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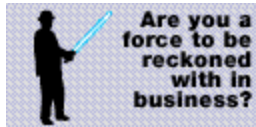
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**Billy Bragg's top 10 books on Englishness**

The singer and songwriter Billy Bragg has been producing music for over two decades. In his first book, *The Progressive Patriot* - part autobiography, part polemic - Bragg considers his own family history and childhood, the influences of thinkers and artists such as George Orwell, Rudyard Kipling and The Clash, and reflects on how they have shaped his sense of Englishness. He also examines the historical impact of such things as the Magna Carta, the civil war and the miners' strike on the formation of the country's national consciousness.

Here, he chooses his favourite books on the subject of Englishness.

[Buy \*The Progressive Patriot\* at the Guardian bookshop](#)

**Recent top 10s**[Top 10s](#)[Billy Bragg: top 10 books on Englishness](#)[Julia Golding: top 10 characters from children's historical fiction](#)[Colum McCann: novels on poets](#)**1. The Lion and The Unicorn - Socialism and the English Genius by George Orwell**

Written during the Blitz, with Nazi invasion seemingly imminent, Orwell wonders aloud if there is anything in this country worth defending, even dying for. The picture he paints of "a family in which the wrong people are in charge" still resonates, as do his attacks on an English intelligentsia "ashamed of their own country". The most important insight he offers is that Englishness is constantly changing: "it stretches into the future and the past, there is something in it that persists, as in a living creature". The greatest book written on the subject from a left-wing perspective.

**2. England's Dreaming by Jon Savage**

Savage was there at the beginning of punk, hanging out with the Pistols and falling for Malcolm McLaren's Situationist shtick. Despite that, his book - the first to attempt to put punk into its proper context - gets beyond the safety pins and snakebite to shed some light how the mediocrity of mid-70s England produced punk rock.

[Buy \*England's Dreaming\* at the Guardian bookshop](#)

**3. The World Turned Upside Down by Christopher Hill**

Hill's masterpiece captures the turmoil of the one true revolutionary episode in English history, when the principle of government by consent led to the execution of the king. A great period of radical thinking was unleashed, much of it

[David Crystal: books on language](#)

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coming from below. Diggers, Ranters, Levellers and others seized the moment to agitate for full democratic accountability. All their arguments are here, alongside those of the grandees who eventually snuffed out the English revolution.

[Buy The World Turned Upside Down at the Guardian bookshop](#)

#### **4. The Village That Died For England by Patrick Wright**

Ostensibly the story of Tyneham, a Dorset village that was evacuated in 1943 to make way for the D-Day preparations and whose residents were never allowed to return, despite Winston Churchill's promise. For Wright however, detail is everything and he clammers over the locked gates and barbed wire fences to discover a "deep England" of eccentric squires, quasi-fascistic communes and neolithic pathways.

[Buy The Village That Died For England at the Guardian bookshop](#)

#### **5. England, Half English by Colin MacInnes**

MacInnes was an Australian who brought an outsider's view to post-war London. He sat in the bars and cafes of Soho, writing articles on the emerging teen culture and the impact of West Indian immigration on the staid English character. This collection of articles, written originally for magazines such as the New Left Review, offers insights into both the roots of swinging London and of our multicultural society.

#### **6. England The Light by Stuart Clarke**

Stuart Clarke is a photographer who, in his own words, sets out "to show a landscape that its quite beautiful without the need for football, industry and people - but is better for their existence". This engaging collection of photographs was mostly taken during Euro 2004 in Portugal and constitutes a dazzling celebration of fandom, accompanied by text in English, German, Portuguese and Swedish.

#### **7. England In Particular by Sue Clifford and Angela King**

A marvellous compendium of the peculiar. Want to know how to participate in the Haxley Hood game or master the ancient art of fen skating? This is the book for you. Every oddity of the English landscape is here, from cabbies' shelters to deserted villages, countryside customs to city superstitions.

[Buy England In Particular at the Guardian bookshop](#)

#### **8. The Making of the English Working Class by EP Thompson**

The founding text of English social history. Thompson shows how the ordinary people of England were not content to wait for political reforms to be handed down to them from above, but were actively fighting for their rights throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

[Buy The Making of the English Working Class at the Guardian bookshop](#)

### 9. A Song For Every Season by Bob Copper

The Copper family tended sheep on the Sussex downland for generations, and built up a vast collection of folk songs which they sung in the fields while working and in the tap room while relaxing with a beer. Discovered by the BBC in the early 1950s, their material formed an important part of the folk revival. Bob Copper's memoir of his family's life on the Downs at Peacehaven is accompanied by songs from the family collection.

### 10. The Strange Death of Tory England by Geoffrey Wheatcroft

It cheers me up just to write that title, never mind read the book.

[Buy The Strange Death of Tory England at the Guardian bookshop](#)



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