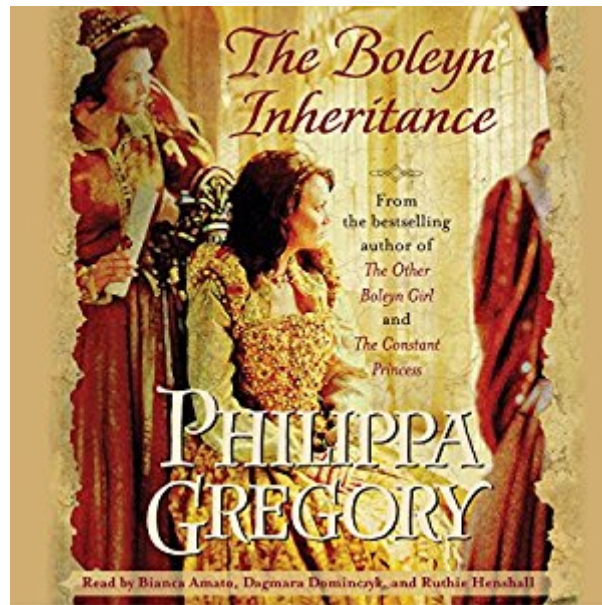


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Boleyn Inheritance



Synopsis

Three women share one fate: the Boleyn Inheritance. From the bestselling author of *The Other Boleyn Girl* comes a novel about three women whose positions brought them wealth, power, deceit, and terror in England after the death of Anne Boleyn. Anne of Cleves must literally save her neck in a court ruled by a deadly game of politics and the terror of an unpredictable and vengeful king. Her Boleyn Inheritance: accusations and false witnesses. Katherine Howard catches the king's eye within moments of arriving at court, setting in motion a dreadful machine of politics, intrigue, and treason that she does not understand. Her Boleyn Inheritance: the threat of the axe. Jane Rochford's name is a byword for malice, jealousy and twisted lust throughout Europe. Her Boleyn Inheritance: a fortune and a title in exchange for her soul. The Boleyn Inheritance is Gregory at her spellbinding best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Philippa Gregory continues to entertain and beguile with this latest entry to her Tudor-era historical novels, "The Boleyn Inheritance." This time around, she focuses on the tumultuous events that take place (1539-1542) following Jane Seymour's death in childbirth, when Henry VIII decides to marry again, only this time he has decided to make a political alliance with the Protestant kingdom of Cleves in order to check the threatening Catholic alliance of France and Spain. "The Boleyn Inheritance" concentrates on what occurs because of this decision, as seen through the eyes of three of the women most effected by the events -- Anne of Cleves, the Protestant princess that Henry marries; Katherine Howard, the vivacious and lively young English beauty that Henry falls for;

and Jane Boleyn, the widow of George Boleyn, whose testimony sent her husband and her infamous sister-in-law, Anne Boleyn, Henry's second wife, to the execution block. Believe me, if you're in on the lookout for a well written and absorbing page turner, "The Boleyn Inheritance" will definitely satisfy. In 1539, Anne of Cleves, prepares herself for marriage to one of the most powerful men in Europe, Henry VIII of England, who has already been married three times -- once to Catherine of Aragon, whom he divorced and broke from the Catholic Church in order to marry the tempestuous and beguiling Anne Boleyn, whom he later beheaded on the suspicion that she was playing him false, and lastly to Jane Seymour who gave him the son he so devoutly wished for before expiring herself. It is not exactly the kind of marriage that most princesses would dream of, but then Anne's situation at home is hardly an ideal one. How was Anne to know that she had exchanged the firing pan for the fire?

Having not merely read but absolutely DEVoured The Other Boleyn Girl, I was eager to read more from Ms. Gregory, and I decided to go in chronological order by history, rather than publication order. Thus, this book came next. I suppose it's fair to say that I liked "The Other Boleyn Girl" so much that in all honesty, anything coming after it would have little chance of living up to my massive expectations. I wanted another book that both informed and transported me, another invigorating read that made me forget the world around me and sucked me into a world I had scarcely ever imagined. But unfortunately, that simply never happened with this second foray into Ms. Gregory's meticulously researched world. Throughout this book, I was never able to lose sight of the fact that I was reading about people Ms. Gregory never actually knew personally. I never had that feeling reading "The Other Boleyn Girl". In that book, she always made me feel as if I was reading about real, living, breathing people -- not just historical figures being recreated on a page. In Gregory's defense, there is not a lot known about the private lives of the three women she tries so hard to bring to life here. (She explains as much in author's note at the end of the book, in a move a more cynical reader might call covering her rear end.) So she had little to draw on, and perhaps she should not be faulted if her characters come off as a little flat, simply because she was unwilling to substitute juicier details for scant facts. However, it must be said that she compounds the problem by splitting her narrative into three parts.

I'm always up for another round with Henry VIII and his wives, so I put myself on the library waiting list for The Boleyn Inheritance. And I'm pleased to report that I enjoyed it immensely. The Boleyn Inheritance is told by Jane, Lady Rochford, widow of the executed George Boleyn; Anne of Cleves;

and Katherine "Kitty" Howard. Jane, self-justifying and self-deceiving, is obsessed with her past yet determined to do whatever she has to do in order to restore her life to its former glamour. Anne, no stupid Flanders mare but a sensible, honorable young woman who longs for freedom and respect, finds that she has exchanged the humiliations of her brother's court for the reign of terror of Henry's. Kitty is an airheaded teenager, with an endless capacity to push aside unpleasant realities in favor of her more satisfying interests: young men, jewels, and pretty clothes. Manipulating Jane and Kitty is the sinister Duke of Norfolk, and stalking through all three women's lives is the unpredictable, increasingly tyrannical Henry VIII. Gregory juggles the heroines' stories masterfully. Even when Anne of Cleves is relegated to the background and the machinations of the Duke of Norfolk and Jane take center stage, Anne remains to comment on what she sees around her. She, the outsider, becomes both the moral center of the novel and the narrator on which the reader can most rely for an accurate perception of events. Kitty's adolescent preoccupations and mercurial character are captured wonderfully, while Jane, morally repulsive as she is, has a normalcy about her that keeps us reading her story and wondering at her motivations. There's a certain humor here, often quite dark, that was missing altogether in the very earnest *Constant Princess*.

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