



The Rose Without a Thorn

Jean Plaidy

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From the pen of legendary historical novelist Jean Plaidy comes an unforgettable true story of royalty, passion, and innocence lost.

Born into an impoverished branch of the noble Howard family, young Katherine is plucked from her home to live with her grandmother, the Duchess of Norfolk. The innocent girl quickly learns that her grandmother's puritanism is not shared by Katherine's free-spirited cousins, with whom she lives. Beautiful and impressionable, Katherine becomes involved in two ill-fated love affairs before her sixteenth birthday. Like her cousin Anne Boleyn, she leaves her grandmother's home to become a lady-in-waiting at the court of Henry VIII. The royal palaces are exciting to a young girl from the country, and Katherine's duties there allow her to be near her handsome cousin, Thomas Culpepper, whom she has loved since childhood.

But when Katherine catches the eye of the aging and unhappily married king, she is forced to abandon her plans for a life with Thomas and marry King Henry. Overwhelmed by the change in her fortunes, bewildered and flattered by the adoration of her husband, Katherine is dazzled by the royal life. But her bliss is short-lived as rumors of her wayward past come back to haunt her, and Katherine's destiny takes another, deadly, turn.

The Rose Without a Thorn Details

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From Reader Review The Rose Without a Thorn for online ebook

Christine Cazeneuve says

I really enjoyed this book but I wasn't surprised because she has become one of my favorite authors. This is the first book I've read on Katherine Howard that did not make her look completely stupid. It really showed why she was the way she was - a product of her circumstance.

ToniS says

This is the first Jean Plaidy book that I have read. The story is told from the perspective of Katherine Howard, the fifth wife of Henry the VIII. I picked it up after watching season 3 of the The Tudors, where she is introduced. I realized I knew nothing about her and thought the way she was portrayed was totally scandalous and I needed to know more! This book isn't quite as titillating as the TV show, of course, but it is probably closer to the truth.

I found the writing very repetitive. I know the family trees and history are complicated, but I really don't need the same paragraph, word-for-word every time a character shows up explaining who he is. Sometimes I literally thought I had lost my place and was re-reading the same page again. Totally irritating. It is a very quick read, though, so I wasn't irritated for very long.

This might be better for a younger reader who is just getting into historical fiction. The sex scenes are fairly mild. I'd say this is a PG kind of a book.

Rio (Lynne) says

When I saw this book at the library I thought it might give me some new information on Katherine. I know of her life at court and what brought her downfall, but was hoping for a new look into her childhood and what made her make the decisions she made. This is also my first Plaidy novel. This book was not fluffy, but not heavy either. I felt it was accurate, from Kat's poor upbringing due to her great-grandfather fighting for Richard III, to her moving into her aunt's house where there was little supervision. This is where Katherine's life started to turn for the worse. I liked Plaidy's portrayal of her. She wasn't the dim wit we tend to know her as, but simply a naive, uneducated girl who was looking for love and fulfillment. The only part that I wasn't sure about was where Plaidy added that Katherine knew Thomas Culpepper as a child (since he was her cousin) and was later almost betrothed to him, until of course Henry saw her. A lot of this book can be skimmed as Plaidy recalls a lot of the history which I was already familiar with. Overall Plaidy did help me look at Katherine in a new light. I recommend this for people who want to learn more about her story and are interested in the Tudor period.

Mónica Cordero Thomson says

Historia novelada de la quinta esposa de Enrique VIII.

Me parece bien documentada, y que los diálogos y las situaciones son bastante creíbles.
Me gustó mucho, y es fácil empatizar con los personajes, que por otro lado existieron de verdad.
me gustó tanto, que tengo pendientes el resto de libros de Plaidy.

A. E. S. says

Pros: This author has more experience and thus is a better writer than Gregory, being much older and wiser by this point in her career (it's Victoria Holt using a pen name). She paints a lovely picture of those days and times; my favorite part was Katherine's sweet yet haphazard childhood.

Cons: Granted, the times were far more difficult than the author would lead you to believe. This book is great for fans of Katherine Howard who are ready to apply a lot of suspension of disbelief to her character as well as nearly everyone in this book. Also - though not Holt's problem at all - a lot of the information is either distorted or outdated, seeing as this book was written in 1993.

Michelle Cristiani says

although not the most gripping of the novels in this series, it is an adequate retelling of the life of Catherine Howard. I enjoyed learning more about the intricacies, and Trust Jean plaidy's writing to be sound and elegant. But something about this one did not merge the history and the characters as well as I would have liked.

chucklethescot says

In the books about Katherine Howard she is either portrayed as the slutish Queen who cheated on Henry VIII or a young and hapless girl who was never taught proper behaviour and ended up dead at her family's ambition. The author casts Katherine in this book as a bit silly, over enthusiastic with her feelings and a victim.

I have always liked Jean Plaidy as a Tudor writer because she really brings the characters to life and takes time to develop them through the story. This book is the same. Katherine is sent away from her family to live a better life with the Dowager Duchess who barely remembers she is there and has little time to bother about her education. She is much more focused on Anne Boleyn's rise and fall from power. She knows nothing of what is happening at Court, has not had the same education or life experience as the other girls and feels stupid all the time. It is easy to see how she fell for the flattery of Henry Manno. She feels betrayed and used when she discovers what his intentions really are-and you feel as if you are watching a sad puppy as poor Katherine vents her feelings.

Her misery leaves her ripe for the seduction of Francis Dereham and her lack of guile means she tells everything to the other girls, including the decision to marry. The portrayal of Francis in this book is not the boastful braggart who gets Katherine into trouble at Court, but instead is a man who loves her deeply and will do nothing to betray her or cause her trouble. I liked seeing a different version of him. Of course the relationship is broken up and the Duchess will hear nothing of Katherine's pleas about being betrothed, telling her to pretend none of it happened. Katherine is broken hearted...for about five minutes, and then the

excitement of a real betrothal to Thomas Culpepper and a position at Court serving Anne of Cleves has her forgetting Francis and being ashamed of her behaviour with him.

Katherine is shocked to discover that she was used to bait the King and that he will be her new husband. Despite her growing love for Thomas, Katherine finds herself as a mostly happy wife, treated well by Henry. I liked the portrayal of Henry as a sad and lonely old man who thinks that nobody could love him as a man if he wasn't King. Katherine has sympathy for his feelings and does everything to make him feel young and happy. Thomas and Katherine are portrayed as being deeply in love and conflicted over whether to start an affair, which is different from a lot I've read about the cruelty of Culpepper. It can be nice, however, to see these different versions of a person in the different books.

The other interesting character in the book is Jane Boleyn, who befriends Katherine as soon as she comes to Court. Jane is shown here as someone who loves to gossip and meddle, and who is excited by the intrigue of helping Katherine meet Thomas. It is a dangerous game made worse when people from Katherine's murky past come looking for work at Court. She is horrified to have Mannox and Dereham anywhere near her for fear of the gossip from her women who knew her at the home of the Duchess. As her past catches up with her, Katherine fears for everyone she cares about, Jane included.

The story is well told and kept me interested the whole time. I had sympathy for a lot of the characters including Henry and the crusty old Duchess! I recommend all of this author's Tudor books very highly.

Linda says

It felt as if this book was written for a young audience, but I enjoyed what seemed a fresh take on this queen, even though I simply had very little liking or sympathy for her. I felt sorry for her in her youth and for being sexualized at age 10, but after that, I found her to be simply stupid. Many people have had worse beginnings to their lives and it did not make them brain-dead. Every time she gave an opinion I cringed. I could not find her charm and it spoke poorly of King Henry to want a so-called woman to be that dumb and subservient. Most of the characters of that story are quite annoying. I'm glad I was not privy to living during those years.

Ashley W says

First let me say this: I don't care what anyone else says about Katherine Howard. She was definitely a VICTIM of her time period and the patriarchal traditions of England at the time. She was not a dumb blond, a slut, or any other derogatory name given to women who might be a little too friendly with the opposite sex. From a young age, Katherine has been a VICTIM, and I absolutely commend Jean Plaidy for portraying her thus. Jean Plaidy made Katherine Howard a strong character where usually she is portrayed as a materialistic dumb blonde.

Yes, she was naive and innocent, but she didn't know any better. When she was brought to be raised in her grandmother's home, Katherine was immediately forgotten and left to her own devices. She was never given a true education except in music and was left in the care of girls who scorned her because she was of a noble family and had what can be known as parties in their dormitory with young men of the household. At the age of around 11, Katherine was taken advantage of by her much older music teacher. She believed she loved him, but still their relationship was squicky. After that was over, she fell in love with a man considered

below her who she could never marry and her grandmother paid enough attention to her then to put an end to that.

When she came to court, he was tired of his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, and wanted something new...and Katherine was that something new because she was young and lively. It was never proven that she did have an affair with Thomas Culpepper, but if she did who could blame her? Let's face it: she wasn't executed for adultery, she was executed because she was "damaged goods" and Henry VIII threw a hissy fit because he wasn't the first one. Her story has always made me extremely sad because she was so young when she died and when she married Henry VIII, she had no idea what she was getting into.

Judy Marshall says

The story of Katherine, 5th wife of King Henry VIII is full of passion, brutality and innocence. Terrible times to have lived in. Jean Plaidy has written numerous historical fiction books and blends history and romance beautifully. i look forward to reading more by Plaidy.

Amalie says

I love Jean Plaidy's ability to tell a story of the history in her novels and I liked the way she has articulated Katherine Howard. Plaidy has made Katherine likeable. Katherine is naive, and comes of age very quickly at a time when one needed to fully understand the world around them.

The story starts out with Katherine Howard talking to a scribe/friend, and it is all presented as the story she is telling to that person in the days leading up to her death.

Although the story is not a new one, it has been presented in a new way. In that Katherine knew her actions were dangerous and she gave into them heedless of the consequences. Perhaps Plaidy has made her simpler than she really might have been, but I enjoyed Katherine in this novel, over the whiny, hyper sexual, and just purely unlikable Katherine I've seen in some other books.

Page (One Book At A Time) says

I read quite a few of the books by Jean Plaidy in the Queen's of England series when I was younger. They're hard to come by since they are out of print. I decided to collect the rest (still missing one) and catch up on my royal reading. I'm hoping my feelings for this book have more to do with the fact that I've read a better one about Katherine Howard than I may no longer like the writing style. It started out fine, although I was a little disgusted by the way Katherine was allowed to behave when she moves to her grandmother's house. I would think a Duchess of the court would have better sense of what was going on in her household. But, history seems to have proven otherwise. I also felt that the author made Katherine seem much more simple than she really was. But, maybe her families ambitions were just way outside of her knowledge. The book also lacked the terror that must have been going through the young queen's mind towards the end of her life. What a tragic ending for a young women who had almost no hope from the start. I would recommend

reading *The Queen's Mistake* by Diane Haeger over this one.

Margo GR says

Me agrada la forma tan sencilla que escribe Jean Plaidy, sin embargo, quienes ya la hemos leído sabemos que es bastante reiterativa y eso llega a cansar, para quienes no tengan una buena retención, supongo es una bendición que la autora se expresé así, pero en este tomo de la saga me sentí frustrada en verdad la mitad del libro solo era más de lo mismo, admito que me gustó el primer tomo, y el segundo me encantó, pero éste me decepcionó, aunque la agilidad que adquiere de la pag 180 en adelante lo salva, sin mencionar que las páginas finales son muy intensas, en mi humilde opinión, es por ello que no puedo darle menos de 3 estrellas. El cierre me parece brutal.

Vasilena says

Jean Plaidy weaves a good story - sadly the life of Katherine Howard is short but the story is deeply nuanced.

Hannah says

Katherine Howard has always been my least favorite of the wives of Henry VIII. She lacked the royal dignity of Katherine of Aragon, the wit and sophistication of her cousin Anne Boleyn, the quiet calculation of Jane Seymour, the sweet (yet canny) acceptance of Anne of Cleves, and the mature calm of Katherine Parr. Katherine Howard was little more than a uneducated, teenage nitwit. The fact that she was uneducated was completely out of her control. The fact of her youth is more an indictment against fat, salacious King Henry than herself. However, the fact of her nit-wittery can be firmly laid at the foot of her royal bed, beside the equally stupid figure of Thomas Culpepper. Were these two people on crack? Who the heck thought that carrying on an adulterous sexual affair under the nose of their rampantly paranoid sovereign was a smart move? Does this monumental lapse of self-control (not to mention good judgement) completely cement the fact that sex **IS** the most driving force in the universe?

I've read several fiction and non-fiction accounts of Katherine Howard's rise and fall, and have always been glad to come to the end of her wretched story. This royal marriage always feels more like a Tudor-era *Entertainment Tonight* special on the nuptial exploits of Kim Kardashian - all flash, no substance.

So when I give a fictionalized book about Katherine Howard 4 stars, you have to know that it takes one heck of a writer to render the fifth Tudor wife worthy of any sympathy and understanding that I possess. Jean Plaidy is that writer, and her tale of Katherine's sorry excuse for royal adultery makes me a bit *verklemt* by the time she has her pretty little empty head removed from her body. Under Plaidy's pen, Katherine is a girl more wronged against than in the wrong. She has a type of emotional purity that makes you want to put your arms around her, go buy a gallon of ice-cream with two spoons and find a quiet place to sit and have a nice long girl-chat. You sympathize with her struggles as she realizes that she's not an intellectual powerhouse - only a warm, beautiful girl who exudes a sexual charm she can't control. In the end, Katherine knows her faults, accepts them, but still stays true to her loving nature. And in the end, you as the reader can't help but

love her, too.

The real Katherine Howard will never be known to anyone; how she acted, what she thought about, why she did the things she did are forever lost. But if you want to read a good story about how Katherine Howard could have been, and want a story that shows this fifth wife with some redemptive qualities, this is the book for you.
