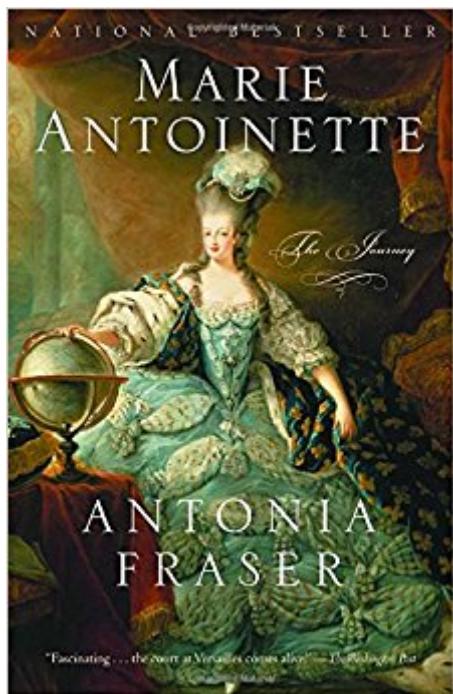


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Marie Antoinette: The Journey



Synopsis

The national bestseller from the acclaimed author of *The Wives of Henry VIII*.TM France's beleaguered queen, Marie Antoinette, wrongly accused of uttering the infamous "Let them eat cake," was the subject of ridicule and curiosity even before her death; she has since been the object of debate and speculation and the fascination so often accorded tragic figures in history. Married in mere girlhood, this essentially lighthearted, privileged, but otherwise unremarkable child was thrust into an unparalleled time and place, and was commanded by circumstance to play a significant role in history. Antonia Fraser's lavish and engaging portrait of Marie Antoinette, one of the most recognizable women in European history, excites compassion and regard for all aspects of her subject, immersing the reader not only in the coming-of-age of a graceful woman, but also in the unraveling of an era.

Book Information

Paperback: 512 pages

Publisher: Anchor (November 12, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385489498

ISBN-13: 978-0385489492

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 252 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #118,524 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France #174 in Books > History > Europe > France #231 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Royalty

Customer Reviews

In the past, Antonia Fraser's bestselling histories and biographies have focused on people and events in her native England, from *Mary Queen of Scots* to *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot*. Now she crosses the Channel to limn the life of France's unhappiest queen, bringing along her gift for fluent storytelling, vivid characterization, and evocative historical background. *Marie Antoinette* (1755-93) emerges in Fraser's sympathetic portrait as a goodhearted girl woefully undereducated and poorly prepared for the dynastic political intrigues into which she was thrust at age 14, when her mother, Empress Maria Theresa, married her off to the future Louis XVI to further Austria's interests in France. Far from being the licentious monster later depicted by

the radicals who sent her to the guillotine at the height of the French Revolution, young Marie Antoinette was quite prudish, as well as thoroughly humiliated by her husband's widely known failure to have complete intercourse with her for seven long years (the gory details were reported to any number of concerned royal parties, including her mother and brother). She compensated by spending lavishly on clothes and palaces, but Fraser points out that this hardly made her unique among 18th-century royalty, and in any case the causes of the Revolution went far beyond one woman's frivolities. The moving final chapters show Marie Antoinette gaining in dignity and courage as the Revolution stripped her of everything, subjected her to horrific brutalities (a mob paraded the head of her closest female friend on a pike below her window), and eventually took her life. Fraser makes no attempt to hide the queen's shortcomings, in particular her poor political skills, but focuses on her personal warmth and noble bearing during her final ordeal. It's another fine piece of popular historical biography to add to Fraser's already impressive bibliography. --Wendy Smith

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A child-princess is married off to a husband of limited carnal appetite. Her indiscretions and na‹vet‚, scorned by elderly dowagers, are coupled with charity, *joie de vivre* and almost divine glamour but her life is cut brutally short. The queen of France's life is rich in emotional resonance, riddled with sexual subplots and personal tragedies, and provides fertile ground for biographers. Fraser's sizable new portrait avoids the saccharine romance of Evelyne Lever's recent *Marie Antoinette*, balancing empathy for the pleasure-loving queen with an awareness of the inequalities that fed revolution after all, Marie herself was fully conscious of them. Her subject shows no let-them-eat cake arrogance, but is deeply (even surprisingly) compassionate, with a "public reputation for sweetness and mercy" that is only later sullied by vituperative pamphleteers and bitter unrest. She would sometimes be trapped by ingenuousness, and later by a fatal sense of duty. Yet her graceful bearing, acquired under the tutelage of her demanding mother, the empress Maria Teresa, made her an unusually popular princess before she was scapegoated as "Madame Deficit" and much, much worse. The portrait is drawn delicately, with pleasant touches of humor (a long-awaited baby is conceived around the time of Benjamin Franklin's visit: "Perhaps the King found this first contact with the virile New World inspirational"). Fraser's approach is controlled and thoughtful, avoiding the extravagance of Alison Weir's royal biographies. Her queen is neither heroine nor villain, but a young wife and mother who, in her journey into maturity, finds herself caught in a deadly vise. Color and b&w illus. (on sale: Sept. 18) Forecast: Fraser needs no introduction to American audiences. She will come over from England for a five-city tour, and with

widespread favorable reviews, this should have no trouble making the bestseller lists. It's a BOMC, History Book Club, Literary Guild and QPB selection. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Brilliantly researched history that avoids the myths and hyperbole to create an in depth portrait of a woman who was very much a woman and a symbol, and ultimately scapegoat, for the times she lived in and the royal society that bred her; while showing the humanity and growth from a young and somewhat trivial and silly fun loving teen to a deeply dignified and religious widow. Very readable and worth the effort to learn more about this woman, this time in history and what it says about the human heart that endures still.

Antonia Fraser is one of my favorite historians, I would recommend anything she has written. Read her and you will know more about history than you did before.

is a phrase that is used often. But it's true about this book. Antonia Fraser is a very skilled writer who takes you on your own journey, besides the subtitle journey of Marie Antoinette herself. This is a look inside Versailles in the 18th century, a look at the daily life of its inhabitants, the extreme care taken with court etiquette, the intrigues and backbiting as well as the stunningly rich life of the King (Louis XVI) and his wife Marie Antoinette. What struck me forcibly is that she was nothing like the character who supposedly said "Let them eat cake". That saying went back way before Marie Antoinette was even born. She was in fact a very sensitive, sensible, caring, compassionate woman, especially for the time in which she lived and the high position she found herself in. You'll see that from the very beginning, a young girl from Austria (Marie Antoinette) was not entirely welcome in the French court. As well, you'll be taken on a tour of the place and times as if you were actually in the rooms witnessing what others witnessed in fact. Very highly recommended.

Growing up, what I knew about Marie Antoinette was that she supposedly said, "let them eat cake", and she was beheaded during the French Revolution. Having just returned from a vacation in Paris, I decided to find a book about that period and chose Antonia Fraser's book about Marie Antoinette. I've loved every book of hers that I've read, and this was no exception. Meticulously researched, and beautifully written, I couldn't put it down. It brought that period of history to life, and gave me insight into the plight of women, as pawns, in Royal alliances throughout history. I highly recommend this book.

I found this to be well-written and provided a lot of interesting information, particularly about Marie-Antoinette's childhood and the Habsburg court she was raised in. While it is true that history has judged the last French queen through a harsh and one-dimensional lens, and it is nearly impossible to be completely neutral as a biographer, I would have preferred a less subjective voice from the author. The author is clearly sympathetic to Marie-Antoinette and I felt that at times this hindered rather than helped the story. Otherwise, it was a fantastic read, introduces the reader to a host of interesting characters and paints an excellent picture of both the Austrian and French courts at this time.

I always liked this book, now I can listen when I want

Loved this book. Learned so much. French Revolution was atrocious and what the people did to their King, Queen and their son shocking cruelty. History is so important to learn so we do not repeat it.

Love the book. It looks new

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