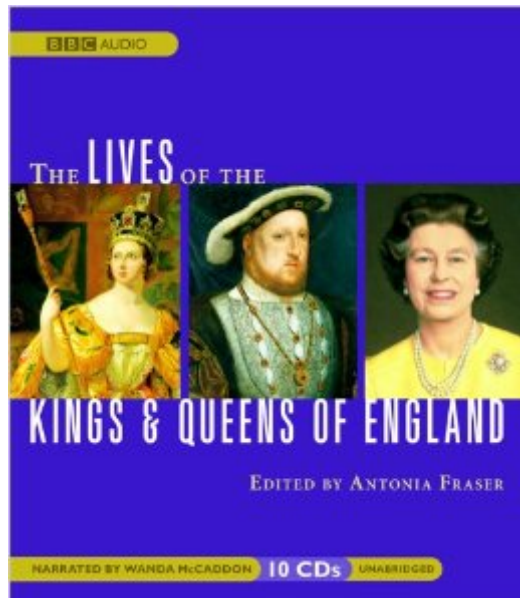


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The Lives Of The Kings & Queens Of England



Synopsis

This magnificent story of one thousand years of English history is told through the lives and deeds of Kings and Queens, from the Normans to the Windsors. Understand how the power of the crown has changed as a result of both the character and ability of each monarch and evolving historical circumstances. Eight specialist contributors depict the whole spectrum of royal life in a succinct and fascinating way. Newly revised in 1998, this edition offers expanded coverage of the House of Windsor, including recent events that have greatly affected the Royal Family.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Antonia Fraser's 'The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England' has long been one of my favourite books (since my childhood, really), because it has both breadth and brevity simultaneously, a rare feat. Lady Fraser's style is evident here, a non-imposing and non-technical style, that is nonetheless satisfying to all but the most rigorous of academic historians. Fraser's account begins with the Norman invasion; like many books on royal history, scant attention is paid to pre-Norman figures. Fraser groups the monarchs into categories: Normans Angevins Plantagenets House of Lancaster House of York Tudors Stuarts House of Hanover House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha House of Windsor Putting together the genealogical tables is a fun exercise--beware here, however, that lesser historical figures are left off the charts (thus, Queen Anne's bevy of children are not represented on the genealogy as none lived to assume the crown or perpetuate the line). Each monarch is given an article about 10-15 pages in length (a good bedtime reading length, I've found). Pictures and paintings help place visually the stories, together with the interspersed essays on

coats-of-arms and other topics. Fraser likes to find the humorous aspects whenever possible. Writing on William IV's distaste for the young Victoria's mother: 'In 1836 the Duchess of Kent took over a large suite of rooms in Kensington Palace without the King's permission. William was furious. If he died now, Victoria would not be old enough to rule without her mother as Regent. At a public dinner, attended by more than a hundred guests, William said that he hoped his life would be spared long enough to prevent such a calamity.' His wish was granted. An ideal gift for anyone, child to adult, who has an interest in the history of the British royals, and a good ready-reference for students, this book is first-rate.

This big picture book of kings and queens is a great reference work for anyone interested in English royal history. The color illustrations are lavish, the brief biographies hit all high points and the genealogies of the various royal houses are very useful when trying to trace the convoluted relationships of England's royals. This is a handy book to have around when you just can't figure out just how Germans ended up on the British throne, can't remember which of Henry VIII's wives died on the block or want to know why Queen Victoria died in the arms of Kaiser Wilhem. Lots of information on all matters royal, including ancient traditions, heraldry, issues of precedent, the crown jewels, court dress, palaces and pastimes and other fun facts. A good book to have close to hand.

For anyone who has even a passing interest in the English monarchs (what's the difference between Bloody Mary and Mary, Queen of Scots?) this is the perfect book. Within four to eight pages, depending on the subject, Antonia Fraser gives a wonderful summary of every monarch since Normand time, right up to Elizabeth II. I used this book not only to clarify which Edward or Mary was which, but also to give me teasers about important events in English history. From this I read two books by another great English historiographer, Alison Weir, "The Wars of the Roses" and "The Princes in the Tower." I even used Fraser's book to guide me as I watched "Mrs. Brown" on video! Fraser manages to take these fascinating people and put them in the context of their time, without romantic presupposition or fake dialogue. Fraser delivers documented facts or opinions and still manages to give her work an interesting and engaging voice.

Antonia Fraser's book "The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England" provides an excellent history of the British monarchy. Highlights of the book include its balance of brevity with a comprehensive scope, its photographs, and especially its genealogical charts. The book's only flaw is that it does not begin in 827 with King Egbert, but in 1066 with William the Conqueror beginning

the rule of the Norman kings.

Antonia Fraser does a great job here, outlining the lives and adventures of the Kings and Queens of England, from the time of the Norman conquest. And of course its not just a history of England that we are reading here, from time to time it was also a history of the known world - there were times when if England didn't own another country, they were coveting it, or were in some conflict with it. And what fascinating people these royal people were. They were of their times, they were shaped by the times, they were defeated by their times, and in being so helped shape the world that we see today. They were competent, insane, brilliant, loyal, lecherous and obsessive. This is a history of mankind - only far more visible! Antonia Fraser is one of the finest historical writers today. In this book she does not have the space or time to delve into the nitty gritty of the reigns of each monarch, but she does give a fascinating and insightful snap shot of their times. This is a valuable reference book for any half serious library, as it deals not only with the people, but the times tthat they lived in.

This is book gives a brief but useful history of every English monarch over the past millenium. I knew very little about the monarchy before reading the book, and this was a perfect introduction. This book would also probably be helpful for those who want a refresher in their history or for those who are just trying to keep all of the Henrys, Georges, and Edwards straight.

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