



# Isabella of Castile: The First Renaissance Queen

*Nancy Rubin Stuart*

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## **Isabella of Castile: The First Renaissance Queen** Nancy Rubin Stuart

An artful, sensitive biography... A prerequisite for understanding Isabella is understanding the period and Rubin excels at delineating both." --"Booklist"

"Rubin succeeds admirably in recounting the story of Spain's greatest queen and the impact of her reign on her country and the world... a first rate exposition." --"Kirkus"

"An excellent, well-developed picture of the complex, often contradictory forces of the European scene from which Columbus sailed." --"Washington Times"

"Classic... will make permanent literary history by dispelling many schoolroom myths." --"Tulsa World"

## **Isabella of Castile: The First Renaissance Queen Details**

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Author : Nancy Rubin Stuart

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# From Reader Review Isabella of Castile: The First Renaissance Queen for online ebook

## Christopher says

It was interesting to read Isabella's path from the princess that no one gave a second thought to, to the most prominent Monarch in the 15th century. It provides understanding for why the inquisition occurred, her conflicted feelings about it and the real reason Columbus voyages were financed. If only one of her other children had survived, one wonders how different history might have been.

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## Brenna says

Good solid introduction to the time period. Not as much information specific to Isabella as I had hoped, but I learned interesting things about the Moors and the Jews of Spain. It turns out many of the classical texts that have survived only managed to survive through the intervention of the Moors. The Moors cherished and saved the ancient writings. And Moors and Jews translated them. Society owes quite a debt for this service.

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## Kathy Duffy says

I read this book about a year and a half ago and had to Inter-Library Loan it to re-read some portions for something I was writing whose underpinnings I wanted to be factual correct. Of the books on Isabella of Castile, this is probably the best. (I read another biography that was horribly dry and a historical fiction that got the early part of her life correct.)

People remember her for expelling the Moors and the Jews from Spain, for letting the Inquisition into Spain AND for getting Christopher Columbus on his road of discovery. But Isabella was responsible for the first Military Field Hospitals and she funded the first University Chair for a woman and recruited women to teach in Spain.

She was always Queen of Castile once crowned, Ferdinand was her consort. Iberia was not a single kingdom until more than a few hundred years had passed.

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## Kim says

One of my favorite biographies - lively and fun to read and has information about the diverse sides of Isabel's personality and character.

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## Jason says

This was OK but there were some really annoying misspellings of Spanish place names. This affects ones

confidence in the research!

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### **Barbara Lynn Johnson says**

Great book.

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### **David Penny says**

A book both interesting and frustrating in equal parts.

Start with the interesting: Nancy Rubin Stuart has obviously done her homework. This book is packed full of dates and places and people, and in most parts reads like a novel as much as a work of history. For me this was a positive thing.

It's a long, long book covering a fascinating and pivotal period in history, and I enjoyed the final summing up showing how, after the death of Isabella, the light that was shone in Spain began to slowly fade.

The frustrating parts? Well - originally I thought this must be self-published because of the idiosyncratic formatting and typos, but discovered at the back that no, it's a traditionally published work. Which means there are no excuses for paragraphs that halt mid-line then continue on the next, nor the frequent occurrences of numbers suddenly appearing in some words. Li7e th9s!

However, because of the amount of information presented and the very readable style I've marked the book up to a 4.

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### **Ashley Catt says**

Isabella of Castile is a very intriguing figure in Medieval/Renaissance/Early Modern history for a variety of reasons, and any biography of her necessarily has to explore the contexts and historical events that she operated in during her lifetime. This includes the issues that the Kingdom of Castile had with the Jewish population, the campaigns against the Muslims during the reconquista and the sponsorship of Christopher Columbus' destructive exploration of the 'New World'.

Obviously Isabella is an extremely unique figure for the time period, given her status and gender, meaning that her interactions with her husband Ferdinand in the field of politics are necessary to explore. However, she was not necessarily constrained by this. Often biographers who take extra-ordinary people as their subjects can be subject to over-rapturous bias of the character. In this work, that bias seems to be minimal. There is a tendency to moralise some of Isabella's less savoury decisions with reasoning that runs along the lines of 'she probably felt very bad about having to do this...' however this is not distractingly frequent. There is no attempt to play down Isabella's more negative aspects.

One does come from reading this with something of a positive impression of the Castilian Queen, and one can argue that it is impossible not to; she does present a rather intriguing and dazzling figure due to the exceptional nature of her rule. In the hands of a less capable historian, the image around Isabella may sway

them. However, Isabella's decisive rule; her commitment to family; her religious devotion are all contrasted with factors such as her streak of ruthlessness; her sponsorship of Columbus' imperialistic ambitions etc... You feel that you've got a full picture of the woman and the queen.

One thing that perhaps could have been improved was a longer epilogue. The reader is given a short briefing in the activities of her husband Ferdinand, and daughter Juana (and much briefer, Catherine - nothing is said of Maria) following the death of the Queen. There is a very small amount of what happened to the political atmosphere in Spain following her passing, and something more detailed would be more satisfying.

The book is structured in a way that makes it a cogent read. Most events that happen in Isabella's life are described in appropriate detail and the chapters are segmented frequently and appropriately. The book is both chronological, but it does not adhere to this completely in order to attain a topical structure rather than a completely linear one.

I would recommend this book especially to those who are interested in Medieval/Early Modern or Renaissance history due to the time period it falls in. Also, Tudor history fans might find interest here. Also, those who are interested in gender history will find much of interest here when reading about Medieval/Early Modern queenship. A worthy read.

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### **Dianagalindo says**

I learned so much from this book at Isabella who took Castille from a back water kingdom to a changing the balance of power in Europe and setting the foundation for Spain to become the supreme world power for a couple of centuries to come. Her diplomatic and negotiating skills and bravery as a true warrior queen, her remarkable marriage, her keen interest in education, and education for women, show her to be a extraordinarily multi-faceted person. I would have liked to see more insight into her as a mother of five children and can only wonder how history would have unfolded if they had all lived long enough - her only son to unite Castille and Aragon and her daughters to fulfill the alliances she arranged through them.

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### **Stuart says**

I read this slowly over the course of a year, but enjoyed it immensely each time I picked it up. The author does an excellent job of portraying the time, place and fascinating people and events of this critical era in Spanish history.

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### **Nancy Bielski says**

This book had lots of detail with lots of information. It was easy to read and was a very detailed account of the Spanish Renaissance. I feel like it was more about Spanish history than just Isabella.

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## **Antigone says**

A sound, if dry and distant, biography of the Spanish queen. A serviceable source for a school report, but little more.

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## **Katy Wilmotte says**

Not being an expert on the Spanish Empire or Isabella of Castile, I can only rate this book based on how much I enjoyed reading it. Every time I've tried to read a biography in the past, I have gotten bored half way through and quit, but this one kept me fully engaged. I felt as I really got to 'know' the 'characters' and got a pretty good idea what was going on both in Castile and Europe in general. The only complaint was that after their marriage, Rubin talked very little about Ferdinand and Isabella's relationship, which seemed worthy of a lot of discussion considering the unique respect they had for each other and the unprecedented partnership they forged.

All things considered, it was a good read, one that added to my belief that a great TV mini-series is just waiting to be made from Isabella's life. :)

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