



Catherine of Aragon

Garrett Mattingly

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For 24 years she was the wife of Henry VIII. England loved her; Henry loved, respected, and finally feared her. Wolsey hated her. Twice she saved England, once from invasion, once from Civil War. Here is one of those rare books, brilliantly readable and buttressed by scholarship and research, which make you see history through new eyes.

Catherine of Aragon Details

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Author : Garrett Mattingly

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From Reader Review Catherine of Aragon for online ebook

Laura Edwards says

Fairly thorough biography with a lot of pertinent historical detail about the times and political landscape Catherine of Aragon had to navigate. Very interesting also to explore how Catherine's case affected the church and unwittingly aided the rise of Protestantism in Europe.

A couple of missteps, in my opinion, knocked a star off the rating, however. Mattingly tends to be an apologist for Henry VIII to some degree. Why is it some men have a problem admitting some other men are controlled by their d****? I'm a woman and I'll admit that there are women who marry and divorce for money. See, not so hard. Henry VIII's main reason for rejecting Catherine and trying to discredit her was fueled by his lust for Anne Boleyn, after which he tried acting all pious in order to hide the truth. The majority of the British population saw through his act and still held Catherine of Aragon in high regard. And what Henry did in regards to Mary, keeping her away from her mother out of spite, was just plain cruel. Mattingly also tries at one point to equate Catherine's motivations regarding the question of divorce to Henry's which is ridiculous. Catherine was merely trying to retain her good name, keep England out of war, stand for the truth and protect the church, all the while attempting to guard her daughter's reputation as well, the last something Henry seemed to care little about.

Mattingly also neglected to adequately convey the dire situation Queen Catherine was living in the last year or so of her life while banished to the outskirts of the country. There was little to no money for even basic necessities, such as food and clothing. Catherine was also struggling with illness during this time and she desperately missed her daughter. I've read a couple of other books which depict this period of her life much more vividly. Maybe the author had just run out of steam by this point. Who knows?

The early years and the political intrigue swirling around the court and the world at large proved very informative, however. I'm glad I read this book, but I also think a person needs to read other sources on Catherine of Aragon to get a more complete picture of the woman Henry cast aside.

C.S. Burrough says

A great biography of a great royal consort, England's beloved Queen Cate.

This daughter of Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon was three when betrothed to Arthur, Prince of Wales, heir apparent to the English throne. They were then married by proxy in 1499, corresponding in Latin until Arthur was fifteen, when their parents agreed they were old enough to actually marry.

Henry VII sailed Catherine to England for the marriage. As Prince and Princess of Wales the couple resided on the Welsh borders. Several months later both became ill, possibly with the sweating sickness which swept the area. Arthur died aged fifteen in 1502, leaving Catherine alone in a foreign country, impoverished without a settled dowry.

Henry VII tried avoiding his obligation to return Catherine's dowry, half of which he had not yet received, to her father. To settle matters, it was agreed that Catherine could marry Henry VII's second son, Henry Duke

of York, five years her junior.

In 1509, seven years after Arthur's death, Henry became King Henry VIII with Catherine at his side from the outset. She was twenty-three, Henry a few days shy of eighteen.

Catherine's tenure as England's Queen Consort lasted almost twenty-four years. Such was her immense popularity that even her foe, Thomas Cromwell, said of her 'If not for her sex she could have defied all the heroes of history.'

A patroness of Renaissance humanism, Catherine befriended great scholars Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More. She commissioned Juan Luis Vives' book *The Education of Christian Women*, which claimed women had rights to educations, and was dedicated to her. She also won widespread admiration by founding an extensive programme for the relief of the poor.

In 1513 she became England's regent for six months while Henry VIII was in France. During that time she played an important part in the England's win of the Battle of Flodden.

After Catherine's many unsuccessful births and only a daughter (Mary) Henry set his eye on Catherine's Lady in Waiting Anne Boleyn, with ideas for for a male heir.

Seeking to have his marriage annulled, Henry initiated England's schism with the Catholic Church. When the pope refused the annulment, Henry defied him, assuming personal supremacy over England's church. In 1533 Catherine's marriage was declared invalid and Henry married Anne.

Catherine always considered herself Henry's rightful wife and queen, never accepting him as the Church of England's Supreme Head. Her stance attracted popular sympathy, with the English holding her in such high esteem. Regardless, Henry would only henceforth acknowledge her as Dowager Princess of Wales.

After all those years of struggle to remain Henry's consort, poor Catherine was finally packed off to the country, where she lived out her days at Kimbolton Castle. She was denied contact with even her daughter Princess Mary who, at Anne Boleyn's insistence, was declared illegitimate and removed from the succession in favour of Anne's daughter, Elizabeth.

Sad and alone, Catherine died in 1536 aged fifty. The English people hated her usurper and mourned deeply for Catherine.

Heartbreaking material at times, about a widely adored woman of immeasurable human decency and royal dignity, this makes for essential reading for those interested in this period.

Catherine's embittered daughter becomes the infamous Bloody Mary, who we know will take out her troubles on all and sundry - especially Anne Boleyn's daughter, Elizabeth - when Mary wins the crown.

Garrett Mattingly's biography cannot fail to satisfy.

S Beverage says

Good, solid history of Catherine of Aragon - the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, who couldn't give

Henry VIII a son and led to the English break with Rome. Catherine was a very strong woman, who had a very clear sense of herself and her role. Our world would be very different if she had been able to ensure the Tudor succession. Mattingly has an engaging style.

William Shep says

Masterful though now somewhat dated biography of Henry VIII's first queen, Catherine of Aragon. Mattingly set a high standard with this biography, and especially for his more famous work: The Armada.

Denae says

Hard to read... we read the 1042 edition, and it was not good!!! Found the subject very interesting - but this version... yuck!

Rick says

“Catherine of Aragon” by Garrett Mattingly was a delightful adventure. Reading Mattingly’s other masterpiece “The Armada” is what pushed me to follow more of his work...thus I arrived at Catherine of Aragon. As usual Mattingly writes with deep knowledge from his research and a sly wit in his approach to the subject. The book teems with history of the intrigue among seemingly all the European royals in the late-1400s-early 1500s.

Simply, the book takes Ferdinand and Isabella’s youngest daughter Catherine and follows as she is betrothed to Arthur (son of England’s Henry VII)...Arthur dies very early in the marriage...possibly before it ever being consummated. Catherine remains in England and is then (eight years later on the death of Henry VII) betrothed and wed to Arthur’s younger brother Henry...who rises to become Henry VIII. Catherine would be the first of his six wives (remember the high school mantra: divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived), yet provide him with only one child to survive childhood – Mary...who eventually became Queen and played her own large part in English history. Catherine stayed married to Henry VIII for 24 years, until being supplanted by Anne Boleyn.

The intrigue and double/triple dealings of these royals is wonderful history...and probably more interesting than any fiction could hope to be. Among others, Austria, England, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain would all be involved; royals such as Henry VII and VIII, Ferdinand and Isabella, Philip I, Emanuel I, Charles VIII and Louis XII, the Emperor Maximillian, Charles V, Francis I, and Alfonso, et al all get to play a role in this pivotal tale; and their aides also figure in as do three Thomases - More, Wolsey, and Cromwell. Mattingly doesn’t miss a move. If you are interested in this period, this is wonderful reading and a great primer on Henry VIII. Highly recommended.

Kara says

Not a good read - an EXCELLENT read.

I had no idea this book existed until I saw it on the shelf in a used bookstore. I gasped with happiness to find a book on the Tudors I hadn't read yet and snatched it off the shelf.

The book is chock full of facts from her birth to death, filled with details about her life and the people she interacted with and how her part in events played out, with great looks into motivation without spilling over into pure fan fiction. I suspect this book was the prime source for a ton of historical fiction writers - I definitely recognized a few scenes that have been portrayed in books and film in fictionalized versions of her life, which just goes to show what a good story history makes without any need to change it.

Angie says

I am a huge anglophile, especially of Tudor England, so this was right up my alley! What a well written book. It read like a novel, and last week I read a historical fiction novel of Catherine and I could tell that the author of the novel used this novel as the basis of her research. I felt like a detective figuring that one out! I would encourage anyone interested in historical biographies to read this.

Gabriela says

This is the first biography of Catherine of Aragon I read. I got a very old edition, a Spanish edition I think. It is very thorough, albeit a bit outdated (I am eager to check the upcoming book by Patrick Williams). Though I read a Spanish translation, I can tell the writing style is quite rich. I think it's a must read for any Catherine enthusiast.

Veronica says

This was a very well-written biography that read like a novel. Catherine's life was frustrating to read about as a modern woman, and her intelligence probably made her life that much harder because it was so out of place in that time.

Marigold says

This is an excellent, well-researched historical biography of Catherine, 1st wife of Henry VIII, though a bit dated (pub. 1941). I picked it up at a library book sale in California last spring--& found inside 1) various pressed flowers, 2) a bookmark with an Asian painting on it, 3) a newspaper clipping about a lecture featuring Dr. Benjamin Spock & Dr. S.I. Hayakawa discussing educational reform! OK, that was a digression – but what's better than finding things inside used books?! What's better is finding the term “beef-witted” used in a sentence! And having Henry VIII described as a “slobbering hulk”! I'm a history fan & I've done quite a bit of reading on Henry & the wives. (Say it with me now – divorced, beheaded, died; divorced, beheaded, survived!) But after reading this book I can finally say that I have a better understanding of Catherine, because Mattingly describes her childhood, education, & goes into detail about the long and successful marriage she enjoyed with Henry prior to his involvement with Anne Boleyn. Catherine was the daughter of Ferdinand & Isabella of Spain, & was probably one of the best-educated princesses of her time,

extremely qualified to be Queen of England. She was intelligent, courageous, & also fun-loving in her early years – she & Henry both loved books, clothes, music, & hunting. She was deeply involved in his foreign & domestic policy in the first half of their marriage. The people who knew her loved & respected her, & had she chosen, she probably could have begun a successful rebellion against Henry – but she didn't believe that war was the answer. All the old Tudor faves are here too – Thomas More, Wolsey, Cromwell, & a sympathetic portrayal of Spanish ambassador Chapuys (for a change). Well-written & sympathetic toward Catherine in the context of her times.

Brittany says

Wonderful book. Very detailed account of Catherine's life, I would highly recommended this.

Rebecca says

Yes, it's old, and dated, and it's not exactly balanced—Mattingly loathes Anne Boleyn—but when Anne is usually glorified, Catherine gets thrown in the shadows. Yet, it was with her that Henry VIII spent most of his reign.

Her courage is hard to imagine, and she deserves to be commended for it.

Jarome says

Whew! Exhaustive and tiring at times but a good read nonetheless. The way it is written kept me interested as I read on the el on the way to and from work. If you've ever seen the British series The Forsythe's, you'll appreciate this.

Sally says

I enjoyed this portrait of a very principled and stubborn woman who would not say what she didn't believe to be true, at the cost of her station and health.
