



Isabel: Jewel of Castilla, Spain 1466 (The Royal Diaries)

By Carolyn Meyer

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While waiting anxiously for others to choose a husband for her, Isabella, the future Queen of Spain, keeps a diary account of her life as a member of the royal family.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8-A flawed, fictionalized diary of teenaged Princess Isabel of Castilla (better known to Americans as Isabella, the queen who sponsored Columbus) that ends just before her marriage to Fernando II in 1469. It is a story of intrigue, as Isabel strives to remain on good terms with both her controlling half-brother, King Enrique, and her younger sibling, the rebel King Alfonso. It is also a tale of romance, as unwelcome matches for the princess are made and broken until she finally weds the man of her choice. Much detail is given of life in the mid-15th century. Appended historical notes include reproductions, a tiny and incomplete map of the Spanish states, and a condensed annotated family tree. A Spanish pronunciation guide and a list of characters (helpfully indicating which are fictitious) are also provided. Unfortunately, there are numerous errors in dating events and the tedious text is often just a recitation of activities. There is little insight into Isabel's personality; the few feelings that are expressed make her sound whiny and complaining, a totally inaccurate portrait. There is no depth to this storybook creation.

Ann W. Moore, Schenectady County Public Library, NY

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From Kirkus Reviews

Bristling with palace intrigue, this entry in the Royal Diaries series tells the story of the pious, determined, soon-to-be Queen Isabel of Castilla during a volatile period in history. Known to American children as the royal who sponsored Christopher Columbus's journey to the New World, Isabel had a rocky adolescence. Ripped from her family and banished to Segovia by her half-brother, King Enrique of Castilla, Isabel endured a tedious life. The country was in turmoil; both Enrique and his half-brother Alfonso had claimed the crown. Although the rocky political terrain of what would later become part of Spain is touched upon in Isabel's fictionalized diary, the book centers on her marriage prospects. Enrique arranged several matches for his half-sister, based largely on his need to secure power. Wishing to marry Fernando, Prince of Aragon and King of Sicily, Isabel took matters into her own hands, scheming royally until her dream became a reality in 1469. Although the writing is dull and sluggish in spots, Meyer (Mary, Bloody Mary, 1999, etc.) offers a multifaceted portrait of this complicated regal youngster and her tumultuous times, smoothly integrating the themes of a passionate belief in Christianity and an interest in navigation that was central to her reign. Followed by an excellent section of notes and biographical information, this book is sure to whet readers' appetites for more. (historical notes, glossary of characters, pronunciation guide, family tree, archival drawings) (Historical fiction. 8-12)-- *Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Brier:

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