



Legacy

Susan Kay

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The much-praised **Legacy** offers an exquisite psychological portrait of the Queen who defined an era, beloved and touted by readers for its stunning storytelling and intriguing take on the monarch's life. From the spectacular era that bears her name comes the mesmerizing story of Elizabeth I: her tragic childhood; her ruthless confrontations with Mary, Queen of Scots; and her brilliant reign as Europe's most celebrated queen. And into this beautiful tapestry Susan Kay weaves the vibrant and compelling image of Elizabeth the woman. Proud, passionate, captivating in her intensity, she inspired men to love her from the depths of their souls—and to curse the pain of that devotion. Teasing out an intriguing answer to the central mystery of the Virgin Queen—satisfying to readers new to Elizabeth's life as well as die-hard fans of the Tudors—here is a premier exploration of the woman who changed the course of history, and three men whose destinies belonged to her alone.

Legacy Details

Date : Published April 28th 1987 by Avon Books (first published 1983)

ISBN : 9780380703227

Author : Susan Kay

Format : Mass Market Paperback 647 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature, English History, Tudor Period

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From Reader Review Legacy for online ebook

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

Actual rating 4.5 stars.

Well-written historical novel about Elizabeth I (why did Susan Kay write only two novels?), with some paranormal undertones.

Kay says

This book is the reason why I buy almost all of my books rather than borrowing from friends or the library.

I first read this book when I was in middle school. I borrowed it from the library, lost myself in the dangerous and glittering world of court intrigue and politics, and read it in a little over two sittings. It also happened to be that this was one of the last books I read before we moved to a different state. In that hectic time, I returned the book to the library almost as soon as I finished it, and promptly forgot the title and author name! But the story stayed with me for years, and for almost a decade I tried to find the book again by just what I remembered about the book--it was a very detailed and introspective book on Queen Elizabeth, one of history's greatest monarchs. It was superbly researched and endlessly captivating, all the while exceedingly personal at the same time. But alas, those are poor metrics with which to search for one diamond of a book amongst the rough of Amazon's and Google's bazillion, sometimes crappy search results. There are only so many Tudor-era books one can sift through in one sitting, and I gave up after some halfhearted searches that followed.

But now, **I FOUND IT** . AH. To say I was *excited* is an understatement--I was nearly bouncing in my chair with giddiness. And I found it on GoodReads! As soon as I clicked on the semi-familiar author name, I *knew* in that the-universe-has-just-worked kind of way that this was what I was looking for.

This book made history come alive for me. The clothes and food, the culture, the politics were all so richly detailed yet not so very heavy to read. The daily rituals of the era that were so everyday then invoked both wonder and a lingering sense of familiarity in me.

Most importantly, I got to know Elizabeth.

The woman is an authentic **BAMF**. Her charisma, charm, and ruthless political acumen should set her above any normal human being, but at the same time, she's so very, very human. She lies, cheats, flatters, loves, and throws tantrums. She has flaws, like the rest of us, but she's still so endlessly fascinating.

In my mind, this is THE standard to meet for any novel aspiring to be the next Great Novel of Elizabeth I. But until then, Ms. Susan Kay, you sit on that throne.

Now that I've accomplished one of the many things on my Bucket List, this book is most definitely due for a reread.

Iset says

Coming into this book, I'd yet to read a definitive novel of Elizabeth's life, something which seemed a bit of a mystery, as Elizabeth is one of the most well known figures of history. Having read Margaret George's *Elizabeth* last year, I was impressed with the quality of writing and the vivid detail in which Elizabeth and her times were rendered, but I couldn't help feeling a tiny bit disappointed that the novel only covered the autumn and winter of Elizabeth's life, from the 1588 armada onwards. George's work could have been that definitive Elizabeth novel if only it had covered the entirety of Elizabeth's life. Now, having read Susan Kay's *Legacy*, I'm beginning to doubt whether it can ever be done. Unlike George's *Elizabeth*, Kay's *Legacy* is grander and more ambitious in scope, taking us from the cradle to the grave, and highlighting themes across Elizabeth's life and seeking to explain how she evolves as a character and makes her later decisions as queen. However, the novel also felt like it dealt with stages of Elizabeth's life in more brevity, and not nearly as much detail as I wanted. George's novel fresh in my mind, I was particularly aware of what Kay left out from Elizabeth's later years, and found myself missing what was omitted.

Legacy was well-written, the dialogue in particular was sharp and in character, although I always felt that her Elizabeth, whilst close, wasn't exactly the real deal. *Legacy* probably is the novel that comes closest to being a definitive novel of Elizabeth's life, but for me it just didn't quite make it, missing it by a hair by virtue of the fact that by focusing on the wider scope Kay sacrificed the details and complexities of the era. Very enjoyable however, and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend *Legacy* to anyone.

9 out of 10

Barb says

This is an amazing masterpiece of historical fiction. The dust jacket on my copy says that Susan Kay worked on this novel for fifteen years. I can say it honestly felt like she did. The history is comprehensive, the characterizations of the historical figures are vivid and realistic, the insight and motivations Kay offers for them are interesting and each character is realistic, three dimensional and matures over time.

This is not a quick and breezy beach read by any stretch of the imagination, this is a novel for serious fans of historical fiction, but neither is it a dry as dust recounting of historical facts.

There are certain books that will stick in your mind as THE definitive authority on a particular historical figure, Sharon Kay Penman's novelization of Richard III's life, 'The Sunne In Splendour' is one example. I think this will be the quintessential 'Queen Elizabeth' book in my mind from now on.

I loved the stories about Elizabeth and Robert Dudley when they were children, those interactions were charming, and endeared the characters to me. Kay did an amazing job of showing what a complex personality Elizabeth was. She paints an interesting picture of a woman who survived a traumatic childhood and realistically depicts the way that trauma shaped her as a person.

I read 'The Virgin's Lover' by Philippa Gregory and I came away from it disliking Robert Dudley. But after reading this novel I really felt for him, Kay paints a heartbreakingly realistic story of an impossible relationship.

between Robin and Elizabeth. This aspect of the book was very moving and revealed the human side of Queen Elizabeth.

There are some novels about queens that make you think "Hey, being queen wouldn't be such a bad thing". Then there are the novels that paint a detailed portrait of the complicated life of a sovereign and make me glad I was born a peasant. This book falls into that category.

I highly recommend this for anyone interested in learning about Queen Elizabeth or Tudor England.

Rebecca Huston says

A book that I was very happy to see come back into print last year. Smart, well-written account of Queen Elizabeth I from the cradle to the grave, and the various personalities, plots and achievements in her life. I think this one is my favourite of all the various fictional accounts of Elizabeth, both because of the dialog, which is very believable, the characters, whom the author does not short, and Elizabeth herself, depicted with her jealousy, temper tantrums and ability to connive intact. A must read for lovers of Tudor fiction.

For the longer review, please go here:
<http://www.bubblews.com/news/8023322-...>

Gaile says

Very early in life the axe hung over the head of this young girl. It was enough to give her nightmares, cause physical illnesses and forever associate being under a man's control with death.

Elizabeth wanted either war or executions. Once she secured the crown after surviving her sister's Mary's reign by the skin of her teeth, Elizabeth put the welfare of her subjects first. Like a mother, she was willing to lie, cheat and even execute (something she always hated to even think about) to secure the welfare of her country. She believed in religious freedom but unfortunately the politics of the time did not allow her to show the tolerance she wanted to.

At the same time, Elizabeth did fall in love. She was an incorrigible flirt and perfectly willing to use men like pieces on a chessboard to achieve her ends. Men who thought her hopelessly in love with them thought wrong. Only Robert Dudley enjoyed her favor most of his life.

Although this book is fiction, Elizabeth is portrayed as a complex and haunted woman. Men certainly found her very attractive and she had female friends who were very close to her, Nevertheless the Sun that ruled England for two score years and five left behind a peaceful, solvent country. Whatever sins may be assigned to her, whatever kept her awake at night throughout her life, she was and still is, England's greatest ruler.

Did God send her to prove a woman could rule? After all, her own father didn't think it was possible and her sister, Mary left the kingdom in chaos.

A page turner!

Marilyn says

This is an excellent novel by Susan Kay depicting the life of Elizabeth from early childhood, with a precarious struggle through adolescence, her sister Mary's suspicions of disloyalty, her imprisonment in the Tower through Traitor's Gate from which few, very few ever emerged from alive until finally, she reaches, against all odds, the throne of England. It's a story of survival and the emotional effects of dealing with three men that figure prominently in her life: Thomas Seymour, the Lord High Admiral, executed for treason for daring to seek her hand in marriage; Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leister--probably the only man who ever really did love her for herself; and, Robert Devereaux, Dudley's stepson who dared to presume she loved him beyond his willingness to betray her to achieve his own selfish ends. It's a very long historical novel; on my Kindle with the type set at #4 setting (Kindle's way of electronic pagination) the total number of locations is 15,629. So get prepared to really hunker down for a long read if you really like Elizabethan history as I do. Susan Kay won two prestigious awards for this novel and it is totally enjoyable and well worth your time.

Misfit says

I'd give it 10 stars if I could!! AWESOME! An absolutely brilliant portrayal of Elizabeth I. The only thing I've ever seen come close to capturing Elizabeth so clearly and brilliantly is the old Masterpiece Theatre series on PBS done back in 70's or 80's with Glenda Jackson. All the characterizations in the book are incredibly well drawn and detailed, particularly Elizabeth, Dudley and Cecil.

The author also has a wonderful way of describing the times, the scenes, the clothes, etc. The author's opinions on Elizabeth's virginity (or lack thereof) and as to who killed Amy Dudley are very intriguing. Anyone interested in reading about this very complex and powerful Queen should put this on their reading list. With the resurgence in popularity of historical fiction and all things English, I can't imagine how this incredible book can be out of print. As another reviewer wrote, go and and it now.

Moppet says

Legacy, for me, was historical fiction gold: a book I loved as a teenager which was just as wonderful second time around. It's a cradle-to-grave retelling of the life of Elizabeth I, and it's 647 pages of class.

The prologue introduces Elizabeth as a troubled young princess, imprisoned in the Tower of London by her sister Mary and facing possible execution as a traitor:

She sat on a low stone window-seat, wrapped in a cloak against the creeping cold and, like the solitary stone pillar that supported the roof, she might have been carved in that pose out of stone. She sat staring out of the window into the courtyard below, straining her eyes to see the yawning cavern that was the Tower's main gateway.

The gate was her lodestone. Night and day it drew her to the stone-hooded window, and there was a starkly simple reason for her obsession. She had not entered beneath that archway and

had even less hope of leaving by it. Through Traitor's Gate she had come to this 'very narrow place', a grim fortress which had swallowed up so many lives - one of them, her mother's.

The story then backtracks to the meeting of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and follows Elizabeth through her turbulent childhood. If you know the story of these years, you know there's enough material here for several books, and as a result, a good deal of the first hundred pages is narrative. But we get more of Elizabeth's point of view (the book is multiple/omniscient third-person) as she gets old enough to start making her own decisions.

Constantly under pressure to declare her loyalties, frequently faced with the choice of sacrificing either her life or a future as Queen of England, Elizabeth develops the political skills of avoidance and prevarication which will serve her so well during her lengthy reign. Susan Kay weaves a compelling narrative out of a welter of political history while never losing sight of her theme. Anne Boleyn's legacy to Elizabeth is twofold: the charisma which wins her followers and the dark past Elizabeth never truly escapes. Kay's Elizabeth is flirtatious, wayward, feminine, intelligent, manipulative and imbued with the steeliest of determination. But we also see her more vulnerable side: her illnesses, doubts and fears, which get a stronger grip on her as her reign draws to its close. Her relationships with the men in her life (Thomas Seymour, Robert Dudley and the Earl of Essex) and her close political partnership with William Cecil are fully explored, and while Elizabeth is shown to be a deeply emotional woman, realism is blended with romanticism.

Legacy is the story of one of history's most fascinating women, told with passion and authority - a true classic.

The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says

I have no idea where the unfortunate appendage to this book's title came from, but I managed to ignore it. Anything billed as "most" anything gives me the hives, and I immediately want to prove it is the "least."

I don't care much for Elizabeth I. Perhaps my disregard comes from a long dislike of the entire Tudor dynasty, and helped along by a lot of bad movies and even worse books.

And then this book, heavy and uncomfortable to hold in my arthritic hands, begins with a scene featuring an omniscient point of view--the narrator was apparently crouched somewhere up on a ceiling beam, metaphorically speaking--and goes on about a rat. And then Elizabeth. And then the rat again. I almost tossed the book on the floor but didn't because the sound would frighten my dogs. I sighed, took another sip of wine, and read a bit more.

Next thing I knew I'd finished the damn thing.

And I really, really liked it. I actually liked Elizabeth, who here was neither a shrilly jealous woman, a Mary Sue with whom everyone was a little in love, a crafty, cold woman who would do anything to keep her well-padded posterior on the throne, nor a 16th-century wonder woman centuries ahead of her time. Instead, she comes through as some of each, in nuanced proportion, believable, understandable, and likable, more or less, rather than a larger-than-life monarch who can do everything but who gave up everything to do it.

The history felt right as well, although this is not by any means my area of expertise. The world that the author created was vivid enough to entrance the reader rather than overwhelm her, and this world was wonderfully dressed in its proper costumes and speaking its proper language.

Altogether a satisfying reading experience. Quite an admission from someone who attitude toward the English royals of any era is decidedly snarky, and who much prefers the Valois, Bourbons, Romanovs, Hapsburgs, and all those little Italian princelings.

Orsolya says

Who doesn't know about Elizabeth Tudor? Whether it is for her famous mother, her pirate conquests, or her many (supposed) lovers; the Virgin Queen has titillated for centuries. Susan Kay's "Legacy" attempts to present Elizabeth from the eyes of men in her life, both romantic and political.

Susan Kay's "Legacy" felt like two separate books (which could be argued as a lack of cohesive tact). The early chapters were much too disjointed with an overall look at events in Elizabeth's early life (and those even before her birth). None of the events or characters was thoroughly explored and Kay lacked in presenting detail of any sort. However, don't give up on Kay just yet (I was tempted, personally) because "Legacy" completes a 180 degree turn after several chapters.

"Legacy" begins to build tension once Elizabeth is nearing her adolescence, which keeps the story moving at a suitable pace. Even for those familiar with Tudor/Elizabethan history; an element of "what will happen next?" drives the story. Kay's presentation is unique, as "Legacy" flip-flops between telling the story through the eyes of various characters and thus allowing for both Elizabeth's views and of those who came into contact with her. This style captures Elizabeth with a fuller impression and less bias (allowing the entire viewing of Elizabeth's pros and cons), and therefore encourages the reader to create his/her own opinion.

Many of the events/elements are not discussed in deep detail which can satisfy those readers familiar with the Tudors seeking a moving story line and less detail; or it can a negative to those newer readers who want a fuller view. Despite the personal preference, a major-related positive is that "Legacy" is largely historically accurate. Unlike many historical fiction novel authors which take drastic and sometimes "annoying" historical liberties, Kay sticks to the greater part of the facts. Although there are some fictional areas, some which may even cause groans from the reader (ahem: passionate kiss between Elizabeth and Philip of Spain); Kay is still less fantasy-based in her work which is a relief to HF readers whom enjoy largely accurate works.

Similarly, Kay smoothly and seamlessly incorporates well-known quotes into the dialogue of "Legacy", which fit into the character conversations while adding depth but again: are historically accurate. On the negative side, some of the characters are highly stereotypical but surprisingly, Elizabeth is not overly glorified with an emphasis on showing her strengths and weaknesses. Basically, Elizabeth isn't "thrown in the face" of the reader. Instead of pure Elizabeth focus, Kay incorporates a healthy cast of characters which perfectly add to the story (each has just the "right" amount of time within the plot) and do not become tiresome. Some unexpected (albeit, brief) cameo roles (such as Mildred Cecil) help provide the full Elizabeth view.

"Legacy" does contain some overly dramatic moments (Elizabeth's first time *supposedly* having sex with Robert Dudley and Dudley's rape/violent thoughts toward her) but luckily, these were fleeting and not

explored with varying depth.

Although a minor point, some phrases/descriptions were overused, becoming annoying and predictable. Kay didn't explore descriptive options, constantly describing Elizabeth as a "coveted bone" and her courtiers as dogs.

The last section of "Legacy" reverted back to the poor beginning in its sense of slow-moving, drawn out events. The book could have ended pages before it did but Kay dragged out the predictable ending in order to build suspense which was never realized. Furthermore, Elizabeth was overly described as losing her mind, which despite the depth of realism, was overly dramatized and completely contradicted the entire book creating a weak ending. Plus, the epilogue is completely ridiculous and downright, silly.

Overall, "Legacy" is a quick read (don't let the page count scare you) and is enjoyable for the new or experienced reader for different reasons. Although Kay may not blow you away, the historical accuracy will at least keep you entwined even if for a light read.

Marita says

4.5 stars

Is there any better novel of Queen Elizabeth I? Originally published in 1985, this novel is probably still one of the very best works of fiction written about the illustrious virgin queen (?) who reigned for 45 years. Mostly based on historical fact, there are some embellishments as the author explores Elizabeth's close relationships.

Elizabeth is portrayed as being multi-faceted, brilliant as a diamond. She sparkles. She was of course not only brilliant in appearance, but she had a brilliant mind. She was for example fluent not only in English, but in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish and Italian. Later in life she apparently also became fluent in the other languages of the British Isles.

In this novel we have an Elizabeth who is mercurial, who changes from moment to moment. She is vain, clever, witty, funny, charming and capricious. Elizabeth learns at an early age to dissemble. She is wily and outfoxes everyone. She is master of the "**diplomatic knee in the groin**". She has a volatile temperament and at times she is a vindictive virago and courtiers have to dodge temper tantrums. Some people are readily forgiven for their trespasses; others (view spoiler). She also has her very private self, one which knows horror, sadness, bitterness and grief. She has the whole gamut of human emotions and she displays them as carefully as if she were selecting a piece of jewellery to match her clothing. In short, she is magnificent!

In order not to arouse the ire of those who do not know this history I'll not tell any of the story here, but it might be in order to mention that the novel starts with Elizabeth's birth and ends with her death. It is when she becomes queen that the novel comes into its own. It is Elizabeth's sparkling performance and witty repartee that make this novel shine. There are several laugh out loud moments. But there are also moments to reflect on sacrifices she may have made.

The novel has an enormous cast as it covers Elizabeth's entire life span of 69 years. Amongst all these characters there are other excellent character portrayals, with particular reference to her trusted advisor William Cecil later Baron Burghley, as well as her lifelong friend Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Cecil

may advise her, but it is always Elizabeth who is in charge.

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Some quotes:

(view spoiler)

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Images of some of the most important characters in 'Legacy' (All images from Wikipedia):

Elizabeth I

William Cecil, Baron Burghley

Thomas Seymour, 1st Baron Seymour of Sudeley

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester

Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex (by William Segar, 1588)

Lynn says

Wow, what a book! For me this book did a remarkable job of telling the story of Queen Elizabeth's life, it was well written, intriguing and the author kept the story moving. This book is broken down into five different areas of Elizabeth's life, The Girl, The Woman, The Queen, The Goddess and The Effigy. What I took away from reading this book was: how strong and intelligent Elizabeth was, she spoke six different languages and was more intelligent than most men of her time. How Elizabeth had a tragic childhood after the beheading of not only her mother Anne Boleyn, but her step-mother and the man she loved. She trusted no one and the thought of giving her heart to a man was giving over control which would lead to total ruin and the risk of her crown "I trust no one, it is the sole reason I have lived this long". She was in a sense married to England, she lived off the love of her people, in a speech she gave to Parliament "And though you have had, and may have, many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, yet you never had, nor shall have, any that will love you better". There were four men who played a major part in her life, Lord Admiral (her first love), Robin Dudley (Her Eyes), William Cecil (Her Soul) and the Earl of Essex, all of them worshiped her in their own way. Words that come to mind when I think of this book: Power, control, plotting, conniving, treason, out maneuvering her opponents as if in a game of chess. Queen Elizabeth reigned for 44 years 1558-1603 which were the most glorious England had ever seen. I'm glad I've had the experience of reading this book and learning more about England's most passionate queen.

Rio (Lynne) says

3.75 Stars. The author didn't make Elizabeth out to be the perfect heroine, like most HF authors do today, which was a positive. The story is seen through the eyes of the men in her life, letting you see all sides of Elizabeth. I simply didn't get attached to the characters or even Elizabeth (which I usually do) so I wasn't emotionally attached to this read. I am very familiar with Elizabeth's reign, so even though parts of this book didn't flow, I had no problem following. The writing style just didn't hold my attention. I didn't agree with some of the author's story telling, but, hey it's fiction, I know.

It started strong with the perspective of the rat, but after that it was just lightly written. I do recommend this for readers who want to know more about Elizabeth. This covers her whole life and due to that the author keeps it light and it isn't weighed down.

Marquise says

This novel had, even before I finished reading it, the requirements for having a place in my favourite books. Now that I've finished, I'm glad to confirm that it is firmly placed in such a place.

I don't know if I'll ever read any other novel set in this time period, but in any case I have this feeling that Legacy has forever altered my expectation of Tudor historical novels—that is to say, has ruined me forever for any other such novel—because if I didn't have great expectations about them before thanks mostly to the extant books, now I am going to have impossibly high standards for them. I am going to expect them to have the quality set up by Kay's novel, which admittedly will be hard to equal.

I've never made a secret of my indifference towards this dynasty as a whole, and Elizabeth wasn't an

exception. Now, the indifference towards them remains, but now Elizabeth is spared. She's come alive, she is felt near, she is interesting. That's the reason why I read historical novels: they have the power that history books lack, of having the average reader develop a burning passion for a period, a dead person, an event, drive them to find out more, to investigate what's true and what's literary invention, and often, as is my case, to look at known facts through different eyes and realise with a start that what you've known by rote all your life can actually be exciting. And the secret is good storytelling. I don't remember who told me this, but sometime in the past I heard that good storytelling could make the narration of your going to the grocery next block to buy veggies quite interesting if you knew how to tell the tale.

And, boy, does Susan Kay know how to tell the tale! As you read the fictional account of Elizabeth's life, you may love her or find her irritating, you may want alternately to throttle her and hug her wounds away, you may laugh at the sheer brilliance of her political manoeuvring or slap yourself in frustration at her personal mistakes, you may pity the men she loves and the men she hates... whatever your reactions, you won't be bored. This isn't a character willing to let your attention wander away as you read.

The woman the author present in this book is far from the mainstream characterisation, she isn't a "good" woman selflessly sacrificing herself for her people and neither is she a "bad" woman turned despot once in power, she is both. She's manipulative, impulsive, cruel, jealous, vain, mocking, bad-tempered, resentful, and egoistic; and she's also hard-working, intelligent, empathetic, loving, forgiving, frightened, courageous, persistent and capable of selflessness. Even the account of her affair with Leicester is devoid of romanticising as is the common practice, for here it isn't a grand love story with tinges of sappy tragedy; instead at times it's poisonous, selfish and hurtful, and at other times it's generous, caring and joyful.

In this skillful balancing of lights and shadows lies the strength of the writer's narrative and characterisation of a deeply flawed woman you can come to love. With such an assortment of flaws and qualities, no wonder this Elizabeth Tudor is hard to classify into a tidy tiny box. Really hard. If pressed at swordpoint to find an adequate adjective to describe her, I admit my inability to find any other better than two overused words: "magnificent bastard." And that's a compliment.
