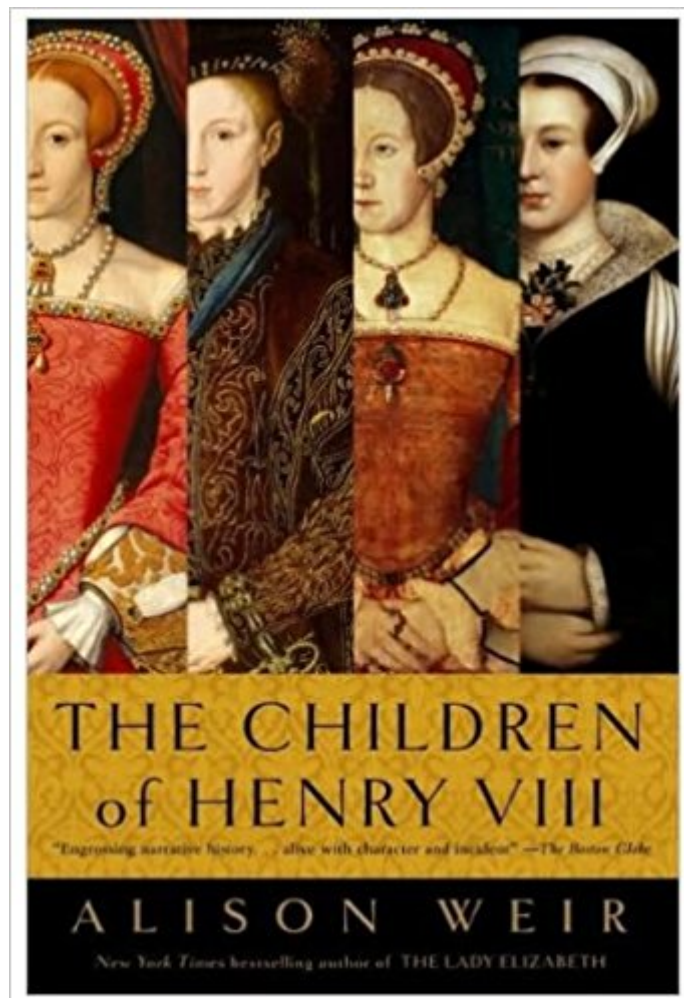


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# The Children Of Henry VIII



## Synopsis

"Fascinating . . . Alison Weir does full justice to the subject."--The Philadelphia Inquirer  
At his death in 1547, King Henry VIII left four heirs to the English throne: his only son, the nine-year-old Prince Edward; the Lady Mary, the adult daughter of his first wife Katherine of Aragon; the Lady Elizabeth, the teenage daughter of his second wife Anne Boleyn; and his young great-niece, the Lady Jane Grey. In this riveting account Alison Weir paints a unique portrait of these extraordinary rulers, examining their intricate relationships to each other and to history. She traces the tumult that followed Henry's death, from the brief intrigue-filled reigns of the boy king Edward VI and the fragile Lady Jane Grey, to the savagery of "Bloody Mary," and finally the accession of the politically adroit Elizabeth I. As always, Weir offers a fresh perspective on a period that has spawned many of the most enduring myths in English history, combining the best of the historian's and the biographer's art. "Like anthropology, history and biography can demonstrate unfamiliar ways of feeling and being. Alison Weir's sympathetic collective biography, *The Children of Henry VIII* does just that, reminding us that human nature has changed--and for the better. . . . Weir imparts movement and coherence while re-creating the suspense her characters endured and the suffering they inflicted."--The New York Times Book Review

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## Customer Reviews

The royal family may have its problems these days, but as Alison Weir reminds us in this cohesive and impeccably researched book, the nobility of old England could be both loveless and ruthless.

Weir, an expert in the period and author of a book on Henry's VIII wives, focuses on the children of Henry VIII who reigned successively after his death in 1547: Edward VI, Mary I ("Bloody Mary") and Elizabeth I. The three shared little--living in separate homes--except for a familial legacy of blood and terror. This is exciting history and fascinating reading about a family of mythic proportions.

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The tragedy of four accidental rivals to a throne, three of them children?by different mothers?of a much-married despot, seems to lose none of its drama by frequent retelling. Along with the royal siblings, Weir (*The Six Wives of Henry VIII*) includes their cousin, the doomed Lady Jane Grey. Guiltless of the intrigues committed in the name of religion, power and property, Queen Jane was forced at 15 to reign for nine days in a futile attempt to block the accession of the fanatically Catholic Princess Mary. The 300 burnings for heresy during the five years Mary ruled were eclipsed statistically by the hangings and beheadings for conspiracy and treachery. In the 11 years between the death of Henry VIII and the survival of his adroit daughter Elizabeth into the succession in 1558, rapacity had at least as much to do with the turbulence and the terror as religion. So many ennobled miscreants grasped for land, loot and legitimacy that readers will need a scorecard to match their names with their new titles. Weir adds nothing fresh to the story, but her sweeping narrative, based on contemporary chronicles, plays out vividly against the colorful backdrop of Tudor England.

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This is a theme that has far too often led to intolerant suffering that should not have had a legitimate place in diplomatic discourse 500 years ago much less today. This book is a sequel to the *Wives of Henry VIII*. It is not a history of their reigns but an investigation into the relationship of the heirs of Henry VIII and how the religious upheavals of the 16th century impacted upon family relationship and ultimately on the 'English Reformation'. This story began with the *Wives* and was brought to fuller end with the *Children*. Alison Weir quotes Elizabeth I as she is first recognized as the Queen of England. Given the Marian Persecution of Protestants and the intolerance of Catholicism that would continue into the 19th century it reflects a certain depth of understanding to this conflict in England. It comes from Psalms 118:24. "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and will be glad in it".

Ms Weir is a fanatical sleuth at digging up obscure info that no one else has revealed. For a Tudor

fan who can't get enough info about this time in history, she's my new "Go to Gal". I'm probably buying all her books as a result of how well this is written.

The biographies of the early years of Edward VI, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth Tudor are really readable and authoritative. I especially was impressed by the discussion of Elizabeth's temptation by Thomas Seymour, the husband of Katherine Parr and a really vile schemer.

After reading this book, I am really grateful our founding fathers established separation of Church and State. These unfortunate children of Henry VIII could trust no one. Everyone was clamoring for power and had no problem destroying those in their way. Henry's son took the throne at age 9 surrounded by those willing to manipulate him. At his death at age 15, he was allowed to rot in place while Lady Gray was put in place to claim the throne (without her knowledge...she didn't want it.) Then came Mary, who was ill-suited for ruling. She suffered two false pregnancies and a husband who would rather be elsewhere. And what she thought was pleasing to God was burning all the Christians who weren't Catholic. Some roasted for 45 minutes before dying. This book ends with Elizabeth's rise to power. Since she was Queen for so very long and proved to be a capable one, her story must be interesting indeed. The thinking common at that time totally evades me. Unbearable cruelty was the accepted norm.

Alison Weir has brought to life a most fascinating over-view of the lives, loves, and losses of Henry VIII's children and heirs in *The Children of Henry VIII*. I was a relative new-comer to Tudor history when I first read it, and I found her elucidative weaving of English history during the Tudor dynasty to be an entirely captivating and informative introduction to some of the most influential - and interesting - figures of the Renaissance period. She draws the reader in as she illuminates her subjects with the same narrative approach you might find in a great work of fiction, and indeed I felt more like I was reading about characters in a juicy novel than a biography about old, dead monarchs. This book will quickly school you in so many aspects of 16th century England without ever making you feel like you're reading a scholarly work of non-fiction. Weir uses the Tudors to illustrate a more thorough and complete perspective of Renaissance history than you'll even be aware of until you finish the book and begin to realize how much you suddenly know about not just this place in time and the people who lived it, but also the undercurrent of political and religious turmoil that defined the period, far exceeding what you'd expect to learn from a biographic analysis of Tudor children. She manages to accomplish all of this while maintaining what a reader will feel is

a deeply personal connection to the Tudors as human beings, affording special attention to the stories of the passionately Catholic Mary and moderate Protestant Elizabeth and their rivalry as siblings and figure-heads of opposing religious movements, and shattering our popular concepts of Bloody Mary and Elizabeth as The Virgin Queen. Simultaneously educational and entertaining, it serves wonderfully as a primer for her Life of Elizabeth I, and also as a follow-up to Henry VII: The King and His Court. It should be noted, however, that this book is in no way the complete, authoritative account on the Tudor children, and your average history professor or expert would likely take great exception to it being regarded as such. Weir's work is a wonderful gateway to the Tudors and how they related with and influenced the Renaissance period for those of us who are more concerned with the human element and the bigger picture of who, where, and why than whether or not Elizabeth was taken to the Tower of London in February or March.

Alison Weir is the best of historical fiction writers! She has the rare (as much as one would hope it would be requisite of historians, but is not) gift and talent of providing historical fact, without the historical "Axe grinding" that is usually ubiquitous in this genre. Her books on the Tudor period are all incredible. This book picks up almost precisely where "The Wives...Henry..." ends, yet can be read and enjoyed without reading the previous. However much this may sound like a cliché, this is a history book that brings its characters alive in their time and place. All are immensely interesting, yet it is almost impossible for a serious historian to capture such detailed essence of the personal, as well as, social, even romantic lives of individuals who lived over five centuries ago without these details becoming melodramatic and questionable at best. Ms. Weir triumphantly achieves this...to the delight of any interested in these individuals and/or the Tudor and Elizabethan Eras!!!

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