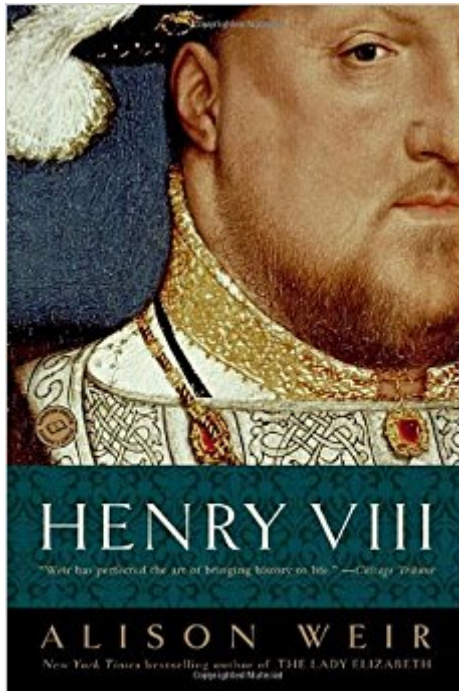


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Henry VIII: The King And His Court



Synopsis

For fans of Wolf Hall, Alison Weir's New York Times bestselling biography of Henry VIII brilliantly brings to life the king, the court, and the fascinating men and women who vied for its pleasures and rewards. "WEIR'S BOOK OUTSHINES ALL PREVIOUS STUDIES OF HENRY. Beautifully written, exhaustive in its research, it is a gem. . . . She succeeds masterfully in making Henry and his six wives . . . come alive for the reader." "Philadelphia Inquirer" Henry VIII, renowned for his command of power and celebrated for his intellect, presided over one of the most magnificent "and dangerous" courts in Renaissance Europe. Never before has a detailed, personal biography of this charismatic monarch been set against the cultural, social, and political background of his glittering court. Now Alison Weir, author of the finest royal chronicles of our time, brings to vibrant life the turbulent, complex figure of the King. Packed with colorful description, meticulous in historical detail, rich in pageantry, intrigue, passion, and luxury, Weir brilliantly renders King Henry VIII, his court, and the fascinating men and women who vied for its pleasures and rewards. The result is an absolutely spellbinding read.

Book Information

Series: Ballantine Reader's Circle

Paperback: 656 pages

Publisher: Ballantine Books; Reprint edition (October 29, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 034543708X

ISBN-13: 978-0345437082

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.3 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (158 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #134,484 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #220 in Books > History > Europe > Great Britain > England #246 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Royalty #348 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Great Britain

Customer Reviews

If you are in the market for a personal, rather than a political, history of Henry VIII, this is the book for you. Even better, and as promised in the title, the book is not just about Henry. You get plenty of information on all six wives, including such tidbits as Katherine Parr's shoe fetish (she had 47 pairs of shoes made in one year- Imelda Marcos, move over!); the presence of aristocratic "cloth holders"

in Anne Boleyn's retinue (these ladies would hold cloths in front of Anne's face at strategic moments, such as when Anne needed to spit!); and Anne of Cleves's disagreeable body odor (Henry was eager to meet Anne after he saw the wonderful portrait Hans Holbein had done of her. Unfortunately, when Henry saw Anne in person he was greatly disappointed. And, being a very clean and fastidious fellow, he was even more "turned off" when he got "downwind" of Anne.) The book seems a bit choppy in the early stages. The chapters are very brief and you seem to be tossed about from one topic to another- the various castles; how they were decorated; the strategic and logistical difficulties of going "on progress"; the quantities and types of food served to the King and his minions; etc. But, even though there doesn't seem to be much of a narrative in the early going, the material is fascinating in and of itself. And, after 200 pages or so, the book starts to come together and becomes more of a straightforward biography. If you are looking for more of a political/military biography this is most likely not going to be your cup of tea.

Generally, I'm not a fan of Weir, as she made a number of errors in her "The Six Wives of Henry VIII". At times her research is faulty. Unfortunately, this book also suffers from mistakes: one of the most glaring is not doing her homework on the 16th C. Tower of London. The current site of the scaffold, in front of St. Peter ad Vincula, was a Victorian notion, and Anne Boleyn's coronation lodgings, where she stayed after her arrest, is not the present Queen's House (but does include salvaged architectural features). As a historian, she should not fall into the "tourist trap". However, this book reveals a superb grasp of overwhelming amounts of quirky primary source documents; quite the task. Also, it is a perfect adjunct to countless biographies that overlook this type of background material. While not a biography of Henry VIII per se, this book is a fascinating glimpse into the machinations of his court over time. This lion king, fierce, ruthless, gifted and charming, presided over the first truly Renaissance court in England. Ms. Weir combed obscure sources for hitherto unknown insights and has written them into a cohesive social history. Who knew Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn both favoured cherries and strawberries above all other fruit? I had heard Henry VIII was fastidious in his personal hygiene, but here all is described at length: his daily routines, his eating and exercise habits, how he dined and with whom, the monumental progresses, plus his being the centre of an enormous courtly universe. What protocols his courtiers had to observe! And even Henry VIII is not the master of destiny, at least not in the minutiae: he, too, was bound by conventional expectations of kingly behaviour.

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