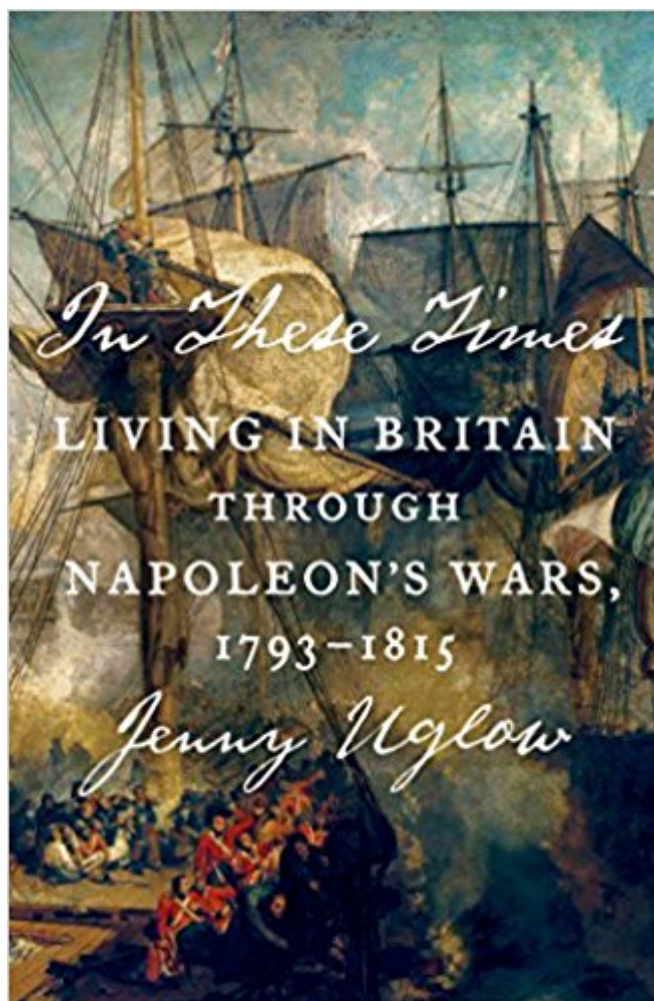


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# In These Times: Living In Britain Through Napoleon's Wars, 1793-1815



## Synopsis

A beautifully observed history of the British home front during the Napoleonic Wars by a celebrated historian. We know the thrilling, terrible stories of the battles of the Napoleonic Wars—but what of those left behind? The people on a Norfolk farm, in a Yorkshire mill, a Welsh iron foundry, an Irish village, a London bank, a Scottish mountain? The aristocrats and paupers, old and young, butchers and bakers and candlestick makers—how did the war touch their lives? Jenny Uglow, the prizewinning author of *The Lunar Men* and *Nature's Engraver*, follows the gripping back-and-forth of the first global war but turns the news upside down, seeing how it reached the people. Illustrated by the satires of Gillray and Rowlandson and the paintings of Turner and Constable, and combining the familiar voices of Austen, Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron with others lost in the crowd, *In These Times* delves into the archives to tell the moving story of how people lived and loved and sang and wrote, struggling through hard times and opening new horizons that would change their country for a century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Monumental . . . A remarkable distillation of hundreds of letters, diary entries and other documents produced by people from varying walks of life . . . [Uglow is] a great historian.”

—Karin Altenberg, *The Wall Street Journal* “A rich harvest.”

—Matthew Price, *The Boston Globe* “A fascinating account of how Britons lived through a generation of war . . . A vivid portrait of citizens who gave priority to day-to-day lives but rarely forgot they were engaged in the greatest war in history.” —Kirkus “It is

hard to think of anyone who has contributed as much to the literature of the past forty years in so many fields--as publisher, editor and writer--as Jenny Uglow. "As crowded and bustling as a Gillray drawing . . . At its impressive best, it has the dense feel of Turner's Battle of Trafalgar. Few can match [Uglow's] skill at conjuring up a scene, or illuminating a character with a swift and glittering line of description. And so it is here . . . In These Times brims with life." Miranda Seymour, The Sunday Times

Jenny Uglow's books include prizewinning biographies of Elizabeth Gaskell and William Hogarth. The Lunar Men (FSG, 2002) was described by Richard Holmes as "an extraordinarily gripping account," while Nature's Engraver won the National Arts Writers Award for 2007. A Gambling Man (FSG, 2009) was short-listed for the 2010 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction. Uglow grew up in Cumbria and now lives in Canterbury, England.

In These Times is a long book covering a long war. The struggle against the Napoleonic armies of Revolutionary France lasted from 1793 to the dictator's ultimate defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Historian Jenny Uglow devotes over seven hundred pages to the impact this struggle for British survival cost the English people. The book is lavishly illustrated with period cartoons. The book extensively quotes from first person diaries, letters and books written during the period. Among the luminaries we learn more about: "George III and the governments who served Great Britain from the Tory leadership under William Pitt the Younger to the Addison and coalition governments. We tour Great Britain from Wales to Scotland and the rebellious Irish to see how the people earned a living from working long hours in mills, sewing, farming, soldiering and making iron. We see these professions under the realization that British industrial growth though nascent was rapid and ever expanding. Uglow is good at showing us how the British soldier was equipped with weaponry and lived life in a dangerous time. She is also good at exploring life aboard ship in the British navy as the tars of old England defeated the French navy. A chapter is given to Trafalgar and the death of Admiral Horatio Nelson. Uglow examines the lives and work of such poets as Robert Burns, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, William Blake and others. Jane Austen and her sailor family as well as Sir Walter Scott are discussed. The book is filled with poetry from the era. This book is a joy to hold and read! The print is large and clear; the illustrations a marvel and the writing topnotch! Well recommended! The book is a pleasure to read and savor the words and pictures of a nation emerging as the most powerful empire in the world

I bought this book after a good review in a recent issue of the Wall Street Journal. (I was not familiar with Uglow's work. My loss.) Absolutely loved this inside look at life and culture in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. Wonderful anecdotes, stories, facts, etc., sweeping the reader through a domesticated adventure!

Great view of normal life during the Napoleonic wars in England. The style of writing was clear and understandable and brought the opinions of the more middle of the road people to light. I have been familiar with the opinions of those of the upper class who wrote novels (like Jane Austen) but did not understand how small bankers and farmers were fairing, and especially did not really understand how the factory workers, soldiers and sailors suffered during the two decades of the war. I was also interested to see just how much the American revolution cost the English and how far into debt all these wars forced England.

I've long been fascinated by the Napoleonic Wars and so are many others--witness the success of Patrick O'Brian's Jack Aubrey series on naval warfare. While O'Brian's and others' novels often provide incidental information on life on the home front--O'Brian sometimes uses them as plot elements--and innumerable histories describe the major campaigns, this is the first serious book I've encountered that describes daily life in Britain in detail. I hadn't given much thought to the Wars' influence on the Enclosure movement, Parliamentary reform, changes in the Corn Laws and many other topics addressed in *In These Times*, but Ms. Uglow clearly explains how the Wars affected civil issues. For example, it is widely held that Britain emerged from the Wars as a greatly enriched nation, thanks to her increased opportunities for trade. But grinding poverty among the lower classes was also a result. If you have even a passing interest in early Nineteenth Century Britain, this is a book you should read.

This book's narrative being written chronologically, I confess to having read it only through the chapter that covers through 1801 (because the novel I'm working on takes place in 1800). But what I did read (nearly 300 pages out of about 650) was extraordinary. For someone like me, who was craving details on the political and social contexts of an era, it was a gold mine, not just of data but also of enlightenment. In a multitude of brief chapters that focus on specific aspects of the topic (particular military engagements, the effects of war on various trades, government policies and finances, political and philosophical debates, the state of the rural poor,

etc.), Uglow presents a complex and comprehensive picture of England during the Georgian era of war against France. Clumps of chapters are grouped chronologically: 1789-1792, 1793-1796, 1797-1801, and so on. This approach allows the reader to grasp the big picture while still absorbing detail. The narrative relies heavily on primary sources—journals, letters, publications of the era—but the underlying scholarship, unlike some works of this kind, is also informed by extensive secondary reading. There is a very useful bibliography, and even more gems are to be found in the notes. Uglow writes in a readable style, without a lot of scholarly jargon and without getting bogged down in the weeds of academic debate. This is real history for the lay reader. Highly recommended!

In an era not unlike our own the Napoleonic wars went on for more than two decades, generations overlapping, one into the next. This is a great panorama of everyone in England involved or touched by it, and we can see in this era echoes of tyranny common on all sides in war, whether genuine or false. It's a splendid work and makes the ideal complement to Andrew Roberts' great biography of Napoleon.

In spite of the few instances the story drifts and tends to lose its forward movement, the book captures the times, events, and feel of the period. Most informative and interesting.

Most engrossing, a good supplement to biographies of the period, a must read for anyone deep into Napoleon.

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