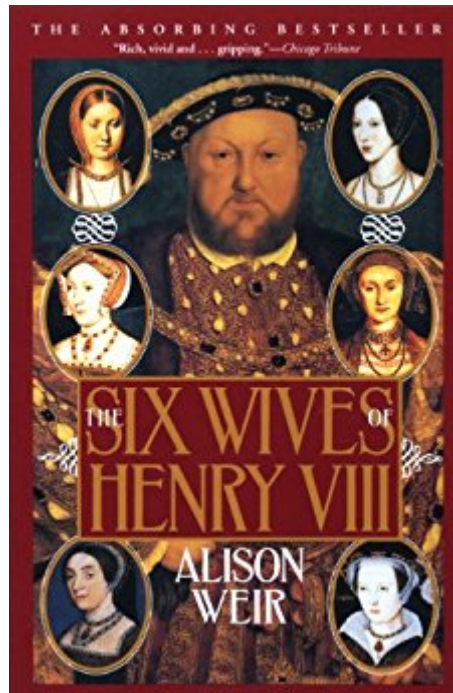




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The Six Wives Of Henry VIII



Synopsis

The tempestuous, bloody, and splendid reign of Henry VIII of England (1509-1547) is one of the most fascinating in all history, not least for his marriage to six extraordinary women. In this accessible work of brilliant scholarship, Alison Weir draws on early biographies, letters, memoirs, account books, and diplomatic reports to bring these women to life. Catherine of Aragon emerges as a staunch though misguided woman of principle; Anne Boleyn, an ambitious adventuress with a penchant for vengeance; Jane Seymour, a strong-minded matriarch in the making; Anne of Cleves, a good-natured and innocent woman naively unaware of the court intrigues that determined her fate; Catherine Howard, an empty-headed wanton; and Catherine Parr, a warm-blooded bluestocking who survived King Henry to marry a fourth time.

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Customer Reviews

The Six Wives of Henry VIII by Alison Weir draws on contemporary sources to tell the story of Henry VIII's six wives, Catherine of Aragon (mother of Mary, annulled), Anne Boleyn (mother of Elizabeth, executed), Jane Seymour (mother of Edward VI, died due to childbirth), Anne of Cleves (annulled), Catherine Howard (executed), and Catherine Parr (marriage ended when he died). The

book is very long and very in-depth, but the stories are told in a way that draws the reader in and holds attention. Most interesting is that although Henry VIII was adamant he have multiple male heirs and disapproved of women ruling, his one legitimate son never ruled in his own right since he died at just 15, but his daughters are still remembered today, one for how bloody her reign was and the other for the great era she presided over. I highly recommend this book to anyone with any interest in medieval England or Henry VIII.

What's Great: the writing, which makes this book a delight to read. Weir paints each wife with color and depth so that we come to know them across the centuries: the staunch but misguided woman of principle, the ambitious adventuress with a streak of vengeance, the strong-minded matriarch, the good-humored woman, the empty-headed wanton, and the godly matron with a weakness for handsome rogues. Why I don't give this book 5 stars: because I don't know how much of the information I can trust. Weir is a novelist who embellishes her narrative with colorful flourishes that make for excellent reading, but which may also distort the actual events and influence our perceptions. Saying that Henry stomped off in a huff is certainly more lively than saying he left the room, but unless his emotional state is corroborated by witnesses, Weir's depiction is artistic license rather than documented fact. It's also sometimes hard to tell when Weir is presenting her own conclusions and when she is relaying what she's found in source material. When she writes that Henry wanted Elizabeth kept out of his sight after Anne Boleyn's execution, is this her interpretation or what a contemporary actually observed? What also makes me question Weir's interpretations is that I don't always find her explanations convincing. For example, she postulates that Jane Seymour's delay in conceiving was probably due to Henry and his advancing infirmity, as evidenced by the fact that his later wives bore no children. We can never really know why it took Jane several months to conceive. She could have had irregular menstrual cycles. Henry's physical condition in 1536 was very different from his state in the 1540s, and any impotence there may have been during his later years would not necessarily have afflicted him earlier. The reasoning just seems flimsy to me. Lastly, some of Weir's information is not corroborated by professional historians, making me question her analysis and assessment of sources. Still, I can't deny that I enjoyed reading this book, and found it accurate enough (that is, the information matched what I've found in other books) to recommend. For reading pleasure, I put it ahead of Antonia Fraser's book of the same title, but Fraser's is

the one I believe. She seems less prone to presenting her opinions as facts and offers more plausible explanations for her views than Weir.

I've read a great deal about Henry VIII, but knew little about his wives, especially Katherine of Aragon.4 and 1 / 2 starsAlthough this book became tedious in places, overall it was a very good read. I wanted an overview of Henry's wives and I believe this book fulfills that requirement. The women's personalities were very different. But they seem to dovetail to Henry's needs as he aged and got more suspicious and pessimistic. He was one tormented man, I'll grant him that. This is a very well written book and was well researched. I read Alison Weir's *Anne Boleyn: A King's Obsession* first, and in it Ms. Weir tells Anne's story in much more detail. (Of course.) I continue to look forward to reading more of Ms. Weir's books.

This is a fascinating look at life back in the days of Henry VIII and the women who shared his throne. It is an in depth look at the customs and beliefs of the men and women of that era. I had no clue how difficult life was for women and children in those days. It examined in careful detail the reality of the women and to a degree the children that were in the court of Henry VIII. I appreciated the authors careful and in depth research on this fascinating topic. It was a great read and a believable historical novel. The author was careful to note when historical fact was either missing or came from a suspect source. It wasn't just another history book. It was lovely, flowed smoothly and was very informative. It had life to it and made you feel as though you were there. I am looking forward to reading her book about the children Henry VIII sired. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the history of the time and the people in Henry VIII's life.

Alison Weir writes interesting, and easy-to-read-for-hours, non-fiction biographies. This is the British historian, not the American political writer. Weir's research is extensively documented; there are no footnotes, thank goodness. In a review by The Guardian newspaper describing her research methods: "nearly every other sentence comes with its own endnote, embedding her narrative in a precise network of whiskery documents and court Latin." I like an absorbing book that flows easily and contains tidbits of what life was like behind the scenes of historical events. Her description of the end of Henry's marriage to Katherine of Aragon is moving without any need to resort to fiction. The Guardian newspaper review of one of her books said of Weir's 'popular historian' label, "To describe her as a popular historian would be to state a literal truth - her chunky explorations of Britain's early modern past sell in the kind of multiples that others can only dream of. "

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