

The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume One: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660

Joad Raymond



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What did most people read? Where did they get it? Where did it come from? What were its uses in its readers' lives? How was it produced and distributed? What were its relations to the wider world of print culture? How did it develop over time? These questions are central to *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, an ambitious nine-volume series devoted to the exploration of popular print culture in English from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the present.

Between the beginning of the sixteenth century and the later seventeenth, governments, institutions and individuals learned to use inexpensively-produced printed texts to inform, entertain, and persuade. Cheap print quickly became rooted in British and Irish culture, both elite and popular. This substantial and authoritative collection of essays - the first of its kind - examines the developing role of popular printed texts in the first two centuries of print in Britain and Ireland. Its forty-five chapters (with sixty-six illustrations) look at a broad range of historical and social contexts, at comparisons with other European countries, at the variety of content and themes in cheap printed texts, the forms and genres that developed with and were used by cheap print, and concludes with a series of case studies exploring the role of print in particular years. The book takes none of these terms - Popular, Print, Culture - for granted, but interrogates each of them with a rich, contoured picture of the relationship between a popular readership, the materiality of books, the economy of the book trade, and political and cultural history. Its forty-two contributors come from different disciplines and with expertise in fields from political and book history, through visual and material culture, to rhetoric and literature. These contributors do not all agree on definitions, or on the history that underlies them, but instead establish the ground for future debates and examinations of the role of cheap print in early-modern Britain.

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