Edmund Burke prided himself on being a practical statesman, not an armchair philosopher. Yet his responses to specific problems – rebellion in America, the abuse of power in India and Ireland, or revolution in France – incorporated theoretical debates within jurisprudence, economics, religion, moral philosophy, and political science. Moreover, the extraordinary rhetorical force of Burke’s speeches and writings quickly secured his reputation as a gifted orator and literary stylist. This Companion provides a comprehensive assessment of Burke’s thought, examining the intellectual traditions that shaped it and the concrete issues to which it was addressed. The volume explores all his major writings from his early treatise on aesthetics to his famous polemic, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. It also examines the vexed question of Burke’s Irishness and seeks to determine how his cultural origins may have influenced his political views – from his attitudes on religious toleration to his complicated response to Empire. Finally, it aims both to explain and to challenge interpretations of Burke as a romantic, a utilitarian, a natural law thinker, and founding father of modern conservatism.

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A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
EDMUND BURKE
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO EDMUND BURKE

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We would like to thank Richard Bourke, David Craig, Paul Langford, Fred Lock, Justin Mihoc, Ray Ryan, and Maartje Scheltens for invaluable support and advice on various aspects of the project.
Citations to Burke’s texts are generally given parenthetically, although some additional references are included in notes to the chapters. References to *The Annual Register* are given by year and page number, or to the manuscript reference in the case of the Fitzwilliam Burke Papers. Otherwise references are to volume and page number.

**AR**  *The Annual Register.*

**C**  *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke,* (ed.) Thomas Copeland and others, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958–78).


**NRO**  Fitzwilliam Burke Papers, Northampton Record Office, Northampton.


**Works**  *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke,* 8 vols., Bohn’s British Classics (London: Bohn, 1854–89). Used for texts that are not yet available in WS.
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For ease of reference to other editions, the full titles of all works, letter, and speeches referred to in this volume from C, WS, and Works, are provided below:

From WS:

**WS, I: 65–128** The Reformer 1748

**WS, I: 129–184** A Vindication of Natural Society 1756

**WS, I: 185–320** A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful 1757


**WS, I: 332–552** An Essay towards an Abridgement of the English History (1757–?)

**WS, II: 45–50** Speech on Declaratory Resolution 3 February 1766

**WS, II: 51–53** Speech on Enforcement of Stamp Act 7 February 1766

**WS, II: 54–57** Short Account of a Late Short Administration 1766

**WS, II: 61–64** Speech on Townshend Duties 15 May 1767

**WS, II: 67–73** Speech on Address 24 November 1767

**WS, II: 94–100** Speech on Address 8 November 1768

**WS, II: 102–218** Observations on a Late State of the Nation 1769

**WS, II: 228–230** Speech on Middlesex Election 15 April 1769

**WS, II: 241–322** Thoughts on the Present Discontents 1770

**WS, II: 343–349** Speech on Jury Bill 7 March 1771

**WS, II: 406–461** Speech on American Taxation 19 April 1774

**WS, II: 463–465** Speech on Massachusetts Bay Regulating Bill 2 May 1774
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WS, II: 471–473  Speech on Quebec Bill 10 June 1774
WS, III: 63–70  Speech at the Conclusion of the Poll 3 November 1774
WS, III: 102–169  Speech on Conciliation with America 22 March 1775
WS, III: 183–219  Second Speech on Conciliation 1775
WS, III: 288–330  Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol 3 April 1777
WS, III: 344–346  Speech on Fox’s Motion 2 December 1777
WS, III: 373–374  Speech on Repeal of Declaratory Act 6 April 1778
WS, III: 431–435  Notes for Speech on Dissenters Bill April 1779
WS, III: 481–551  Speech on Economical Reformation 11 February 1780
WS, III: 588–601  Speech on Duration of Parliaments 8 May 1780
WS, III: 626–634  Speech at Bristol Previous to Election 6 September 1780
WS, V: 140–142  Speech on Bengal Judicature Bill 27 June 1781
WS, V: 144–189  First Report Select Committee: ‘Observations’ 5 February 1782
WS, V: 334–378  Eleventh Report of Select Committee 18 November 1783
WS, V: 378–451  Speech on Fox’s India Bill 1 December 1783
WS, V: 454–459  Speech on Pitt’s Second India Bill 28 July 1784
WS, V: 478–552  Speech on Nabob of Arcot’s Debts 28 February 1785
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WS, VI: 79–91  Rohilla War Charge
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C, I: 88–90 Burke to Richard Shackleton 21 March 1747
C, I: 129–130 To Adam Smith 10 September 1759
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C, I: 147–149  Burke to Charles O’Hara ante 23 August 1762
C, I: 242–243  John Ridge to Edmund and William Burke ante 8 March 1766
C, II: 136  Burke to Richard Shackleton 6 May 1770
C, II: 512–514  Burke to Adrian Henrich von Borcke 17 January 1774
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C, IV: 8–10  Burke to Edmund Sexton Pery 18 July 1778
C, IV: 83–84  Burke to Dr. John Erskine 12 June 1779
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C, VI: 55–58  Burke to Philip Francis 17 December 1789
C, VI: 67–76  Thomas Paine to Edmund Burke 17 January 1790
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C, VII: 173–178  Burke to Lord Grenville 18 August 1792
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C, VIII: 62–64  Burke to French Laurence 28 July 1796
C, VIII: 254–257  Burke to Sir Hercules Langrishe 26 May 1795
C, VIII: 425–435  Burke to Lord Loughborough circa 17 March 1796
C, IX: 112–118  Burke to John Keogh 17 November 1796
C, IX: 161–172  Burke to the Rev. Thomas Hussey post 9 December 1796
C, IX: 277  Burke to Sir Lawrence Parsons 8 March 1797
C, IX: 307  Burke to French Laurence 11 April 1797
1730 Burke born in Dublin (1 January; 12 January, NS).
1735–40 (?) Lives with mother’s relatives in the Blackwater Valley, County Cork.
1741–44 Attends Abraham Shackleton’s school at Ballitore, County Kildare.
1744 Enters Trinity College, Dublin (14 April).
1748 Graduates from Trinity College, Dublin (February).
1750 Moves to London to study law at the Middle Temple.
1753 (?) Drafts *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*.
1755 Abandons his study of law to seek a literary career.
1756 Publishes *A Vindication of Natural Society* (18 May).
1758 Richard Burke born (9 February). Burke signs contracts for an *Essay towards an Abridgment of the English History* (25 February; subsequently abandoned; a fragment was published in 1812) and an *Annual Register* (24 April).
1759 (?) Accepts position as private secretary to William Gerard Hamilton.
1759 First volume of the *Annual Register* published (15 May).
CHRONOLOGY

1761–4
Returns to Ireland for two periods (August 1761–Spring 1762; September 1763–Spring 1764) as secretary to Hamilton, who had been appointed Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant.

1762 (?)
Begins *Tracts Relative to the Laws Against Popery in Ireland* (later abandoned; the surviving portions published in 1812).

1765 (?)
Breaks with Hamilton (before February 1765).

1765
Becomes private secretary to the Marquis of Rockingham, First Lord of the Treasury (11 July). Through the influence of Lord Verney, elected to the House of Commons for the borough of Wendover, in Buckinghamshire (23 December).

1766
First speech in the Commons (17 January). Publishes *A Short Account of a Late Short Administration* (4 August). Goes into opposition with Rockingham.

1768
Buys a house and 300-acre estate at Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire (April).

1769
Publishes *Observations on a Late State of the Nation* (8 February).

1770
Publishes *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (23 April).

1770
Elected London agent for the New York Assembly (21 December; Burke accepts the position early in 1771).

1773
Visit to France (January to March).

1774
Delivers *Speech on American Taxation* (19 April; published 10 January 1775). Elected MP for Bristol (2 November).

1775
Delivers *Speech on Conciliation with America* (22 March; published 22 May).

1776
American Declaration of Independence.

1777
Publishes *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol* (5 May).

1778
Publishes *Two Letters on the Trade of Ireland* (12 May).

1780
Delivers *Speech on Economical Reformation* (11 February; published 17 February). Dissolution of Parliament.
Chronology

(1 September). Seeks re-election at Bristol, but is forced to withdraw. Through Rockingham’s influence, elected for the borough of Malton, in Yorkshire (9 December).

1781 Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown (19 October).

1782 Lord North resigns (20 March). Rockingham forms a new ministry; Burke appointed Paymaster-General of the Forces (27 March). On the death of Rockingham (1 July), the King appoints Lord Shelburne as First Lord; Burke therefore resigns (11 July).

1783 Shelburne’s administration defeated in the Commons (18 February) by a conjunction between the supporters of Lord North and Charles James Fox. The Fox–North Coalition (nominally headed by the Duke of Portland) formed; Burke again becomes Paymaster-General (2 April). Delivers his Speech on Fox’s East India Bill (1 December). The Fox–North coalition is defeated in the House of Lords (17 December). The Coalition is dismissed (19 December), and William Pitt becomes Prime Minister.

1784 Parliament dissolved (25 March). In the ensuing election, Pitt secures a majority. Burke re-elected for Malton (1 April).

1785 Delivers his Speech on the Nabob of Arcot’s Debts (28 February; published 23 August).

1786 Composes 22 ‘articles of charge’ against Warren Hastings, the East India Company’s Governor-General of Bengal 1772–85 (April–May).

1788 Trial of Hastings opens (13 February). Burke leads with a four-day speech (15, 16, 18, 19 February). In October, the King is taken ill, initiating the ‘Regency Crisis’. Burke speaks frequently in the debates in the Commons.

1789 The King unexpectedly recovers, ending the ‘Regency Crisis’ (February). The storming of the Bastille (14 July).

1790 Publishes Reflections on the Revolution in France (1 November).

1791 A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly published (April, in French; May, in English). Public breach with Fox on the floor of the House of Commons (6 May). Publishes
Chronology

An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs (3 August). Writes ‘Thoughts on French Affairs’ (posthumously published in 1797).

1793
France declares war on Great Britain (1 February). Burke writes Observations on the Conduct of the Minority (September; unauthorised publication, 13 February 1797) and ‘Remarks on the Policy of the Allies’ (October; posthumously published 1797).

1794
Delivers the concluding speech at the trial of Hastings (over nine days, May–June). Retires from Parliament (25 June). Death of Richard Burke, Jr. (2 August).

1795
Hastings acquitted on all charges (23 April). Burke awarded a pension (August). Writes on the food crisis (December; a garbled text published as Thoughts and Details on Scarcity in 1800).

1796
Publishes A Letter to a Noble Lord (24 February). Publishes Two Letters ... on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France (20 October; pirated text published 19 October as Thoughts on the Prospect of a Regicide Peace).

1797
Burke dies (9 July).