



The World Is Not Enough

Zoé Oldenbourg, Willard R. Trask (translator)

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The World Is Not Enough re-creates medieval life. This first of Zoé Oldenbourg's acclaimed historical novels chronicles the lives of a remarkable gallery of people in twelfth century France and the catastrophic upheavals of the Second and Third Crusades.

The World Is Not Enough Details

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From Reader Review The World Is Not Enough for online ebook

Coleen says

Way back in 1977, I discovered Zoe Oldenbourg. I fell in love with her books- her historical accuracy-and her characters. Back then, I was fortunate to buy this title and 2 other Oldenbourg's in paperback. The years took their toll on the paperbacks - and they fell apart through handling and moving. I missed those books-especially this one.

A couple of years ago I discovered that The World Is Not Enough was no longer in my local library's collections and that Amazon listed it as out-of-print and not easily available.

You ever get that longing for a favorite book and discover that you may never get a chance to read it again? It hit me right in the gut. Alis and Ansiau- the two main characters stayed with me so strongly that I even considered seriously naming my son Ansiau before he was born back in 1988. My son Josh scoffs at the idea-but I still think it's a mighty fine name.

Recently I hunted through my state's inter-library online loan program- and discovered that Toledo, Ohio had a library with one of the original hardback cloth copies of The World Is Not Enough.

Well-worn orange-red cloth with butter soft pages. I was in heaven every night reading before I went to sleep.

-which brings me to my first review of the new year....

The World Is Not Enough---

"At Christmas time their parents had settled the amount of the dowry and the other details. The bridegroom's father was old and he wished to see grandchildren of his race and lineage. That was why tonight Alis of Puiseaux would have to go to bed with a boy."

One of my favorite openings to a book. This begins the story of Alis and Ansiau in the year of our Lord 1171. What follows in the next 490 pages is their story as well as that of their children, in-laws, lovers, enemies.

The 2 major events in the book center around the Crusades. During the first Crusade in 1179, the reader stays in Linnieres with Alis, while Ansiau leaves to travel to the Holy Land. Alis develops into a strong woman who runs the castle and surrounding farms.

The reader is taken along with Ansiau and his sons in the 2nd Crusade in 1190. They fight Saladin alongside England's Richard the Lionheart. Upon the baron's return to Linnieres, the couple is followed through ever increasing marital difficulties to final old age and infirmity, but still loyally together as the book's last lines indicate.

Despite their infidelities and financial strains, they remain a force together.

Thus ends one of my favorite books:

"She (Alis) shook her head and rested her cheek on the baron's shoulder. A huge red sun set behind the forest."

Eileen Iciek says

This novel, first published in 1948, tells the story of the lives of the minor nobility in the county of Champagne in France before, during and after the third Crusade. Few of the characters are likable and the story jolts from one grim situation to another. I knew the Middle Ages were full of death, disease, and filth, but this story was relentless that way. The main characters are Baron Ansiau and his wife, Lady Alys, whom we meet on their wedding day in their early teens. The story closes about 40 years later. In between there is the Crusade, poverty, infidelities, and dozens of children born (most of whom end up in the grave).

I do not read books to be depressed or discouraged, which this one did. It was well written (if in a style some would find dated today) and the author's research into the period was impeccable. I would recommend this book to anyone seeking to learn what life was like in Medieval times, but only if you can handle the unceasingly grim lives these people lived.

Marcella says

As with any such sweeping family saga, being fully-immersed in the lives of the main characters (and their children) from adolescence to late middle age left me feeling moody at the end; there was something very bittersweet about leaving these real, flawed characters in their twilight years. That's how vividly they and their world were drawn.

Pam says

More historical than novel.

Angela says

Details the lives of one family and their interpersonal relationships in the time of the Middle Ages. However, being confined to the family members' castle you learn very little about the rest of the world around them. The exception is when the male members venture off to the Crusades and the reader has a taste of military camp conditions of the time, and yet when they return you are confined once again to who-did-what in the castle and how everyone feels about it. In my opinion, Kenneth Follett's books weave a richer tapestry of the medieval world.

Kellie says

The lady at Border's recommended this book when I was looking for The Pillars of the Earth today...it's worth a try!

Ditti Steiner says

The author, Zoé Oldenbourg was a painter before becoming a historian and a writer. I always feel transported to and immersed both intellectually as well as visually in the particular era she chooses to write about. I particularly enjoy her stories set in the middle ages, a time of history my history teachers did not particularly like and always referred to with distaste. As a grown up I traveled a lot in that particular area of France and became fascinated as well as curious about what really happened during those dark ages. Couldn't have dreamed of having a better view and understanding .

Diane Verdi says

amazing book about the crusades and life in the 12th centuy.

Ben says

The words 'sweeping' and 'epic' are so often over-used but here they are just right. This is an account of the lives of Alis and Anisau over a 40 year span from their marriage in their mid teens - 20 pregnancies for her, innumerable battle and tournament wounds for him, love affairs for both. Their children (mutual children and children with others) and grandchildren, their financial manoeuverings to pay for dowries and armour. The crusades are depicted mainly as a matter of frustrated waiting and camp fever. The writing is simple, a continuous story from several points of view with few chapter breaks, little dialogue, some realistic but confusing aspects eg several characters with the same name. It's all immensely involving and vivid. The complex family relationships reminded me of Tolstoy, the casual violence and the frequent sex (with the very young) reminded me of rock stars with teenage groupies. Some gritty situations - more than once a girl is mentioned as still growing even after giving birth. The French/Russian author was only thirty when the book was published, yet brings immense psychological insight and the real 'truth of mood' that is the hallmark of great well-researched historical fiction. 590 pages but very enjoyable.

Erik Graff says

This is the first of Oldenbourg's mediaeval novels. It is not the best of them, perhaps reflecting her inexperience as a writer at the time. In any case I found parts of it tedious--though, to her credit, one must note that parts of it are intended to show the tedium of even upper-class provincial life, a tedium which partly accounts for why the lord runs off from his home and wife on two crusades.

Casey says

This is one of a dozen books I've read twice. And I'm 60 years old, so that's over a very long period with a lot

of reading. I'm not sure why, but part of it is that the author loves all the characters, even the dark, mentally ill "evil" ones. She knows both men and women. She writes convincingly of the inner lives of children, young adults, and old adults.

Vonnie says

This really put you into France during the crusades time period. The story was interesting and the environment painted very realistically.

I couldn't relate too much to the lovers, they were both rather shallow people at first. Their love was very strong because it was the only protection they had for the cruel and violent period in which they were living.

Sherilyn says

If you're interested in the Crusades read everything Zoe Oldenbourg has ever written.

Malini Sridharan says

The parts set in France fit somewhere between pop historical romance and In A Dark Wood Wandering. The treatment of the crusades was a little disappointing-- the writing style changed completely, and it became more of a non-fiction chronicle than historical fiction.

theunforgivingice says

Although this was highly interesting and well-written, the author didn't talk about the characters' emotions enough for my taste, hence a writing that stayed cold and distant.

I definitely want to read the second book though.
