



The Spanish Armada

Robert Hutchinson

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After the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, Protestant England was beset by the hostile Catholic powers of Europe, including Spain. In October 1585, King Philip II of Spain declared his intention to destroy Protestant England and began preparing invasion plans, leading to an intense intelligence war between the two countries and culminating in the dramatic sea battles of 1588.

Popular history dictates that the defeat of the Spanish Armada was a David versus Goliath victory, snatched by plucky and outnumbered English forces. In this tightly written and fascinating new history, Robert Hutchinson explodes this myth, revealing the true destroyers of the Spanish Armada—inclement weather and bad luck. Of the 125 Spanish ships that set sail against England, only 60 limped home, the rest wrecked or sank with barely a shot fired from their main armament.

In this dramatic hour-by-hour, blow-by-blow account of the Spanish Armada's attempt to destroy Elizabeth's England, Hutchinson spins a compelling and unbelievable narrative. Using everything from contemporary eyewitness accounts to papers held by the national archives in Spain and the United Kingdom, Robert Hutchinson re-creates one of history's most famous episodes in an entirely new way.

The Spanish Armada Details

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Author : Robert Hutchinson

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From Reader Review The Spanish Armada for online ebook

Gareth says

This book dispels the popular myth that Drake and the English Navy defeated the Armada by bravery and skilled seamanship. England was bankrupt, the 'Navy' was a cobbled together group of privately owned, armed merchantmen, privateers and a few Naval warships, led by self serving privateers and a few genuinely skilled captains.

Disorganisation, egotistic and inept admirals, the inevitable and unpredictable English weather and a lack of funds brought the downfall of the Spanish fleet, many of which were lost before they entered English waters and even more lost off the treacherous Scottish and northern Irish coasts in storms, as they ran away from the pursuing English fleet. Nary a shot was fired in anger by the English as they chased the Spanish up the coast - they had not munitions as Elizabeth refused to spend the money.

Highly informative, entertaining and with academic referencing, but still a book I found difficult to put down once I started reading. Moved along at a fast pace, crammed with primary source references.

Garry Marlton says

I really enjoyed this book and I now know what the Spanish Armada is all about. The only thing I will say is the story only goes 51% of the book then it is all names and orders.

Ani says

Before I start this review, I feel that it is necessary to state that I won this book from the publisher on Goodreads. However, this in no way influenced my review. It was awesome to win the book because it was on my to-read list! But, I will review this book in the same way that I review books that I have bought or checked out from the library.

The Spanish Armada is one of my favorite events in history. The tables could have so easily turned the other direction and history could have been changed forever. However, I don't know much about the more minute details and was excited to see that Robert Hutchinson wrote an hour by hour account of the event. I had read his book on the last days of Henry VIII's life ([found here](#)) and found it to be well written. This one was also fascinating!

Hutchinson has a very clear and concise writing style. It works well because it does not burden the reader with information and allows them to follow the story easily. However, he also writes with an exciting build up to the final event which keeps the reader entertained.

The author does two useful things. The first is that he converts all money into today's values. This helped me to get a better idea on just how much both sides spent on war. The other thing was the multiple appendices in the back. There was a list of ships, people, etc. This helped keep me straight since there were so many players in this event.

Overall, I found this book to be a new and fascinating take on the Spanish Armada. Even though I already knew the outcome, I still found myself excited to see what was going to happen next. Hutchinson did a great job and I look forward to reading his other books on the Tudors! I am giving it four stars!

If you liked my review, check out my book review blog! Here is the link!

Ethan says

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Nathan Schmidt says

I received this book as an advance copy through Goodreads First Reads, and am grateful for the opportunity.

This book is very interesting, and gave me an in-depth vision of a part of history that I had not examined too closely before. I had read some about the Elizabethan era before, but this book brought that age to life in a new way. I believe that this is due to the sheer detail that Hutchinson put into the book. There are many primary source quotes, from letters to journals, throughout the book that highlight the thoughts of people living at the time. Moreover, he gave intense detail in the different parts of the book, even bringing up minor yet intriguing events from the disorder within the Wisbech Castle prison for Catholics to the various struggles the stranded Spanish forces faced on Ireland's shores.

Hutchinson clearly researched the subject heavily for the book, as revealed not only by his extensive list of sources but also his separate appendixes, including a chronology and an inventory of the ships involved in the fateful battle. My only concern is that these notes and the like take up a little too much of the book. The appendixes and index take up over a third of the book's total length. Still, the amount of detail and the dedicated research required for the information is quite admirable.

The biggest issue I had with the book is that it seemed lack an overall point. Sometimes it just felt like a meshing of facts about the events rather than going farther and combining them together into a larger message. It didn't help that the first few chapters did not even address the Spanish Armada at all, which is rather offsetting when that is said to be the main focus of the book. Then, when the book reached its conclusion, I was left with somewhat of a feeling of, "So what?"

The history told within the book lacked a satisfying conclusion, made all the more jumpy with the parting words, "They planned to kidnap the king's nine-year old daughter Elizabeth and put her on the throne as a Catholic queen" (254). The ending just seemed out of the blue, and left the audience hanging. It might be somewhat understandable if the author intended a sequel, but even then I would be cautious; whatever book might follow would likely have little to do with the Spanish Armada itself, and trying to link the two together through the conclusion is a little awkward.

Even so, this was a very interesting and detailed book that I enjoyed reading. In addition, as this is but the advance copy, I am confident that the published version of the Spanish Armada will be vastly improved.

Zachary says

Disclaimer: I received this book for free via a First Reads Giveaway.

The Spanish Armada by Robert Hutchinson is a fascinating look into the almost mythic story of Armada's attempt to restore Catholicism to England. Hutchinson focuses his story on the intelligence gathering by both the Spanish and the English from the preparation of the Armada through to its ultimate failure. While it is sometimes interesting to read what so-and-so knew at a certain point in time, it seemed a little tedious occasionally, slowing down the pace of the story. Nonetheless, the story flowed fairly well and it felt like a quick read. Overall, I thought it was a good book and solidly written. It was certainly interesting, but I still felt like there was just a tad missing to really draw me into the story. I would definitely recommend the book, especially to someone interested in the period, but it doesn't make it into my favorite books club. Lastly, the appendices giving England's and Spain's ship roll calls is a great addition as is the dramatic personae which I found highly useful as the numerous names involved in the story got a bit confusing at times.

Daniel Farabaugh says

A good solid read that very factually recounts the events of the Armada. A bit dry at times, but it's strengths outweigh that. The one basic problem was that it could have used a map insert to show the progress of the Armada because it required a very specific understanding of coastal English geography.

Amy says

Hutchinson attacks head on (pun intended) the topic of the Spanish Armada. Launched after several years of preparation in 1588, this venture of Philip II of Spain endeavored to end the reign of Elizabeth I of England and the nation's Protestant faith. Using his role as a protector of the Catholic faith and his claim to England's throne through his late wife, Mary I of England, Philip ordered the armada into existence and funded it through a plethora of means.

The book opens to a summary of the events leading up to the Armada, including a brisk overview of the rise of Protestantism via the Tudors and their reigns of both Mary I and Elizabeth I and Philip II thus far. Then it goes into all the work done to prepare the Armada as funding was raised. This included recruitment of officers and men; establishing roles for the main commanders; procuring ships and supplies. As the reader discovers, English Catholics abroad joined Philip's cause. Meanwhile in England, Elizabeth's spy network, led by Walsingham, learns of the plans and she ordered a fleet prepared while also building up land defenses in the likely places for the Spanish landing force the Armada (led by Medina Sidonia) and its separate barge fleet (led by the Duke of Parma). It concludes with the actual embarkation and actions of the Armada and its opposing English fleet (led by Lord High Admiral Howard and Sir Francis Drake). Readers learn that the outcome was determined more by an ineluctable climate than actual battle and full accounts of both are provided.

The book had two great features. First, Hutchinson utilized many excerpts from documents pertaining to the Armada and defense against it. And he managed this seamlessly within the text. Second, with the many

dozens of names and ships mentioned, he included several great appendices, which I recommend reading first. These include a list of all ships involved and their stats and fates; a list of key players and their mini-bios; and a glossary that included all non-English words and descriptions for each type of ship and firearm mentioned. To note, the appendices and end notes encompass half of the text in the book.

I opted to enter the Goodreads First Reads Giveaway for this book because I always heard about the Armada, but never knew much beyond the basic world history textbook outline. While to definitely filled in the gap and fixed some misconceptions made by those textbooks leaving out material, I found the whole things was not as interesting as expected. I think that was because of the focus on preparation and the outcome and the fact their was little real battle to the ordeal. And I like reading about battles to understand their strategies. From an academic standpoint, I find no fault with the book.

Lee says

This book is the utmost authority on The Spanish Armada! Written in amazing detail by Robert Hutchinson, The story sets the stage of the Spanish Armada campaign in 1588, showing the ascension to the throne by Elizabeth, and the events of the time in England and Spain that led to war. You can see the frustration of the Spanish king, Phillip, as he is trying to bring the Armada and the soldiers together to get the wanted attack of England going. And the imperial strength and attitude of Elizabeth as she rules from her throne and sets up her response to war. I love all of the details of the ships and the sailors and the administrator general, Sidonia. From the types of food they ate, and drink they consumed, to the weather and repairs they endured just in trying to get to England. Not to mention, the actual conflicts with England and what happened thereafter. It's awe-inspiring the charts and chronology and resources in the final part of the book, so everything could be looked over and refreshed and clarified, as to all of the details. It's a very good history of the times and especially of the events that unfolded with The Spanish Armada. I highly recommend this book...thanks to goodreads and the author for the complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review.

Tammy says

I received this book free from the goodreads giveaway. I'll admit I am not much for history, but I was intrigued enough to keep reading and liked it.

Tony Ferguson says

A good read but quite breezy and not very comprehensive. I am not aware of the other books on this subject but at only 250 pages this could hardly be considered the definitive account.

Mike Slawdog says

Disclaimer: I received this book through Goodreads' First Read program.

As stated in the description, *The Spanish Armada* details the events leading up to, of, and after the sailing of the Spanish Armada. This is primarily done chronologically, and it does so while presenting both the Spanish and British actions and perspectives. While a timeline is given at the back of the book, the text within the chapters simply flows, making for a fairly smooth read.

Uniquely, Hutchinson saves virtually all analysis for the final two chapters of the book. I don't know how many readers would feel the same, but I liked this approach, as he mostly leaves it to the reader to make conclusions from the events, and he simply compiles them. And did he ever compile them; this book is rich with primary references and sources. At times some of the quotes are a little difficult to understand, but this is understandable since I am a 21st century American reading 16th century British English or translations of 16th century Spanish. In addition to demonstrating the level of research that went into the book, the footnotes in the back also include some interesting asides, making it worth the reader's while to check them throughout the text.

The book only had a few drawbacks, if you can even call them that. First, the actual text ends at page 254, leaving roughly 150 pages for appendices, a glossary, footnotes, an index, etc. This isn't necessarily bad since it demonstrates the thoroughness of the work, but it should be noted if someone wants to purchase the book online. Next, the start of the book did feel somewhat dry and did not include much naval combat, but Hutchinson uses the chapters to detail the set of European politics at the time and explains why the Armada came into being, which I found useful since I only remembered some snippets from my 10th grade history class. Lastly, I did not find that it busted any myths that I had about the armada, but this was largely due to my lack of knowledge on the armada and of 16th century European history, again likely because of my educational and post-educational focus on American history, and I found that I learned a lot.

Overall I recommend this book, particularly to fans of naval history and/or Renaissance-era European history.

ZSR Library says

Did you know that the victory of the English navy over the Spanish Armada in 1588 was primarily due to severe and stormy weather? Oh, and the superior seamanship of the British sailors. To learn about what led to this epic battle (Phillip of Spain Versus Elizabeth I) you'll have to read this marvelous examination of England's victory.

-John McDade (WFU Parent)
