



Bloody Tower: The Diary of Tilly Middleton, London, 1553-1559

Valerie Wilding

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Tilly lives in turbulent times. It's the 1550s; when Queen Mary ousts Lady Jane Grey to win the throne, her executioners are kept busy. Even Princess Elizabeth is imprisoned in the Tower. As Tilly watches the plots and politics of the Tudor court unfolding, she waits for her chance to deliver a very important letter...

Bloody Tower: The Diary of Tilly Middleton, London, 1553-1559 Details

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Madison says

I REALLY loved this book, though it was pretty gory (beheadings, etc.). It is set in 1553 when all of that confusing stuff about Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth I, and Mary Tudor is going on. It is a very interesting read and I recommend it to ANYONE!

Suad Shamma says

This was an interesting story, one that turned out to be a prequel to To Kill A Queen, which I had read and reviewed earlier. I might have enjoyed it more knowing that there is a part 2, however, it did not take away from the story at all.

In this book we read about Tilly Middleton, who is thirteen years old when she begins her diary in 1553. She lives at the Tower of London with her family, and is the daughter of the tower physician. So she's seen and heard quite a lot of disturbing sights, despite her parents trying to shield her from all of it. She's also at an advantage in which she gets to hear a lot of the news that goes on with the royal family.

Tilly spends a good portion of the diary describing her life at home, the difficulties of doing chores and helping care for her younger siblings and supporting her mother who was pregnant, suffered a miscarriage and then was pregnant again. She also recounts any events that happen in England, such as the young King Edward falling sick and dying soon after.

Through Tilly's first-hand experience, we learn about Lady Jane who was on the throne for 9 days as Queen before she was imprisoned by Edward's Catholic half-sister, Mary, who becomes Queen of England. Since Lady Jane was Protestant, Queen Mary becomes suspicious of anyone not following the Catholic religion and goes about executing them. Thus begins the reign of the Bloody Mary - something I actually did not see coming as I started reading this book, as I thought it would be more focused on Queen Elizabeth. I was pleasantly surprised to say the least, and found myself immersed in how all the events took place. I liked that not once was Queen Mary referred to as Bloody Mary in the book, even though that is what she was known as later on.

To protect herself further, Queen Mary imprisons her Protestant half-sister Queen Elizabeth as well. Tilly spends a good portion of the book attempting to deliver a mysterious letter to Queen Elizabeth...and at the end we find out whether she's successful at doing so or not.

George Fowles says

I picked up this book to be a quick read to get me out of my reading slump but, to my surprise, I ended up grabbing a highlighter to highlight the facts I've learnt. It was Horrible Histories but with a diary style narrative. The language is very simplistic, being a children's book, which can be a little annoying after

jumping from the middle of Dickens. Overall, if you want a super short read and to learn a bit of history, I recommend picking up one of the 'My Story' or 'My Royal Story' books as they cover a range of time periods with a variety of authors.

Josie says

Re-read in February 2012: I do like Tilly Middleton! She's a bit arrogant and very much a 13-year-old girl with her mood swings, which I think makes her a very endearing narrator. I love her attempts to one-up Sal, the maid, especially when it comes to hanging out with Tom, who works at the Royal Menagerie. I found her friendship with Frances very realistic too. One moment Tilly is all magnanimous towards her ("Frances found it hard to keep her feet out of the muck on the floor and keep her eye on windows above. It was only my quickness that saved her twice from being drenched by someone's watery slops.") and the next, she's irritated that Frances thinks she knows everything ("She is so simple-minded. You can tell she is from the country.").

And of course there's the history. Tilly's life in the Tower of London is a stark contrast to her typical teenage girl worries -- in the world she lives in, attending executions is a fun day out for all the family. By having a heroine that you can relate to, the history becomes more accessible. It was interesting reading about Lady Jane Grey, and the politics of Mary and Elizabeth ascending to the throne. I thought the fuss about the secret letter was slightly over-dramatic, but I suppose Tilly needed a reason to keep on writing her diary until Elizabeth became queen.

Laura says

I have mixed feelings about this book. Written in diary entries and spanning a period of 5 years, we see—through the eyes of a girl named Tilly—the medieval world during Queen Mary Tudor's rule in the 1550's. Tilly is a physician's daughter who lives with her family in the Tower of London. I enjoyed reading her personal thoughts about her family life, her friends, the Royal family, and her views on the political and religious conflicts taking place during her youth. She's a teenager with some of the same issues today's teen faces albeit a 460-year difference.

From a historical point of view, a young reader will learn what it was like to live in that era, however since it was a violent and bloody time period, it could be disturbing to learn of all the beheadings, butchering and burnings that took place because of a cruel Queen who did not tolerate Protestants.

Tilly actually describes going to several beheadings and her nonchalant attitude well depicts how the people of that time felt—these events were actual highlights in their lives. Families watched these spectacles with their young children! Would I want my daughter to read this? No, especially since she is a sensitive child by nature. It's one thing learning about these barbaric events through a history book but another reading it for pleasure in a story. Moreover, the suspense about the important letter that Tilly is to deliver leads to an anticlimactic ending, which I found disappointing.

Sara says

I love this book though there were pretty frightening parts as there were many horrible deaths mentioned in this book most of them during the reign of Mary I. Poor Lady Jane Grey is also mentioned in this book. It's her parents faults that she suffered the fate she got not her own. She was only 16 too and very small. The main character Matilda(Tilly) Middleton is a likeable character though she can be a bit rude at sometimes. She is also treated to harshly by her parents in my opinion also liked her friend Tom and disliked her servant Sal and Frances Lea. The sequel is My Story To Kill A Queen.

Afira says

Ooh.. Information on the Tudors era! How exciting! *not being sarcastic here*

The whole story about Tilly and all was okay (they didn't tell us what happened to Tom!) and a bit.. I don't know.. It didn't resolve the story much (didn't tell us what was in the stinkin' letter that Tilly held for five freakin' years).

But if you didn't understand much about England in the 16th century part of history, this book clears up a mighty proportion of it. But this book more focusses on the heir to the throne after King Henry VII died and it gives you a brief insight of the Tower when Kind Edward VI (Henry's son) died of an illness. From then and on, it tells a story of the fight for the throne and the fight of religion (Catholics and Protestants) between Lady Jane Grey, Princess Mary (Henry's first child from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon) and Princess Elizabeth (Henry's second child from his second wife, Anne Boleyn).

Oh, and King Henry VII had SIX WIVES. First one was divorced, second one beheaded (accused of cheating on the king), third one died during childbirth, fourth one annulled, fifth one beheaded (accused of treason) and his sixth wife outlived him. Insert WTF?! moment here. Phew. That was a big burst of information there.

And to be honest, I'm just fascinated in all this because I saw a brilliant fan video about Anne Boleyn from the TV show The Tudors. See! Watching videos do make you smarter =D (or at least, they make you research things that DO make you smarter!)

Meghan says

I have heard that this is a fantastic book - from reading just the first 18 pages i have realised that they are completely right! This book is £4.99 but it is so worth the money. I have never heard of the author Valerie Wilding before even though I have read 3 of her books before. She is a fantastic author and I think she should be known all around the world!

Clare Cannon says

I don't really like this series, I find them quite negative, graphic in their description of violence and injury, anti-religiously biased and overall not a very objective view of history.

Darlene Wilson says

Tilly lives in turbulent times. It's the 1550's and when Queen Mary ousts Lady Jane Grey to win the throne, her executioners are kept busy. Even Princess Elizabeth is imprisoned in the Tower. As Tilly watches the plots and politics of the Tudor court unfolding, she waits for her chance to deliver a very important letter. . .

Rebecca says

This book is one in the My Story series. The books in this series are fictional diaries of young girls living during different periods of British, Scottish, and Irish history.

Tilly Middleton is thirteen years old in the spring of 1553, when she begins her diary. She and her family live at the Tower of London, where her father is the physician. She describes her life at home, doing chores and helping care for her younger siblings, as well as the events of the day in England. It is a time of great turmoil, as the young king, Edward, dies, and his Catholic half-sister, Mary, becomes Queen of England. During Mary's reign, many people are kept at the tower as prisoners, including Mary's Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth.

I enjoyed this book from the My Story series a lot, as I particularly like this time period, but the book covered a long time period, and as a result, the later half contained a lot less detail than I would have liked, so I wish it were longer. However, I still recommend it to readers who enjoy historical fiction in diary format or who have an interest in this time period.

Mimi says

I really enjoyed reading the 'Bloody Tower' and found it easy to read.

It tells the story of Tilly Middleton, who is a young girl who lives with her family in the Tower of London. Covering the period of 1553-1559, Tilly writes about what was a very dark and difficult time in the Tower's history.

Out of all the characters, Tilly, was my favourite. I felt sorry for her at times because of the way she was treated by her family and friends. I didn't like Sal or Frances, because they didn't come across well.

I found the parts about Lady Jane Grey and Guildford hard. She was obviously forced into becoming queen by her family and he had been used as well. This story sees a lot of deaths but I found theirs the hardest because of their ages.

There was only one bit I found frustrating with this book and it is to do with a letter that Tilly comes across. I just thought that the outcome would be different to what happens.

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I enjoy reading history books and plan to read more of the 'My Story' series. Though this book seem more for younger readers, to help them to learn about history. I still think older readers will like it too.

I know that I did, and that's why I am giving it 4 out of five stars.

Alex says

Probably one of my favourites in the My Story series. Valerie Wilding explores an often overlooked period in Tudor history - the overthrow of the Nine-Days-Queen and the reign of Queen Mary I. The book is much more believable than other instalments, with Tilly detailing mostly the day-to-day life of living in the Tower, with the political bits only peppered throughout.

This novel is a great introduction to history for young readers who are interested in finding out what happened after Henry VIII died.

Chloe (QuothTheBookLover) says

I love the tudors and The My Story books are amazing. The books are toned down a little but they are still quite gory but I think they are incredibly informative and I remember reading these when I was younger and learning loads. I think they are amazing for kids!

I love the tudors so this was always one of my favourites and it was so good to reread it, I still wish I knew what the letter said!

Tori says

I have read this 5 times and I still enjoy it!!
