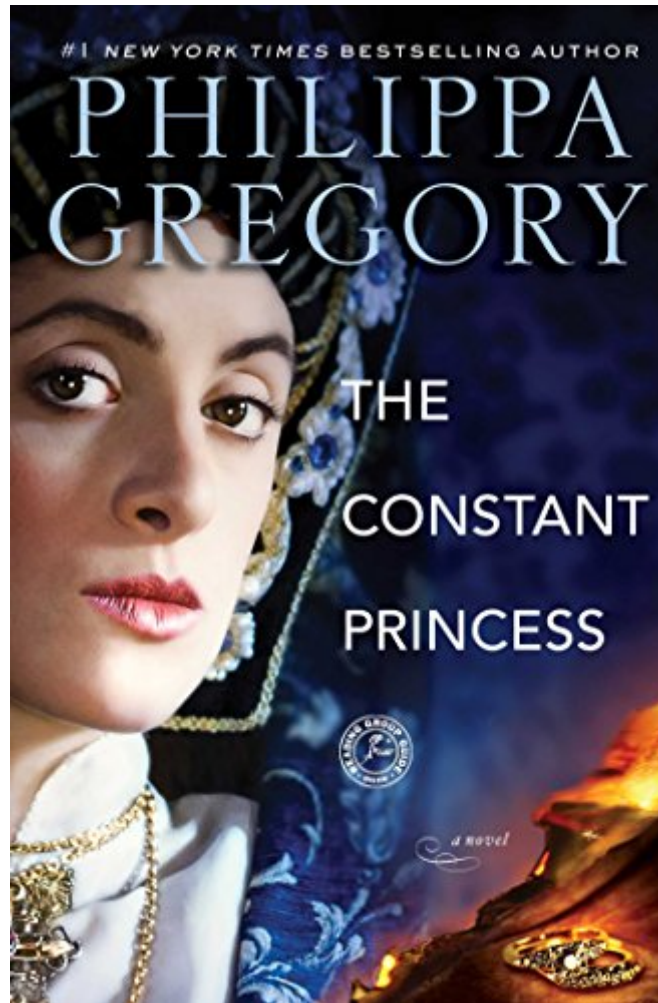


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The Constant Princess (The Plantagenet And Tudor Novels)



Synopsis

From #1 >bestselling author and "queen of royal fiction" Philippa Gregory comes the remarkable story of Katherine of Aragon, Princess of Spain, daughter of two great monarchs, and eventual Queen of England when she marries the infamous King Henry VIII. Daughter of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain, Katherine has been fated her whole life to marry Prince Arthur of England. When they meet and are married, the match becomes as passionate as it is politically expedient. The young lovers revel in each other's company and plan the England they will make together. But tragically, aged only fifteen, Arthur falls ill and extracts from his sixteen-year-old bride a deathbed promise to marry his brother, Henry; become Queen; and fulfill their dreams and her destiny. Widowed and alone in the avaricious world of the Tudor court, Katherine has to sidestep her father-in-law's desire for her and convince him, and an incredulous Europe, that her marriage to Arthur was never consummated, that there is no obstacle to marriage with Henry. For seven years, she endures the treachery of spies, the humiliation of poverty, and intense loneliness and despair while she waits for the inevitable moment when she will step into the role she has prepared for all her life. Then, like her warrior mother, Katherine must take to the battlefield and save England when its old enemies the Scots come over the border and there is no one to stand against them but the new Queen.

Book Information

File Size: 6370 KB

Print Length: 416 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0743272498

Publisher: Touchstone (December 6, 2005)

Publication Date: December 6, 2005

Language: English

ASIN: B000FCKKWG

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #28,492 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #30 in Books > Romance > Historical > Tudor #62 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction >

Customer Reviews

Since Katherine of Aragon is vastly underrepresented in fiction about Henry VIII (people tend to focus on Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard) it's nice to see a book just from her point of view. This is the story of Katherine of Aragon, born to parents constantly on crusade against the moors (Muslims, Jews and other non-Christians) in Spain, with a comparatively feminist mother for the time period. From the age of three she was betrothed to Henry Tudor's eldest son, Arthur. She was married, after great haggling by the royal parents, to Arthur when she was 16 and he was 15. There was a language gap, she spoke Spanish and French and Latin, and he spoke English, French and Welsh. But they got along. In this book the story of Katherine's first marriage is highly romantic and very sweetly written. This book is her life story, with a major gap between Princess Mary's (Later Queen Bloody Mary) birth and the time of the separation of Katherine from Henry so Anne Boleyn could be queen, told in third person and quite a lot of first person seeming journal entry type sections also from Katherine's view point (those parts can be quite boring.) This is a good book written about a largely ignored time period in the time of one of Henry's greatest queens and truest loves. That said, I have some major issues with this book. Philippa Gregory is a good writer, there's no question about that. But she made some very large historical presumptions in writing this book that I have problems with. I could understand if the book was supposed to be purely from a fictional standpoint, or had an author's note saying that pretty much all serious historians believe that Katherine and Arthur Tudor's marriage was never consummated, but this book doesn't ever say that.

Even though I have found Philippa Gregory's Tudor series ("The Other Boleyn Girl," "The Queen's Fool," "The Virgin's Lover" & "The Constant Princess," to be excellent reads -- Gregory writes well and in an engaging manner -- I will have to admit that "The Queen's Fool" & "The Virgin's Lover" did not quite measure up (for me) to "The Other Boleyn Girl." I found those two books to be less emotionally engaging and a little less complex. Of course, this could well be because I'm not so partial to Elizabeth I. Whatever the reason, it was with relief that I found myself becoming totally involved and engaged with the plight of Catalina of Aragon as she circumvented her way through the treacherous English court politics of Henry VII. Catalina of Spain, youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, had been raised to believe fervently in her parents' causes (to unite all of

Spain and make it a completely Christian country, and to create alliances with other Christian European countries that would enable them to beat back the Muslims) and to know her place in her parents schemes -- to marry the English Prince of Wales and become Queen of England, and to ensure England's help in her parents' crusade against the Muslims. But even though Catalina had anticipated that her life would not be a completely easy one (being so very far away from home and family, and feeling so completely alien in a foreign land), even she had not imagined how much pain, sorrow and heartache her life in England would be. Or just how tenacious she would have to be in order to ensure that she retained her rightful place.

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