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The Lunar Men: Five Friends Whose Curiosity Changed the World

Jenny Uglow

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The Lunar Men: Five Friends Whose Curiosity Changed the World Jenny Uglow
From the celebrated author of *Hogarth*--An animated, swarming group portrait of the friends who launched the Industrial Revolution

In the 1760s a group of amateur experimenters met and made friends in the English Midlands. Most came from humble families, all lived far from the center of things, but they were young and their optimism was boundless: together they would change the world. Among them were the ambitious toymaker Matthew Boulton and his partner James Watt, of steam-engine fame; the potter Josiah Wedgwood; the larger-than-life Erasmus Darwin, physician, poet, inventor, and theorist of evolution (a forerunner of his grandson Charles). Later came Joseph Priestley, discoverer of oxygen and fighting radical.

With a small band of allies they formed the Lunar Society of Birmingham (so called because it met at each full moon) and kick-started the Industrial Revolution. Blending science, art, and commerce, the Lunar Men built canals; launched balloons; named plants, gases, and minerals; changed the face of England and the china in its drawing rooms; and plotted to revolutionize its soul.

Uglow's vivid, exhilarating account uncovers the friendships, political passions, love affairs, and love of knowledge (and power) that drove these extraordinary men. It echoes to the thud of pistons and the wheeze and snort of engines and brings to life the tradesmen, artisans, and tycoons who shaped and fired the modern age.

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