. From the Hardcover edition.

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