

# **The Other Boleyn Girl Study Guide**

## **The Other Boleyn Girl by Philippa Gregory**

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## Plot Summary

The Other Boleyn Girl is Philippa Gregory's story of Mary Boleyn. Mary Boleyn was the beloved younger sister and bitter rival of Anne Boleyn, who became Queen of England and second wife to King Henry VIII. The story is told by Mary Boleyn, whose narrative transforms as she matures and discovers her own true values and her more authentic self. Mary, Anne, and George Boleyn are siblings who are often in collusion as they conspire, under their family's orders, to rise in the king's court.

The Boleyn family, in connection with the powerful Howard family, works tirelessly to advance the two sisters and their brother within the ranks of the king's court, even encouraging young Mary's adulterous affair with the insecure young king. As handmaidens to King Henry's wife, Queen Katherine of Aragon, Mary and Anne Boleyn compete for the king's favor under the direction and control of their heavy-handed Uncle Howard. However, after producing two illegitimate children through her affair with the king, Mary is allowed to return to her husband, William Carey. Her children awaken in Mary a love and compassion that is absent in her immediate family. Having been raised to be a courtier, Mary learns to appreciate nature and the simple farming life outside of court.

A tale of unbounded ambition and cloying competition, The Other Boleyn Girl offers a fascinating look into the era of England's feudal caste system where bloody ruthlessness, corrupt politics, decadent luxury, vicious rivalry, and superstition are the norm. Although most people are aware of Anne Boleyn's fate, Gregory has fleshed out the story for us with human emotions and obscure historical detail, bringing life to each character. Philippa Gregory does a masterful job of taking what is known as recorded fact, and drawing logical assumptions about the personalities of the characters involved.



# Spring 1521

## Spring 1521 Summary

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The Boleyn family, in connection with the powerful Howard family, works tirelessly to advance the two sisters and their brother within the ranks of the king's court, even encouraging young Mary's adulterous affair with the insecure young king. As handmaidens to King Henry's wife, Queen Katherine of Aragon, Mary and Anne Boleyn compete for the king's favor under the direction and control of their heavy-handed Uncle Howard. However, after producing two illegitimate children through her affair with the king, Mary is allowed to return to her husband, William Carey. Her children awaken in Mary a love and compassion that is absent in her immediate family. Having been raised to be a courtier, Mary learns to appreciate nature and the simple farming life outside of court.

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Thirteen-year old Mary Boleyn, now married a full year to Sir William Carey, is witnessing the beheading of the Duke of Buckinghamshire, a lifelong friend of the king's, and a close Boleyn family friend. The court has gathered to watch, and the king sits nearby in his throne, surrounded by his closest servants, including Mary's brother, husband, and father. Mary is surprised when the duke's head is held up for the crowd to see, since she was certain the king would step forward at the last minute and pardon him. Mary's father has already warned her that the Duke had made the mistake of stating that King Henry would likely die without a son to succeed him to the throne. Further, the Duke who is of royal blood had been keeping a large retinue of armed men, which made the King feel threatened. Although it was common knowledge throughout the country that a royal son was of paramount importance, as a good courtier, the Duke should not have said anything so distasteful.

By carrying out this execution, the King is sending a message to the court that he is omnipotent. Mary rides back to the palace on the Queen's lavish barge with the other



ladies in waiting. When Mary suggests that she is surprised about the execution, her mother quietly calls her a fool, telling her to listen and learn.

## Spring 1521 Analysis

The lavish medieval court scene is set in the very first paragraph, as Mary tries to see beyond the lacing on the bodice of the woman blocking her view of the scaffold. Mary notes she has attended hundreds of festivities in her year-plus in the court. She wiggles her toes in her silk slippers, obviously a member of the upper class. It is already clear that, although she is young, she is also quite accustomed to gentility. She recalls that the duke had given her a gilt bracelet at her wedding. She also mentions the men on the riverbank who take off their hats as the royal barge passes, with its regal pennants flying and its richly clothed courtiers. Clearly, Mary is of royal status. She mentions that the duke and king had played tennis, jousted, and had on a hundred occasions engaged in drinking and gambling together, suggesting that these are people who live a lavish lifestyle. The fact that Mary knows these things also denotes her elevated level in the royal court.

Having revealed her class status, Mary also reveals her naiveté as a thirteen-year-old girl. Her description of the execution lends the surreal sense of a stage set with props and characters. Mary thinks it looks like a masque rather than a real event and finds it hard to believe that the king has not made a mistake by not stepping in and stopping it. She is impatient for the king to grant clemency so that she can have breakfast because she is, after all, only thirteen.

This chapter foreshadows events in the future, since it is a dramatic and shocking statement from the King, and it is an event that bursts Mary's bubble of childhood innocence. The cold reality of the block upon which her uncle placed his doomed head is a chilling eye-opener for her, as it is for the reader. Mary's mother also warns of the chilling results of making a mistake at court, indicating that one must be very careful with this king.



# Spring 1522

## Spring 1522 Summary

Mary's father announces his intention to go to France and bring back Mary's sister, Anne, to serve in the queen's court. The family has plans for an arranged marriage for Anne. Mary dreads the possibility that Anne could surpass her by being placed into a better marriage, but she keeps a false smile on her face and is obedient. She reminds herself that her mother was a Howard, her father a Boleyn, and that being a Boleyn is no small matter, not to mention that she is married to William Carey who is high in the king's favor. Further, Mary is the favorite handmaiden of the queen and the youngest lady in waiting, so she feels certain her sister Anne cannot spoil things for her. She secretly hopes her sister will drown on her way to England, but simultaneously realizes that there would be no world for her without her sister Anne.

When Anne arrives at court, Mary plans to impress her, but they hug instead, and talk about intimate matters of marriage, as sisters would. Anne is stylish, well groomed, and perhaps overly-confident about her suave French upbringing, criticizing Queen Katherine's age, her Spanish heritage, and her lack of style. Although both sisters were born in England, they were raised in the French court. Anne has decided to adopt her French-ness as the special thing that will make her stand out. Mary tells Anne that King Henry is wonderful—she seems quite taken with him, but explains to Anne that Henry loves his wife, Queen Katherine. Katherine had been married to the king's brother and, when his brother died, Henry took her as his own wife.

The matter of the king having no legitimate heir is of strong interest to the three Boleyns, especially Anne. The Queen is thirty-seven and has only a daughter, Mary, and, although the king has fathered a "bastard" son with a commoner, there is still no heir.

The king seems to have taken a strong liking to Mary, and dances with her before the queen and the entire court, telling her how lucky her husband is to have her. After a masked dance in which the king pays romantic attention to Mary, he begins to flirt outwardly with her, much to her delight, as well as that of her family; it is understood that if he wants her, regardless of her marital status, she will oblige. He gives Mary a horse, and Mary moves to her sister Anne's room to separate from her husband in preparation for sleeping with the king. The king wears Mary's kerchief under his breastplate as he jousts, and later rebukes her for scolding him about having dropped it. From that incident on, the family decides that Anne and George will orchestrate Mary's affair with the king. At her family's direction, Mary leaves the court feigning illness. She goes to the family home in the country at Hever, and adjusts to country life, waiting and hoping that the king will send for her.





Although she is sad and misses the king, within a couple of months at Hever, Mary finds she loves being in the country riding her horse around, enjoying nature, and becoming familiar with the community and their farming activities.

## Spring 1522 Analysis

Chapter 2 sets the stage in a more profound way for the events to come. Anne Boleyn's dominant attitude toward her sister and her overly-confident ambition in moving the family upward in the court is revealed as she grills Mary for information, advises her, and plans Mary's quest to "ensnare" the king. The family, who is already high in the King's favor, anxiously schemes to move themselves up the ladder through the King's affection for Mary.

Their beloved brother George's frilly affectations toward the Queen, as well as his dread over his upcoming arranged marriage to poisonous Jane Parker, foreshadow some things about the free-wheeling, heavy-drinking George that are revealed later in the story. There is strong symbolism in the names the Queen assigns to the dancers—Anne is "Perseverance" and Mary is "Kindness." The reader also learns of Cardinal Wolsey, who apparently has great a impact on matters of importance in England.

This chapter reveals the wasteful extravagance of the court contrasted against the poverty of the general population. It is also clear that the courtiers, for whom everything is handled by servants, spend most of their time gossiping, flirting, competing against one another, indulging themselves in extravagance, and playing psychological games to win influence.

Anne's interest in nature and farming grows in her. She realizes that if everything else goes wrong, she can always farm. This experience foreshadows her future.



# Summer 1522

## Summer 1522 Summary

Anne manages to get the king to invite Mary back to court, and he is openly delighted to see her. Later that night, her brother George arrives with a message that the king has invited her to his rooms for wine. Anne wants control over her sister, even telling her which intimate body parts to wash before going to the king.

Mary's willingness and joy at having an affair with the king are compounded by the fact that she is in love with him, but also because she is in a superior position to her jealous sister.

The king and queen are Catholic, the queen devoutly so. The queen is regal, patient and, although hurt over Henry's attention to Mary, her royal breeding and love for the spoiled and selfish king keep her from openly reacting, even when she sees Mary sitting next to the king after their hunt, crowned in flowers. Mary continues to sleep with the king at night, but he is still close to Queen Katherine during the day.

War against France has broken out, with England and Spain as allies. Queen Katherine is of Spanish descent and her nephew, Charles, emperor of Spain. Henry's court seasonally moves from one palace to another. Since the summer plague has hit England, the paranoid king hastily moves his retinue to Hampton Court and insists on pure food and cleanliness in order to be kept from illness. Cardinal Wolsey arranges everything significant to the court, including their progressions.

## Summer 1522 Analysis

Anne's preference for fastidiousness and Mary's resistance is humorous, as Anne has to insist that Mary bathe and wash her hair. While surrounded with silks, tapestries, linens and jewels, the courtiers are not necessarily clean, and Anne often reminds Mary that she is no ordinary slut.

In this chapter, Anne is at Mary's service, fixing her hair, dressing her, and waiting up for her. They are both ladies-in-waiting for the queen, but Mary definitely has the upper hand as the king's bedded mistress. In fact, even Jane Parker, the sour-tongued woman who is betrothed to their brother, finally realizes her place when she witnesses a tender moment between the king and Mary.

Anne is more confident and is feeling her power in her rejuvenated affair with the king. The queen is aging and ill, and the king seems to be very much in love with Mary.

As the court travels to its new destination, they prevail upon the poorer country people to feed and house them, and expect them to feel honored to do so, even though it can



have a profound impact on their already meager existence. Wolsey organizes dinners, masques (masked balls), hunting, picnics, and jousts.

Adultery, or any other indulgence on the part of the boyish king, is a given, and is accepted by the queen. He is "more foolish, more selfish and less of a prince than she was a princess" (92). Although still being narrated from Anne's point of view, the true personality of the king and his court is becoming apparent.



# Winter 1522

## Winter 1522 Summary

The merry court has moved to Greenwich and is celebrating Christmas with twelve days of elaborately planned activities. Every day an artistic pudding of marchpane is served. The king and queen never stop smiling, although Queen Katherine is not looking well.

Mary still goes to the king's bed at night, but always returns before morning, lest any of the court's visiting foreign ambassadors, including the disapproving Spanish ambassador, should see her. The king makes a point to dine and sleep with his own wife once a week. Their brother George, who is in service to the king, seems to always be with his sisters, and is the king's appointed escort who takes his sister to the king's bedroom, and returns her to her chambers.

However, when a soothsayer tells Henry that the queen may conceive a son during Christmas, he goes to the queen's bed for all twelve nights of the holiday, much to Mary's great distress.

Uncle Howard has sent a valuable chalice for Mary to give to King Henry for Christmas, and Anne comments that she hopes to see some return on it.

A small group of courtiers, including Mary, Henry, Anne, and Henry Percy ride to the boatyard to see one of the king's battleships under construction. While at the boatyard, Henry asks an artist to draw a likeness of Mary, but does not say why.

On Christmas night, Mary kisses her own husband, William, goodnight, but wishes only to be with Henry. George and Henry Percy have a conversation about the possibility that they will all end up with their own wives in the end.

A bit of tension arises between George Boleyn and Mary's husband when William mentions that he would like to have his wife back. George reminds William that Mary is not allowed to choose for herself.

Anne blatantly flirts with one of the richest men in the kingdom, Lord Henry Percy of Northumberland, while privately scheming to perhaps marry him and thus, gain a position higher than her sister's. Anne repeatedly reminds Mary that everything she does for her is in the interest of advancing the family and not for her personally.

## Winter 1522 Analysis

Again, the lavishness of court is depicted with winter entertainment such as boat races, jousting, archery, bear baiting, dog fights, plays, gambling and sumptuous food and drink. Although England and Spain are at war with France, the merry mood of the court is maintained. The war is temporarily suspended for the winter months.



King Henry's decision to have Mary's portrait sketched at the boatyard is as much a mystery to her as it is to the reader. Henry tells Mary to wait and see why he has done this. He refers to her affectionately as "Sweeting." Christmas is the most important holiday during this period in history, and is celebrated at length, so Henry may be planning something for Mary for Christmas.

A soothsayer has told the king that he will sire a son at Christmas, but Anne suspects that the soothsayer was paid by a Seymour to make that prediction.

It becomes clear that George is not looking forward to marrying Jane Parker, but is doing so because he has no choice, and because marriage to her comes with a significant dowry, negotiated by the two families.

Anne's ambitions regarding Henry Percy, although she talks at great length with him about love, are all about doing better in marriage than her sister.



# Spring 1523

## Spring 1523 Summary

It appears the queen might be pregnant since she has missed her "courses". In her chamber, she prays ardently for a son. The king has begun to ignore Mary and the queen had begun to feel radiant. However, the queen's maids reveal that she has begun to sweat profusely, and that menopause has commenced instead. Anne sings a duet with the king and quietly tells him of the queen's condition. Her final inability to bear him a son and her failure to tell him herself makes Henry sad and angry, and he banishes the queen to her chambers.

Henry and Mary again become inseparable, and their relationship is openly known in the court and throughout London. He has lavished her with expensive gifts, her sister Anne now wearing Mary's remade hand-me-downs. The king names his new warship after her and wants her to launch it, making it irreversibly public that he is in love with her. Mary is more frightened by the acknowledgement than pleased; she feels she is moving too high, too fast and is being positioned as rival to the queen, which would simultaneously make her an enemy to Spain. She also realizes that she has become a threat to the Seymour family, which competes with the Boleyns for position in court. Further, the king has asked Mary's father and uncle to invest in the warship, meaning that instead of gaining from this relationship, the Boleyn family could be losing. The king mentions to Mary that he wishes she were queen for all the days instead of just this one.

The Boleyns have gathered for a family meeting. Mary's uncle and father want repayment for their investments on behalf of the king, hoping to use Mary and George's relationships with the king to their advantage.

Cardinal Wolsey's job, besides being spiritual leader, is the king's master planner. Politically, logistically, and in every other way, Wolsey makes life easy for the king, paving the way for all the minor details involved in moving and entertaining the court.

Anne reveals her jealousy and dissatisfaction with her own station in life, and tells Mary she is going to take matters into her own hands and make Lord Percy love and marry her. Mary warns her that the lord's father surely has other plans for him, but Anne is restless and angry at not gaining anything for herself from her sister's affair with the king. Anne finally torments Percy into admitting he loves her and wants to marry her. George, who comes in during the sisters' bath time, dreams of both sisters holding positions of great power and what that would mean to the family, as well as to him. Anne seems to drop into a girlish fantasy about how in love she is with Percy, and coerces both her brother and sister to witness the troth, which in those days meant that one was formally married. She hurries to consummate the marriage so that it cannot be overthrown for non-consummation.



## Spring 1523 Analysis

This chapter contains foreshadowing of the events that are going to unfold.

It is revealed that Anne is an expert archer, landing her arrow in the bull's eye. Anne also warns Jane Parker that she might not be welcome in the Boleyn family. Anne turns snake-like when she holds Mary's arm painfully behind her back and hisses that she will play her own game and wants no interruption from Mary—this going off the deep end is a side of her that the reader has suspected, but up until this point, has not clearly seen. It is now clear that she might do anything to get what she wants. Again, as she leaves for Lord Percy's bed, Anne puts her hands at the neck of Mary's nightdress and twists it against her throat. There is a surreal quality to Anne's sugary tangent about the love she feigns for Lord Percy, which she is trying to convince herself is real. When she marries Lord Percy, the ring is too loose, so she clenches a fist to hold it on, which is symbolic of what she will need to do to solidify this marriage. She also tells George that, although he thought she was aiming too high, that he will know another time that where she aims, she hits.

Lord Percy jokes that, although the Bible forbids a man to have two sisters to himself, he is sure he could get the Pope to grant him a dispensation. The Pope's authority will surface again later in the story. Lord Percy is described as baby-faced, trusting, and boyish.

The trip to the river to see the warship is described as somewhat surreal, with silver seagulls, fresh spring growth, and Mary's overwhelming bliss at being with her beloved king, but things grow frighteningly unnerving for her.



# Summer 1523

## Summer 1523 Summary

Cardinal Wolsey has organized extravagant war games for the men and women of the English and French courts. Queen Katherine continues to be reserved and polite about the king's attentions to Mary. At the May celebration, Henry makes Anne sit in the queen's chair, calling her the queen of the May.

Anne and George serve as witnesses to Anne's forbidden wedding, smiling "the Boleyn smile; a pair of pleasant snakes" (131). Anne is becoming more critical of her family's willingness to do anything to advance themselves, not excluding herself.

Anne has received a note from Lord Percy that the Cardinal knows everything and that he, Percy, will not fail her. She is summoned to immediately appear before the Cardinal, who tells her that the marriage of someone as great as Percy is a matter of policy, and the king and the cardinal make the policy. He also informs her that Percy has agreed to submit to the authority of his father, suggesting that surely Anne would not have been so foolish as to risk her own future by consummating the marriage. In any case, Anne's father and the king will make the decision. Anne says she would make a good duchess.

Anne's mother, father, and uncle are enraged at her, and order her never to say she has lain with her husband. Her mother would rather see Anne dead than dishonored. They assure her that she could go to a nunnery or even be hanged for this, and that Cardinal Wolsey would never allow them to leap up that high. They banish her to Hever for one year, and assure her that if she writes or replies to or sees Henry Percy she will go to a nunnery. Anne's mother intercepts Henry Percy's letters and burns them, and confines Mary indoors in case she tries to pass messages between Anne and Percy. When her mother expresses that concern, Mary reminds her that her mother had her married at twelve, ended her marriage at fourteen and had her in the king's bed by fifteen years of age—surely she has always done as she was told. When another letter arrives from Henry Percy addressed to Anne, telling her he will stand by her if she will stand by him, Mary's mother dictates a reply that Mary is forced to write. The reply, as if it is from Anne, tells him not to go against the cardinal and his father, and that the marriage was not binding, releasing him from the half-promise.

## Summer 1523 Analysis

It becomes clear in this chapter that Mary, although good-hearted, has always been obedient to her family, even beyond the point of good sense. She stands up for Anne at her wedding when she knows it will mean terrible trouble. Mary is kind, but not as bright as Anne, as she has mentioned several times. However, Anne clearly over-reached this time and is having to learn her lesson the hard way.





Anne's temper is exposed in full when she attacks her beloved brother in a rage over what has happened to her marriage and her plans. Mary has to hold her back while George fends off her fingernails.

It is not clear in this chapter how Mary is feeling, as she refers to herself the most notorious adulteress in the kingdom.

Mary's mother shows her true temperament in her rage toward Anne, talking to her not as a mother but as a cruel dictator who sees Anne as a shame, a disgrace, and hateful. She seems to have no motherly feelings for her daughters whatsoever.

Cardinal Wolsey's power proves to be absolute, as he denies that a true marriage ever took place between Anne and Henry Percy, even though by the laws of that day, the marriage was legal.

Mary's mother reminds her that women have no power whatsoever and that Anne's spirit needs to be broken if she is to be of any use to the family, which is the family's first and foremost concern.



# Winter 1523

## Winter 1523 Summary

With Queen Katherine away spending the summer with her daughter, Mary Boleyn has spent the entire summer riding, hunting, dancing, and living with the king as his mistress.

In November, when they return to Greenwich, Mary tells Henry she is pregnant. King Henry gives her beautiful new rooms, a fur coat, and a new lady in waiting. People everywhere begin speculating and placing bets as to whether the baby will be a boy, and an heir. The ones who bet on a boy are rewarded with gold; the ones who bet against a boy are met with the king's pout of displeasure.

While pregnant, Mary is forced to sleep alone.

Queen Katherine finally tells Henry that she is barren. The king resents Katherine for it, and behaves as though she purposely refused him an heir. Mary knows how much Katherine wanted to give him a son, and remembers her praying for one, but Henry is indignant. Henry reminds Mary that even if Mary carries his son, the boy would be a Carey and still not a legitimate heir to the throne. He says to her, "I have to have a son, Mary. England has to have an heir from me."

## Winter 1523 Analysis

This is, by design, a very short chapter wherein the reader learns of Mary's constant company with the king and her ensuing pregnancy. If the narration from Mary had been kept as a journal, one could deduce that she has been very busy keeping Henry company and is now more circumspect, as she prays alone at night for the baby to be a boy.

Mary notes Katherine's pained eyes as she watches Mary's body grow. Mary's compassion for her Katherine is growing, even though she is enjoying being the king's mistress.

It is confirmed by the queen that she is barren, and King Henry reiterates that he must have a legitimate son.

Mary expresses sympathy for Queen Katherine, but Henry's attitude toward Katherine is quite harsh. Henry is not consoled by Mary's pregnancy.

It is obvious that King Henry's mental wheels are turning; he is honoring Mary's pregnancy and not hiding the fact that the child is his, and still, he has to have a legitimate child. This seems to foreshadow some kind of plan on the king's part, but the

reader does not know yet what it might be. However, it is clear that Mary's son will not be Henry's heir.



# Spring 1524

## Spring 1524 Summary

Anne has been miserable at Hever, under the watch of Grandmother Boleyn, whose manners are coarse and who makes Anne walk in the rain every day to keep her skin youthful. Mary has, perhaps, enjoyed having Anne out of the way, and sends her letters to keep her informed about her own pregnancy and happiness. Henry Percy has been wed against his will to Mary Talbot, and Mary tells Anne she heard that Henry wept at his promise.

Mary is seven months pregnant and her narrative seems to be softening. She feels protective of her baby, and feels a strong kindness and sympathy for Queen Katherine.

George is set to be married, albeit unwillingly, to Jane Parker, whom he and Anne feel is poisonous. Anne is allowed to come from Hever just for the wedding. She is not allowed to stay for the feast, but comes early enough the day before to spend a night with her two siblings. Anne is still feeling sorry for herself about losing the love of her life, and mentions how tired she is of being unhappy. She sarcastically reminds her siblings that she is an attested official sworn-to-it virgin, saying "You can't be more of a virgin than me" (154), referring to the lie that has been agreed upon among her family, the cardinal and the king.

As Anne returns to Hever, Mary imagines herself making the trip, and what it would be like to be a squire of Hever, rather than a pretend queen of a masquing court. She wishes that her baby were legitimate and that she could look out over her farmland and know that it would belong to him someday. Instead, she is resigned that she is the lucky Boleyn, blessed by fortune and the king's favor.

## Spring 1524 Analysis

As the narrator, Mary is growing up in this chapter. Her pregnancy has caused her to feel more compassion toward the barren queen, and forced her to look inward and identify more clearly her own values. She senses the irony of her own situation as she listens to the same wedding vows that she took with William Carey four years earlier.

George seems to be on the edge, looking "pale as a bride on his wedding morning" (155). Anne has informed him that his wife to be has informed herself all about the intricacies of sex.

During George's wedding, Mary mentions that her mother smiled at her as if she were her only daughter, as Anne slipped out and returned to her banished state of loneliness at Hever. Again, there is an emphasis on the idea that this family cares only for advancement and has very little emotional connection. Even though the two sisters love



George, they are bitterly competitive and their parents and uncle seem to care nothing for any of them except for where the children can take them politically.

Mary's desire to be a farmer plays into one of the underlying themes in the story, which is that women in the 1500s were not allowed to think for themselves, own property, or act in any way that was not controlled by men. Just as Anne has stepped over a boundary, Mary thinks outside of the boundaries imposed on her life.



# Summer 1524

## Summer 1524 Summary

Mary is confined in a dark room to await the arrival of her child. Anne is allowed to come from Hever to be with Mary for the birth. She has been bored and ignored at Hever, and has not even taken the time to notice the local farms, choosing instead to stay inside and read. There is still tremendous jealousy between the girls, with Anne saying that the only way to come to the attention of their family is to climb into the king's bed. "You have to be a whore to be beloved by this family" (158).

Mary's baby girl is born. Mary is delighted with her baby, and even the king seems to like her, bringing Mary diamonds and books and a gold purse. Mary names her Catherine, after the queen, and the baby will bear the last name of Carey, Mary's husband's name. In exchange for William Carey's graciousness at allowing his wife to have an affair with the king, he has been granted knighthood and land, and his income has doubled. Even so, he is understandably bitter and humiliated. William, in a visit to Mary, tells her that her family is spreading the rumor that he and Mary never consummated their marriage due to William being impotent. This has the potential to set aside their marriage and clear the way for Mary's next baby, if there is one, to be the king's heir if it is a boy.

The court has moved on to Winchester so that the king can hunt all summer. Mary's husband and brother join him, as well as Francis Weston, her brother's friend. Mary's father has been working on negotiations between England, France and Spain, each of whose leaders dreamed of being the greatest king in Europe. Mary takes the baby to Castle Hever for the summer, and tries to explain to Anne that she is no longer interested in court or in raising the family status, but is now interested in giving her daughter a good, happy, and educated life at home. She is not particularly interested in court gossip or national politics, much to Anne's frustration, but is attuned to her young daughter's needs. Her maternal instincts are dominant. The sisters acknowledge that one is all about passion and desire, while the other is all about ambition, and Anne wants nothing more than to focus on her ambition, now that Henry Percy has married someone else.

Mary enjoys her time in the country with her baby, Anne, and their old grandmother, but Henry has written to tell her that she must return to court, and that he expects her to arrive alone, without Anne and without the baby.

## Summer 1524 Analysis

When Anne admits to Mary that she has never explored the surrounding farms at Hever, the contrast between the sisters is emphasized. Anne mentions that she has been



reading books written by Martin Luther, which have been banned in the kingdom, indicating the central role of religion in this culture, and emphasizing Anne's rebel spirit.

A peculiar moment of foreshadowing in this chapter is when George kisses his sister deeply on the lips, and asks her to kiss him the way she kisses the king.

Mary tells Anne that the king is perfectly fine about her taking the baby to Hever for the summer, and comments to the reader, "I could almost see the calculations of her brain as she picked over what I was saying" (166). Clearly, Anne has not stopped scheming.

Mary provides luscious symbolism when she talks about the harvest, and cows bellowing for their babies, apples swelled round and rosy in the orchard, plums growing rich, dark and splitting their skins and the heady perfume of fruit fattening on the bough supports; in no uncertain terms, her comment to Anne that she is in love with her baby. Mary is happily in love with motherhood and with nature. Seeing her return to court as a peasant returning to the field is a clear indication that she no longer perceives the court as a wonderful place to be, but merely a job.



# Winter 1524

## Winter 1524 Summary

Mary returns to the party atmosphere at court. Despite rumors of his flirtations and meaningless affairs, the king is exceptionally glad to see Mary, and tells her his heart ached for her night and day.

George has a black eye from participating in a bar brawl over a young man who claimed to be in love with him, and everyone seems quite wild and merry.

Already the king, Mary, George, and Mary's mother are discussing that Mary's next baby might be a boy.

Mary learns of her family's plans to make the dishonest claim that Mary's marriage to William Carey was never consummated, just as she was warned. Mary desperately does not want to try to replace Katherine as queen, but Uncle Howard makes it clear that Katherine's usefulness as England's connection to Spain will be at an end once the war is won. Mary's father warns him not to risk England's relationship with Spain by trying to oust Katherine, but the Boleyn uncle feels the political alliance is worth sacrificing if they can get Mary into Katherine's throne. Howard feels that it is more important to get a family member into the king's bed than to make peace in Europe, and reminds Thomas Boleyn that he is only in the Howard family through marriage.

## Winter 1524 Analysis

In this chapter, Mary's uncle talks bluntly about using Mary. It is also clarified here that, although Mary's father holds a high position in his efforts to negotiate peace with France, her uncle is in final control of the family, reminding her father that he is only a Howard by marriage.

Her uncle's icy indifference is emphasized when he states that it is more important to get Mary into the king's bed than to save the lives of Englishmen, since there will always be more soldiers.

There is nothing more meaningful to Howard than power and advancement of the family. His reasoning is that there are always more soldiers, but this opportunity to use Mary for ascent at court comes once in a lifetime. Howard's lack of feeling toward both Queen Katherine and Mary are obvious in this chapter. He turns to Mary's mother for help in concocting a lie for her to tell about her marriage to William Carey. This is obviously just a very important game that Howard wants to win.

The reader gets a sense in this chapter that Thomas Boleyn may have a conscience after all, since he expresses concern about a lasting peace in Europe. However, it is clear that he has no authority and, although this maneuver may seem like a personal



family matter, Howard is playing with the fate of thousands of people, as well as the fate of his own country.



# Spring 1525

## Spring 1525 Summary

With the joyous news that the French army has been defeated at Pavia, the king falls all over Queen Katherine with love and appreciation for the status that he will gain, now that France is powerless. He gives her credit for the victory owing to her connection with her nephew, King Charles of Spain.

Henry's kingdom celebrates for days, and Cardinal Wolsey orders a special High Mass. The queen has now returned to her throne next to Henry, and he awaits a summons to Paris for his coronation as King of France.

However, King Charles chooses instead to go to Rome for his own coronation, and decides to release the captured king of France back to his people. Henry flies into a rage, furious that Katherine may have known of her nephew's plans, and furious that Katherine's own daughter, who was promised to King Charles, may be rejected. Cardinal Wolsey has exposed this information and frankly implies that Katherine knows more than she is admitting. Henry now feels that another war with France is imminent. Suddenly, the "treasonous" queen is no longer in his favor and Mary is, again, the focus of his attention. She sleeps with him nightly now, and is treated with deference by everyone.

Mary becomes pregnant again, the message being delivered to the king by her father, who wants to make sure the family gets credit for her fertility. Of course, there is still the great hope for a male child.

The Boleyn-Howard family is granted more land and titles, and everyone rises in their position with the king, including Mary's husband William. William is sad for himself, but realizes that the entire family has used Mary, and all she really wants is to be a mother. William promises to arrange for Mary to be at Hever with Catherine, her daughter, for the summer, and she does go.

George visits his sisters at Hever, and complains of how much he detests his jealous, sneaky, thieving wife. She has odd sexual ideas, and George admits to his sisters he is sickened by women. He is weary to the soul of their constant desires, flirting and vanity. Anne mentions the names of two boys at court who have been linked with George, as well as that of Francis Weston, with whom George is often seen. George admits he is attracted to boys, and is warned by his sister Anne that he could be hanged for it.

## Spring 1525 Analysis

The true nature of certain characters is exposed in this chapter.



The sad plight of the kind William Carey becomes clear. He drinks for comfort. He cannot be with other women because he is married, yet his wife is the well-known mistress to the king. Although it has earned him land and favor, he is unable to live a normal life. He feels less abused by Mary when he realizes that her preference is to be with her daughter, and it becomes apparent to him that she is being used by her "wolf pack" of a family.

Another sympathetic character in this chapter is Queen Katherine. The powerful Cardinal Wolsey may be out to bring her down. She has suffered through the king's unconcealed affairs, his rage, and his unfair accusations toward her, but she remains calm, polite, and strong, truly a princess in her breeding. George, as well, has to acknowledge his disillusionment in his role at court, where he always has to act like someone he is not.

King Charles of Spain's release of King Francis bodes ominous, since everything King Henry has counted on involving his future power over Europe is now in doubt.



# Autumn 1525

## Autumn 1525 Summary

Upon her return to court, Mary is treated very much like a queen who might be carrying the king's heir. The Boleyn family decides that Anne should be brought back to court, and perhaps married off. The king's bastard child, whose mother is a commoner, is his only son. Born to Bessie Blount, Little Henry Fitzroy is only six years old, but has already been named as a duke, an earl, and lord high admiral, just in case he ends up being the only son. The king is desperate for an heir.

The Boleyns decide that, although it is treasonous to talk about it, the queen will be discarded if Mary bears a son, and Mary will become queen. Mary, who has grown up considerably in her narrative by this chapter, refuses to accept their plan, saying that she loves Queen Katherine, and will not betray her. She refuses to take her place. Nevertheless, her uncle feels that a new order is emerging in the world, including the end of the Pope's authority, and, regardless, her refusal is meaningless since the world is still ruled by men.

## Autumn 1525 Analysis

This is a very brief chapter, which lends intensity to the nature of the family meetings held by the Howards and Boleyns, wherein they traditionally scheme, plan, and orchestrate the family's future. They try to guess what the king is thinking, and how they can take advantage of every possible angle. Howard feels they are at the head of a new world order, given their high positions in court. Feelings, children, marriages, and love hold no value compared with their selfish desire to rise in status and fortune. With the exception of Mary, and perhaps George, the family's ambition makes them truly immoral people.

Howard's smile is referred to in this chapter as wolfish, implying the predatory nature of his scheming. His cynical smile leaves his eyes as cold as wet coals.

Mary's conscience will not allow her to consent to betray Katherine, but there is no possibility for her to refuse her uncle's directions. Again, the reader sees that women have nothing to say about their own lives or their own fate.



# Spring 1526

## Spring 1526 Summary

Mary is miserable in her pregnancy, in pain and fatigued. There is an assumption that Mary's fatigue is due to her carrying a boy child, but in any case, she would much rather be at home in Hever. Anne is back in court and has taken over Mary's duties as lady-in-waiting to the queen, and is helping Mary with her discomforts.

Anne has now been directed by the family to keep the king's attention on Mary, or in the alternative, flirt with the king herself. Since Anne is a natural flirt, she does this very well.

George appears at their room and announces that the king wants to invite Anne to his bed, but he was told she would have to be married first.

While Mary is confined to a dark room to await the baby's birth, Anne is beginning to make it clear that she is going after King Henry and will try to replace Mary in his affections.

William Carey comes to the birthing chamber to visit his wife and bring the king's greetings.

The baby is born early, and is a boy.

## Spring 1526 Analysis

Curious moments in this chapter foretell events to come. Anne warns her sister she must not stop having sex with the king just because she is pregnant, but Mary is tired. She says she has been at court since she was four years old and is tired of dancing, feasting, watching jousting, and dancing in the masque. Anne begins outwardly flirting with the king, raising Mary's old fears of being outdone. "I thought for a moment and went straight to the anxiety of my childhood. 'But what if he comes to like you best?'"(196).

Anne tells Mary the king should have named a barge after her instead of a warship, referring to her pregnant body. Mary again refers to Anne as a snake. Mary is very clear that she would like nothing better than to leave the envy, spite, and gossip of court. Anne does not hide the fact that she is pursuing the king, and tells Mary she won't be a whore like her, but would insist on marrying him.



# Summer 1526

## Summer 1526 Summary

Mary's new son has been taken from her to be cared for. She is severely depressed, wanting nothing but her children. She is having trouble with bleeding, has grown fat, and has no energy. Anne has had the king "on a thread" (204), but the family is still counting on Mary, hoping to annul her own marriage, as well as the king's marriage, making the new child heir to the throne. The king is now allied with France, and Venice and is close to war with Spain. Mary's uncle Howard feels Mary will surely be the next queen.

Ill and depressed, Mary is forced back into the spotlight in court, and the king wants her back in his bed. Her brother and sister help her with a vaginal packing to stave off her bleeding. She submits to the king's lovemaking, but is sad that she cannot share her true feelings with him.

In his bed, King Henry shares with Mary his sorrow over having lost several babies conceived with Queen Katherine, and they agree that it must have been the will of God. Henry decides his marriage was cursed because he married his brother's wife, and that Katherine must have been lying when she told him her marriage to his brother had never been consummated.

George and Henry squeeze the story of the king's anguish out of Mary, and they are delighted at this chance that the king may reject his marriage to the queen. Uncle Howard asks Mary to continue to be stupid and play along. In exchange for sharing this information, Mary is allowed to go to Hever to be with her children. Her daughter does not remember her, but she spends one glorious week with them, and returns to court.

The line is bitterly drawn between the sisters, Anne and Mary, with Anne spending her days at the king's side, and Mary still spending the nights with him.

The court travels, without Queen Katherine, to visit Princess Mary, who is Katherine's only child and the king's only living legitimate child. Princess Mary is ten years old and has a full court, but still has the size and demeanor of a child. King Henry is disappointed in her. Henry convinces himself that his heirless marriage to Katherine was a mistake, not blessed by God but only by the Pope's dispensation. He is going to tell the queen to leave in order to cleanse himself of this sin.

## Summer 1526 Analysis

Mary's return to Hever is again laden with symbolism of her love for the country, such as heart-shaped swans that doubled with their reflection in the water.

Mary sheds a lot of unhappy, lonely tears in this chapter. Her uncle informs her that outside Henry's bed, she is nothing but a "silly, used whore that no one cares for" (206).



In this chapter, the cutthroat relationship between the sisters reaches a peak, as Anne's ambition to rise in Henry's favor becomes exaggerated. Mary goes back to being the king's mistress at night, trying to feign enthusiasm, and she continues to obey the directions of her family. However, Anne replaces her as the favorite of the king.

George is also beginning to show his true ambitions, supporting both sisters in their relationships with Henry. The king's sorrow over his marriage being accursed equals joy to the men of the Boleyn family.

Henry's beard, once a source of soft joy for Mary, is now hot and his breath is sour.

The king has turned the misfortune of his inability to have an heir into blaming the queen for leading him into mortal sin.

Trouble for George is foreshadowed by Mary's remark that Anne would see him in the gallows before surrendering her ambition.



# Autumn 1526

## Autumn 1526 Summary

The king is in a dark mood, struggling to determine whether the Bible says it is the will of God for a man to marry his brother's widow, or whether it is considered sinful. The ambiguity requires a college full of theologians.

Although Mary reasons in her mind that it makes sense to marry one's brother's widow to make a good home for her and her children, she would not dare to speak her opinion, because the last thing the scholars and church fathers wanted was "a bit of common sense from an immensely ordinary young woman"(238). Mary explains to George that the king must find a way to have God on his side in order to leave the queen; he must make the decision under a higher authority than his own. He wants to think well of himself, and pores over the Bible trying to find a passage that will support his theory that his marriage was not legitimate.

Anne, with her good education, spends time with Henry discussing these issues and the king begins to spend every day with her, in deep discussion.

The Boleyn family calls another meeting and informs Anne that she is getting in the way of Mary's chances to marry the king. Howard orders Anne to leave court and go to Hever for Christmas.

Anne asks Howard if he now thinks he is Holbein, painting Anne out of the picture. Anne protests that Mary is old hat to the king now, like a wife rather than a mistress, which is Howard's cue to press on with Mary's relationship with Henry.

Uncle Howard tells Anne that Mary is the family's favorite, so for the moment, Mary is ahead in the race between them.

## Autumn 1526 Analysis

The ambitious Boleyns see the king as very vulnerable, and they want to be sure that they place before him the sister who will gain the most for the family. Uncle Howard tells Anne, "You're spoiling the game for Mary" (240). Uncle has been described as wolfish, and is again in this chapter as he deals with the belligerent Anne.

The reference to the famous German painter, Holbein, is interestingly made in this chapter.

The Boleyns are unashamed of using the girls and George as pawns in a game that they are determined to win. It is interesting that Anne is upset not so much over not getting what she wants, but that Mary is being put ahead of her. Their rivalry is palpable in this chapter. Although Mary is tired of court, tired of the king and the stress, she is



very pleased to win this round with Anne, and pleased that Anne is to disappear. This is another short chapter, as they tend to be when there is a family meeting.



# Winter 1526

## Winter 1526 Summary

Anne reluctantly leaves for Hever again, exchanging bitter words with her sister. Mary's pleasure in winning this contest exposes a mean side to her that is usually expressed in Anne.

Mary sends Christmas gifts to her babies with Anne and asks her to tell them of her love for them.

Queen Katherine is being ignored in court. Her nephew, the emperor of Spain, has sent an ambassador to England to make amends with the king, but Ambassador Mendoza is prohibited from seeing both the king and queen. When he finally does meet with Katherine in mid-January, it is under Cardinal Wolsey's watchful eye, and his visit is doomed to be ineffective.

King Henry refuses to joust, and later describes his despair to Mary. He is afraid that if he should die, the crown of England might go to anyone. He is sad that his father worked too hard to make the kingdom safe and sound, and that he has no heir to continue that stability. He sends Mary away and, as she leaves, she quietly suggests a solution: he could marry her and their son would be his heir. However, the king, in his wine-induced misery, appears not to hear her, and Mary, although she knows her uncle would have wanted her to, does not press the issue.

## Winter 1526 Analysis

Cardinal Wolsey's treachery against the queen is again revealed when, after weeks of waiting, she is finally allowed to see her nephew's representative and then, only under Wolsey's scrutiny, leading the ambassador into the room "as a mountebank might lead a dancing bear" (244). The queen has wanted to hear news of her nephew. She wants peace again between Spain and England and their two kings, but realizes, after this controlled visit, that she is totally helpless and alone.

The king has reached his lowest point in this chapter, fearing his death, and fearing the total loss of the kingdom of England due to the fact that he did not produce an heir.

Mary again claims in this chapter to be slower witted than her sister. It is Mary's nature to be more passive and less wily than Anne and, although she is aware that her uncle would have wanted her to push the issue of marrying the king, she is unable to assert herself.



# Spring 1527

## Spring 1527 Summary

A French envoy is at court because England is now forming an alliance with France, and little Princess Mary is to be married to either King Francis of France or to his son. Mary's uncle and father decide that Anne must return to court, as the king wants her. Mary is angry and feels that Anne will ruin her chances with the king. When Anne returns, she makes it very clear she intends to marry the king.

Anne resumes her star-status at court and continues to flirt with King Henry. The French representatives are entertained by a tennis tournament (in which Henry breaks his foot) and a masque dance.

Cardinal Wolsey has arranged a secret court at Westminster to covertly try the case of the king's marriage. The king himself is on trial, accused of a sinful marriage that took place because the Pope approved it. Theologians are invited to give testimony on whether marrying one's brother's wife is a Biblical sin.

The Boleyn family decides Anne will become queen as soon as Henry's marriage is annulled. However, the news that the king of Spain has captured the Pope means that Henry's divorce is not likely to be successful. Mary and the queen have a good laugh over Anne's impending failure and her characterization of herself as a storm-tossed maiden. Nevertheless, the family keeps up a positive appearance, and Anne is the center of attention, outshining Mary and taking over the rooms the king had given to her.

King Henry informs the grief-stricken queen that their marriage is not valid and will be annulled.

Mary agrees to tell her uncle how the queen intends to secretly send a message to her nephew and, in exchange, is granted time with her children in Hever. Anne is concerned about holding Henry at a distance while his bed is empty, but steels herself for a few weeks more.

## Spring 1527 Analysis

In the see-sawing competition between Anne and Mary, Anne is the cleverer strategist, although her tactics are very transparent. Anne is also the more dishonest of the two and strangely, does not mind being a pawn of the family if she can have her own way.

Symbolic foreshadowing in this chapter takes place at the great garish feast given for the French envoy. The king directs that the heart of a gaudy, showy fowl dish should be served to Anne.



Symbolically, as well, the queen has been working on an altar cloth and has asked for Mary's help on the blue sky section above the angels.

The political implications of the Pope being kidnapped by Spain are very grim. Even though Henry claims supreme power in England, the Pope still has supreme power in Europe. This leaves the reader to wonder to what degree Henry will go to maintain his crown, as well as obtain the divorce he desperately wants from Katherine. This is also the first time in the story that queen cries; the reader has been told several times that she has never, and will never cry.

Mary has clearly bonded with the queen and has grown to love her. Her betrayal of Katherine is a matter of angst to Mary, but she feels powerless to withhold the information from the family. Mary's hatred for her family peaks after betraying the queen, saying that she would rather have buried every one of them except George.

Jane Parker, George Boleyn's wife, makes an appearance at the sisters' room. She is offensive and lewd, and accuses their brother George of sleeping with them. This short scene foreshadows some later events.



# Summer 1527

## Summer 1527 Summary

Mary, while at Hever, admits to enjoying being free from her own constant tally between herself and her sister. Mary is very involved with her children and the purity of life at Hever.

Mary receives triumphant letter from her sister telling her that Anne will be married to the king, sealed by witnesses and a ring, and that Henry will be free to marry within the month when Cardinal Wolsey is acting Pope.

However, Mary's husband William arrives with other news. The queen's covert message to her nephew telling him what the king was trying to do to her actually did reach him, and was not intercepted. Cardinal Wolsey will not be allowed to be the Pope's deputy and none of the cardinals will support him. The Pope and King Charles of Spain are now allies, and England is once again at war with Spain. Queen Katherine is on top once again, and things do not look good for Anne, since there are also the competitive Seymours, always waiting in the wings for a chance at the king's attention.

Mary's husband, William Carey, informs Mary the Howards/Boleyns have broken their cover and everyone knows now that they have been after the throne. He tells her that since she is still his wife, he will now take her and the children and half of everything she owns to his home at Norfolk. However, while he is there, they receive a note from Anne inviting them to Richmond to make merry. Mary promises William that if they ever are truly married again, she will be a good wife.

## Summer 1527 Analysis

In her note to Mary, Anne claims that nothing will ever be the same for any woman in this country again, and that she has overturned the order, and sealed the fate of the queen. But, rather than being concerned about the huge impact this will have, Mary's first reaction to Anne's triumph is that she has lost the contest and is no longer the favorite.

It is no surprise that Anne has sent William Carey to deliver this news, since he is now free to reclaim Mary as his wife. William has spent five years branded as a cuckold, and hopes that this new opportunity will allow him once again to have a wife and a normal life. William's bitterness frightens Mary. Although Mary has consented to being a good wife if she needs to, her first concern is still herself and her children, and her great desire not to be in service to her sister, Anne.

William tells Anne that this is not a good time for wives, and that her family will find that they will slip and tumble down in the mess they have made. This line implies that they have made a rather nasty mess of things and is an ominous foreshadowing.



Mary tries to get a note to Anne because she does not want to be forced by William to go to Norfolk, but the Boleyn servants, now loyal to William, made sure the note did not get delivered. William reminds Mary that they are now his servants, and that everything that belongs to Mary is his, including her children.

Mary stands up to William, acting as a representative of the Howard and Boleyn families, and tells him that he must support Anne's rise in court. William is sure Anne cannot keep up this charade; she is running herself ragged being the perfect companion and mistress to the king. Although she does not say so, it is possible that Mary may still love William.



# Autumn 1527

## Autumn 1527 Summary

Anne is being treated by all as Queen of England, except when Queen Katherine takes her meals with the king. Mary lives with Anne in her luxurious surroundings as her servant. Anne is under tremendous pressure to keep the king happy, and to not make a move that might betray her fatigue or generate gossip in the court. She is also obligated to hold off Henry's sexual advances as they wait for Wolsey to return with the annulment.

Mary warns Anne that Henry will not tolerate her tantrums.

In a boat race put on for and by the court, the Howard family predictably wins. Wolsey returns without the annulment, forcing Anne to continue to wait. Mary is uncharacteristically kind to her sister and tells her she is doing a good job. Anne, whose control and power is growing, says that Cardinal Wolsey is no longer even allowed see the king without her presence.

## Autumn 1527 Analysis

In the court, Mary and Anne are on "unending public show," being watched by everyone. Anne is like a pressure cooker, and her siblings are on guard for her temper tantrums, once again acting as a team. There is a sense in this chapter of Anne being right on the edge of losing control; she paces and screams and is tired and nervous, having to constantly play-act the role she has chosen as the king's future wife.

Wolsey, who has done everything to serve his king, cannot obtain an annulment of Henry's marriage, which does not portend well for him. Anne's smile is "feral" as she compares herself to Wolsey.

Mary foreshadows the future when she is sickened by her own words, telling Anne that she has years and years ahead of her.



# Winter 1527

## Winter 1527 Summary

William Carey is now courting his own wife, and Mary is enjoying being with her husband again. She also feels safe with the idea that, if the family should fall, she will have him and the children.

Princess Katherine is now eleven, and her confidence and regal breeding bring out Anne's hateful jealousy.

George shares with his sisters that he is in love with Francis Weston. Anne flies into a rage at the possibility that his being in love with a man could hurt her reputation and future as queen. She demands that he give up his love, as she and Mary both had to do. When Mary tries to suggest that it's not worth life itself, Anne disagrees.

## Winter 1527 Analysis

Anne is becoming increasingly paranoid and skittish, as she waits to become queen. On the other hand, Mary is finding happiness in being an ordinary Lady and wife. Both Mary and George continue to support Anne on her road to the throne.

Mary describes young Princess Mary as pretty and full of character and determination, like her mother, "born to rights that we could only dream of" (293). Young Mary looks through the Boleyn girls as if they were glass, or insubstantial. The princess was born with assurance, grace, and confidence, and Mary sees that neither she nor Anne would ever have these traits, as they were trained only as opportunists.





# Summer 1528

## Summer 1528 Summary

Anne is exhausted and losing weight and growing ill from her constant activities at court. Mary seems happier and freer than she has ever been, enjoying the outdoors and trysts with her husband.

The "sweat" descends on the court. Anne has caught it, perhaps from her maid. Mary's husband William is sick, and orders her to go to Hever to be with the children and away from the illness. The king, Queen Katherine and their daughter Princess Mary have fled from the disease to the country, and manage to escape it while spending some quality time as a family.

Anne fights for her life, while everything in court stops due to the outbreak of illness. The king writes to Anne, but keeps himself and his family at a safe distance. Anne shows up at Hever and is placed in the tower to be cared for by a servant.

William Carey dies from the sweat. Mary considers William's death a chance for her to be independent, and perhaps own her own farm. She has experienced the true plight of women, and would rather be single. She knows her son and daughter may end up with royal responsibilities, but she prays for their safety.

## Summer 1528 Analysis

The death sweep of the sweat seems to have equalized everyone, at least temporarily. It takes the haughty Anne down, makes the servants flee, sends the king, queen, and princess running, and closes down court.

King Henry's terror of illness may have put him in touch with what is truly important, since he takes Katherine and Mary away with him and only writes to Anne.

Mary feels sad over the loss of her husband, William, but has awakened to what is important to her, and none of it involves being married or being at court.

The sweat, or black plague, was indiscriminate and was especially contagious and deadly in the summer within the city.



# Autumn 1528

## Autumn 1528 Summary

The Pope has sent Cardinal Carpeggio, an Italian theologian, to England to make a determination on the status of Henry's divorce from Katherine.

The Boleyn family is not sure which girl to promote, since Mary may be more appealing now that she is widowed and has Henry's son. However, Anne has recovered from her illness and is determined to rise in the king's favor again, jealous that he has spent the summer with Queen Katherine Princess Mary. She convinces Mary to be with her in court, and returns to seduce the king once more. In return, she is honored and indulged with riches and property, and is back in the king's favor.

Anne informs Mary that she will make sure Mary is taken care of now that William Carey has died. She then crushes Mary's emotions, telling her that, since Mary is now widowed, Anne has adopted Mary's son, Henry. Mary is beside herself, sick and enraged that her sister would steal her precious son from her, but Anne threatens to send her to a nunnery if she ever dares to speak out against her about not having a son of her own. Mary realizes how dangerous Anne has become to her and that she will never forgive Anne for this.

## Autumn 1528 Analysis

The powerful favor of King Henry continues to bounce from one woman to the other, including Queen Katherine. When the family suggests that perhaps Mary might win the king back, Mary flatly states she does not want him. Anne points out that either one of the sisters might be Queen of England, but both will always be nothing to their family, reinforcing the idea that the girls are simply pawns.

George reminds the girls of his love for Francis Weston, who is his closest companion.

The reader is finally allowed to see a more tender side of Anne Boleyn after her illness, when she beseeches Mary to stay with her and extends her hand to her sister. However, only a short time later, she violates Mary in the worst way possible, by stealing her son and wielding her ultimate power over Mary by threatening to banish her. It is clear now that Anne's ambition has no boundaries whatsoever, and she is surely just as cold-hearted and conniving as her family.



# Spring 1529

## Spring 1529 Summary

The king and queen are in a court of law in an unprecedented hearing, in battle over whether their marriage was legitimate. The queen has defied the king's order to dress subtly in public, and is in red velvet, ready for battle. Mary and Anne hide and watch the proceedings.

When she is called to testify, the queen instead rises and kneels before Henry. She asks him what she has done wrong, assuring him that she has been a good wife and that she was a virgin when they were married. This scene is quite out of order for a court, but Katherine is allowed to speak to Henry, and refers her cause to God and the law.

Anne, who still wishes Katherine would die, is clearly threatened by this scene, laughing and crying at the same time. Mary is privately delighted on behalf of the good women of the country who are put aside simply because their husbands want someone else.

## Spring 1529 Analysis

This short, intense chapter is wonderfully rich with historical fact, woven with Mary's perception of the divorce trial as she watches from the wings. Mary describes the king as a fat, spoiled child who has been confronted by an angel. The stiff formality of the court is suspended entirely for the few moments when beloved Queen Katherine, against protocol, kneels and pleads with her husband.

Watching this scene, laughing and crying, Anne prays for Katherine's death, an ominous prayer. Her laughter may indicate panic, or her love of the game, but her tears imply fear of loss of her pending position.



# Summer 1529

## Summer 1529 Summary

While the court is in session, Mary decides to go to Hever to be with her children. Anne reminds her that Mary's boy, Henry, belongs to her. She threatens to have the king order Mary away from her children, but Mary threatens that if Anne does that, she will hang herself in Anne's new palace and curse it forever.

Mary says goodbye to Queen Katherine, both of them knowing that she will probably not be there when Mary returns in the fall. The understanding queen says she knew Mary would betray her, and set up the messenger deliberately in front of Mary to throw off the king's men. Although the queen knows she will probably have to step down, she insists that Henry is currently just dazzled and ill-advised, and will eventually come to his senses.

Mary enjoys her children at Hever, and her brother George joins them for two weeks. They receive a letter from their father saying Carpeggio cannot make a decision without the Pope, after all. He demands that George and Mary return to court, as they are the only ones who can manage Anne's rage. Mary refuses to go, feeling that the Boleyns have lost the contest to make Anne the queen of England. Anne sends a letter to Mary, assuring her that she will not tolerate a servant who says such things. Anne threatens her, saying that, just like Cardinal Wolsey, Mary stands to lose everything if she does not comply. She orders her to Greenwich in Autumn.

## Summer 1529 Analysis

A true affection has grown between Mary and Queen Katherine. Mary wishes for Katherine to win this battle, and does not want to be there when they send her from her country in disgrace. Katherine, as always, is gracious and kind to Mary, even though Mary slept with her husband for years and bore two of his children.

Although it is clear to Mary now that Anne has the power to control her every move, it is also very clear to Mary whose side she is on, and how much she hates Anne.

Mary dares to say aloud that Anne needs their support for her treasonous insurrection. Mary is outspoken about her support for Queen Katherine.



# Autumn 1529

## Autumn 1529 Summary

Cardinal Wolsey has been ruined and disgraced, and the king's men have divided his fortune among them.

Mary explains and recommends some sexual maneuvers to Anne to perform on the king, and reminds Anne that they are both just whores.

When Anne finds that Queen Katherine is still sewing Henry's shirts for him, she throws a major tantrum, witnessed by Mary. Henry tells Mary he will make the queen stop sewing his shirts, and he will have the goldsmith make up something pretty, with rubies, for Anne.

Using the techniques Mary has taught her, Anne makes the king so happy that he grants their father an earldom, grants Anne and her brother George a lady and lordship, and makes George an ambassador. Anne has obtained nothing, however, for her sister Mary, who is just the other Boleyn girl.

## Autumn 1529 Analysis

The irony in Mary's revealing her sexual secrets to Anne is interesting, in that the reader knows how much Mary hates Anne, especially since Anne has stolen her son. In addition, it represents an effort on Mary's part to keep Anne in the king's favor. Given the competition between them, this may not seem logical. But when Mary shares the most intimate secrets of her love life with the king, it is clear that she really no longer cares for him and still supports the family's attempt to rise in his favor.

When Anne wins favors for her newly learned skills, none of them are extended to Mary. In each successive chapter, Anne seems to become less moral, and yet Mary continues to serve her, albeit under duress, and even tries to help.



# Christmas 1529

## Christmas 1529 Summary

Queen Katherine is to be honored as queen at court for Christmas time, and Anne is not to be seen. Since it is customary for the people of the city to watch the royal court dine, Henry wants to give them the impression that he is only choosing Anne for the good of England, not for his personal desires.

Mary and her brother George are having a visit in her rooms, talking of their fantasies- his of having his own castle and being a crusader, hers of owning a hop field, apple orchard, and sheep. She puts George's head on her lap while they rest on the bed, and they both fall to sleep. Mary awakens and sees George's wife, Jane Parker, slip into the room and look at them; she feels that Jane has drawn some bad conclusion about Mary's relationship with her brother, which would be typical of Jane, who is abnormally curious and perhaps is sexually deviant herself.

Anne is in her usual foul temper over not being the center of attention at Christmas, and she has forced the king to make great promises to her to soothe her rage. The king sits with Katherine and makes a good show, but does not dance with her or speak with her, and thinks only of Anne.

Mary spends the evening with Queen Katherine as she prays. Katherine forces herself to think that this is just another passing phase and that King Henry will come back to her, and that their daughter will one day be queen.

## Christmas 1529 Analysis

George's deaf servant, Joss, is suspect since he is mentioned in some detail as being present during a private conversation between Mary and George.

Jane Parker stares at Mary and George on the bed as if she is collecting evidence. It is as if treachery is everywhere now, and no one is sure whom to trust. The queen refers to her neglectful servants, with the exception of Mary, as half a dozen Peters.

Katherine will not prepare for defeat, but feels that since her daughter is the granddaughter of Isabella of Castille, no one can doubt that a woman can rule a kingdom. Surprisingly, she still seems not to recognize the degree of disrespect the English hold for women.

It seems even George has tired of the games at court, and talks about the larger costs to England and to women, if Anne becomes queen.



# Summer 1530

## Summer 1530 Summary

Mary travels to Hever, now surrounded by servants and the Howard family standard. She is attracted to her uncle's gentleman assigned to escort her, William Stafford, but is put off by his bad manners.

She has decided to put little Catherine in proper gowns and to cut small Henry's curls this summer, but sheds tears over losing their babyhood. William Stafford sees her crying, and suggests to her that she has an opportunity to be free from the family while they are so fixed on Anne. Stafford says he is a free man regardless of his service to the Howards, and would like to have a woman who loved him, one who would stake her life on his ability to care for her rather than have her father bind him with a dowry and contract. He also assures her that young Henry will always love her, as he, William, has always loved his own mother.

Once Mary cuts little Henry's hair and puts him into breeches, she realizes what a princely golden child he is and no longer mourns his infancy. She realizes that she would like to have a wanted child some day with someone who loves her.

When Mary weeps over leaving her children, William Stafford tells her that since she must do as her family had bidden her, to fight them and take the children back makes better sense than to weep for them.

## Summer 1530 Analysis

Mary is clearly moving on in this chapter, although her son still technically belongs to Anne. William Stafford already knows about her past and seems attracted to her, but it is an unlikely match, since he is so far beneath her socially. Mary is free and perhaps lonely at this time. Her comment to the attractive William Stafford that she is so hungry she could eat anything may reveal her willingness to reach beneath her status for companionship.

Mary's change of heart about seeing her baby grow up is interesting, in that she recognizes the royal quality about him, which may foretell his future as king after all.

When Mary's tear lands on William Stafford's face, instead of wiping it off, he licks it from his finger, foreshadowing her relationship with him.

Mary tells William that "women are the very toys of fortune." William calls Mary an "adventurer," encouraging her to think on her own.



# Autumn 1530

## Autumn 1530 Summary

Anne and Henry are inseparable again, and he has given her many gifts. They have traveled the country and are told everywhere that the country is admiring them, favoring their plans, and they are treated royally everywhere they go.

While Anne is competing in archery, her uncle Howard expresses his displeasure with her temperament, saying that a woman should know her place. Uncle Howard has always kept a mistress and the hatred between him and his wife is well-known. They watch as Henry places a small crown on Anne's head for winning the archery competition.

Anne and Mary spend time discussing Cardinal Wolsey, and Anne expresses that there are only ten people who wish her well against a whole world who would like to see her fall. She decides she wants Cardinal Wolsey dead. The cardinal is set up and charged with treason, and sent to the tower of London to await trial and his execution. Anne chooses her old lover, Henry Percy, to escort Wolsey to his death, since Wolsey was the one who invalidated their relationship years before. Wolsey dies on the road to London, sick and exhausted.

## Autumn 1530 Analysis

Some tension arises between Uncle Howard and Thomas Boleyn, as they discuss the temperament of the Howard women. Uncle has described Anne as having the temper of a stable cat, but Thomas Boleyn reminds him that his own sister and all the Howard women are like this. When Boleyn sarcastically tells his brother-in-law that not everyone is "blessed with your happy touch with women," Boleyn has crossed a line of authority that has long been in place. Uncle Howard may no longer be the most powerful man in the family, now that Anne is almost Queen of England.

It is not enough for Anne to reduce Wolsey to ruin, but she wants revenge, as well. Wolsey came between her and the only person Anne claims to have loved, Henry Percy. Wolsey also made a demeaning comment to her at one time, and she is determined to have him die. Although Wolsey has been like a father to the king for many years, Anne wants the king to love absolutely no one but her.

It is no longer enough for Anne to advance herself in the king's favor and obtain riches and power; she has now developed a taste for revenge.





# Christmas 1530

## Christmas 1530 Summary

Mary accidentally intercepts a coded message from her Uncle's wife written to the queen. She dutifully delivers it to Howard, who deciphers a message of comfort only. But Uncle Howard is furious with his wife for supporting the queen, and King Henry reprimands Mary's aunt. Mary sadly confesses to the queen that she has betrayed her again, and this time the queen is not as kind to her. She tells Mary that she is no better than her weasel sister, and no matter how much love is between them, she is sure Mary will always support her sister. Mary reminds the queen that Anne controls her son as well as the king. The queen feels Anne will kill her and that Mary will help her. Mary is sent away until Easter. With tears on her face, she encounters William Stafford. She shares what she has done and he comforts her. Stafford is now clearly flirting with her, and Mary is flirting back.

## Christmas 1530 Analysis

The depth of Queen Katherine's pain and hopelessness is revealed in this chapter, as she sadly watches the merry courtiers gathering outside to go to Anne's Christmas feast, and knows that her most loyal servant has betrayed her again. She has also accepted that whether she wins or loses the divorce issue, somehow Anne will have her killed. Her hope that Henry will come around is fading.



# Spring 1531

## Spring 1531 Summary

King Henry takes control of the church and declares himself the supreme head of the Church of England. Anne is concerned about Queen Katherine's confessor, Bishop Fisher, who still visits her daily. Anne feels they are plotting and will speak against her, and that people will listen. Three nights later the bishop falls ill, and three men at his dinner table die from poisoned soup that the Bishop had chosen not to eat. Mary is fairly certain that her father and sister are guilty of this, given Anne's hatred of Fisher.

The king and queen dine in front of the people of the city, Henry now hopes that they would feel sorry for him for being stuck with an older woman.

Queen Katherine asks Mary if she would warn her if her life were in danger from poison. Katherine feeds her dog a bite of her food before she will eat herself. Mary's loyalty to the queen is even stronger now, since she no longer knows what Anne might do.

The queen's daughter, Princess Mary, becomes ill and the Katherine is afraid that she may have been poisoned. Henry agrees to let her go to her daughter, but only on the condition that she stay there and not return. Refusing to be forced into leaving Henry, Katherine stays, but is tormented about her daughter. She confronts Henry at dinner in front of their servants and asks him to send Anne away from court, calling her a shameless creature and "no company for a good woman or a Christian prince" (363). Henry loses his temper and tells Katherine to go and stay there, but she still refuses to leave him on a permanent basis. Finally, when Princess Mary is said to be near death, Katherine goes to her. Anne sees this as the queen's loss of her crown.

Mary has a brief exchange with William Stafford, reminding him that he is beneath her and that she never thinks of him.

## Spring 1531 Analysis

It is obvious that Katherine has reached the end of her rope. Her audacity in asking the king to get rid of Anne is surprising, given her regal bearing, but she feels she has nothing to lose at this point and will probably lose her life in any case.

Princess Mary's illness is due to grief over her parents' relationship, and from the loneliness of being without family, even though she is surrounded by servants. Once again a mother's love of a child and the callous disregard of it by those in power are examined. With all of her titles and prestige, Queen Katherine has no choice but to put her daughter's needs above her own.

Historical figures, such as Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, and others are often inserted into the story, and are seen dining with the king and in other supporting roles.



Lady Jane Seymour is portrayed as a foolish gossip in this chapter. These appearances reminds the reader that this story has its basis in fact and, although fascinating, is a story of real people.



# Summer 1531

## Summer 1531 Summary

The Queen and Princess have returned to court for the princess to get well and the queen to rest. Katherine asks the queen what she thinks Anne's secret is, and Mary tells her that Anne and King Henry are very much alike, both having the ability to be single-minded.

William Stafford wants to arrange to escort Mary to Hever. She accepts, but warns him that there can never be anything between them, to which he replies that he wants to be friends.

Anne and Henry, along with the court and all of its trappings, leave the castle without saying goodbye to Queen Katherine, leaving her alone. A note from the king tells her she and Princess Mary are to be banished and must leave the castle within a month.

Mary goes on to Hever Castle to be with her children, now ages seven and five. William Stafford brings them each a pony and asks to stay the summer to teach them to ride. They spend their days together with the children and Stafford talks of being a gentleman farmer and raising the children outside the influence of the court. Mary finds herself agreeing that it would be a good life, with the exception of her son possibly being called on as heir to the throne.

A letter from Anne informs Mary that the Katherine will live in Wolsey's old house with a court of her own, and that Mary is not to serve Katherine any longer, but will be strictly in service only to Anne. Anne feels there are too many people envying and watching her, and she demands that Mary be at Richmond when she arrives. She also mentions that she is certain of a favorable ruling from the Pope, and plans her wedding and coronation for Autumn.

Uncle Howard has been cold to her, and the formerly loyal Duke of Suffolk has turned against her.

## Summer 1531 Analysis

The sharp contrast between the misery of the court and the blissful summer at Hever are emphasized in this chapter. Queen Katherine remains a loveable, martyred figure, and Anne's treachery and hatefulness continues to intensify. Mary is coming into her own, finding genuine affection and a lifestyle she loves at Hever.

Anne is becoming more paranoid, probably for good reason. Anne has now taken everything from the queen, and the reader gets the sense that the king must have insisted on Katherine having a court, otherwise Anne would have deprived her of that, too.



# Autumn 1531

## Autumn 1531 Summary

Anne returns to court and realizes the queen is finally "thrown down". The two sisters send the non-entity servants to Katherine's court, including some Seymours, keeping the best for Anne, as well as the ones who pose any threat to Anne, such as George's wife, Jane. Katherine receives ambassadors at her own court and is still loved by the people.

Anne acknowledges that it will not be over until either she dies or the queen dies. Anne is being seen by the English people as the one who destroyed the queen's happiness and they are shouting out against her. A trip into the city proves to be terrifying when a mob of 8,000 approaches, threatening to hang Anne. She flees on her boat, hiding in her furs. The king's standard is removed and sinks into the water.

The feeling of unease surrounding the absence of the queen at court during Christmas is palpable. Anne is furiously trying to be enchanting and entertaining, and is working herself into ill health and alcoholism under the stress.

George comes home, and the three siblings spend an evening together.

Anne does not tell George about the mobs, the poisoning, or any of her other treacherous acts since he has been gone, including the shocking, tasteless masque which she designed and performed in, entitled "Sending the Cardinal to Hell". Mary interprets Anne's withholding of information as Anne feeling ashamed of what she is becoming. But Anne assures them that, regardless of how much they helped her get where she is, she is all-powerful, George and Mary are her subjects, and they will be treated as such.

George calls her a witch and asks Mary if Anne is untouchable, to which Mary replies that she probably is. Mary is pleased that there might be a break between George and Anne, which might strengthen her own position with her son. Mary admits to George that she has been paid attention to by a "nobody," but that she is not in love, and could not have him if she was.

## Autumn 1531 Analysis

Anne makes it clear that Mary will have no power to make personal choices in her own life. The relationship among the three siblings has become strained as Anne is increasingly drunk with power. She is alienating people who have supported her, and even family is no longer exempt from her arbitrary decisions. She is truly dangerous at this point.

Anne tells Mary that she cannot stop drinking, which is interesting, since she is in control of everything else around her.



# Spring 1532

## Spring 1532 Summary

George experiences firsthand the public's rejection of Anne when they are refused service at a restaurant. They leave and dine in a monastery, where the king is now an object of terror, given his claim to power over the country's entire religious system.

The women of the country feel that if the King of England can put his loyal wife aside because he wants a change, then no woman is safe in her marriage. The people are calling Anne a witch and a murderess, and are accusing her of supernaturally causing the queen's barrenness.

William Stafford suggests that if Mary wanted to marry a simple man with a little manor then she should do so before her sister's wedding. Mary flirts and says no one has asked her yet. William disappears for two weeks, telling Mary's uncle that he has gone to prepare for marriage.

George joins Anne and Mary again in their chambers, and his wife Jane Parker is caught looking through the keyhole at them.

Anne instructs George that, since she is queen now, he must always serve her first. George and Anne share a moment that is much too intimate for siblings, at which Mary is both horrified and fascinated.

Jane Parker informs Anne that Henry Percy of Northumberland, Anne's first love, is being divorced by his wife, saying that their marriage was never valid, claiming that Percy has all along been married to Anne, which, under English laws, this is secretly true.

Mary goes to her uncle with this news. He tells her to lie, and to tell Anne to lie, and that everyone who knew the truth about Anne's marriage to Percy is either bought or dead, like Wolsey. When confronted by King Henry with the rumor, Mary covers for her, and Anne throws a tantrum, actually striking the king, but ending with a romantic interlude. George and Mary discuss the dangerous nature of this game that Anne plays with the king. Mary assures him that Henry Percy's wife might just as well wait to be widowed as hope for a divorce on these grounds, noting that she should have married for love and not to just to become a countess.

## Spring 1532 Analysis

Mary is certain that William Stafford has gone off to prepare to be married to someone else, and she tries to harden her heart against him.



Mary has become polished at lying, and her wit is sharper than it was when she was younger. Her false comments to the king about Henry Percy sound like something Anne would have said earlier. Anne's outraged indignation at the suggestion that she is unchaste is almost comical, given what is known about her betrothal to Percy. As usual, the climax to Anne's tantrums at the king ends in bed.





# Summer 1532

## Summer 1532 Summary

Mary has chosen a different courtier to escort her to Hever, snubbing William Stafford. In the middle of her visit, she receives a note from her uncle saying that her brother George will arrive to bring her to court. She sadly prepares to leave early and say goodbye again to her children.

Instead of George, William Stafford arrives to take Mary to court. She is cold to him, and he does not know what he has done to change her attitude. They talk and he tells her he has been courting her only, and has been making preparations to marry her. Mary refuses because William is a nobody, and Mary cannot change who she is, but he invites her to be a nobody with him. She admits she cannot do things like make cheese and skin chickens.

Mary returns to Anne, who is having luxurious gowns made. Anne tells her that everywhere she and king traveled they were taunted and spat at. Rocks, fish, and stinking produce thrown at them, and townspeople were burning Anne in effigy.

The Duke of Suffolk has declared himself as an enemy, saying Anne has cost King Henry the church and he could now lose the country as well. Rather than wait for a ruling from Rome, they are waiting for elderly Archbishop Warham to die so that Henry can appoint a new archbishop, Cranmer, who will agree to marry them.

Anne is critical of Henry for wanting to be seen by the country and by the queen as doing the right thing.

Mary warns her she could still fall, but Anne replies that the king will make her a Marquess, a title that does not require marriage, that cannot be taken away, and that will make her the richest woman in England in her own right. Mary is envious of the autonomy.

William Stafford tries again to ask Mary to marry him. She asks him not to go on the king's hunt for fear her uncle will see them together. William gives up, and lets her go.

## Summer 1532 Analysis

Anne seems to be disturbed by all the turmoil she has created. She and Henry can no longer be seen in public without the threat of an abusive mob, and she feels as if they are hiding in their own palaces from the people. The people are calling the queen "Katherine the Well-Beloved." And yet, Anne continues to seemingly tempt fate by making statements critical of the king. She is, perhaps, becoming reckless in her abuse of power.

Although Mary looks for William Stafford and is very attracted to him, she is afraid to go public with the relationship, afraid of making a commitment, and afraid of her family's reaction. William is frustrated with his efforts to encourage her to break free.



# Autumn 1532

## Autumn 1532 Summary

Anne, as Marquess of Pembroke, is now as good as queen. George and Mary realize they will both be overlooked for the rest of their lives; Mary seems to be comforted by the thought that she will be a nobody forever.

Anne has decided to go to the king's bed and wait no longer to consummate the relationship. George knocks on her door and she allows him into the room, while half naked. She seductively makes him lace her up, and enjoys his touch, wanting him to say that in front of Mary that she is the most desirable. George tells her she belongs in a "bagnio" (brothel), but she suggests that if she should want her brother in that way, he would have to comply.

Thomas More resigns from the king's service upon learning that the clergy has given in to the king. More has kept quiet on the subject of the king's marriage, but, as George explains, More is a logical man and knows the truth about this sham, and would never accept Henry as a replacement for the Pope. George makes it clear to Mary that he and Anne know this is a game, that only a fool would think there is justification for it in law, morality, or common sense.

Mary and William Stafford finally discuss their mutual affection. He again urges her to break the family pattern and to marry him. George sees them and advises her that their behavior must be perfect until Anne is married.

Anne and Henry are arguing loudly over Anne's wish to take the queen's jewels to Calais, England's castle in France. Henry explains that some of them were given to Queen Katherine by her father, but Anne wants them, and more. As usual, after their explosive battle, Henry gives in and they are lovers again.

The court makes a huge, extravagant display of their trip to Calais. On the boat crossing the English Channel, Mary and William Stafford finally get some time alone, and admit they are in love. They agree that the boat trip was the happiest six hours of their lives.

The queen of France refuses to see Anne, and Henry is forced to meet King Francis without her. The queen of Navarre also refuses to see her, calling Anne's behavior a scandal. Anne arranges an elaborate masked dance involving her ladies in waiting and herself, and finally manages to meet face to face with King Francis, who mentions that when she was young and at his French court, there was only one other who could match her and that was the other Boleyn girl, Mary.

Mary and William have intimate days together, since the wind is keeping the court from leaving from the harbor at Calais. George tells Mary that she has been seen, and that as courtiers, love is not a possibility for her. Mary replies that she will not see him again, on her honor, but that she and her siblings have no honor left.



## Autumn 1532 Analysis

Anne is far off the deep end, even wanting to seduce her own brother so that she can dominate everything, even that which is forbidden to her. The king seems in no better shape, capitulating to her at every turn, allowing her to take the queen's jewels and the queen's barge.

King Francis' comment about Mary stings Anne, whose desire it is to be the most desired woman.

As Mary becomes more of a nobody, a certain amount of stress seems to lift from her. She allows herself to have feelings for and to be with William Stafford. She explains to William that when she was involved with the king and realized he was simply a selfish child, she could not love him anymore. William, on the other hand, is a responsible, independent man who does not want to work for a master, but wants to live freely. Mary is much more attracted to this way of thinking.



# Winter 1532

## Winter 1532 Summary

Anne and Henry are living as queen and king although, as yet, unmarried.

William Stafford has returned to his home to oversee the farm. Mary is lonely without Anne in her room, and with William gone. Anne becomes pregnant, and Henry is very attentive to her.

Henry legislates a new law so that they can be legally married, under new English law in the new English church. They are married by Cardinal Cramner in a secret ceremony. While Anne and Henry are getting married, Mary and George cover for them so that the court does not know what is happening in the king's chamber. Mary sits in Anne's chair and even tries on her dressing gown.

## Winter 1532 Analysis

Anne's pregnancy makes Henry feel vindicated for his behavior. His "adaptable conscience" confirms to him that God has lifted the curse against him for marrying his brother's wife, and he tells himself now that Anne is his first wife. The two marry in the former home of Anne's enemy, the late Cardinal Wolsey. Anne and Henry, whose relationship has been volatile and passionate, are friendlier and kinder to each other during Anne's pregnancy.

There may be some wistfulness in Mary as she sits in Anne's chair and tries on her dressing gown.



# Spring 1533

## Spring 1533 Summary

Henry and Anne are married by the Archbishop Cranmer, who agreed Henry's marriage to Katherine has always been null and void.

While Katherine is writing appeals to the Pope, Henry passes a law that English disputes can only be tried in English courts, with no legal appeal to Rome. Mary now cynically views English justice as Henry's whim, the church as Henry's treasury, and the Privy Council as Henry and Anne's favorites.

Katherine's existence is not acknowledged in the court. Mary finds out her uncle has discouraged William Stafford from returning to court.

She has an epiphany that puts loyalty to her self above her loyalty to her family name. She gets a horse from the stable and journeys alone to Stafford's farm, depending upon the kindness of people along the way for food and rest. When she arrives at William's, she declares that money means nothing to her anymore. They get married, but William convinces her that they both need to return to court and bide their time in order to get her children back.

George knows that Mary has been with William Stafford, but he is also in a forbidden love affair, and agrees to help her by giving William a job as gentleman usher to the king.

The people of London meet their new queen with sulking silence. Anne has surrounded herself with her chosen favorites and Howard girls, including her brother's wife, Jane Seymour, and a pretty young cousin named Madge Shelton who is to share Mary's room.

Men are flirting and loitering in Anne's chambers as the women sew, the atmosphere much more casual than Katherine's chambers had been.

Uncle Howard and Anne have a quarrel and Anne threatens him with the Tower, feeling she needs no one now that she has the king and is pregnant with his child.

At Anne's extravagant coronation, Henry passes out honors, including making William Stafford a knight. William and Mary spend their nights together in London in a small rented attic room. William tells Mary of talk that George and Francis Weston are lovers. In England, at this time, homosexuality is considered a sin. Mary confronts George about the rumors and warns him to be careful; he denies everything in front of Anne, but confesses his love for Weston to Mary. Mary tells him that this will be his undoing, and he agrees, but feels Anne and his new unborn nephew, the king, will save him.



## Spring 1533 Analysis

This is a relatively long chapter that allows the reader to look more closely into Mary's heart, and watch her as she travels to become more familiar with poverty, real life and her genuine self. She starkly sees the waste and foolishness of life at court, and becomes hungry enough to appreciate simple food and the simple people who offer it. She learns what it feels like to be dusty, dirty, fleabitten, and smelly. But mostly, she is able to discern that love that is more important to her than status.

George, as well, cannot deny his true self, even with the knowledge that it will ruin him.

While in England, Mary only returns to her shared room in the mornings, but Madge Shelton does not question it. Mary thinks half the court is waking up in the wrong bed, and that Anne, "the mistress who had become a wife, was an inspiration to every loose girl in the country" (469).

Anne experiences some small pains and hopes they do not indicate that she is carrying a girl.



# Summer 1533

## Summer 1533 Summary

Anne will not allow Mary to go to Hever, and all focus is on Anne and her pregnancy. George and Howard have gone to France for some assurances, in case Spain decides to move against Britain over the news of Henry's heir-to-be. The court is not moving on, due to the pregnancy.

Anne is nervous about childbirth, and wants Mary with her. She feels that if it came down to her life or the baby's, that the baby would win. Anne wants Mary's protection.

George's wife brings news that King Henry has been excommunicated by the Pope; every Englishman loyal to the Pope should disobey the king, and that Spain may invade England in a holy war. This is a severe threat to Anne's position as queen. Henry calls off talks with France and begin to design a defense strategy for England. The Priests ask for calmness but wonder which way they themselves should turn, and many churches simply close their doors.

Anne is fearful that another woman will take the king from her while she is pregnant, just as she did when Mary was pregnant.

Mary and George are secretly meeting with their respective lovers as cautiously as possible. George, overwhelmed by the politics, turns all his attention to watching over Anne, who manages to retain her charming demeanor for the king.

Anne confronts the king about flirting with a courtesan, and the king compares her to Katherine, who never rebuked him for anything. She reminds him Katherine was never really his wife.

Anne announces her month-long confinement before the birth of her child. She demands that the king get Princess Mary's christening dress from Katherine to use for the new baby. When Katherine refuses, she is forced to move to a desolate, outlying palace and threatened that she may never see her child again.

Mary feels very sorry for Katherine and loves her like a mother, even though she betrayed her.

## Summer 1533 Analysis

Anne's fears are not really irrational; Henry really is cheating with younger women, and together they have created such an atmosphere of distrust in the court that anything could happen.





Finally, although he is still devoted to her, the king seems to be getting weary of Anne's bad temper. He refuses her order to remove the latest favorite young woman from court, and compares her to Katherine, who was at all times sweet and gentle to him, no matter what. Henry has begun hunting regularly again, as well as flirting. He also does not insist on taking the christening gown from Katherine, which was her own property. This refusal to do what Mary says may indicate he has finally had enough of her.

Mary is very attentive to her sister, perhaps because she is happier since marrying William.



# Autumn 1533

## Autumn 1533 Summary

Anne has forced little Princess Mary to be present during the birth of the new child, who will replace the princess as heir to the throne.

Anne, naturally, is having a dramatic labor. The baby is a girl, much to the great disappointment of Anne and the entire Howard and Boleyn family.

King Henry, however disappointed, is more gracious than all of them and welcomes his new little daughter. Mary is distressed because she cannot be free of Anne until another child comes along.

Both the new baby princess, Elizabeth, and Katherine's daughter, the young Princess Mary, are sent away to live in a royal nursery with a family aunt. Anne wants Princess Mary to wait on little Elizabeth like a servant.

When it is time for Mary to go to Hever to see her children, Anne informs her that she has arranged for little Henry to go and study with the son of Francis Weston, George's lover, and sons of some other rather wild gentlemen at court. Mary, knowing what she knows about Weston, pleads for him to be allowed to stay at Hever with his sister, but Anne's mind is made up. William promises Mary that they will get him back.

## Autumn 1533 Analysis

Anne is suspicious of Mary's health and happiness. Asking, "What good is a girl to us?" is Anne's bitter welcome to her new child. She uses the children as pawns, just as she and her siblings were used. She takes out her jealousy of Katherine by forcing Katherine's princess-daughter to serve her own daughter. She is keeping control over Anne's son, especially now that her own child turned out to be a girl.

Mary, once again, is devastated over having lost control of her own child. Anne is thoroughly heartless, thinking only of ways to prevail over all of the threats she perceives to be surrounding her.

Again in this chapter the reader sees that the differences between the two sisters are becoming greater and more pronounced.



# Winter 1533

## Winter 1533 Summary

As a New Year present, Anne has had a gaudy, expensive fountain built for Henry, made of gold and studded with diamonds and rubies. Its carved female figures spout water from their nipples, signifying an omen, reminder, and wish for fertility. Mary and George are stunned by its ugliness.

Anne eats asparagus shoots for every meal, and becomes pregnant again in January, returning to the center of attention.

## Winter 1533 Analysis

This is the shortest chapter yet in the book, but an extremely powerful one.

Anne's gift to the king is quite over the top in terms of unrestrained, wasteful extravagance. Besides being offensive in its decadent opulence, it signifies a growing desperation in Anne to maintain her power and position, and to sustain the king's hope that she will conceive again.

It is interesting to note that Mary and George's "amens" are "as devout as Lutherans". Without going into great detail, the author keeps us aware that there are religious changes taking place.

Anne's superstitious eating of asparagus shoots to make a boy are amusing; Anne has become a caricature of herself in this chapter. The fountain is a representation of herself; it is showy, glitzy, and hopeful, but of no lasting practical value. It also emphasizes the ridiculous gap between the rich and poor, and is a major contrast for Mary, who has had a taste of genuine life.



# Spring 1534

## Spring 1534 Summary

The Howard family gathering is attended by Queen Anne, who was not invited. Howard asks her about her pregnancy, and warns her how important it is that this child be a boy, saying there are many who more are loyal to young Princess Mary than to Anne's daughter, Princess Elizabeth.

Howard wants to place his niece, Madge Shelton, before the king, since the king will take a lover during Anne's last month of pregnancy. Anne announces that she will not tolerate it, but Howard assures her that it is better to have someone from the family do this, and Madge will be married off as soon as Anne's baby is born. Since she is Madge's roommate, Mary is directed to teach Madge how to behave toward the king. As an afterthought, the men agree that Mary should be married before the child is born.

Anne begins to bleed prematurely, and becomes ill. The family protects this information, telling the king she is tired. A midwife gives her a potion to make her sleep, but she loses the baby. Anne and Mary's mother wraps the fetus and burns it, wondering what sin Anne has committed that would make her lose the child. Henry is told that Anne has a cold, so he stays away. Anne is instructed to say that she was mistaken about being pregnant. Her uncle, afraid for his own well-being, reminds her that she needs to conceive again, and this time it had better be a boy.

## Spring 1534 Analysis

This chapter is particularly dark and ominous. Not only has a lie been perpetrated against the king, but the entire family is in on it, and they burn the fetus to destroy the evidence.

Anne has come close to death and the family, with the exception of her siblings, continues to demonstrate that the only thing that matters to them is their standing with the king. Anne wonders what will become of her if she is never able to produce a boy. Things are not looking good for the Boleyn/Howard family, especially for Anne.



# Summer 1534

## Summer 1534 Summary

Mary is pregnant, and knows that this will be the undoing of herself and her husband, William. They spent their best summer with the children in Hever. She returns to a more mature court, of men writing poetry to the queen, and a subtle air of corruption.

When Mary tells Anne she is married and pregnant, Anne hits her hard, in a rage. Anne is furious that Mary is pregnant and has married beneath her rank. She banishes Mary from court and tells her she will never see her children again, that they will be told she is dead. She is warned not to approach the king.

Mary leaves with William, no one daring to speak to her but her brother George, who admits to William that the family's focus has been on things other than Mary's happiness. George seems fearful of Mary's departure. Mary is concerned for George's safety, since it is becoming more widely known that his circle of friends is not the best.

Mary and William arrive at his modest fifty-acre farm. Mary takes over the kitchen and begins teaching herself the small duties of living, with a neighbor named Megan who comes daily to teach her to churn butter, make cheese, bake bread and pluck a chicken. Mary is exhausted, unaccustomed to working so hard. She does not miss life at court, but misses her children. She writes to them, as well as to her siblings and to her friends at court. Mary has no regrets about marrying for love in a "world where women were bought and sold as horses.." (518).

## Summer 1534 Analysis

Mary's pension has been taken from her, leaving her entirely dependent upon William, but as a married woman, she enjoys the freedom of having her own small farm. Her laborious chores seem simple compared to the posing, masquerading, and lying expected of her at court.

In a conversation with Madge Shelton, Mary notes that everyone knows the one thing Anne hates is fertile women. Perhaps if Mary had not been pregnant, Anne might have treated her more kindly.

For some reason, Mary was hoping that Anne would help her and cover for her, the way she had done for her sister when the child was lost. Mary's innocence about family ties seems almost unbelievable after all she has seen of her sister's treachery.

Madge Shelton is young, and, as a Howard girl, is being used by the family just as Mary and Anne have been. She cannot imagine a life outside of court, or a life outside of the family's ambitious influence.



# Winter 1535

## Winter 1535 Summary

George sends a letter to Mary telling her that matters have gone sour for Anne. The king is torn between Madge Shelton and Jane Seymour, and no longer responds well to Anne's temper tantrums but now just avoids her. Anne is angry that the family is putting another Howard girl in front of the king. George thinks Anne misses Mary, but is envious of Mary finding love while Anne is in the greatest court in Europe, frightened and unhappy. He tells her that this court would corrupt a saint. George is still sadly in love with his friend, Sir Weston, and feels the only thing that will help anything is if Anne becomes pregnant again.

Mary gives birth to a daughter during the snowy winter. William is happy, Mary is deeply comfortable and feels blessed.

## Winter 1535 Analysis

The most vivid illustration of contrasting lifestyles occurs in this chapter, as Mary, in a simple, comfortable, yet poorer, existence is genuinely blissful, while her sister Anne, at the highest level possible in wealth and status is utterly miserable. Through George's letter, Mary's distance from her old life at court is emphasized. What surrounds Mary now is nature, healthy work, a more balanced society and love, all of which bring her genuine happiness.

Anne's treachery seems to be coming back to haunt her, with the king's behavior and her inability to conceive a child.

George makes it clear that if Mary had married a prince and was miserable, then Anne would have been her best friend, but her jealousy is all-consuming and controls her actions toward Mary.



# Spring 1535

## Spring 1535 Summary

Mary is summoned back to court, and is to return without William or their child. Anne is pregnant again and is lonely and frightened, needing another friend at court besides George. She is no longer the king's favorite, nor the family's favorite. Uncle Howard is now holding family meetings with the Sheltons instead of the Boleyns. Five men have been imprisoned for disloyalty to the king, and the city is in an "uneasy" mood. Henry knows his power is limitless and no longer has any stabilizing forces around him. Mary is going to be allowed to see her children at Hever and have her pension restored.

William and the baby accompany Mary to court in spite of the queen's orders, traveling on a royal barge that was sent for them. Mary notices that the people are no longer supportive of royalty as they were when Katherine was queen, and they no longer trust the king. The Boleyn family has destroyed the unity of the country and Katherine's banishment seems as pointless as ever.

Mary is overwhelmed by the warm reception at court from the ladies, even though none of them had ever tried to help her. She finds Anne kneeling and praying, as Katherine used to do. Anne looks pale and weary, showing her age, and is not feeling well with this pregnancy. When Mary sees Henry, she realizes that he would not have banished her, and that Anne has only called her back to help her hide this pregnancy. Anne blatantly lies to the king about not inviting William to court, and Mary takes the king's arm and goes to dinner, telling him of her activities at home.

The king has grown fat and the court has grown gluttonous, serving twenty meat dishes and fifteen puddings at one meal. William comes for Mary and she tells him that the king was pleased to see her, and wants William and the baby to come to court, also giving her permission to take the baby to Hever in the summer. She tells him it is Anne who arranged her exile, and that Anne is sour, sick, and sad.

## Spring 1535 Analysis

It is interesting that Mary and William are glad to return to court, with all of its faults. It is still a luxurious existence and, even though they love their farm and plan to return, they are not unhappy about going back to the luxury, and do not question the Queen Anne's orders.

It is finally clear that, although the king is not a particularly virtuous man, he is not the one who is making poisonous decisions at court, but instead it is Anne alone who is generating negativity. The king and queen are both very unhappy. Anne has clearly changed the political climate in England.



The strange resemblance between Queen Anne and Queen Katherine is ironic, since Anne is Katherine's opposite. Anne kneeling and praying may be her final desperate attempt to control her future.





# Summer 1535

## Summer 1535 Summary

Mary and George help prepare Anne to go to Henry's bed. The reader learns that Henry is often impotent. Mary leaves George and Anne lying on the bed together.

William tells Mary that the king has now ordered Bishop Fisher, Katherine's close adviser, to the tower. William is worried that, if the king is able to arbitrarily make laws in his own favor and the Pope cannot intervene, then many people are in grave danger. Mary remains optimistic that Fisher will just spend some prison time and will be released. She feels the king and Thomas More are just temporarily disagreeing over the marriage issue, but that it will be resolved because they love each other and are such good friends. But Henry does send More and Fisher to trial for his opinion that Katherine had been truly married to him. Neither man would agree that Henry is head of the church, or an "English Pope". Both men, two of the "finest" in England, are beheaded.

Anne's baby has died inside of her. Fearing for Anne's health and safety, George and Anne go to an old sorceress, who gives them a potion to relieve Anne of the baby. It will be Anne's decision whether to drink it. The old woman warns them it is not the potion they should fear, but the blade. Anne loses the dead child, and George takes it to bury it, planning to get William's help.

Anne scrubs herself mercilessly in very hot water, puts on her best clothing and her hardest façade.

Mary and William join her children at Hever and are amazed at how they have grown. They meet their new little sister and Catherine asks to call William "Father". They are the picture of a beautiful, happy family.

## Summer 1535 Analysis

By conspiring in the expulsion of Anne's dead child, Mary, George, and William have placed themselves at great risk. The king does not even know of Anne's pregnancy, as she keeps all pregnancies secret until the child quickens. This time, however, the quickening never takes place, and the lie is kept hidden by the family, of which William is now a part. The old sorceress may prove to be a problem, since she seems to have guessed who the potion is for, and seems to know more than she should.

The court has now surpassed its own lowest point by beheading two scholarly, kind gentlemen. No one feels safe any longer, perhaps with the exception of Mary and her family. Mary's blissful account of meeting once again with her children, and their cohesiveness as a family may be foreshadowing the next calamity that awaits.

In the meantime, Anne is portrayed as a pathetic, mentally ill, fading flower. The king is insane with his own power and self-indulgence.



# Autumn 1535

## Autumn 1535 Summary

Mary receives a letter from Anne telling her of Anne and Henry's visit to Jane Seymour's house. She describes Jane's play for the king, and informs Mary that she is again pregnant. She asks Mary to meet her in Windsor to be with her for the birth. No one but Anne, Mary, and George know of the pregnancy.

Mary prays for a healthy boy for Anne, knowing that Anne might cross the line into insanity if anything bad happens to this child.

Mary's adolescent daughter, Catherine, asks to go to court with Mary. Mary is worried, and had hoped to spare her daughter that life, but feels it is time to let her go with her. She makes Catherine promise to tell her everything and do as she is told.

## Autumn 1535 Analysis

Anne's description of Jane Seymour sounds like Jane is the kind of woman that Henry would have wished for. She is domesticated, likes to supervise the cooking of her father's meals, likes to garden, and feels that a woman's place is to be a handmaiden to men. Anne is obviously threatened by Jane, but is more upbeat now that she is again pregnant.

Mary is still quite Catholic, using her rosary for prayer. Astonishingly, she still cares deeply about her sister.

Mary is concerned that her young daughter may get her heart broken at court, but seems proud to take her and is prepared to furnish her with the gowns and other trappings she needs to be a courtier.



# Winter 1536

## Winter 1536 Summary

Mary spends her best Christmas ever, with her entire family at court, including her son Henry. Anne is healthy and pregnant.

When William Stafford comments on Jane Seymour's angelic quality, Mary tells him Jane is a blanched snake, and the king is only interested in her for the hunt and joust; only a Howard girl could keep the king. Anne, Madge Shelton, their daughter Catherine, and Mary are the most beautiful women in court.

Anne has her ladies sewing shirts for the poor and works on a huge altar cloth, much like Queen Katherine had done. Jane Parker's voice is the only "discordant" one among the gossiping ladies.

Mary's uncle bursts in with the news that Queen Katherine, or Princess Dowager as they have called her more recently, has died. Anne and Henry plan a merry celebration while others, like Jane Seymour and Mary, are saddened and pray for Katherine's soul. Mary refuses to wear yellow and attend the celebration feast. Jane Parker has heard that the queen was poisoned. Uncle Howard reminds her that she should be at her husband George's side as part of the family, but she says that George is always either with Anne or Francis Weston.

Anne shares with her that this new child she is carrying will be strong, that she has gone to great lengths to conceive him, even journeying to the "gates of hell" (561). Mary does not want to know the details. Anne's baby moves and she is overjoyed that she has a live child growing inside of her, and accidentally asks Mary to run and tell George, but corrects herself, saying she meant Henry.

Mary goes to the king to bring him to Anne, and misspeaks as she tries to compliment him. He laughs hard, and tells her she is the best of the Boleyns. George gives a strange look when Mary tells him that Anne's baby has quickened, and Mary guesses that Anne has taken him, her own brother, along with her to the gates of hell to conceive this child.

George tells William that he has no ambition, and does not see that there is only one goal in life, which is "more".

Anne is back in the king's favor. She suggests to Mary that young Catherine will make a good match for someone, that she is a Boleyn girl and has to marry to suit the family. Mary does not want her daughter to lose her childhood to an early marriage. The queen reminds Mary that Mary's young son Henry belongs to her.



Katherine's death and Anne's pregnancy rejuvenates Henry and makes him feel that he and God are again on the same side. Young Princess Elizabeth was pledged loyalty by every person in the country, and those who refused have been killed or imprisoned.

Henry is seriously injured in a joust. Mary and her uncle write up an instrument forged for Anne that will give her power to keep England intact in case Henry dies. Anne is too upset to do anything. George reports that the king is confused and is asking for Katherine. Mary goes to him, since Anne is faint, and he recognizes Mary, asking her to stay with him.

When Henry recovers, he does not hide his growing hatred for Anne, and threatens her that she had better have a son. He openly shows his preference for the Seymours, even shunning George. As a good sister, Mary quietly tells Jane Seymour that if she continues to flirt with the king, one of the Boleyns will scratch her eyes out. When a group of courtiers enters the room and sees Jane Seymour jump from the king's lap, Anne wants her removed from court, but the king refuses and loudly recalls Anne's whore's tricks, which no longer enchant him, but he does not forget them. This outburst generates an exchange between George and his nasty wife, who reveals that she knows George doesn't really like women except for his sisters. Mary and George are frightened and guilty of teaching Anne all of the sexual tricks they knew to keep the king interested. Mary convinces Anne to shake off her anger, come to dinner and act as if nothing has happened. Anne seems cordial to John Seymour and tells him she has a gift for him: a little stool from France that she wants to give him for his daughter, since she doesn't seem to have a seat of her own but has to borrow Anne's. Surprisingly, the king laughs at this, as does the court.

But, George quickly pulls Anne away, seeing that she is bleeding through her dress, losing her baby. They rush Anne to bed and try everything to prevent her labor, but were unable to save the child. The midwife, upon seeing the baby, calls it a monster. Both Mary and Anne are terrified; the baby is horribly malformed. The midwife says that this is a devil's child, and she must tell the king. The midwife informs Mary that she has been appointed by the king from the moment Anne conceived because he doubts her. Mary offers to pay her anything to keep this from the king, but the midwife has sworn herself to a life of witch-taking.

Mary and George go to their uncle with the news about the monster-child and the midwife. Howard has no sympathy for Anne. George shouts that the king cannot make a son, and Howard reminds him it is treasonous to say such a thing.

Mary approaches the king to ask him to delay the court's move to Greenwich until Anne has recovered. The king says it is too late for Anne. William assures Mary that Anne must have done something sinful to have had a monster child, and hopes that there will not be too many questions asked, given his and Mary's participation in some of Anne's birthing problems.

The king, with Jane Seymour at his side, leaves with the court, while Anne stayed alone watching them from her window, just as Katherine had done years before. Jane



Seymour is now given her own luxury apartments connected with the king's, and has her own ladies at Greenwich. The ladies of the court begin to emulate her style in clothing and her downcast expression.

When she arrives and learns of the Seymour takeover, Anne's siblings counsel her to soothe Henry to get him back. Returning from the hunt, the Boleyns arrive at the back of the king's group, no longer in his favor, with the Seymours in front. When their mother expresses no particular desire to see Anne, Mary realizes that the three Boleyn siblings are on their own.

Henry has sent Jane Seymour a bag of gold, which she has refused, saying that she cannot accept such a gift, since she is unmarried. There is a rumor that the king may set aside his marriage to Anne as invalid so that he can marry again. Henry is partially crippled with his unhealed leg and the Seymours attend him, while he chooses Jane over Anne to come with him and read to him.

## Winter 1536 Analysis

In the beginning of this long chapter, everything seems to be going along well for Anne, Mary and the King. Katherine's death has removed a threat from Anne's life, she is pregnant, and the king is feeling good and hunting again and even feels like jousting. But his injury and near-death bring him a stroke of reality, and he realizes how much Anne has taken, how little she has given, and how much he dislikes her, regardless of her charm and polish.

After the malformed baby is born, Henry turns his attention publicly to Jane Seymour and her family, and does not hide his loathing for Anne. Jane Seymour cannot compare to Anne in talent, education or charm, but Henry is attracted to her for her simple ways and innocent charm, just as he had been attracted to Mary. Although he once enjoyed Anne's boldness and power, he craves virtue and the maternal nurturing that she is unable to provide.

Mary realizes in this chapter that Anne loves her brother unlike she has loved anyone else.

Anne mentions in this chapter that she taught the king to follow his desires and filled his head with "new learning". Unfortunately, he now believes his whims are holy.

The rumored alliance with Spain foreshadows a turning of the tide against Anne. The fact that the king placed a witch-taker to watch Anne portends danger for her.

Jane Seymour's style-setting headdress that is more similar to Katherine's is a clue that things are turning against Anne.



# Spring 1536

## Spring 1536 Summary

When Anne asks Uncle Howard to arrange to get rid of Jane Seymour, he tells her that if she can arrange for George to get the Order of the Garter he will stand by her. She is now, again, in deference to her uncle. George is overlooked for the garter award.

Mary's uncle warns her to get her son, Henry, and take him from his tutors, away from court. Apparently the men who hang about in Anne's chambers are in trouble with the king, and young Henry is living at school with their sons. William quickly leaves to fetch young Henry, knowing that Howard would not have issued this warning unless it was very serious.

Anne is surrounded now only by immediate family. The king is in hearings with Howard, Secretary Cromwell, and the Duke of Suffolk. Anne guesses that they are going to try her for the dead baby, and breaks into the hearings with her baby, pleading with the king to acknowledge her loyalty and the princess, but the king turns his head, and Anne realizes he has turned against her.

A boy named Smeaton, who has spent time with the men in Anne's court, has been heavily questioned by the king's men, and comes to George asking for protection. He has been asked about sexual acts he has never even heard of. George admonishes him to remain quiet and closes the door in his face.

The court attends a tournament for their May Day celebration. The king wants Anne to bet on either Henry Norris or her brother George to win at the joust. She gives her favor to one, and bets on the other. He is clearly baiting her, but no one understands why. After the joust, the king is seen riding toward the tower with William Norris and an escort of men.

Mary senses danger and warns Catherine to be ready to travel in the morning, and informs the wet nurse to be ready to leave at dawn with the baby. She is delayed in her departure because her daughter's horse needs a shoe. Mary spends the night awake with George and Anne. George tells Anne to have a bath and that he will see them at morning prayers. They never saw him again as a free man.

Mary is almost ready to flee with Catherine, but an armed guard comes to the tennis match to arrest Anne, and Anne insists on taking Catherine with her. William has returned from taking young Henry to their home and securing him, and tells Mary that George, Henry Norris, and Mark Smeaton are imprisoned in the tower. When Anne and Catherine finally emerge from the Privy Council, they were led to a barge and taken to the tower. William, Mary, the baby, and her wet-nurse took rooms where they could see the tower. William finds out Anne has been charged with adultery and witchcraft.



Rumors are already afoot that Henry will marry Jane Seymour, who is as innocent, devout and sweet as Anne was over-educated and French-influenced.

Young Catherine has chosen to stay on at the tower to help her aunt Anne. The three imprisoned men, including George Boleyn, are charged with adultery involving the queen. Mary and young Henry go to the tower to visit Catherine, and the two siblings are happy to see each other. William comments on the courage of the Boleyn women.

## Spring 1536 Analysis

This chapter is full of tension and terror. The worst thing that could have happened is happening and, although Anne has clearly set herself up for this kind of failure, it is surprising that the rowdy men of the court have also been arrested, including loyal George Boleyn. However, there have been hints over the past few chapters of the incest between George and Anne, and it has also been made clear that King Henry has had spies watching Anne. Also, the turning of the entire Boleyn family away from the three siblings was ominous. Uncle Howard surprisingly turns out to be the one who saves Mary and her family from accusations, warning them to take their son and go from court. However, it is not surprising that Henry has tired of Anne and her power plays, and is going to repeat his pattern of setting aside another wife for a young maiden.





# May 1536

## May 1536 Summary

Many more at court have been questioned and arrested. It is clear now that Mary could be arrested and hanged for her involvement with her sister and brother. Henry has gone mad and is drawing conclusions and making accusations. Mary has to choose not to try to defend them at trial, knowing that she, too, will be accused and would lose the opportunity to raise her children.

Mary chooses not to attend Anne's trial because she does not want to hear the lies, and she does not want to hear the truths, either. Some of the charges against Anne are legitimate, and some are simply wild fantasies.

All who are imprisoned are convicted. Anne's first lover, Henry Percy, was to sit on her jury, but could not be there for the sentencing. George and the other men are executed. A swordsman is ordered from France to execute Anne, although the king was planning a last-minute reprieve.

The same archbishop who had annulled Henry's marriage to Katherine arranged for his annulment from Anne. Anne is promised if she signs the papers she will be sent to a nunnery in France. Anne is executed, regardless, and William quickly takes Catherine so that the family can go home.

Jane Seymour has already chosen her wedding clothes. The Boleyns are ruined, but as Mary's Uncle Howard had told her, there would always be another Howard girl to use. Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, will never be called princess again, or sit on the throne.

Mary describes Anne's death as the loss of her other self, and she is unable to imagine life without her brother. But she is happy to go back to the country and try to live a good life with William and her children. They know that some day Catherine and Henry may return to court, and perhaps Elizabeth, as well.

## May 1536 Analysis

The conclusion to this story is sad, frightening, and powerful. Henry, drunk with power and in fear of not having an heir, has total power to make his own laws and do whatever he pleases, no matter how immoral or damaging.

Anne was drunk with her own power, turning her into her own worst enemy. Her desire to give birth to the next king of England overtook her common sense, as she went to absurd lengths to conceive. Whether or not she was adulterous with men other than her brother is not clear.



Young Catherine, the illegitimate daughter of the king and Mary, shows her royal courage by staying with her aunt until the end. Jane Parker, who has always been portrayed as a mean-spirited traitor, has finally had her say over her unhappy marriage to George, who has never loved her.

William Stafford, the nobody who loves Mary unconditionally, emerges the strongest, most level-headed character in this fantastic story, based on historical fact.



# Characters

## Mary Boleyn

Mary Boleyn is the main character in *The Other Boleyn Girl*, and her voice serves as narrator of the story. Mary is younger sister to Anne and George Boleyn, and is, through her mother, related to the powerful Howard family. Raised in the English court from the age of four, Mary is married to her first husband, William Carey, by the time she is thirteen in a marriage arranged by her family. Mary is somewhat naive, but has the ingrained manners, reserve, and attitude of a true courtier.

Mary is fiercely competitive with her sister Anne, both vying for attention and love, but they are also bound to each other by their shared blood and family ties. They adore their brother, George, and the three siblings often act as a unit in the story.

Mary's beauty catches the eye of King Henry when she is still a young, married girl. Her family pushes her to accept the king's advances, and she becomes his mistress for several years, bearing two children. Although she remains married to William Carey, who benefits significantly from the affair in status and wealth, Mary loves the king and serves him well.

After her affair with the king, Mary returns to her true husband, William Carey, until he soon dies of the "sweat", leaving Mary a widow.

Mary's sister Anne, who has risen to a powerful status in court, adopts Mary's son against her will, and this loss is the source of Mary's greatest anguish throughout the story. Mary is forced to attend her sister as her lady-in-waiting during Anne's own affair with, and eventual marriage to the king, which is also an indignation for Mary.

Mary's character develops and matures through her narration as the story progresses. Initially thinking like a slightly shallow young girl, she develops into a mature, compassionate, and wise woman.

Mary's love for her children and the genuine comforts of the country outweigh the pleasures of the luxurious life at court.

Eventually, Mary falls in love with and marries William Stafford, whose position at court is much lower than her own. She is the only one of the Boleyn siblings who is not executed by King Henry.

## Anne Boleyn

Anne Boleyn is a young woman with exceptional beauty, education, grace and athletic ability, wit, charm and, above all, ambition. Raised in the French court, Anne has learned the stylish and flirtatious ways of French royalty. She arrives in the English court



in the early stages of her sister Mary's affair with King Henry VIII. Though obedient to her controlling family, Anne has a mind of her own, conniving and scheming to raise her personal and familial status in court.

Anne's first major move is to become secretly "betrothed" to Henry Percy, a powerful man who owns a huge percentage of England's land. However, her family denies the marriage and pretends that Anne has not consummated it, banishing her to the family castle for a time.

Upon her return to court, Anne puts all her efforts into attracting King Henry by charming and teasing him, and working him into a frenzy of desire for her. The king wants to marry Anne so badly that he invents a way to legally set aside his marriage to Queen Katherine of Aragon.

Anne is cruel, abusive, manipulative, and ruthless and no one is exempt from her wrath.

There are many references throughout the story of Anne's snake-like qualities. She alienates all of her allies, and eventually alienates the king himself. Anne will go to any length for power, and once she attains power, she lives in paranoia over losing it. She murders, lies, cheats, and even seduces her own brother in her inflated ambition to have a son and thereby secure her place as Queen of England. Anne's ambition eventually ripens into insanity. Her cruelty to her own family ultimately proves to be her own undoing, when her powerful uncle chooses not to protect her from accusations of adultery, witchcraft and treason.

## George Boleyn

George Boleyn, older brother to Anne and Mary, is a tragic figure in this story.

Although he is in the king's high favor and one of his closest men, George cannot resist a wild lifestyle. He and his friends drink and party to excess. George is handsome and charming, and his role in court includes flirting with the gossiping and cloying women. George's own ambition to rise in the court, although similar to Anne's, is limited by the fact that he is a closeted homosexual, which is a sin punishable by death. George's loyalty to his family is so unwavering that he allows himself to be seduced by his sister Anne in an effort to sire an heir for England, since she and King Henry have not been able to do so.

George is forced to marry the evil Lady Jane Parker. He dislikes her intensely, avoiding her at every opportunity. Jane Parker eventually participates in providing her version of information that leads to George and Anne being executed.

George is allowed to serve as ambassador to France for a time, but along with the other Boleyns, he falls out of the king's favor when Anne's ambition turns to insanity. George is a sympathetic character, and his execution for the charge of adultery is very sad for his sister, Mary, who loves him deeply.



## King Henry VIII

King Henry VIII is a young king in the beginning of the story. He has inherited a reformed, more organized and civilized England from his father, and truly wants to be a good leader. He has ambitions to some day be the king of Europe. He is married to Queen Katherine of Aragon, formerly a royal princess of Spain.

Henry's flaws involve the fact that he is very much a child in terms of his needs and desires, and since he is king, there is little that stands in his way of getting what he wants. He loves his wife, Queen Katherine, but is frustrated and quite worried that she is unable to give birth to a living heir to his throne. Although they have conceived two sons, both died in infancy and Katherine is reaching menopause.

Henry becomes so obsessed with having a son that he attempts to get the Pope's approval of a theory that he has developed that would annul his marriage to Katherine. He convinces himself that it is sinful for him to have married his dead brother's wife, even though she was a virgin. He has decided that a passage in the Bible confirms this, and propounds the idea that he has been tormented by this knowledge for years, and must be divorced from Katherine so that he can have a true marriage that is not sinful. The underlying truth is that he has fallen hopelessly in love with the seductive Anne Boleyn and will do anything to have her. Anne insists on marriage and becoming the Queen of England and, when the Pope denies Henry's annulment, Henry proceeds to take over the church, forming the new Church of England, and proclaiming himself head of the church. He passes legislation that allows him to marry Anne Boleyn and sets aside his marriage to Katherine.

Henry is cruel to Katherine, but one gets the idea that if Anne Boleyn were not pulling the strings, and if Henry were not trying constantly to please her, that Henry would have been a good and kind king.

However, the medieval culture in which Henry VIII lived was raucous, violent and dangerous. The ability to produce an heir had the potential to have a huge impact on England's power. The plague was beginning to take European lives by the scores, and casual adultery, especially for the king, was a given.

Henry's lavish lifestyle eventually becomes so self-indulgent that he grows obese and unhealthy. Ironically, Henry is terrified of illness, and goes to great lengths to distance himself from the city during the summer when outbreaks of the plague, or "sweat" would be most prevalent.

Henry can be kind and generous, but once his mind is made up, he is capable of turning on his own wives, or anyone else who disagrees with him, to the extent of ordering their executions.



## Queen Katherine of Aragon

Kind Queen Katherine is the princess daughter of Queen Isabella of Spain. She is a devout, pious Catholic, and loves her husband, King Henry VIII, as if he were her own son.

When Henry sets her aside for not giving him an heir, Katherine continues to have faith in him and feels he will change his mind and once again recognize her as his true wife.

Katherine is at all times gracious and polite, bred to be a devoted queen. She is loved by her young lady-in-waiting, Mary Boleyn, who bore two of the king's children and named one after the queen.

Anne Boleyn is extremely cruel to Katherine, first banishing her from court, then trying to poison Katherine's confessor and only friend. Anne Boleyn takes Katherine's home, her jewels, her husband and her only daughter, as well as her throne and her title, leaving Katherine only with the love of her family in Spain and the devotion of the English people. Katherine protests, but will not willingly leave her husband. Katherine is finally banished from Henry's court, but continues to hold court in the late Cardinal Wolsey's home. However, when she refuses to turn over her only child's christening clothes to Anne Boleyn, her child is taken from her and she is sent to a remote and miserable location far away from London.

Katherine's nephew Charles is the emperor of Spain. His relationship with his aunt Katherine keeps England and Spain allied against France for a number of years. However, when Charles learns of Henry's ill treatment of Katherine, he begins making political moves that enrage Henry, forcing England to make peace with France, and turn as allies against Spain.

Katherine is very reserved and it is said that she never cries. She is strong and compassionate toward her people, and does not tolerate decadence.

When the people of England realize that Henry's marriage to Anne has resulted in damage to the church and to the country's legal system, their loyalty toward Katherine becomes more vocal and pronounced. She is very much loved by her people, with some considering her the only true queen.

Katherine eventually dies alone. There are rumors she was poisoned, but, although that is likely, it is not a certainty. Her role in this story, in addition to the factual one she played in history, was to help Mary Boleyn develop her values and open her heart.

## Thomas Boleyn

Father of Anne, Mary, and George Boleyn, Thomas is the king's ambassador to Spain and France. Although he could not be considered a kind father to his children, Thomas



holds great loyalty to England and tries to make and maintain peace for the country. He and Mary Boleyn may be the only members of the Boleyn family with a conscience.

Thomas' marriage to a woman from the powerful Howard family and his loyalty to the king have earned him a high position in court. Thomas is almost as ambitious as the rest of his family, but is generally forced to defer to his brother-in-law. He is complicit in using his children as pawns to raise the Boleyn family's status, just as they are used by his wife and his brother-in-law, Howard.

Although Thomas defers to his wife's brother, Howard, there is one instance in the story when Thomas has the nerve to stand up to Uncle Howard, but only when his daughter is Queen of England and expecting an heir. Otherwise, he allows his daughters to be used and is under the control of his wife and her brother, as well as in service to the king.

## Uncle Howard

Mary Boleyn's uncle Howard, whose first name is unknown, is the powerhouse in the Boleyn and Howard families. His sister is married to Thomas Boleyn, and is the mother of Anne, Mary, and George Boleyn. The Howard family is wealthier and holds a higher position in court, therefore, Howard is the patriarch of the entire family, including the Boleyns. He makes every important decision for the Boleyn family, playing the Boleyns like pawns to increase their rank in court. Owning a mansion in London and great wealth, Howard's elevated status in court is that of a close adviser to King Henry VIII.

Howard helps the family push Mary into an affair with Henry when she is very young. He calls family meetings throughout the story to plot strategies for the family's upward ascent at court. His authority in the family is unquestioned and strictly obeyed.

It is interesting to note that although Howard could be considered a minor character in terms of dialogue and story line, his presence in this story represents a strong underlying force of ultimate control and power over the Boleyn family, including the fate of Anne and George. The fact that he is only referred to as "uncle" is ironic, since he is the master manipulator and supreme authority dominating the family.

Howard is ruthless in his ambition, and has no special feelings for children or family. His only interest is the advancement of the family's interests, and he stops at nothing to keep that momentum, keeping his nieces in front of the king's eyes. His unhealthy relationship with his wife is well-known at court.

Howard is one of the forces behind his niece Anne's downfall and execution since, as Queen, she has defied and threatened him, despite the fact that he is the one who managed to get her into that position.



## Henry Percy

Sir Henry Percy of Northumberland is a high-ranking man at court, who is set to inherit a huge amount of English land, which will make him the second richest man in England. He spends his time at court writing silly poetry to Anne Boleyn and having quiet, flirtatious conversations with her. He falls deeply in love with Anne and the two become "betrothed" in the English tradition of stating their marriage vows before two witnesses. Henry Percy and Anne actually consummate their marriage, but the marriage is set aside by the king and Percy's father, since the marriage of the son of a Lord of his stature is a political decision that must be planned and arranged among Cardinal Wolsey, the king, and the father of the heir.

Henry Percy cannot stand up to the pressure, but never stops loving Anne. He tries to communicate to Anne that he will stand by her, but Anne's mother responds for Anne, and tells him to move on. Henry later marries unhappily, crying at the ceremony, in an arranged marriage not of his choosing. His wife tries to divorce him, accusing him of being legally married to Anne, but Anne, as well as her family, denies that the marriage was ever consummated. Later, Henry sits on Anne's jury at her trial, but does not show up on the day of her sentencing, claiming illness.

## William Carey

William Carey, a tragic figure, is a friend of and servant to King Henry VIII, and is married to Mary Boleyn when she is thirteen years old. King Henry takes a liking to William's young wife Mary, who is forced to leave William's side and have an affair with the king that lasts several years and produces two illegitimate children. Sir William is rewarded handsomely in riches, status, and landholdings in exchange for tolerating his wife's affair with the king, but he becomes bitter and angry at the humiliation of being "cuckolded". Still, William is a very kind man, and he understands the power of the Boleyn family's influence over Mary. When her affair with the king has ended, William and Mary spend a brief time together, happily married once again. However, William Carey dies of the "sweat", leaving Anne a widow.

## William Stafford

William Stafford is a minor assistant in King Henry's court, who falls in love with Mary Boleyn. Although their relationship is a gamble due to their unmatched status, William sees the goodness and potential in Mary and inserts himself into her life with her children at Hever. William eventually marries Mary without permission from Queen Anne. William owns a fifty-acre farm at Rochford, to which he and Mary retreat when Anne sends Mary into exile for marrying without permission. William is a major force in helping Mary retrieve her son from the clutches of Anne's selfishness. William is a gentleman farmer with an appreciation for nature that is shared by Mary. He is gentle, kind, and patient, and a doting father and step-father. He provides the strength Mary





needs to find her true self, and then helps her through the horrible events of losing her sister and brother.

## Madge Shelton

Madge is another Howard girl, cousin to Anne, Jane, and George Boleyn. Like the other Howard women, she is beautiful and, although very young, has a wild, partying nature. She comes to court as a young woman and, since she is family, is one of the few ladies who stay with Anne Boleyn when the others have wandered over to Jane Seymour's service. Like many of the other young women in court, she enjoys a brief affair with King Henry. Madge is a good friend to Mary Boleyn, since they have shared rooms together more than once, keeping one another's secrets safe.

## Princess Mary Tudor

The only surviving child of Queen Katherine and King Henry, Princess Mary is a sickly, small child who is forced to spend much of her life separated from her parents. She is extremely well-educated but is not outgoing or strong. Henry is wildly disappointed when, at twelve, Mary is still too wan and dwarfish to be named as the future queen of England. When Queen Katherine is put aside and replaced by Anne Boleyn, Princess Mary becomes ill with grief, and Katherine is not permitted to go to her unless she agrees to leave King Henry.

Princess Mary is forced to be present in Anne's chambers for their daughter Elizabeth's birth. Later, she is forced to wait on and defer to the younger Princess Elizabeth. She is a wise and insightful person, whose regal bearing contrasts with the Boleyn girls. Mary is raised as a princess who has never questioned her own status until Anne becomes queen, while the Boleyns were raised with ambition as their foremost value.

## Henry Carey

Henry Carey is an illegitimate child of Mary Boleyn Carey and King Henry VIII. He is one of the two sons the king ever sired, but is not considered an heir to the throne because Mary was not married to the king. Henry bears Mary's husband's last name, but very much resembles the king in looks and in his regal nature. He is taken from his mother Mary by his aunt, Queen Anne, when Mary becomes widowed. Anne sends Henry away to a religious monastery-type school. Henry is rescued and returned to his mother by his step-father, William Stafford, at the end of Anne's reign as queen.

Mary Boleyn sees her son Henry as a princely, golden child who takes after his father. She knows that he may be called upon some day to take the throne.



## Catherine Carey

Catherine Carey is the illegitimate daughter of Mary Boleyn Carey and King Henry VIII. Mary names her after Katherine of Aragon. Catherine is raised at the Boleyn family home, and visited during the summers by her loving mother, Mary. Mary allows her to attend court at the age of twelve, and Catherine becomes the youngest lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne Boleyn. Catherine is eager to come to court, and is a lovely Howard girl, a great concern to Mary who knows the predatory nature of the men at court.

When Catherine's aunt, Anne Boleyn is imprisoned in the London Tower, Catherine chooses to stay with her and assist her, since she is ill and terrified. Young Catherine stays with Anne until Anne's execution, then returns with her mother, her step-father William Stafford, and her brother Henry to Rochford.

## Jane Seymour

A family of courtiers, the Seymour family is constantly in competition with the Boleyn and Howard families for King Henry's attention and favor.

The Seymours try to place their daughters before the king, just as the Boleyns have done and, although their family is among the king's favorites, they usually are in the periphery of his entourage. However, Jane Seymour, whose piety and domestic talents attract the king, is choosing her wedding clothes on the day of Anne Boleyn's execution. Jane finally gets her turn to become King Henry's next wife when his marriage to Anne is set aside upon Anne's execution.

## Jane Parker

Lady Jane Parker, the least likeable character in this story next to Anne Boleyn, is wife to George Boleyn through an arranged marriage. She is sexually perverted, and seems addicted to gossip and bad news. She is harsh and strange, and her husband George avoids being with as much as possible. She is very much disliked by the Boleyn girls due to her sneaky behavior. Not surprisingly, Jane betrays the incestuous relationship between her husband, George, and his sister, Anne, and is instrumental in having them both executed.

## Bessie Blount and Henry Fitzroy

The reader only knows these two characters from dialogue among the main characters. Bessie Blount is a commoner who had an affair with King Henry VIII, and produced a son named Henry Fitzroy. Although Henry Fitzroy cannot legally be heir to the throne, King Henry bestows land, titles, and status upon the young boy in case a legitimate heir never comes along.



# Objects/Places

## Bagnio

A brothel; a house of prostitution.

## Calais

English fort and palace, located in Calais, France, where the court visits for Anne's coronation.

## Court in progress

The king's court traveled seasonally from manor to manor, with a large entourage of courtiers, equipment, horses and other necessities. A caravan of royal wagons, carts, animals, and servants would travel with the king's standard flying, as the common people watched them pass. They courtiers would occasionally stop on their journey and expect to be fed and lodged at the expense of whomever was blessed with their company.

## Eltham

Eltham, England is the location of one of the palaces to which the court traveled to spend spring, and is the favorite of King Henry.

## Greenwich

Greenwich, England is the location of one of the castles to which the court traveled to spend the winter. It is also home to the Trevelyans, whose safety was threatened when a mob followed Anne Boleyn to their house.

## Hertfordshire, The More

Cardinal Wolsey's home, the first location to which Queen Katherine is banished.

## Hever Castle

The birthplace of the Boleyn girls; the Boleyn family manor in the country where Mary was allowed to spend summers with her children.



## **Masque**

Dramatic entertainment in which masked performers represent mythical or allegorical characters.

## **Matins**

Morning prayers in medieval Catholicism.

## **Nobody**

A nobody in this story is anyone who is without status or rank in the court, or someone with low rank.

## **Richmond**

Richmond, England, the location of one of the castles to which the court traveled to spend autumn.

## **Tableau**

A visually dramatic scene; wide-ranging display.

## **Tower**

The Tower of London was where the crown jewels were (and are) stored, and also was the location of the famous prison.

## **Westminster Palace**

The primary residence of the king and his court in London.

## **Windsor Castle**

The location of one of the castles to which the court traveled to spend the Summer.



# Themes

## Power corrupts

Both King Henry and Anne Boleyn have such a drive for power that it becomes destructive. Henry's desire to be king of all of Europe was a driving force for him, causing wars, deaths and destruction of diplomatic relationships. Henry's wish to take a position as the head of the Church of England, usurping the power of the Pope, had negative consequences for the church, as well as for the country of England. The churches were drained of money now that they were "owned" by the king, and Henry gave himself the power to randomly and arbitrarily pass laws for his own benefit. Loyal friends became dispensable and, the tighter control became, the easier it was to violate the rules. People in the court became more suspicious and competitive, because the king and queen's need to control and hold on to their power forced them to employ spies to make sure their interests were being covered.

But if power corrupts, absolute power causes absolute corruption. Henry lost all sense of the morals and values he held as the young ruler of a great country once he had absolute power over church and state. The reader knows from the beginning of the book that Henry is capable of putting to death anyone who disagrees with him. But decisions to banish his wife of many years and to have his second wife put to death along with his loyal courtiers reflects a culmination of too much unregulated power, which placed Henry's own greed and personal needs above the needs of his people.

## Blood is Thicker Than Water

Even though the Boleyns are willing to sacrifice their own family members to move up in the ranks at court, there is an unbreakable bond among them that keeps them loyal, even when this bond victimizes them. Mary reports everything she sees and hears to her Uncle Howard, even while knowing she is betraying a queen she loves.

Anne is cruel to Mary, stealing the king while Mary is in childbirth, stealing Mary's child when her husband dies, and banishing Mary in exile when she marries. Mary knows of hundreds of violations on her sister and family's part, is aware that her sister is immoral and even a murderess, but still wants to testify on Anne's behalf at her trial.

## Love as a healing force

As a young girl, Mary watches the execution of an uncle with only a bit of emotion. She is, in addition to being a member of the somewhat aloof Boleyn family, a child who was raised in court without much contact with her parents or family.

Although Mary claims to love King Henry and tries to be a true friend to him, it is her unexpected deep love for her children that opens Mary's heart and changes her life. Her



love of nature and for William Stafford are what empower her to give up the luxurious trappings of court and live a simple and more wholesome life in the country. She makes many sacrifices just to be allowed to be with her children. Mary also loves the queen she serves and, in the end, she is the only one of the Boleyn siblings who is not executed.

## **Oppression of Women**

This story is a fascinating study for feminists. Women in England in the 1500s were not allowed to own property. Women were not allowed to make decisions regarding marriage, divorce, childbearing, child rearing, politics, religions or anything else. The husband was the absolute head of the household. Once married, which was the aspiration of most girls, a woman was expected to obey her husband as a child would obey its parents. During this time in history it was truly and wholly a man's world. Female babies were undervalued, and women were expected to know and practice a set of rules that included being cheerful at all times, not talking back to men, not speaking their minds, and not participating in family decision making. Women were primarily ornamental and their purpose was to entertain men and bear children.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view throughout the novel is that of the narrator's, Mary Boleyn. The author allows Mary to tell her story through her own experiences and the reader is able to perceive Mary's maturity as the story progresses.

The story is told in an expository way, with plentiful dialogue among the characters. The characters are developed through description as well as through their own words. Mary's narration is in present tense, for the most part. Because the story has its basis in history, Mary's job is to fill in the emotional, human, and variable details that the reader can only guess at as one studies this period in history. However, most of the characters and their roles are known to be true. Their personalities and feelings have been woven for the reader by the author through Mary's excellent narration which, although one gets a feel for the dialect of that day, is easy to read and beautifully written.

## Setting

The novel is set in medieval England, through some of the early years of the black plague and while feudalism was still in full force. The fifteen-year time period covered is Spring, 1521 through May, 1536.

Although the reader is made aware that there is deep poverty among the common people, this story is set primarily in court and among the courtiers, as it examines their protected, cloistered culture within the castle walls.

The English countryside is beautifully described and, in the narrator's mind, represents the ideal aspect of life, the freedom inherent in nature, and a form of beauty more potent than the fancy gowns, jewels, architecture, and riches of life in court.

Castle Hever, Mary's childhood home, is in a pastoral country setting, surrounded by farms. Hever represents a sort of Eden to Mary, who goes there in summers with her children and is able to relax without being watched, without being subjected to gossip and without having to maintain a facade of flirtatious charm. Although there are servants at Hever, the caste system is not so apparent and there is no competition for status. There exists at Hever only a simple, lovely ambiance.

## Language and Meaning

Phillipa Gregory does a masterful job of weaving old world language and ideas into modern day writing. Her writing is smooth and fluid, and it is easy to become wrapped up in the story.



Although the customs of medieval culture called for an absurd degree of graciousness and reserve, at least on the part of women, Gregory allows the reader into that world through authentic dialogue and through Mary's narrative, which is sometimes bawdy and coarse.

The courtiers cannot imagine a life outside court, since most of them have grown up in court. Delving into their pampered world, Gregory subtly shows us their haughty naivete and the foolishness that lives in people who are so out of touch with reality.

Using extremely readable writing, and incorporating old world language into dialogue, she provides a realistic look at a feudal system way of life that the reader can only imagine in today's world.

## Structure

The Other Boleyn Girl is divided into chapters by season, ranging from Spring 1521 through May 1536. During this relatively short span, Gregory takes the reader on a roller coaster ride through historic events that set the stage for the Renaissance. Although the story is based on history, it could not have been more fascinating if it were entirely fiction, and Gregory fills the spaces between events with the drama of human life and love.

The chapters are primarily differentiated by seasons; however, as if the narrator had kept an uneven diary, some chapter titles are simply about Christmas, some are specific months, and some are seasons. The chronological flow of time helps the story move quickly, since the reader never stays too long in one time period, but is able to move on to the next where, at times, considerable changes have occurred.





## Quotes

"Anne gave a snort of disbelief, her breath a little cloud on the cold air. 'Oh aye,' she said derisively. 'She could ride, astride and learn to joust. A girl can't rule a country like this, the great lords'd eat her alive.'" Chap. 2, Spring 1522, p. 21

"She's watching me," I whispered back. "Course she is. More to the point, he's watching you. And most important of all Father and Uncle Howard are watching you, and they expect you to carry yourself as a young woman on the rise. Up you go, Mistress Carey, and all of us go up with you." Chap. 2, Spring 1522, p. 28

"There was a trail of extravagance and dishonesty and waste that followed the king around the country like slime behind a snail." Chap. 2, Spring 1522, p. 54

"When you first came to court you were a fresh piece of goods, hardly glazed by the French court, but now the gilt seems to be entering your soul. Do you ever do a thing without thinking twice?" Chap. 5, Spring 1523, p. 106

"George and I smiled encouragingly, the Boleyn smile: a pair of pleasant snakes." Chap. 5, Spring 1523 P. 131

"'You will break both their hearts', I observed, scattering sand on the wet ink. 'Perhaps', my mother said coolly. 'But young hearts mend easily, and hearts that own half of England have something better to do than to beat faster for love.'" Chap. 5, Spring 1523, p. 147

"No one pays any attention to me, I'm quite eclipsed by your glory. There is only one way to come to the attention of this family and that is to climb into the king's bed. You have to be a whore to be beloved by this family." Chap. 9, Summer 1524, p. 158

"'Thank you, Mistress Anne,' he said. 'Your quickness of wit would much become you if you were still in France. But since you are in England I have to remind you that all English women are required to do as they are bid, and look happy while doing it.' 'You are a wild card and I don't know how to play you,' he said with brutal frankness." Chap. 15 Autumn 1526, p. 240

"'Don't you want to touch me?' she taunted him. 'I'm good enough for the king.' 'You're good enough for the bagnio,' he said brutally. 'Get your cape, if you're coming.' 'But I am desirable,' she said, confronting him. 'Why on earth ask me? Half the court was weak at the knees this evening. What more do you want?' 'I want everyone,' she said, unsmiling. Chap. Autumn 1532, p. 412.

"'And what will you do to protect her'" George asked cautiously. 'You know George,' my uncle said slowly, 'the last time I had the pleasure of a private conversation with her she said that I might leave the court and be damned to me, she said that she had got where she was by her own efforts and that she owed me nothing, and she threatened me with



imprisonment.' 'She's a Howard,' I said, putting the wine aside. He bowed. 'She was.'"  
Chap. 47, Winter 1536, p. 594.

## Topics for Discussion

Are there any resemblances to today's politics in the 1500s in England? What could we have learned from King Henry VIII and his reign?

Gregory does a great job portraying Anne as a snake-like. What are some of the other ways we are able to visualize Anne and her demeanor? Discuss other animal imagery in the story.

Discuss some of the social effects of the attitude of medieval European culture toward women in the 1500s. In what ways is life different now for women? Is anything the same?

It seems as though Mary may be the only Boleyn with a heart and conscience. Is she an honest narrator and, if so, where do you suppose she gets these more honorable traits? What makes her different from her siblings?

Discuss the Howard and Boleyn family's extensive use of the term "play." What does "playing" another person imply? Besides the Boleyn siblings, who else in the story is "played"?

Discuss the reasons that being accused of witchcraft was the road to the executioner's block in medieval England. What forces played into society's fear of witchcraft?

Was Anne Boleyn doomed, or could she have saved herself under her unfortunate circumstances? What could she have done?

Would you consider Katherine of Aragon a martyr? Was there a constructive purpose or outcome in Europe that resulted from her banishment?

Discuss the implications of homosexuality in the 1500s in Europe. If George Boleyn was truly homosexual, explain his impregnating of his sister.

The serfs and peasants, the commoners, do not get much notice in this story. Discuss the moments in the story when we are actually exposed to some of the common people of England. Why do you suppose there is so little discussion of them?