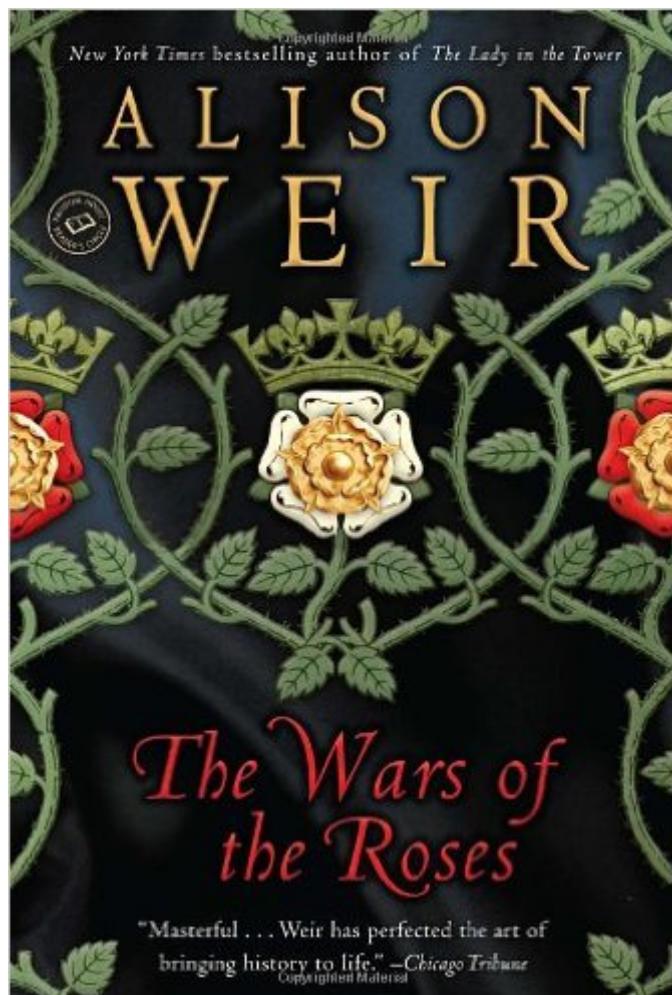


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The Wars Of The Roses



Synopsis

Lancaster and York. For much of the fifteenth century, these two families were locked in battle for control of the English throne. Kings were murdered and deposed. Armies marched on London. Old noble names were ruined while rising dynasties seized power and lands. The war between the royal houses of Lancaster and York, the most complex in English history, profoundly altered the course of the monarchy. Alison Weir, one of the foremost authorities on British history, brings brilliantly to life both the war itself and the larger-than-life figures who fought it on the great stage of England. The Wars of the Roses is history at its very best—“swift and compelling, rich in character, pageantry, and drama, and vivid in its re-creation of an astonishing period of history. Look for special features inside. Join the Circle for author chats and more. RandomHouseReadersCircle.com

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Customer Reviews

The Wars of the Roses are one of the most confusing periods of English history. From the origins in the rivalries between Edward III's children to the final resolution with the founding of the Tudor dynasty by Henry VII, there are eight kings, including some of the best and worst England has had; and literally scores of major figures and families: the Nevilles, the Percys, the Woodvilles, the Beauforts, the Cliffords, the Bourchiers -- the list is endless. Making this all comprehensible the first time through is simply impossible. Weir almost manages it, though; her style is very readable and friendly, and exciting without being sensational. Weir begins with a short section describing what England was like in the fifteenth century; then she starts the story proper with Edward III, whose five sons and their families are the central players in the history. She ends her story in 1471, with the

defeat of the Lancastrians and the subsequent murder of Henry VI. She only gives a page or two to the remainder of Edward IV's reign, and to the story of Richard III and the princes in the tower, and Henry VII's ultimate accession in 1485. This is almost certainly because she has covered this ground in another book, "The Princes In The Tower". The omission is understandable but still rather a mistake -- the conflict doesn't end till the Tudors are on the throne (and not even then, really -- there were pretenders for years). The only other criticism I have is that the genealogy tables at the back are too small to read easily. I tried using a magnifying glass but the reproduction is poor enough that some letters are blurred into unreadability.

In terms of her attention to detail, the author has clearly done a thorough job. However, I've read much (if not all) of Weir's work (concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine, Princes in Tower, wives and kids of Henry the VIII, and Elizabeth I), and I had to *push* myself through this one. I don't know how much of this is her fault, and how much of it is the fault of the Yorkists who were slow in finally eliminating Henry VI as a challenge to the throne- at one point I thought "I'm gonna kill Henry myself if nobody else does soon." It is a taxing read and while I really enjoyed the other books, this one was more frustrating. The reversals of fortune were particularly frustrating- for example on one page, Jaspar Tudor has the title to Pembroke, which is stripped from him, given to somebody else who is called Pembroke repeatedly but then is killed about two pages later and the name of Pembroke is given back to Jaspar Tudor. So on one page, the name Pembroke is for the House of Lancaster, but then any reference to "Pembroke" means the guy is for the house of York, and then when it switches back to Jaspar, Pembroke is pro-Lancaster again-- So at some point you think to yourself, "Wait, why is Pembroke for Edward- I thought he liked Henry... Oh yeah..." One wonders why (for the sake of clarity)- Jaspar Tudor just can't be called Jaspar Tudor throughout. She is accurate, but at some point I wish clarity had become a priority. While this is a complaint that I and others have had about all of Weir's (and other historians' books), it's particularly troublesome here because of the vast number of people involved, as well as the number of years that it covers.

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