



The Life of Elizabeth I

By Alison Weir

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Perhaps the most influential sovereign England has ever known, Queen Elizabeth I remained an extremely private person throughout her reign, keeping her own counsel and sharing secrets with no one—not even her closest, most trusted advisers. Now, in this brilliantly researched, fascinating new book, acclaimed biographer Alison Weir shares provocative new interpretations and fresh insights on this enigmatic figure.

Against a lavish backdrop of pageantry and passion, intrigue and war, Weir dispels the myths surrounding Elizabeth I and examines the contradictions of her character. Elizabeth I loved the Earl of Leicester, but did she conspire to murder his wife? She called herself the Virgin Queen, but how chaste was she through dozens of liaisons? She never married—was her choice to remain single tied to the chilling fate of her mother, Anne Boleyn? An enthralling epic that is also an amazingly intimate portrait, *The Life of Elizabeth I* is a mesmerizing, stunning reading experience.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The long life and powerful personality of England's beloved Virgin Queen have eternal appeal, and popular historian Alison Weir depicts both with panache. She's especially good at evoking the physical texture of Tudor England: the elaborate royal gowns (actually an intricate assembly of separate fabric panels buttoned together over linen shifts), the luxurious but unhygienic palaces (Elizabeth got the only "close stool"; most members of her retinue relieved themselves in the courtyards), the huge meals heavily seasoned to disguise the taste of spoiled meat. Against this earthy backdrop, Elizabeth's intelligence and formidable political skills stand in vivid relief. She may have been autocratic, devious, even deceptive, but these traits were required to perform a 45-year tightrope walk between the two great powers of Europe, France and Spain. Both countries were eager to bring small, weak England under their sway and to safely marry off its inconveniently independent queen. Weir emphasizes Elizabeth's precarious position as a ruling woman in a man's world, suggesting plausibly that the single life was personally appealing as well as politically expedient for someone who had seen many ambitious ladies--including her own mother--ruined and even executed for just the appearance of sexual indiscretions. The author's evaluations of such key figures in Elizabeth's reign as the Earl of Leicester (arguably the only man she ever loved) and William Cecil (her most trusted adviser) are equally cogent and respectful of psychological complexity. Weir does a fine job of retelling this always-popular story for a new generation. --*Wendy Smith*

From Publishers Weekly

Weir describes herself as a social historian but admits that when chronicling the lives of the flamboyant Tudors, it's impossible to keep domestic politics and world affairs apart. One could hardly ignore the threatened depredations of the "invincible" Spanish Armada or pass over the intrigues of Mary Queen of Scots as she struggled to seize the throne and return England to Roman Catholicism. Weir has already negotiated the complex matrimonial life of Elizabeth's father in *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and the early lives of the resulting progeny in *The Children of Henry VIII*. After a lonely and often perilous childhood during which Elizabeth was once imprisoned in the Tower and was nearly executed at the behest of her half sister, Queen Mary, 25-year-old Elizabeth ascended to the throne when Mary died. The prevailing expectation was that she would speedily marry a strong man who would then take over as king: as Elizabeth herself admitted, it was commonly thought that "a woman cannot live unless she is married." Elizabeth did nothing of the kind and, as Weir details, she did quite well for herself manipulating the royal marriage mart of Europe. Weir uses myriad details of dress, correspondence and contemporary accounts to create an almost affectionate portrait of a strong, well-educated ruler loved by her courtiers and people alike. Hot-tempered, imperious Elizabeth has been the subject of innumerable biographies, many very good. But Weir brings a fine sense of selection and considerable zest to her portrait of the self-styled Virgin Queen.

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From School Library Journal

YA-YAs introduced to Elizabeth I through recent motion pictures and seeking more information about her could hardly do better than to choose Weir's third book on the Tudor dynasty, following *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1993) and *The Children of Henry VIII* (1996, both Ballantine). Those interested in details of Elizabeth's early years could begin with *Children*, but this new volume stands alone. A short introductory chapter provides historical context while a one-page prologue sets the stage: the death of Mary I and Elizabeth's ascension to the throne at age 25. While Weir covers important events and issues, her purpose is biography, so she focuses steadfastly on the woman and her relationships with those who knew, served, and loved her. The question of why she never married is much discussed, and YAs may be surprised to learn how

close she came to marriage-and with whom. The author shows an Elizabeth who is flirtatious and temperamental; capable, yet insecure; imperious, yet compassionate-in a word, complex. With talent, determination, able assistance, and the loyalty and love of her subjects, Elizabeth surmounted intrigues, jealousies, plots, disease, even the betrayal of a loved one to lead her kingdom in its transformation from a debt-ridden country of little influence into a major European power. It's a fascinating tale that is well told in this engrossing, articulate book.

Dori DeSpain, Herndon Fortnightly Library, Fairfax County, VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Athena Thornton:

The reserve untitled The Life of Elizabeth I is the book that recommended to you to read. You can see the quality of the publication content that will be shown to a person. The language that author use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The writer was did a lot of analysis when write the book, therefore the information that they share for your requirements is absolutely accurate. You also could get the e-book of The Life of Elizabeth I from the publisher to make you much more enjoy free time.

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