

[PDF] The Six Wives Of Henry VIII

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Books Details:

Title: The Six Wives Of Henry VIII

Author:

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Description:

From School Library Journal YA-- A wonderfully detailed, extensively researched collective biography. Although the book is undoubtedly the work of a Tudor scholar, with sources ranging from previous biographies of these women to private papers, letters, diaries, and diplomatic sources, it is also the work of a competent fiction writer. The narrative is free flowing, humorous, informative, and readable. Weir's research abilities and deductive reasoning have shed a whole new light on the political maneuverings of the era and thus on the myriad forces that drove Henry VIII, his wives, and his children. Personal and obscure facts about the women, Henry's relationship with his nobles, and quirks of the times enliven the text. Genealogical tables for all the families involved are included. This book can be used for research, as it contains a wealth of information. However, students who don't read the whole book (even though its size may intimidate them) are missing a once in a lifetime opportunity to have the Tudor era laid open for them.

- *Debbie Hyman, R. E. Lee High School, Springfield, VA*

From Kirkus Reviews Weir (the genealogical Britain's Royal Family--not reviewed) here uses the many public records and personal letters of the early 1500's to offer a comprehensive, factual version of the tempestuous private and public lives of Henry VIII and his six wives. The story is dominated by Henry and the devolution of his character from an ``affable," ``gentle," and gifted (he wrote poetry) lover, soldier, and ruler into a porcine, paranoid, impotent old man who was exploited and manipulated by courtiers and women, some of whom he imprisoned, beheaded, or hanged. Henry's brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, six years the king's senior, became at 24 his first wife. Thirty years later, she was set aside for the ambitious ``virago" Anne Boleyn, who was in turn beheaded to make room for the gentle Jane Seymour, who died in childbirth and was replaced by the repugnant and scholarly Anne of Cleves. Soon, Anne was retired for Catherine Howard, a 15-year-old ``empty-headed wanton" who, despite Henry's passion for her, was executed--along with three alleged but innocent lovers--and replaced by the king's most ``agreeable wife," Catherine Parr, who narrowly escaped execution herself for religious quarreling. Vowing in marriage to be ``bonair and buxom/amiable/in bed and at board" and to produce heirs, Henry's wives illustrate to Weir, through their pregnancies, miscarriages, and infants' deaths, both the profligacy of nature and the dependence of political power on sexual prowess. Yet Weir offers this sensational chapter in history in the cautious tone of a college term paper, doggedly and unimaginatively piling up facts and occasionally lapsing into naivet[], as when Mary (whose mother, Catherine of Aragon, had been banished to die alone) and Elizabeth (still too young to understand that Henry had beheaded her mother, Anne Boleyn, in order to marry Jane) are invited to court: ``At last the King," Weir writes, ``was settling down to something resembling family life." (Sixteen pages of b&w illustrations; 74 pages of responsible bibliographical essays.) (Book-of-the-Month Dual Selection for May) --
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