



# Aristocracy: A Very Short Introduction

*William Doyle*

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## **Aristocracy: A Very Short Introduction** William Doyle

Aristocracies or nobilities dominated the social, economic, and institutional history of all European countries until only a few generations ago. The relics of their power, in traditions and behavior, in architecture and the arts, are still all around us. This engaging *Very Short Introduction* shows how ideas of aristocracy originated in ancient times, were transformed in the middle ages, and have only fallen apart over the last two centuries, following the outbreak of the American and French Revolutions. William Doyle, an authority on eighteenth-century European history, here strips away the myths in which aristocracies have always sought to shroud themselves, but he also astutely delineates the true sources of their enduring power. Their outlook and behavior affected the rest of society in innumerable and sometimes surprising ways, but perhaps most surprising was the way in which the centuries-old aristocratic hegemony crumbled away. In this *Very Short Introduction* William Doyle considers why this happened and what is left today.

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