

The Children of Henry VIII Study Guide

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Plot Summary

"The Children of Henry VIII" chronicles the reigns of his immediate successors, Edward VI and Mary I. Edward takes the throne as a nine-year-old child, and his court is rife with politics and intrigue. His uncles Somerset and Seymour battle over his influence and affection, and the young King is victim to abortive plots to take over the throne. He shows early strength and promise of representing England well, and plans to uphold and further his late father's religious reforms. Unfortunately the young King contracts tuberculosis, or consumption, and dies at fifteen. The Lady Elizabeth is his favorite sister, as she is also Protestant. Elizabeth suffers a scandal as a young girl: The Admiral Seymour plots to marry her after his wife Katherine Parr dies, and become King himself. After the scandal blows over, Elizabeth makes known her aversion to marriage, which may have originated from her mother and Katherine Howard's deaths, which she experiences as a child. She endeavors to be seen as a prim Protestant maiden, especially if she is to one day become Queen of England.

After Edward's death there is an attempt to put Protestant Lady Jane Grey on the throne instead of the Catholic Mary. The Duke of Northumberland marries Jane to his son Guilford and places them both on the throne, though England rallied for Mary and they are deposed in nine days. Jane is committed to the Tower and though Mary does not want to execute the innocent young lady, she is left no choice but to make an example of the incident.

Mary is determined to restore England to the Catholic fold. She marries the Catholic prince Philip of Spain, son of her longtime confidante and father-figure Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. The Spanish marriage is extremely unpopular with the English people, who fear being dragged into wars and made into a satellite nation of Spain. Mary falls in love with Philip, who uses her feelings as a bargaining chip against her. Mary works to bring about a reconciliation with Rome and provide the kingdom with a Catholic heir. She suffers from two phantom pregnancies that affect her physically and mentally, wearing her down.

Once Philip loses interest, Mary turns more and more to religion for her comfort. She begins burning heretics in England, and considers it her divine duty to root out heresy wherever it may lie. This cruelty makes her very unpopular with her subjects, and later generations will nickname her "Bloody Mary."

Toward the end of her life she is pressured to name a successor. Elizabeth is the obvious choice but Mary is reluctant because Elizabeth is Protestant. She makes her half-sister promise to uphold Catholicism in England before finally naming her successor. Mary dies among her ladies during mass. There are celebrations in England upon the news of Elizabeth's succession.



Introduction and Prologue

Introduction and Prologue Summary and Analysis

Henry VIII marries six times but only has three surviving children: Mary, Elizabeth, and Edward. Mary is his daughter with Katherine of Aragon, whom he divorces when she does not bear a son, on the grounds that their marriage is incestuous because she had been the wife of his brother. He then marries Anne Boleyn, who gives birth to Princess Elizabeth. Mary is disinherited, and the experience undoubtedly scars her for life. After Anne Boleyn is beheaded for treason, Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, finally bears him a son, Edward. She encourages him to welcome his other two children back to court, though Mary has to sign a document declaring that her mother's marriage to the king was incestuous and unlawful. When Jane dies, Henry marries Anne of Cleves, but annuls the marriage after six months, followed by Katherine Howard, who is beheaded for infidelity. Henry's final wife is Katherine Parr, a humanist and Protestant who encourages Henry to reinstate his daughter in the succession. Mary is popular with the subjects, and famed throughout Europe for her intelligence and virtue. She suffers from chronic ill health that is probably psychological in origin, leftover trauma and stress from her childhood and new problems she faces in adulthood. She is better suited to be a gentlewoman or a nun than a queen. She is a complete innocent and literally has no idea about fleshly sins or foul words. At twenty-five, Mary has resigned herself to life as an unmarried woman, though she still longs for a child of her own. Her faith, Catholicism, is the most important thing in her life.

Henry's second daughter Elizabeth is raised almost entirely by a woman named Katherine Ashley after Anne Boleyn is executed. She is eight when Katherine Howard is executed, and the experience likely brings back memories of her own mother. She may have developed an association between marriage and death. She grows to be an excellent linguist, and her handwriting is superb. Elizabeth, like Mary, is also effected by her disinheritance, which manifests in various illnesses and a distrust of others. Elizabeth is a Protestant like her brother Edward, who becomes King when he is still a child. Elizabeth and Edward are closer in age and in philosophy than Mary, though Edward is fond of his eldest sister as well.

Prologue

King Henry VIII rules England for thirty-eight years, and dies at the Palace of Whitehall having married six wives, reformed England's religion, and gone deeply into debt. Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford and Henry VIII's brother-in-law, becomes Lord Protector of England to the young King Edward.



Chapter 1, The King's Uncles

Chapter 1, The King's Uncles Summary and Analysis

When Henry VIII dies, he leaves the government in the charge of a council of regents until Prince Edward comes of age. The Earl of Hertford, John Dudley, and the Archbishop Cramner all take prominent positions on the council. Though Henry VIII never instates a Lord Protector of England, Hertford feels he should fill the position because he is the King's uncle. Hertford is knighted by Edward VI and created Duke of Somerset, at the same time John Dudley is created Earl of Warwick. Though Somerset and Warwick formerly worked together, a rivalry develops. Somerset's brother Thomas Seymour resents his power as well.

Mary, as heiress to the throne, is kept in the country in an attempt to separate her from Catholics who might use her as a figurehead for a rebellion against the Protestant government. Edward VI is crowned King of England at age 9, and takes to emulating his revered father. The young King is fiercely Protestant, and it becomes fashionable for courtiers to pursue arts and literature rather than sports and tournaments, as had been popular in the reign of Henry VIII.

Though Somerset is formally appointed Lord Protector on March 21, 1547, he is too much of an idealist to gain support with people of his own rank. Though Henry VIII officially broke with Rome, the English Church still contains many of the traditions of orthodoxy, and Somerset wants to Reform the movement even further. Somerset's rise to power pits him against his brother Thomas Seymour, who has also been raised to the peerage as Baron Sudeley. Seymour tries to court the young King's favor by sending him gifts, and plants seeds of resentment in his mind against his controlling uncle Somerset. Seymour's ambitions drive him to seek the Princess Mary's hand in marriage, but Somerset claims that neither brother was ever meant to be King. Instead, Seymour secretly marries Henry VIII's widow Katherine Parr. She eventually confesses to Edward VI, who takes the news very well, although Princess Mary is furious and never forgives her stepmother. Mary is worried that Elizabeth may be in moral danger by living in the house.

Seymour courts the young King's favor, hoping he will usurp his brother with favoritism. Though he is young, Edward has strong convictions and is determined to rule the realm with as much success as his father. The seeds are sewn for major religious conflicts: the heiress Mary is a devout Catholic, and the child King Edward a devout Protestant.



Chapter 2, Amorous Intrigues

Chapter 2, Amorous Intrigues Summary and Analysis

Admiral Seymour moves in with Katherine Parr and the Lady Elizabeth, who is fourteen. He is a larger than life figure known for his charm. Elizabeth's caretaker, Kat Ashley, encourages Elizabeth's infatuation with the Admiral. The Admiral would come into her room, to which he had keys made, and wake her up in the morning by throwing open her bed curtains and pretending to come after her. Kat Ashley and Katherine Parr think it is innocent fun, but he seems to deliberately be trying to awaken the adolescent Elizabeth's sexuality. He sends her suggestive notes and visits her in slippers and his nightgown, which even Kat Ashley thinks inappropriate. Elizabeth becomes uncomfortable with his visits, and takes to waking up early and dressing so she is not still in bed when he comes to bid her good morning.

Lady Jane Grey is Elizabeth and Mary's cousin through Henry VIII's niece, the daughter of his sister Mary Tudor. Jane is extremely intelligent and fanatically Protestant, though used as a pawn by her family in their play for power. Her father is Henry Grey, Marquess of Dorset, who marries Frances Brandon, Mary Tudor's daughter. Jane's parents treat her like a princess, insisting she dress in expensive fabrics, though she prefers to wear simple Protestant dresses of black and white. She is sent to live with Katherine Parr at age 9, and the Admiral decides Jane will make an ideal mate for King Edward. Edward himself is determined to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, as his father wished. The Admiral is continuing his flirtation with Elizabeth, though Katherine Parr is suspicious of his behavior. Elizabeth persuades her guardians to appoint Roger Ascham as her tutor, under whose tutelage she makes remarkable progress.

Katherine Parr is pregnant with her first child at age 36. She is ill and often confined to her bed, leaving her husband alone on his early morning visits to Elizabeth. One day they are discovered alone in each others' arms. Katherine Parr is distraught, but avoids a public show of her anger to try to save face for herself and Elizabeth. She decides to remove Elizabeth from her household, and explains to her how foolish she had been to put herself in such a position. Elizabeth is terrified that gossip has spread. She realizes her position in the kingdom, and is determined to retain her good name and reputation.

Elizabeth is very ill the rest of the summer, possibly a nervous reaction to the tremendous amount of stress the scandal causes her. Though some historians have suggested her illness is the result of a miscarriage, there is no evidence to support the claim. Katherine Parr gives birth to a girl that summer, but develops a fever and dies shortly afterward. Kat Ashley again schemes for Elizabeth to marry the Admiral, but Elizabeth is wary of another scandal and refuses to show any enthusiasm for the idea. Lord Dorset realizes the Admiral's influence at court has died with Katherine Parr, and takes Lady Jane Grey back into his home.



Seymour loudly criticizes his brother, and begins organizing the military in case of a coup. Kat Ashley convinces Elizabeth that the Admiral wants to marry her, though Elizabeth is still very hesitant of entering into any formal betrothal. The council hears rumors about Elizabeth and Admiral Seymour but dismisses them as gossip. They pass a new Book of Common Prayer and allow the clergy to marry instead of being bound by vows of celibacy. Archbishop Cramner and the council reject the idea of transubstantiation, which prompts Mary to write Charles V for protection against the Protestants.



Chapter 3, A Royal Scandal

Chapter 3, A Royal Scandal Summary and Analysis

The Admiral Seymour decides to blackmail the vice-treasurer of the Bristol mint, Sir William Sharington, by threatening to make public that Sir William defrauded the King of lots of money. Sharington gives the Admiral money to pay his mercenaries, totaling 10,000 pounds. Even Seymour's allies warn him against attempting a coup. Though Seymour and Elizabeth's indiscretions have been mostly shielded from the public, Kat Ashley informs Thomas Parry of the problem, who will later reveal all he knows to the treason inquisition. The evidence against Seymour is such that the Lord Protector his brother cannot ignore it, and thus presents it to the Council. On the night of January 16, the Admiral and a small retinue of armed men enter the King's chamber with a forged key. The King's spaniel leaps at Seymour, who shoots the dog with his gun. When the Yeomen of the Guard arrive, Seymour explains he had been trying to test the King's security. The next day Seymour is taken to the Tower, and the Lord Protector becomes convinced that Seymour had planned to marry Elizabeth and overthrow the government. Elizabeth herself is interrogated by Sir Robert Tyrwhit, who is determined to get a confession from the princess. Although Elizabeth is under immense pressure, she remains composed and convincing in her innocence, and Somerset believes her. He sets up Tyrwhit as head of Elizabeth's household, though Elizabeth wants Kat Ashley and Thomas Parry returned to her. The Admiral's arrest also means the end of hopes of a royal marriage for Jane Grey, for which her parents misguidedly blame her.

There is no trial for the Admiral, and finally Kat Ashley and Thomas Parry are released back into Elizabeth's custody. Seymour's sentence is commuted to beheading instead of the usual traitors' death of hanging, drawing, and quartering. Though Elizabeth does not betray any emotion for the Admiral's death, many historians think that her traumatic experiences with him affect her emotional and sexual development, thus fueling her lifelong aversion to marriage. She learns to associate marriage with death. Elizabeth falls ill later that year, and though there are rumors her illness is caused by a pregnancy, no hard evidence exists to support the claim. Elizabeth surely learns to keep her own counsel from this ordeal, and adopts a motto from Lady Tyrwhit, which she uses the rest of her life: "Be Always One," (p. 80).



Chapter 4, The Most Unstable Man in England

Chapter 4, The Most Unstable Man in England Summary and Analysis

Parliament passes the Act of Uniformity in March of 1549, which declares the Book of Common Prayer is to be used in all church services, and anyone celebrating Roman Catholic mass can be imprisoned. The Lady Mary decides that Edward is too young to make judgements on religion himself, and declares that she will make no religious changes until he comes of age. Mary relies on the advice and protection of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and his ambassador Francis van der Delft. She presses the Lord Protector, Duke of Somerset, to grant her religious freedom until Edward comes of age, and he finally gives her a verbal agreement, though he later denies giving any such permission. The public is shocked that Somerset did not try to save his brother's life, and views it as an act of fratricide.

The Act of Uniformity sparks rebellions in the country, and Somerset is forced to send out armies to squelch the uprisings. Warwick and Northampton lead the forces, supplemented by German mercenaries. The Lady Mary is rumored to be involved with the rebels, though in reality she sees them as traitors. Charles V is angry that Mary is not allowed to practice her religion, and Somerset decides to allow her freedom to avoid a war with Charles V.

The Lady Elizabeth is very ill that summer and often bedridden. She has been found not guilty of conspiring with the Admiral, but her reputation has taken a beating as a result of the scandal. She cultivates the image of a pious Protestant maiden, and eschews jeweled garments and expensive fabrics in favor of simple and severe black and white dresses.

Somerset is more unpopular than ever, and his moderate politics offend Catholics and Protestants who want him to take a more extreme stance one way or the other. John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, seizes the opportunity to advance himself. Though technically he seems virtuous: he does not drink, gamble, and never incites a scandal, he is actually greedy and corrupt, and many fall to his charm. His goal is to undermine the Lord Protector and take his position. He gathers forces and marches on Hampton Court, and the Lord Protector has to wake the King and flee to Windsor, though Seymour is forced to surrender his position as Protector and sent to the Tower. Warwick becomes the Lord President of the Council, and the office of Lord Protector lapses. Dudley soon is governing England like a dictator, bypassing Parliament and the Council. The Lady Mary is under a much stricter mandate under Dudley than she had been under Somerset, and she makes plans with Charles V to escape from England. The Lady Jane Grey is returned to her parents, but continues to be treated very badly by them.

Somerset is released from the Tower and resumes a seat on the Council, where he has no choice but to support Warwick.



Chapter 5, Keeping the Faith

Chapter 5, Keeping the Faith Summary and Analysis

The Lady Elizabeth is finally restored to favor, and Edward requests her portrait. The wise and business savvy William Cecil becomes her surveyor, and Roger Ascham is invited back into the household as a friend to share Elizabeth's intellectual pursuits. Elizabeth is praised for her skill in languages, and enjoys her independence.

The Lady Mary is still suffering under the religious restrictions placed upon her by Dudley, and England's power in Europe is declining because of internal politics. She and van der Delft begin planning her escape from England, but he is recalled home because of his ill health. He promises to come back for her, but once he reaches Flanders he becomes seriously ill and dies, after confessing to the escape plot. Jean Dubois is sent to rescue her in van der Delft's place, and lays all the plans for the escape. However, Mary gets cold feet, and has heard a prediction that the King will be dead within a year. Though she waffles between escape and riding out the storm, she resolves to stay in England and continues to press Parliament for freedom to practice Catholicism. The Dorsets visit Mary that October, and Lady Jane Grey is shocked at the regular masses Mary's household holds. Mary is considered a heretic, for which the penalty is death, though Edward cannot bring himself to sign her death warrant, fearing she will never attain Heaven. Elizabeth steers clear of the conflict between her other two siblings.

Warwick extends his power over the Council and invites Edward to attend the meetings. At thirteen, he considers himself worldly enough to weigh in on matter of religion, and is offended when Mary implies that he is not yet old enough. Mary is worried about being eliminated from the succession for her beliefs, and also by rumors that Warwick plans to leave his wife and marry Elizabeth. Mary tells Edward she would rather her life be forfeit than change her religion, and Charles V confirms that he will declare war on England if Mary is not allowed to celebrate mass. Though a royal edict is passed forbidding her to celebrate mass, it is simply assumed she obeys it, and no investigation ensues.

Edward endeavors to be like his father, inciting awe and respect in all he encounters.



Chapter 6, Pining Away

Chapter 6, Pining Away Summary and Analysis

In the summer of 1551, there is an epidemic of the sweating sickness, and the country is battling inflation. In October Warwick is given the title of Duke of Northumberland, the first man without royal blood to hold a ducal title. During the first Council meeting, Somerset is accused of treason and sent to the Tower. He is accused of planning to overthrow the Tower and gain access to its arsenal, then poisoning the Council and taking over the government of England. He is condemned to death, though a public outcry serves to prevent the sentence from being carried out. Northumberland pressures Edward to sign Somerset's death warrant, though the young King is reluctant to send his own uncle to the block. However, the sentence of beheading is carried out, and the crowds dip handkerchiefs in Somerset's blood because he is perceived as a martyr. Northumberland is perceived as evil by the public.

In June of 1552 Edward sets out on a trip to view the progress of his kingdom, but is steadily declining due to consumption, or tuberculosis. Girolamo Cardano, an Italian doctor, does not inform the court of the King's condition because it is treason to predict the death of the King. The King's impending death is inconvenient for Northumberland, since his heir is Catholic Mary and Northumberland has pitted himself against her. He begins to court her good favor, which confuses her, because she and Elizabeth have no idea how serious Edward's illness is. She determines to go visit her brother, and is alarmed to see how ill he has become. According to the Act of Succession passed by Henry VIII, Mary and her heirs are to succeed Edward, then Elizabeth and her heirs, then the heirs of Henry VIII's sister Mary Tudor, whose daughter is Frances Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, and mother to Lady Jane Grey. The Duke of Northumberland begins to hatch a plot that puts Lady Jane Grey on the throne, thus keeping England Protestant and himself in power. Northumberland betrothes Jane to his youngest son Guilford, though she would have preferred not to marry at all. Edward is getting worse, and Northumberland has to move quickly to get his ducks in a row. Jane and Guilford are ordered to consummate their marriage, and Northumberland begins dosing the King with arsenic, allowing him to live longer but causing him great suffering. Northumberland convinces Edward to change the succession in favor of Lady Jane Grey, on the grounds that his sisters are illegitimate. Though the Council considers it treason, the succession is changed. The King is very near death, and Jane is told to go to the Tower as soon as she hears of his passing in preparation to be crowned. She is shocked at the change and tries to resist it. Elizabeth is summoned to Greenwich, but wisely claims illness to keep herself out of Northumberland's clutches. Edward VI dies in horrible pain amidst a raging thunderstorm, said to be sent by Henry VIII himself in his anger of the altered succession.



Chapter 7, Jane the Queen and Chapter 8, God's Miracle

Chapter 7, Jane the Queen and Chapter 8, God's Miracle Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7 begins as Mary Tudor makes it known that she intends to claim the throne once King Edward is dead. Northumberland keeps the King's death a secret for almost two days while he makes arrangements. He wants The Lady Mary in his custody before the public knows of the King's death. Northumberland may have switched Edward's body with a similar one to avoid an autopsy, which may have revealed the arsenic in his system. If that is the case, the remains of the real Edward VI lie somewhere in Greenwich park, and the occupant of the tomb is unknown.

The Lady Mary is staying with one John Huddlestone, a Catholic gentleman, when Protestants set fire to his house upon hearing the rumor she is there. She flees to Kenninghall and declares, among her councillors and the members of her household, that she is the true Queen of England "by divine and human law," (p. 161). She makes it clear that she has no intention to change the religion set in place by Edward in an attempt to gain support. When Jane is informed of her accession and honored by Northumberland and the Council, she is faint with shock. She bursts into tears, claiming she is appalled and that Mary is the rightful heir. However, she cannot win against the powerful men who mean to use her for their own ends, and accepts the crown. The public is not pleased with the announcement, believing the Lady Mary to be the rightful Queen of England. Jane is a puppet of Northumberland, with little power but to sign "Jane the Queen" where she is told. The Council is suspicious of Northumberland's aspirations for Guilford, who is completely spoiled and still runs to his mother when he does not get his way. This is a sharp contrast to the intellectual brilliance and maturity of young Jane Grey.

In Chapter 8, Northumberland bribes Elizabeth in an attempt to have her relinquish her claim to the throne, though she parries him by saying she will not relinquish until Mary does. Northumberland writes Mary that Queen Jane is invested and crowned, and she should stop the uprising. Though many councillors sign the letter, William Cecil does not. As Mary garners support, Northumberland ignores Queen Jane's refusal to make Guilford King of England, and plans a crowning ceremony for the couple at Westminster Abbey. Jane is planning to enforce Protestantism on England.

Meanwhile, the Council decides to drop Northumberland's cause and begin to prepare for Mary's arrival. On July 19, Mary is proclaimed queen in London, and everyone believes it is God's will. The Duke of Suffolk informs Jane that she is no longer queen, and she is glad to take off the crown. She feels she has sinned by going along with the scheme, and remains composed though the Duke shortly abandons her in the Tower.



Mary forgives most of the men who have risen against her, and feels it is her holy duty to restore Catholicism to England. She sends Northumberland and his family to the Tower. Frances Brandon begs Mary for her husband Suffolk and daughter Jane's lives, and Suffolk is released, but not Jane. Charles V suggests his son Philip as a husband for Mary, and the marriage contract goes into negotiations. Queen Mary includes Elizabeth in the celebrations, though young Elizabeth is a sharp contrast to the older and more weathered Mary. To the people, Elizabeth represents the future of their country, at least until Mary has a child.



Chapter 9, A Merciful Princess; Chapter 10, The Marriage of Princes

Chapter 9, A Merciful Princess; Chapter 10, The Marriage of Princes Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 9, Mary I will not allow Jane's execution on the grounds that Jane was a pawn. Her council warns her this kindness will be perceived as weakness, but she cannot go against her conscience. Stephen Gardiner is appointed Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal, and becomes one of the Queen's most trusted advisors. He is a Catholic and works without rest for England his entire life, and though he is to gain a reputation as a religiously intolerant bully, he actually favors a more moderate approach to the problem of religion.

Mary is ill-equipped for the political savvy and deep understanding required of a queen. The English have not had a female sovereign since the twelfth century. She rules according to her conscience, and is extremely stubborn. Mary is appalled that Elizabeth is Protestant, and is determined to bring her half-sister and the entirety of England to Catholicism. She writes to the Pope, who sends Mary's cousin Cardinal Reginald Pole as papal legate to England.

Many Englishmen want Mary to wed Plantagenet Edward Courtenay, the great-grandson of Edward VI, and the Queen grants Courtenay the Earldom of Devon. Charles V puts forth his son Prince Philip as a candidate for marriage as well, but Mary is still apprehensive about the idea of marriage and conjugal relations.

Northumberland is executed on Tower Hill on August 23, even after a public conversion to Catholicism and a confession of his sins. Jane Grey and Guilford are to stand trial as well.

Chapter 10 begins with background information on Prince Philip of Spain, whose previous marriage to Maria of Portugal ends when she dies in childbirth. Philip has not remarried, but his vast holdings, Catholic beliefs, and connection to Charles V make him an attractive candidate for Mary. In order to prevent Protestant Elizabeth from inheriting the throne, Mary needs to take a husband and produce a male heir.

After Mary is officially crowned, her first Parliament session repeals Edward VI's religious legislation. They ban the Book of Common Prayer, the marriage of priests, and declares Henry VIII's marriage to Katherine of Aragon valid. Mary is extremely stressed at the prospect of marriage. She finally accepts Philip of Spain, though her subjects are lackluster about the announcement, afraid England will be drawn into the Hapsburg wars. The people are distrustful of Spaniards, and Mary's religious reforms are forever associated with the Spanish regime.

Lady Jane Grey and Guilford are found guilty of high treason and condemned to death, though Mary means to keep them alive and in the Tower.



Chapter 11, Heretics and Traitors

Chapter 11, Heretics and Traitors Summary and Analysis

On November 26, 1553, a group of men led by Thomas Wyatt meet to discuss rebellion. They want to prevent a Spanish marriage for the queen, but do not want to depose Mary and place Elizabeth and Courtenay on the throne as is the popular opinion. By the end of November the marriage treaty is made, which does not give Philip any real power over the kingdom.

Mary decides not to pardon Jane Grey until she and Philip have married and given the kingdom a Catholic heir. However, with the Protestant rebellion brewing, Mary cannot risk allowing Jane the daily walks and other freedoms she has enjoyed as a prisoner of the Tower. Wyatt, Suffolk, Sir Peter Carew, and Edward Courtenay are to be the ringleaders. The four armies will march on London and rescue Mary from the Council, under the impression they are forcing her into the marriage. The rebellion might have gone off without a hitch, but Courtenay loses his nerve and confesses the plans to Gardiner. Mary wants Elizabeth to come to London immediately for safekeeping, but the princess claims she is too ill to travel. Mary and her supporters dig in and prepare for a possible battle. Mary addresses the city of London personally to raise their spirits against the threat of an attack, and the rebels are squelched when London does not rise to support them. Though they are victorious, the queen's councilors reference the rebellion as an example of the queen being too kind to her subjects, and she resolves never again to show clemency to traitors. Charles V does not want Philip in England while Jane Grey still lives, though Mary still offers her reprieve if she will convert to Catholicism. Her father Suffolk belatedly tries to communicate with his daughter after he is captured, though it is too late for any reconciliation. Though Guilford loses his nerve at his execution, Lady Jane keeps her composure and dies bravely, if tragically.



Chapter 12, Much Suspected for Me

Chapter 12, Much Suspected for Me Summary and Analysis

After the rebellion is over, Mary requests Elizabeth at court. She is apprehensive because Mary is under pressure to deal with her as she had dealt with Jane Grey, and on the way to London she is so sick that her retinue thinks she might die. When she arrives at Whitehall, she is essentially Mary's prisoner.

Suffolk is beheaded on February 17, and many other rebels hanged. Less than a month after Suffolk's execution, his widow marries her master of horse. This causes a scandal because she has royal blood and he does not, he is half her age, and they have to marry because she becomes pregnant. As for Mary's own marriage, she is officially betrothed to Philip by proxy on March 6 at Whitehall.

The Council is trying to extract a confession from Elizabeth implicating her in Wyatt's rebellion. Wyatt, under torture, admits to contacting Elizabeth only twice: one to advise her to leave London, and once to alert her of his presence. Though Mary wants to indict her sister, her councillors fear it will start another rebellion. Gardiner wants Elizabeth kept in the Tower, but many believe Mary will not live long past her marriage and then Elizabeth will take the throne. She is eventually committed to the Tower, which she fears because it is the place where her mother Anne Boleyn was imprisoned and beheaded. Elizabeth is allowed to write Mary a letter, in which she proclaims her innocence and begs for mercy from her sister. Elizabeth suffers from her confinement, and is extremely anxious about her future. Her romance with Lord Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester may have begun during her imprisonment. The councillors finally agree they cannot make a case against Elizabeth, but have difficulty deciding what to do with her. It is agreed that Elizabeth will be under house arrest, and she is placed in the care of Sir Henry Bedingfield at the manor of Oxford. While these accommodations are theoretically better than imprisonment in the Tower, Elizabeth can do nothing without approval from the Council. Though Sir Henry sees himself as a kind guardian, she never warms to him and resents him as her jailer.



Chapter 13, The Spanish Marriage

Chapter 13, The Spanish Marriage Summary and Analysis

England is preparing for Philip of Spain's arrival, though he is belated in contacting Mary personally. Philip is greeted with great fanfare, but has brought his entire household with him, not realizing that an entire English household has already been arranged for him. Philip is a young man considered very attractive, and weds Mary for entirely political reasons. He knows his role is to reconcile England with Rome and produce a Catholic heir for both their countries. He intends to stay in England only a week because his father, Charles V, needs help in his war with the French. Mary and Philip's first conversation lasts half an hour although Philip does not speak English. Though he behaves impeccably toward his bride, he feels misled by the portraits painted of her and feels no physical attraction. They are married on July 25, 1554 at Winchester Cathedral in a lavish ceremony that lasts much of the day. Only a few courtiers attend the customary public bedding ceremony. This is certainly emotionally tumultuous for Mary, at 37, who experiences her first physical relationship with a man. Luckily, the French forces in Brussels are beaten back, and Philip is not obliged to leave his bride right away. Mary loves him instantly, or at least is infatuated with him. She has presumably missed emotional fulfillment in her childhood, having been separated from her mother and denied by her father, and for the first time in her life she feels desired. She does not always defer to her husband as is the expectation, but keeps her sovereignty with marked stubbornness. The court is already resenting the Spanish attendants of the King, whom he clearly prefers over his English retinue. The English people fiercely resent the Spaniards' presence, blaming them for the religious changes in England that are to come about.

That September Mary learns she is pregnant, which is a fulfillment of everything she has hoped for. With a Catholic heir on the way and England's reconciliation with Rome imminent, she cannot have been happier.



Chapter 14, True Religion Restored

Chapter 14, True Religion Restored Summary and Analysis

Cardinal Pole is waiting in Brussels for a summons from England, as he is still considered a traitor under an act passed by Henry VIII. There is more talk in England of marrying Elizabeth off, but many councillors want to wait in case of the death of their monarch and her unborn child. Parliament repeals Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy, so England can be reunited with Rome. Pole is finally summoned back to England, where he announces the kingdom has been welcomed back into the Catholic fold of Rome. This is a crowning achievement for Mary, who has made it her life goal to bring England back to the true faith. Mary then considers it her duty to completely eradicate heresy from England, which begins when Parliament ratified "An Act for the Renewing of Three Statutes made for the Punishment of Heresies" (p. 293). This act gives the bishops the power to investigate suspected heretics, and if found guilty, have them burnt at the stake. Though many blame Gardiner for the rampant burnings and persecutions, he does not condemn any heretics in his diocese, and tries to curb the burnings when they get out of control.

Mary is not cruel, but she believes it is her divine calling to eradicate heresy by any means necessary. She shows no mercy toward heretics, and her Counter-Reformation proceeds ruthlessly. That Christmas is triumphant for the pregnant Mary, though Philip is obviously restless and means to leave as soon as his child is born. The burnings she instigates are having the opposite effect: instead of converting Protestants to Catholicism, they are strengthened in their resolve for the reformed faith. The people blame Philip for the persecutions, though he actually tries to check Mary on the matter. The nickname "Bloody Mary" is not assigned until centuries later, but Catholicism and persecution are irrevocably associated in the psyche of the English people. As a result Elizabeth is more popular than ever.

In March Pope Julius dies, and his successor, Marcellus II dies three weeks later. This puts Paul IV at the head of the Church of Rome, who hates the Hapsburgs and loathes Spaniards. This strains the relationship between England and Rome. Mary is close to going into confinement for the birth of her child, and Elizabeth is brought to court to prevent an uprising in the case of Mary's death. Philip endeavors to be kind to Elizabeth, realizing that if Mary dies in childbirth he will need to have a good working relationship with her.



Chapter 15, A Miracle Will Come to Pass

Chapter 15, A Miracle Will Come to Pass Summary and Analysis

In April 1555 the King and Queen go to Hampton Court to await the birth of their child. According to tradition, six weeks before the birth of the child the Queen goes into confinement with her ladies, and the only man allowed to see her is her husband. The political atmosphere in England is tumultuous, and Mary and her doctors are afraid for her: childbirth in the time period is already difficult, and she is considered well past middle age to be giving birth. Though Elizabeth is summoned to court for safekeeping, rumors abound that Philip means to marry her if Mary dies. Mary refuses to see Elizabeth unless she confesses her involvement in Wyatt's rebellion, which Elizabeth does not. She is again under house arrest, but now she is directly under the thumb of her sister. King Philip requests a meeting with her which Mary allows, and later Elizabeth will claim he was in love with her.

Childbirth is extremely dangerous at this time. No one understands the need for cleanliness, and any number of complications can occur that can easily kill both mother and child. There is a false announcement in April of the birth of a prince, which has to be put down hastily by messengers from Hampton Court. In early May there is a rumor that the Queen has given birth to a "mole, or a lump of flesh" (p. 306) and is very near death. Though it is theorized that Mary delivers a hydatidiform mole, this is unlikely because there is no record of excessive bleeding. She may also have suffered from an intrauterine death, but this is also unlikely. When Mary has not delivered by the end of May, she begins to think God is punishing her for failing to discover and punish heresy in England sufficiently. Though the doctors and midwives try to comfort Mary by convincing her she has confused her dates, the court realizes there will probably be no baby born of their Queen. King Philip's grandmother Queen Juana dies during this time, but he cannot leave if the imminent birth of his child is a possibility. That summer is very cold and rainy and as a consequence the harvest fails, and the people begin to blame their Queen for the misfortunes. There are altercations between the English and Spanish at court, and everyone has accepted there will be no child except Mary. Philip is embarrassed and the court in low spirits, having been living in the now filthy Hampton palace for too long. The Queen finally accepts there will be no baby. Mary probably suffers from pseudocyesis, or phantom pregnancy. Her missed periods may have been the early onset of menopause.

Philip breaks the news to Mary that he is needed in the wars abroad, and that Charles V means to abdicate in favor of his son. He asks Mary that Elizabeth be treated with respect. Mary is distraught at Philip's leaving, and becomes depressed.



Chapter 16, Bloody Mary

Chapter 16, Bloody Mary Summary and Analysis

After Philip leaves, Mary is profoundly depressed. Elizabeth stays at court, though it is obvious that Mary despises her sister. Elizabeth tries not to incite Mary's anger by attending mass daily and distracts herself in her studies with tutor Roger Ascham.

Charles V begins the process of transferring power to Philip as soon as he arrives in Brussels. Philip uses Mary's feelings to his advantage, demanding that he be crowned King of England. He attends countless social functions in Brussels and rumors abound that he is not faithful to his wife. She realizes he will not return until she grants him everything he asks.

Mary's subjects are appalled at the continued burnings, and Elizabeth is becoming a champion of the people. Mary sets spies in her household and though Elizabeth does her best to avoid controversy, she cannot help that many plots that surface use her as a figurehead. The Dudley conspiracy plots to send Mary overseas with Philip, then place Elizabeth on the throne and marry her to the English Earl of Devonshire.

Charles V abdicates on January 16, ill with arteriosclerosis. Thus, Mary and Philip become Queen and King of Spain, the Netherlands, and Spain's land in Italy and the Americas. Philip's brother the Archduke Ferdinand becomes the Holy Roman Emperor, who in turn cedes his land to his brother. England is now useless to Philip except as a source of men for armies, and an investment in the future in Elizabeth. Mary turns forty on February 16 but is said to look much older. She is profoundly depressed at Philip's abandonment, and turns to religion as her only solace.

The Dudley conspiracy is out of control and has grown too large for efficiency. Courtenay, the last of the Plantagenets, dies in Venice of a high fever, his death relieving the Tudors of a threat that had existed for years. Philip, now Philip II, is in trouble with Rome. Their relationship is deteriorating rapidly, and he is requesting men from Mary to lead an army into the holy capital. Mary feels very torn because she is loyal to both Rome and Philip, although she is ecstatic when Philip begins sending members of his household back to England to prepare for his visit. Philip is in favor of Elizabeth marrying the Catholic Duke of Savoy, and Elizabeth is ready to flee England to avoid the marriage.

Though Mary's spirits are up with the imminent return of her husband, the kingdom is suffering. When Mary declares England will go to war to aid Philip against the French the entire kingdom is shocked. Philip promises he will come back to England if Mary commits troops to the fight, and sets sail for England on March 8.



Chapter 17, Little Children Like Angels

Chapter 17, Little Children Like Angels Summary and Analysis

When Philip II returns to England it is clear he comes for political reasons and not out of affection for his wife. Though her spirits are lifted with Philip's visit, Mary is not at all well. She is being pressured to name Elizabeth her successor, whom she vehemently hates. Elizabeth has become haughty with the knowledge that her place in the realm is more secure. Philip II is excommunicated by Rome, forcing Mary to choose between her husband and her religion. She finally grants him the use of English troops, and the Pope is forced to accept Philip's terms. Then the French mount a surprise attack on Calais and regain the city. This is a huge loss for Mary and England, and she considers it the worst failure of her reign.

Six months after Philip leaves, the Queen announces she is again pregnant, though again it is a phantom pregnancy. Mary is getting more and more ill, and Philip pressures her to write her last will and testament. Elizabeth is under intense pressure to take a husband, and Philip expresses his compliments and support to the princess.

The burnings make Mary completely unpopular in England. The Council continues to pressure Mary to name a successor, and the dying Queen finally names Elizabeth, providing she uphold the Catholic faith. The queen dies during a celebration of mass in her bedchamber, of a broken heart and the loss of Calais.



Characters

Mary I

Mary I was the only living child of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon. She was staunchly Catholic, like her mother, and was devastated when Henry VIII divorced her mother in favor of Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth I, Mary's half-sister. After the death of Henry VIII, Mary's much younger brother Edward VI took the throne. The fiercely Catholic Mary suffered much anxiety living under the rule of her Protestant brother, and relied heavily on the support of the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Under Edward VI, she continued to practice Catholicism though the King her brother ordered her not to. She had decided he was too young to make decisions on the matter of religion, and she would not change her ways until the King had come of age and she deemed him mature enough to make his own decisions. Mary I could not reconcile her conscience to a change of religion, believing it was a sin against God and would bar her from Heaven. When Edward VI died, Mary's accession was usurped by Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Day Queen. The greedy Duke of Northumberland placed an unwilling Jane on the throne, but the country rallied to Mary, whom they believed their true queen. Though at first she promised not to change her brother's religious ordinances, she considered reconciling England with the papacy of Rome her life goal.

Mary always longed to be a wife and mother, and was known for her kindness and generosity early in life. She was thrilled to enter into a marriage contract with Philip of Spain, the Catholic son of Charles V. Though she was thirty-seven and he was twenty-six when they were married, she had high hopes of providing a Catholic heir for England, and especially did not want her Protestant younger sister Elizabeth to ascend to the throne. Though Philip was chivalrous, attentive, and polite to Mary at the beginning of their marriage, he felt misled by her age and had no physical attraction to her. Alternately, she was intensely devoted to him, and so desired his love that she was completely bereft when he left after her phantom pregnancy. After that, it was clear their marriage was solely for political advantage, and neither Philip nor her country believed she was capable of bearing children. A combination of physical illness, bad harvests, and horrible weather led the people to think that England was being punished for Mary's sins. Mary believed God was telling her to root out heretics even more brutally, though she was already mercilessly burning heretics at the stake with no chance of repentance.

Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I was the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. When Elizabeth was just a child, Anne Boleyn was beheaded under conviction of adultery, and the young princess was stricken from the succession and taken away to be raised quietly in the country. She was raised mostly by Kat Ashley, whom she regarded as a mother, and was not brought back into the court circle under Henry VIII married his sixth wife, Katherine Parr. Though Elizabeth benefited greatly from Katherine Parr's influence,



through the traumatic events of her childhood and later teenage years, she may have learned to associate marriage with death. Furthermore, after Henry VIII's death, Katherine Parr's marriage to the Admiral Seymour caused Elizabeth untold anxiety and suffering. The Admiral, a grown man, played on her teenage impulses and underdeveloped understanding of womanhood to wreak havoc on her emotional state. Though Elizabeth was extremely intelligent and often praised for her understanding of languages and politics, she allowed herself to become embroiled in a scandal with the Admiral, much to her misery and the shame of Katherine Parr. Elizabeth desired nothing more than good public opinion after the scandal, and worked to cultivate the image of a pious Protestant maiden. This garnered favor for her with her half-brother Edward, but served to alienate her from the militantly Catholic Mary.

When Edward was on the throne Elizabeth was in favor, but when Mary became queen she fell out of favor. Mary was jealous of Elizabeth's youth and beauty, and bitterly resented that a Protestant whom she perceived as a bastard would inherit the throne. King Philip favored Elizabeth, which incensed Mary further, so at the end of her reign it was known Mary I utterly detested her sister. Elizabeth remained diplomatic and savvy, never bowing to false confessions and not allowing herself to be at the center of any plot to overthrow her sister.

Edward VI

Though he took the throne when he was only nine, Edward VI showed early promise as a sound ruler for the kingdom. He was well-read and well-spoken, and from the beginning sought to carry out his late father's wishes, even intending to wed Mary, Queen of Scots. Young Edward resented his uncle, the Lord Protector Somerset, and favored his uncle Seymour who would send him money and gifts. Somerset and Seymour, though brothers, came to hate each other and Seymour schemed to marry Edward to Lady Jane Grey. He had all the potential to be a strong King and figurehead for England, but Edward died at fifteen from consumption, or tuberculosis.

Lady Jane Grey

Jane Grey, granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister Mary Tudor, was a fierce Protestant and formidable intellectual, rival even to the Lady Elizabeth. Jane was used as a pawn by her ambitious parents, who first schemed to marry her to the young King Edward. Her only solace was in her caring tutor, her studies, and her religion. Though she was one of the great ladies of the realm, she did not enjoy a happy life. She was used by Northumberland, married to his inept son Guilford, and placed on the throne in a dangerous coup after Edward VI's death. Though Jane had no wish to be queen, she accepted the position and ruled for nine days as a puppet of Northumberland. After Mary came to power Jane and Guilford were sent to the Tower, where they languished, convicted of treason. Though Mary wanted to pardon Jane, political circumstances prevented any action but her execution. Jane was brave to the end, and gave an



articulate speech before a crowd gathered at her scaffold. She live a sad life and died a tragic death, and the witnesses of her beheading bore her nothing but sympathy.

Henry VIII

Father of Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, Henry VIII made himself head of the Church of England.

Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford and later Duke of Somerset

Henry VIII's uncle, who made himself Lord Protector of England.

John Dudley, Viscount Lisle and later Earl of Warwick

Great Chamberlain of England in the beginning of Edward VI's reign, and a sincere convert to Protestantism.

Sir Bedingford

Elilizabeth I's caretaker when she was under house arrest.

Charles V

Holy Roman Emperor, and Mary I's powerful Catholic cousin.

Katherine Parr

Henry VIII's widow, stepmother to Elizabeth I, and wife to Admiral Seymour. She died in childbirth.

Katherine Ashley

Elizabeth's governess and lifelong friend, whom she regarded as a mother.

Francis van der Delft

Charles V's ambassador to England during Edward VII's rule.



William Cecil

Elizabeth's surveyor and trusted councillor.

Guilford Dudley

The youngest son of the Duke of Northumberland, husband and King consort to Lady Jane Grey, also imprisoned in the Tower with her and beheaded.

Frances Brandon

Daughter of Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, and mother to the Lady Jane Grey.

Stephen Gardiner

Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal under Mary I; Mary relied heavily upon him for advice.

Cardinal Reginald Pole

Mary I's cousin, sent as papal legate to England at the beginning of her reign.

Edward Courtenay

The great-grandson of Edward IV, the last of the Plantagenet bloodline, and seriously considered as a suitor for both Mary and Elizabeth.

Ruy Gomez

Philip of Spain's best friend and confidante.



Objects/Places

Whitehall

The great Tudor palace in London.

The Tower

The Tower of London had many uses, perhaps most notably the detention of political prisoners. Monarchs waiting to be crowned also customarily spent a night in the Tower.

Windsor

One of the Tudor palaces.

Greenwich

The Tudor palace where Mary I retreated to battle for the throne.

London

The center of political activity in England during the Tudor dynasty.

Letters

Letters were extremely important in Tudor England, and were how many important news and decisions were conveyed.

Rings

Rings were used to convey rank, such as Mary I's betrothal ring and Edward VI's coronation ring. They were also oftentimes bestowed at gifts.

Tower Hill

Tower Hill is where many political prisoners were executed, usually by beheading. Among these executions were Anne Boleyn, Katherine Howard, and the Lady Jane Grey.

Portraits

Portraits were used among the upper classes like photographs. Edward VI requested a miniature portrait of his beloved sister Elizabeth, and Philip of Spain requested a portrait of his betrothed, Mary.

Hampton Palace

The Tudor palace where Mary went into confinement during her first phantom pregnancy. Also, a popular palace for subsequent monarchs to frequent.

Themes

Religion and Truth

Religion was a chief component in the life of a subject in Tudor England. The church dictated much of the social etiquette and the celebrations, attitudes, and traditions of the day. Henry VIII separated from Catholic Rome creating the Church of England with the monarch at the head, which was highly controversial. For the Tudors religion was literally a matter of life and death, and it was not until Elizabeth that England enjoyed some semblance of religious stability. King Edward viewed Catholicism as evil and superstitious. He wanted to bring England to the reformed Protestant religion, while Catholic Mary desired the exact opposite during her reign. Alliances, wars, marriages, and countless other things were dictated according to one's religion. People believed very strongly in their faith, and viewed saving souls as a matter of life and death.

Mary I's entire being centered around her Catholic beliefs, even after she married Philip of Spain, whom she was obsessed with. She perceived it as her duty to bring England back to Catholicism, and took to burning heretics as examples. The burnings were terrifying and horrible, and though Mary was known as a kind sovereign, these actions earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary." So adamant was she about her religion that even on her deathbed she delayed naming a successor, only capitulating after Elizabeth promised to uphold the Catholic faith. Religion was not a matter of personal faith, but of king and country. It could make and break regimes, countries, and monarchs. The clash between Catholicism and Protestantism was a life and death issue, as evident throughout Henry VIII's reign and especially Mary I's reign.

Loyalty

The highest crime in Tudor England was treason, for which the penalty was stiff. A nobleman could get off with beheading, but a base-born subject would have to endure a traitor's death: hanging, drawing, and quartering. In an age where one's identity was very much determined by the origin of one's birth, there were not many gray areas when it came to crimes against the country or the crown. The monarch demanded total and complete respect and had the power to make and break lives. In England the people were xenophobic and insular, as evident when Philip's Spanish retinue entered the court. The monarchs all demanded complete and total devotion from all subjects. Much of this demand for loyalty was leftover from mediaeval times, where groups and clans had to stick together or be destroyed.

A wife was expected to be completely subservient to her husband, another form of loyalty. Although Mary I did not obey her husband Philip on many occasions, it was against the norm for the time period. Loyalty to England was much of the reason the subjects of the country did not approve of a foreign marriage for their monarch. They



were afraid of becoming simply a satellite nation of Spain, with English concerns falling by the wayside.

Sibling Rivalry

A driving force of Tudor existence after the death of Henry VIII was sibling rivalry. Not only did the siblings differ in matters of religion, but they all also had different mothers. In Mary and Elizabeth's case, their mothers' animosity carried over into the daughters' adult life. Since royalty was hereditary, it was of the utmost important to keep your friends close, but your enemies closer. For Mary and Elizabeth, they were one in the same. Mary hated Elizabeth for her choice of religion, but was certainly still resentful over Anne Boleyn's treatment of Katherine of Aragon. Edward favored his Protestant sister Elizabeth, and though he was much younger, both Elizabeth and Mary had to defer to him in all things because he was King. Mary was constantly scrutinized under Edward's reign because she did not try to hide her Catholic religion, and claimed Edward was not mature enough to make decisions on weighty matters like religion. Somerset and Seymour, the Lord Protector and his brother, also had a rivalry during Edward's reign. This sibling rivalry ended in tragedy, when Admiral Seymour was executed for treason.

For Elizabeth and Mary, either one of them could have been used against the other, which is why Elizabeth was kept under such strict supervision during Mary's reign. Each of the sisters had a legitimate claim to the throne, and each could have supporters rally for them at any time.



Style

Perspective

The author writes from both her passion about the subject and her research into historical fact. She bridges the gap between actual historical events, and the thoughts, feelings, and convictions of the people who led them to occur. She identifies with the historical figures, and writes in a way that is in turns sympathetic and objective. Alison Weir is an expert on medieval English history through the Renaissance, and has focused much of her writing on the famous Tudor family. Her excellent understanding of the Tudor monarchies aids the clear presentation of her material.

The biography is in third person, but includes many quotations from contemporaries of the time period. She delves into the psyche of each subject and endeavors to present who they were as people, though takes care not to stray from historical fact. Weir certainly identifies with Elizabeth the most of the four subjects of the work, taking extra time to defend her actions and explore what she was feeling. It is clear that Weir regards Elizabeth as the light at the end of the political tunnel, and pointedly ends her biography with the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, bringing England out of the dark times of Bloody Mary and the uncertainty of foreign influence.

Weir has an excellent understanding of the political atmosphere of the age, in England and abroad, and is able to digest information in a way that is easily understandable for the average reader. She is clearly enthusiastic about the information, but for the most part steers clear of speculation, preferring to rely on fact and common sense rather than wild assumptions. Weir is a native of England, and has written multiple biographies on the history of the English royals, especially the Tudors.

Tone

The biography has a slightly formal tone, since it is an account of historical fact. Many quotations in the work have a formal feel to them as well, especially since they are antiquated and taken from a much more formal time. This formality reflects in the biography, seeming to mimic the syntax and language of the time. The author makes specific use of language to convey the emotions of the historical figures being examined, often using strong language to convey the extreme situations her subjects find themselves in. Deviating slightly from formality, the author sometimes adopts a reverence for the subjects being examined, betraying an obvious regard and respect for these great kings and queens.

Though technically the work has four distinct protagonists, some figures seem more sympathetic than others. The antagonists are made clear, even described sometimes with language such as "evil" or "greedy." Each subject of the biography evokes a different feeling from the reader: while Edward's piety and smugness in combination



with his boyish delights in games and court life make him sympathetic, Mary's piety combined with her neuroses, ineptitude, and later cruelty serve to create a dark cloud over her character. She is repeatedly portrayed as weak-willed and unfit to rule, and the reader gets an unsettled feeling about Mary in general. Lady Jane Grey evokes a similar feeling in the text, though her tone is more pitiful and sympathetic than Mary's. Elizabeth is an obvious bright spot, favored by the biographer and the time period alike, and is portrayed as attaining a sage-like wisdom that contrasts with Mary's neediness and impulsiveness. The tone of the work helps a reader understand the importance of etiquette and social graces to the time period, especially in court life.

Structure

The biography is formed into three sections which are divided by chapters. The sections are chronological and chronicle the reign of each one of Henry VIII's heirs, save Elizabeth, at the beginning of whose reign the work ends. The biography begins with a preface by the author and an introduction, and ends with an epilogue and afterwards. The chapters are titled with subjects pertaining to the information contained in the chapter, as well as numbered for organization. The text in the chapters may be divided by paragraphs, including significant use of quotations and sources contemporary to the time period being examined. In the middle of the book are black and white pictures of some of the biography's subjects, including the main four heirs to Henry VIII's throne. The pictures are captioned specifying the person or place, and with a quote from the text to further explicate the image. The biography is equipped with an extension bibliography of primary sources for further reading, as well as an index of important people and places. There is a family tree drawn in the work also, titled "The Heirs of Henry VIII, 1547-1558" (p. 375). This shows precisely how all four heirs are related to Henry VIII, including their birth, marriages, offspring, and deaths.

The author provides a readers' guide in the back of the book, with probing questions that require critical thinking, knowledge from the biography, and creativity. There is also an historical update on some portraits of the Lady Jane Grey, of whom new portraits were discovered in 2006. The author has, fittingly, dedicated the work to all the children in her family.



Quotes

"Wherefore I shall desire you to think that a greater matter than this could not make me impute any unkindness in you, for I am a friend not won with trifles, no lost with the like," (p. 55). A letter written from the Lady Elizabeth to Admiral Seymour, after Elizabeth was sent away from the household in fear of scandal. She is trying to maintain normality.

"My lord, these are shameful slanders, for the which I shall most heartily desire you lordship that I may come to the court that I may show myself there as I am," (p. 71). The Lady Elizabeth denying any pre-contract with Admiral Seymour.

"The Lord Admiral was sore charged with high treason, great falsehoods and marvelous heinous misdemeanors against the King's Majesty and the Royal Crown," (p. 76). The Council's ruling on the Admiral's guilt.

"This day died a man of much wit and little judgment," (p. 78). Elizabeth's reaction to the Admiral's death.

"The Earl of Warwick is the most unstable man in England. You will see that no good will come of this move, but that it is a punishment from Heaven and may be only the beginning of our misfortunes," (pp. 95-96). The Lady Mary to van der Delft, after Warwick's coup.

"When I am in the presence of either father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand or go, eat, drink, be merry or sad, be sewing, playing, dancing or doing anything else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, number, even as perfectly as God made the world, or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea, presented sometimes with pinches, nips, bobs, and other ways—which I will not name for the honor I bear them—so without measure misordered, I think myself in hell, till the time come when I must go to Mr. Aylmer, who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning, that I think all the time nothing whiles I am with him," (p. 100). The Lady Jane Grey to Roger Ascham, the Lady Elizabeth's former tutor, on how badly she is treated by her family.

"I am like a little, ignorant girl, and I care neither for my goods nor for the world, but only for God's service and my conscience. If there is peril in going and peril in staying, I must choose the lesser of the two evils," (p.105). The Lady Mary on deciding whether or not to flee England and the Act of Uniformity.

"Although my soul belongs to God, I offer my body to the King's service; might it please him to take away my life rather than the old religion," (p. 121). The Lady Mary, on her religion.

"It was observed on all side how sickly he looked, and general pity was felt for him by the people," (p.136). The beginning of Edward's illness, according to a Spanish observer.



"The crown is not my right and pleaseth me not. The Lady Mary is the rightful heir," (p.165). Jane, after being informed of her accession to the crown.

"As not a soul imagined the possibility of such a thing, when the proclamation was first cried out the people started off, running in all directions and crying out 'The Lady Mary is proclaimed queen!'" (p.179). A foreign observer, on the day the Lady Mary was proclaimed queen over Lady Jane Grey.

"Remember, I am innocent and did not deserve this sentence. But I should not have accepted the crown," (p.224). The Lady Jane Grey, after being found guilty at her trial.

"And now, good subjects, pluck up your hearts, and like true men face up against these rebels, and fear them not, for I assure you I fear them nothing at all!" (p. 239). Mary I to the city of London, preparing for Wyatt's rebellion.

"Everything in this kingdom depends on the Queen's safe deliverance," (p. 304). Renard writing to Charles V, during Mary's first pregnancy.

"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out," (p. 321). Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester to Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London just before they were each burned at the stake for heresy.

"God sent oft times to good women evil husbands!" (p. 333). Mary, after being neglected for months by her husband Philip.

"When these with violence were burned to death, we wish for our Elizabeth," (p. 339). The end of each list of martyrs, printed in 1557 London.

"What good dreams she had, seeing many little children, like angels, play before her, singing pleasing notes, giving her more than earthly comfort," (p.360) The dying Queen Mary to her ladies, described a dream.

"This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes!" (p. 363). Elizabeth, when told that Mary had died and she was now Queen of England.



Topics for Discussion

Did you feel the biographer presented an unbiased historical account of her subjects? Is she more inclined to sympathize with one person than another? Does she take any liberties with the facts?

Could Lady Jane Grey have avoided her fate? What events would have had to have been different for Jane Grey to live? Do you think Jane Grey could have capably ruled the kingdom?

If Edward VI had lived, what do you think would have happened to Mary, Elizabeth, and Jane? Would they have had similar marriages and standing in the kingdom?

Mary and Elizabeth both suffered from chronic illness in their adult lives. Is it a coincidence that each sister had chronic health problems? Could their illness be attributed to stress experienced in their lives?

Mary I's marriage was disastrous for England. How may her marriage have affected sister Elizabeth? What other events in Elizabeth's life could have contributed to her aversion of marriage?

Discuss the role of religion in Edward VI and Mary I's reigns. Of which monarch would Henry VIII have approved?

How did Philip II endeavor to help England? What were the implications of some of Philip's decisions?