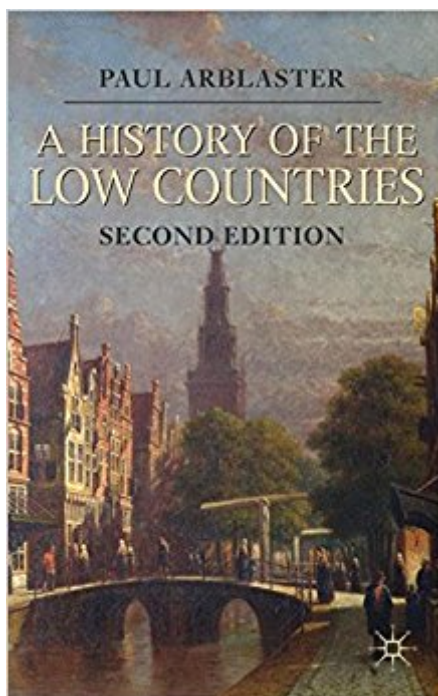


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# A History Of The Low Countries (Palgrave Essential Histories Series)



## Synopsis

Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are three relatively small countries whose contribution to Europe's economic, spiritual and artistic heritage has been immense. Their histories cannot be written in isolation from one another, or from their neighbours. In the first full historical survey of the Benelux area to be written in English, Paul Arblaster describes the whole sweep of the history of the Low Countries, from Roman frontier provinces through to the establishment of the three constitutional monarchies of the present day. In this revised and updated new edition, Arblaster: ? incorporates the latest scholarship and recent events, bringing the story right up to today? provides fresh coverage of immigration, multiculturalism, and the resurgence of nationalism in the Low Countries? offers a brief discussion of the rise of secularism in Western Europe and how this has affected the Benelux region? outlines the countries' recent economic successes and failures? includes a new list of political parties and governments since 1918 A History of the Low Countries is ideal for those seeking a concise and readable introduction to the history of a region which, for centuries, has been at the crossroads of Western Europe.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for the first edition:"An excellent book. It is fluently written and covers not only political, social and economic developments but touches on the most important cultural aspects as well." - Ulrich Tiedau, University College London, UK "Arblaster's writing is fluent and enjoyable... For the available space and the ambitious scale, Arblaster has pulled off a hat-trick. My sole regret is that,

given the sharpness of his observatory powers, he did not write more... This will be a valuable addition to reading lists for students and worthy of recommendation to those general readers who wish to learn more about the rich heritage of the Low Countries and its impact on modern Benelux."

- Peter Illing, Christ's College, Cambridge University  
Praise for the second edition: "Arblaster does excellent work in weaving together a single history of a number of modern states, namely the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Despite their complex relationship, historically they have been one region politically, economically, and religiously. This history is careful to include pertinent facts and covers a variety of groups and individuals who have responded to challenges of diversity, change, and identity." - John Roney, Sacred Heart University

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"A History of the Low Countries" by Paul Arblaster professes to be "the first full historical survey of the Benelux area to be written in English", ranging from 57 BC to the Belgian constitutional crisis of 2010-2011. Standing almost alone as an English historical survey of this area from ancient times to the present, it offers a decent general and brief survey of the region's history, but not much in the way of depth and serious historical analysis. Already at the outset Arblaster admits that "in composing such a general work I have had to fight my professional urge to provide detailed footnotes at every point." (p. xiii) In his opinion, in writing such a comprehensive historical narrative, "the author need provide only an outline of what might be interesting, and leave the rest to the reader's curiosity", referring his readers, inter alia, to Wikipedia and YouTube for supplementing

their knowledge. The narrative is comprised mostly of brief surveys of events, coupled with thematic sections that often amount to little more than agglomerations of facts and anecdotes related to a certain theme (e.g., the rise of religious and political movements, social and cultural trends, etc.), without any significant analytical or ideational thread connecting them. The historical narrative itself, while often fluent and clear, is at times incomplete and dissatisfying. For example, the description of the Batavian Revolt of AD 69-70 by the author is based mainly on Tacitus's Histories, and thus he concludes the account of the revolt led by Julius Civilis by stating that "the rest of Tacitus's Histories is missing and nothing is known of what happened to Civilis", adding a few other general details that render the account incomplete. Beyond the descriptive and anecdotal nature of the narrative discussed above, some important issues are given a very short and superficial treatment. Very tellingly, Ch. 5 lacks any discussion of the Low Countries' position in the continental deterioration to WWI. The interwar period and its upheavals are given a very short and superficial discussion in Ch. 6, being treated mostly by means of a descriptive list of developments in popular culture and various radical political parties. The outbreak of WWII and the events in the Low Countries until their final occupation are described in no more than one vague paragraph, and the author moves directly to discuss the situation in the Low Countries under the German occupation. The superficiality of later sections is made worse by the continued treatment of the Low Countries as one unit, even though at that stage they became three separate independent countries, with clearly distinctive national histories. Finally, the book lacks any concluding segment. Somewhat disappointingly, the narrative ends in the midst of the Belgian constitutional crisis of 2010-11, which was not over at the time of writing, rendering it *incomplete*. All in all, this book is recommended for those looking for a brief and general introductory survey of the history of the Low Countries, without expecting too much beyond it. Those willing to read a somewhat longer book, should check out "History of the Low Countries" edited by J.C.H Blom and E. Lamberts, which was published earlier than Arblaster's second edition, and which I have not read myself.

This book was obviously written by a non-native speaker of English. While the author's use of language is not technically incorrect, his syntax is consistently non-idiomatic and I found it extremely difficult to read. Lots of passive constructions and relative clauses. I abandoned it early on.

A disappointing book. Social and economic factors are given short shrift. The bubonic plague gets one sentence. The first 100 pages are devoted largely to the wars and marriages of petty nobility.

A fantastic, comprehensive history written in a readable style.

Well written account of Holland and it's neighbors.

Despite surveying nearly 2000 years, Arblaster does not do "equal coverage". He is able to focus on most critical times and offered a nuanced view despite the brevity. There is little lost to brevity because Arblaster does not let brevity dilute significance.

Bought because I am from Belgium. Wanted a readable history of my country, instead , while I have no doubt that all the information is correct, It is very tedious and confusing as to historic personalities and locations. Rather like reading a boring history textbook. Will continue my search.

I am atill reading it, but it is a good book that I read before, ...these region or Benelux is one of those areas of the world favored bt the people who being diverse made the best by beiung hardworking, innovative, explorers and industrious..worth to learn with this book.

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