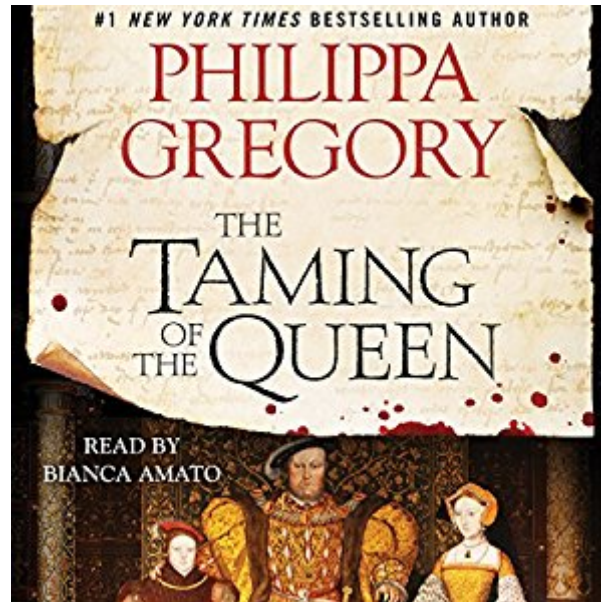




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The Taming Of The Queen



Synopsis

By the number-one New York Times best-selling author behind the Starz original series *The White Queen*, a riveting new Tudor tale featuring King Henry VIII's sixth wife, Kateryn Parr, the first English queen to publish under her own name. Why would a woman marry a serial killer? Because she cannot refuse. Kateryn Parr, a 30-year-old widow in a secret affair with a new lover, has no choice when a man old enough to be her father who has buried four wives - King Henry VIII - commands her to marry him. Kateryn has no doubt about the danger she faces: the previous queen lasted 16 months, the one before barely half a year. But Henry adores his new bride, and Kateryn's trust in him grows as she unites the royal family, creates a radical study circle at the heart of the court, and rules the kingdom as regent. But is this enough to keep her safe? A leader of religious reform and the first woman to publish in English, Kateryn stands out as an independent woman with a mind of her own. But she cannot save the Protestants, under threat for their faith, and Henry's dangerous gaze turns on her. The traditional churchmen and rivals for power accuse her of heresy - the punishment is death by fire, and the king's name is on the warrant. From an author who has described all of Henry's queens comes a deeply intimate portrayal of the last: a woman who longed for passion, power, and education at the court of a medieval killer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this latest chapter in the Tudor saga, glorious King Henry has receded into a bloated tyrannical child-king, fretfully trying to make sense of his marital history while his latest wife acts as his nurse.

The story is narrated by Kateryn Parr, who sets aside her own hopes for marriage with her lover, to become Henry's last queen. While Gregory can only speculate about the thoughts and motives of these colourful historical characters, she does it superbly within a carefully researched historical context. Kateryn is haunted by her predecessors and tries to avoid their fatal "mistakes" yet she also finds that a living queen cannot compete with the dead Jane Seymour, mother to Henry's only living son. She even finds it difficult to deal with Anne of Cleves, who had graciously side-stepped marriage with the King, and was now a favoured member of court. In a double irony that Tudor lovers will appreciate, while Henry's previous wives were obsessed with delivering a healthy male heir, Kateryn is portrayed as terrified of becoming pregnant to Henry, because another failed pregnancy would humiliate the King, endangering her life. While Kateryn navigates these challenges and becomes a loyal loving step-mother to Henry's three motherless children, she also makes her own significant contribution to the era, translating religious passages into English. Gregory's examination of the changing church and attitudes to education, particularly for women, is extremely illuminating. Kateryn also takes the role of Regent when Henry is away at war, competently managing the country in his absence - a formidable task for a young woman who has only previously run a small estate. There are also interesting glimpses of the man Henry could have been if he hadn't been gluttonous for power and for food - a man who respected higher education for women as well as men; a man who was prepared to make changes to the Church. Kateryn's secret love story runs as a recurring thread throughout the book, the lost passion between the lovers creating a dramatic contrast to the sordid sickly business of intimacy with King Henry. This is an excellent finale to the saga of Henry's wives and I'm glad to learn more about Kateryn's achievements as a writer and a Queen. Overall, the book conveys the frighteningly precarious nature of life with despotic and fickle Henry - when a dearly beloved wife or friend can be banished or destroyed at any moment.

The story focussing on and told from Kateryn Parr's perspective leaps into action from the first pages. In keeping with most interpretations Henry the VIII is portrayed as a monster. The story opens with Henry's proposal and expectation that Kateryn, a 30 year old widow and already passionately in love with Thomas Seymour will marry him. Torn between following her heart and duty to her king and her family, she identifies herself as shrewd and intelligent. As a future Queen her personality resonates more with a modern day woman's expectations. Knowing that like before her when the attention falls upon a member of the court it is a double edged sword; making the wrong move with brutal and capricious

Henry will result in death. This story should appeal to romance fiction readers, although some might consider it a bodice ripper and Kateryn too sexualised for the sixteenth century. Before Kateryn accepts her fate as Henry's sixth wife, she commiserates with her lover, Seymour, and her sister, Nan, who reminds her of her duty to their family's legacy and fortune. Philippa Gregory portrays Kateryn Parr as deeply conflicted with the dead body of her late husband barely cold in the grave, her hopes of marrying her dashing lover doomed when Henry, old, bloated and grotesque, throws himself at her feet. She is not only repulsed by the very thought of marrying Henry, but is terrified that when like her predecessors she falls out of favour she will be dragged to the Tower. As Kateryn faces her fate, Gregory likens Henry VIII more to the murderous Bluebeard than an autocratic and aging monarch. Despite facing the pain of being torn from her lover's arms, Kateryn Parr is mature and astute enough to recognise that unlike her predecessors it is essential that she survive. Having grown up within Henry VIII's court she is only too aware of the importance to gain the King's favour to serve self-interest. If she must sacrifice love, in the spirit of a 21st Century woman she seeks to command influence and power. However, her ambitions place her in danger with the King's court where she encounters enemies and must navigate a dangerous path to survive. If you enjoyed *Wolf Hall*, the *Cousins War* series and other stories from the Tudor Court novels this one should impress, and I believe surpass them.

Kateryn Parr was an amazing woman; in Philippa Gregory's latest book *The Taming of the Queen* her story is told in a narrative voice from the point of his proposal up until Henry's Death. In the author's note it is also described how Kateryn did live to marry her love Thomas and that she would eventually die trying to give birth to their child. I love Philippa Gregory's book but this one is a favorite now by far. In it the voice of Kateryn speaks out passionately to the reader and it is almost moving to a point as you follow her on her journey of thinking that a woman's role is just being a wife and surviving to the realization in and of herself that she has the power to be able to write and study just as any man does specifically for her this epiphany occurs when she is studying the Word of God. Kateryn goes through hell and back trying to survive Henry the 8th and all his mind games; even to the point of him setting up a fake arrest to scare her into submission as if he hadn't already by that point; but Kateryn stays strong and survives the marriage with cunning and grace. She was a woman truly out of her time who I believe would have been a great writer if she'd been born in a period with more tolerance for women and their rights. The characters were easily relatable in this book and I found myself cheering them on. In a way Kateryn can be an inspiration for women today.

She survived an extremely abusive marriage, raising step-children, living in a royal court, and she did it all while still wanting to study and having a thirst for knowledge that I truly admire. She was also the first woman to publish a book in England. Gregory knocked this one out of the ballpark for me and it's a book I will most definitely keep on my shelf.

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