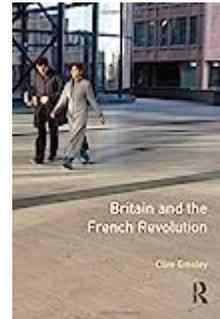


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Clive Emsley. *Britain and the French Revolution.* Harlow, England: Longman, 2000. 134 pp. \$11.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-36961-0.



Reviewed by Gary Kates (Pomona College)

Published on H-Albion (May, 2001)

This large pamphlet-like book is a convenient way to become fully updated on the impact of the French Revolution upon Britain. And certainly no one is more qualified to guide us than Clive Emsley, who in a series of important articles and books, has already established himself as among the very best historians in this area. Here his lively prose, clear thinking, and smart decisions regarding selections yields a volume that is pleasurable in addition to being informative. Like all volumes in this series (of which Emsley is also the general co-editor), this is a classroom textbook divided into narrative and documentary sections, supplemented by a comprehensive bibliography. Emsley has selected some thirty documents, many of which are difficult to find and some may be first published here. Reflecting recent scholarship, he gives appropriate emphasis to anti-Jacobin movements that gained popularity as the war with France intensified. He also offers a fresh perspective on events in the Caribbean noting, for example, that between 1793 and 1801 over half of British troop fatalities were caused not by war but by yellow fever and malaria.

While the quality of the volume is above dispute, I

wonder what kind of classroom it is aimed for. Perhaps Britain has college curricula aimed for this volume. But it doesn't seem to have much relevance for university studies in the United States. The topic is simply too advanced for undergraduates. We may want them learning about the French Revolution and eighteenth-century England both in some in-depth fashion, but we would generally regard the issue of the revolution's impact on a neighboring country to be marginal. The topic suits graduate courses, but the book's format is a bit too simplistic for that audience, since it avoids a sophisticated argument. In the end, the volume seems a perfect vehicle to help a professor supplement his or her outdated lecture notes or to help a student initiate a major term paper.

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