

wolfson prize for history

wolfson prize for history stands as one of the most prestigious awards dedicated to recognizing outstanding achievements in the field of historical writing. Established to honor exceptional historical scholarship, the Wolfson Prize for History celebrates works that combine rigorous research with engaging narrative style. This award not only highlights contributions to historical knowledge but also encourages public interest in history through accessible and compelling publications. Over the years, the prize has become a benchmark for excellence among historians, authors, and academic institutions. This article explores the origins, criteria, notable recipients, and the impact of the Wolfson Prize for History on the discipline and public understanding of history. Additionally, it provides insights into how the award has evolved and its role in promoting historical scholarship worldwide. The following sections will guide readers through a comprehensive overview of this esteemed accolade.

- History and Establishment of the Wolfson Prize for History
- Criteria and Selection Process
- Notable Winners and Their Contributions
- Impact on Historical Scholarship and Public Engagement
- Wolfson Foundation and Its Role in Promoting History

History and Establishment of the Wolfson Prize for History

The Wolfson Prize for History was founded by the Wolfson Foundation, a charitable organization established in 1955 with the aim of supporting excellence in a variety of fields including science, health, education, and the arts. The prize specifically targeting history was introduced to recognize outstanding historical writing that combines scholarly rigor with readability for a broader audience. Since its inception, the award has been given annually to authors whose work demonstrates originality, depth of research, and the ability to engage readers beyond the academic community.

Origins and Purpose

The Wolfson Prize for History was created to address a need for recognizing historical works that are not only academically credible but also accessible to the general public. The founders believed that history should be appreciated not just by scholars but by society at large, fostering a deeper understanding of the past and its relevance today. By incentivizing historians to produce high-quality, readable works, the prize has encouraged the dissemination of historical knowledge in an impactful manner.

Evolution Over Time

Since its establishment, the Wolfson Prize for History has evolved in its scope and prestige. Initially focused on British history, the award has expanded to include works covering global historical topics. The criteria and judging process have also been refined to maintain the prize's reputation for excellence. Over decades, the award has gained international recognition, attracting submissions from prominent historians worldwide.

Criteria and Selection Process

The Wolfson Prize for History is distinguished by its rigorous criteria and meticulous selection process, ensuring that only the most deserving works receive the honor. The prize emphasizes not only scholarly merit but also the quality of writing and the ability to communicate historical insights effectively.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the Wolfson Prize for History, submissions must be published works of history written in English. The works should demonstrate original historical research based on primary sources or innovative analysis of existing materials. Both academic historians and independent scholars are eligible, provided their work meets the standards set by the judging panel.

Judging Panel and Evaluation

The judging panel for the Wolfson Prize typically comprises distinguished historians, academics, and experts in historical writing. They assess entries based on several key criteria:

- Originality of research and contribution to historical knowledge
- Quality and clarity of writing style
- Depth of analysis and critical insight
- Relevance and appeal to a general readership
- Overall impact on the field of history

The judges engage in thorough discussions and debates before selecting the winner, ensuring that the awarded work exemplifies excellence in historical scholarship and communication.

Notable Winners and Their Contributions

The Wolfson Prize for History has recognized a diverse array of historians whose works have significantly influenced the understanding of history. These winners often bring fresh perspectives, groundbreaking research, and compelling narratives to complex historical subjects.

Prominent Recipients

Over the years, several notable historians have received the Wolfson Prize for History, including:

- Eric Hobsbawm, for his influential works on the history of the 19th and 20th centuries
- Antony Beevor, recognized for his vivid accounts of World War II
- Mary Beard, acclaimed for her scholarship on ancient Rome and her ability to engage a wide audience
- Simon Schama, honored for his narrative history blending art, culture, and politics
- Margaret MacMillan, awarded for her insightful research on international relations and diplomacy

Impact of Awarded Works

The winning books often become essential reading within both academic and popular history circles. Their influence extends to educational curricula, public discourse, and cultural understanding, demonstrating the Wolfson Prize's role in shaping historical knowledge and appreciation.

Impact on Historical Scholarship and Public Engagement

The Wolfson Prize for History has played a significant role in promoting historical scholarship that resonates beyond academia. By rewarding works that combine research excellence with readability, the prize has helped bridge the gap between scholars and the public.

Encouraging Accessible Scholarship

The emphasis on clear and engaging writing encourages historians to present

their research in ways that captivate and educate a broad audience. This approach enhances public understanding of history and underscores its relevance to contemporary issues.

Influence on Publishing and Academia

The prestige associated with the Wolfson Prize often increases the visibility of winning authors and their works, leading to wider distribution and greater impact. Academic institutions and publishers view the award as a mark of quality, often influencing decisions about research funding, teaching, and publication priorities.

Wolfson Foundation and Its Role in Promoting History

The Wolfson Foundation, the sponsor of the Wolfson Prize for History, is dedicated to supporting excellence across various disciplines, with a longstanding commitment to the humanities and historical research. The foundation's support extends beyond the prize to include funding for libraries, museums, and educational programs.

Commitment to Cultural and Educational Projects

Through grants and awards, the Wolfson Foundation fosters the development of resources and initiatives that enhance historical research and public engagement. This includes funding for digitization projects, exhibitions, and academic conferences that promote the dissemination of historical knowledge.

Future Prospects and Continuing Legacy

As the Wolfson Prize for History continues to evolve, the foundation remains committed to nurturing innovative and accessible historical scholarship. Its ongoing support ensures that history remains a vibrant and influential discipline, contributing to a well-informed society.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Wolfson History Prize?

The Wolfson History Prize is a prestigious British award given annually to promote and encourage standards of excellence in the writing of history for the general public.

Who established the Wolfson History Prize?

The Wolfson History Prize was established by the Wolfson Foundation in 1972 to recognize outstanding historical writing.

What types of history books are eligible for the Wolfson History Prize?

The prize is awarded to history books written in English that are accessible to the general public, covering any historical period or theme.

How is the Wolfson History Prize judged?

A panel of historians and experts reviews the submissions based on scholarly merit, readability, and contribution to historical understanding.

Can non-British authors win the Wolfson History Prize?

Yes, authors of any nationality can win the prize, provided their work is published in the United Kingdom and written in English.

What impact does winning the Wolfson History Prize have on an author's career?

Winning the prize enhances an author's reputation, increases book sales, and often leads to greater public and academic recognition.

Where can I find a list of past winners of the Wolfson History Prize?

A list of past winners is available on the official Wolfson Foundation website and various literary and historical award databases online.

Additional Resources

1. The Year of the French by Thomas Flanagan

This historical novel explores the 1798 Irish Rebellion through the eyes of a young Irishman. Combining meticulous research with vivid storytelling, Flanagan brings to life the complexities of Irish nationalism and British imperialism. The book has been praised for its rich character development and immersive portrayal of a turbulent period in Irish history.

2. The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648-1815 by Tim Blanning

Blanning offers a comprehensive overview of European history from the Peace of Westphalia to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The narrative weaves political, social, and cultural history to provide a nuanced understanding of Europe's transformation. This work exemplifies the kind of scholarship recognized by the Wolfson Prize for bringing clarity and insight to complex historical periods.

3. Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947 by Christopher Clark

Clark's book traces the history of Prussia from its early origins to its dissolution after World War II. The author delves into the political, military, and cultural factors that shaped Prussia's influence in Europe. Praised for its balanced analysis, this book sheds light on a state that played a pivotal role in shaping modern Germany.

4. *The Struggle for Mastery: The Penguin History of Britain 1066-1284* by David Carpenter

David Carpenter provides a detailed account of medieval England during the High Middle Ages, focusing on the consolidation of royal power and the development of institutions. The book examines key events such as the Norman Conquest and the reign of Henry III with clarity and scholarly rigor. It has been recognized for making medieval history accessible and engaging to a broad audience.

5. *Empire of the Sikhs: The Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* by Patwant Singh

This biography chronicles the life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh Empire in the early 19th century. Patwant Singh portrays the complexities of Sikh politics, culture, and military prowess that allowed the empire to thrive amid British colonial expansion. The book offers valuable insights into a lesser-known but significant chapter of South Asian history.

6. *The Great War and Modern Memory* by Paul Fussell

Fussell's classic work examines how World War I influenced literature and collective memory. By analyzing soldiers' writings and cultural responses, the book reveals the profound impact of the war on modern consciousness. This influential study has shaped the way historians and literary scholars understand the cultural legacy of the Great War.

7. *Jerusalem: The Biography* by Simon Sebag Montefiore

Montefiore's sweeping biography of Jerusalem spans thousands of years, capturing the city's religious, political, and cultural significance. The book draws on a vast array of sources to depict the myriad peoples and events that have shaped Jerusalem's tumultuous history. Its engaging narrative style and scholarly depth have earned it critical acclaim.

8. *The Plantagenets: The Warrior Kings and Queens Who Made England* by Dan Jones

Dan Jones recounts the dramatic history of the Plantagenet dynasty, which ruled England from the 12th to the 15th centuries. Through vivid storytelling and detailed research, the book explores the personalities and events that defined medieval England. It has been celebrated for making scholarly history accessible and entertaining.

9. *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* by Simon Schama

Schama offers a richly detailed narrative of the French Revolution, focusing on the social, political, and cultural upheavals that transformed France. The book emphasizes the human experiences behind the revolutionary events, blending rigorous scholarship with compelling storytelling. It is widely regarded as a landmark work in the field of revolutionary history.

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the PG-Tips chimpanzees trained by Molly Badham, John DeLorean's 'gull-wing' car, or the new British Library designed by Colin St John Wilson-though, as rounded and balanced accounts, Oxford DNB biographies also set these events in the wider context of a person's life story. Authoritative and accessible, the biographies in this volume are written by specialist authors, many of them leading figures in their field. Here you will find Michael Billington on Harold Pinter, Michael Crick on George Best, Richard Davenport-Hines on Anita Roddick, Brenda Hale on Rose Heilbron, Roy Hattersley on James Callaghan, Simon Heffer on John Profumo, Douglas Hurd on Edward Heath, Alex Jennings on Paul Scofield, Hermione Lee on Pat Kavanagh, Geoffrey Wheatcroft on Conor Cruise O'Brien, and Peregrine Worsthorne on Bill Deedes. Many in this volume are, naturally, household names. But a good number are also remembered for lives away from the headlines. What in the 1980s became 'Thatcherism' owed much to behind the scenes advice from Ralph Harris and Alfred Sherman; children who learned to read with Ladybird Books must thank their creator, Douglas Keen; while, without its first producer, Verity Lambert, there would have been no Doctor Who. Others are 'ordinary' people capable of remarkable acts. Take, for instance, Arthur Bywater who over two days in 1944 cleared thousands of bombs from a Liverpool munitions factory following an explosion-only to do the same, months later, in an another factory. Awarded the George Cross and the George Medal, Bywater remains the only non-combatant to have received Britain's two highest awards for civilian bravery.

wolfson prize for history: My History Antonia Fraser, 2015-10-13 The doyenne of the historical biography turns the spotlight on her childhood and early life. Antonia Fraser's memoir of growing up is not only an attempt to recapture the experiences of her Oxford childhood and youth--in Shakespeare's phrase, to call back yesterday, bid time return. It is also a chronicle of the progress of her love of History since her first discovery of it as a private pleasure when she was a child in the 1930s--her history, as she believed it to be, for the study of History (as her books subsequently attest) has always been an essential part of the enjoyment of life. When Antonia received as a Christmas present a copy of *Our Island Story* by H.E. Marshall in 1936, it engendered a lifelong interest in History, firing her emotion to write the story that thirty years later became the globally bestselling *Mary Queen of Scots*. Antonia's mother, born Elizabeth Harman, was the daughter of a Harley Street doctor; her father, Frank Pakenham, was the second son of the Earl of Longford. With the coming of war, Antonia's happy childhood in the Sussex of Puck of Pook's Hill was succeeded by an evacuation to an Elizabethan manor house near Oxford, which had a profound effect on her imagination. A North Oxford upbringing, including life at the Dragon School, followed, and later a Catholic convent which she attended as a Protestant and emerged as a Catholic. In the meantime, holidays included adventures with relations in Anglo-Ireland at Dunsany Castle and Pakenham Hall, before rather less glamorous work experience as 'Miss Tony' in the hat department of a famous London store. After Oxford University came a job in publishing, a fortunate coincidence for one whose sole ambition was to write--and to write history. Her magical memoir, told with inimitable humour and style, is an unforgettable account of the making of a great narrative historian.

wolfson prize for history: Conspiracy on Cato Street Vic Gatrell, 2022-05-12 Tells the immensely dramatic but neglected story of one of the most sensational plots in British history.

wolfson prize for history: **Hitler's Scandinavian Legacy** Jill Stephenson, John Gilmour, 2013-06-06 The Scandinavian [Nordic] countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland experienced the effects of the German invasion in April 1940 in very different ways. Collaboration, resistance, and co-belligerency were only some of the short-term consequences. Each country's historiography has undergone enormous changes in the seventy years since the invasion, and this collection by leading historians examines the immediate effects of Hitler's aggression as well as the long-term legacies for each country's self-image and national identity. The Scandinavian countries' war experience fundamentally changed how each nation functioned in the post-war world by altering political structures, the dynamics of their societies, the inter-relationships between the countries and the popular view of the wartime political and social responses to totalitarian threats. Hitler was no respecter of the rights of the Scandinavian nations but he and his associates dealt surprisingly

differently with each of them. In the post-war period, this has caused problems of interpretation for political and cultural historians alike. Drawing on the latest research, this volume will be a welcome addition to the comparative histories of Scandinavia and the Second World War.

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wolfson prize for history: *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945* Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp, Richard Overly, 2011-06-30 This is the first book to treat bombing during WWII as a European phenomenon and not just the 'Blitz' on Britain and Germany. With Western Europe now at the heart of a united continent, it is even more difficult to explain how only 70 years ago European states destroyed much of the urban landscape from the air. There were many blitzes between 1940 and 1945 with an estimated 700,000 people killed. The purpose of this book is to provide the basis for a comparison of the experience of western states under the impact of bombing. In particular, it considers the political, cultural and social responses to bombing rather than the military, strategic and social dimensions which have formed the core of the discussion hitherto. This book will correct the popular perception of the British Blitz as the key bombing experience by exposing the reality of life under the bombs for communities as far apart as Brest, Palermo, and Rostock. An international panel of historians consider the issues raised amidst the bombing of human rights and protection of civilians in this seminal event in 20th history.

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impressive breadth of interests was underpinned by tremendous respect for the subjects of his enquiry. Brilliantly equipped as Rose was to witness, detail and report, the second volume of his journals vividly portrays some of the most important events and people of the last century, from the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 to Kenneth Rose's death in 2014.

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wolfson prize for history: *Suffering and Happiness in England 1550-1850: Narratives and Representations* Michael J. Braddick, Joanna Innes, 2017-07-26 *Suffering and Happiness in England 1550-1850* pays tribute to one of the leading historians working on early modern England, Paul Slack, and his work as a historian, and enters into discussion with the rapidly growing body of work on the 'history of emotions'. The themes of suffering and happiness run through Paul Slack's publications; the first being more prominent in his early work on plague and poverty, the second in his more recent work on conceptual frameworks for social thought and action. Though he has not himself engaged directly with the history of emotions, assembling essays on these themes provides an opportunity to do that. The chapters explore in turn shifting discourses of happiness and suffering over time; the deployment of these discourses for particular purposes at specific moments; and their relationship to subjective experience. In their introduction, the editors note the very diverse approaches that can be taken to the topic; they suggest that it is best treated not as a discrete field of enquiry but as terrain in which many paths may fruitfully cross. The history of emotions has much to offer as a site of encounter between historians with diverse knowledge, interests, and skills.

wolfson prize for history: *History, Religion, and Culture* Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, Brian Young, 2000-05-01 Modern British intellectual history has been a particularly flourishing field of enquiry in recent years, and these two tightly integrated volumes contain major new essays by almost all of its leading proponents. The contributors examine the history of British ideas over the past two centuries from a number of perspectives that together constitute a major new overview of the subject. *History, Religion, and Culture* begins with eighteenth-century historiography, especially Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. It takes up different aspects of the place of religion in nineteenth-century cultural and political life, such as attitudes towards the native religions of India, the Victorian perception of Oliver Cromwell, and the religious sensibility of John Ruskin. Finally, in discussions which range up to the middle of the twentieth century, the volume explores relations between scientific ideas about change or development and assumptions about the nature and growth of the national community.

wolfson prize for history: *Imperial Migrations* E. Morier-Genoud, M. Cahen, 2012-12-15 This volume investigates what role colonial communities and diaspora have had in shaping the Portuguese empire and its heritage, exploring topics such as Portuguese migration to Africa, the Ismaili and the Swiss presence in Mozambique, the Goanese in East Africa, the Chinese in Brazil, and the history of the African presence in Portugal.

wolfson prize for history: *Exit Strategies and State Building* Richard Caplan, 2012-08-10 In

the past two decades, states and multilateral organizations have devoted considerable resources toward efforts to stabilize peace and rebuild war-torn societies in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. Despite these prodigious efforts, there has been relatively little consideration of the critical questions arising from the end game of state-building operations. In *Exit Strategies and State Building*, sixteen leading scholars and practitioners focus on relevant historical and contemporary cases of exit to provide a comprehensive overview of this crucial issue. By examining the major challenges associated with the conclusion of international state-building operations and the requirements for the maintenance of peace in the period following exit, this book provides unique perspective on a critical aspect of military and political intervention. Deftly researched, *Exit Strategies and State Building* sheds new light on what is not merely an academic issue, but also a pressing global policy concern.

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