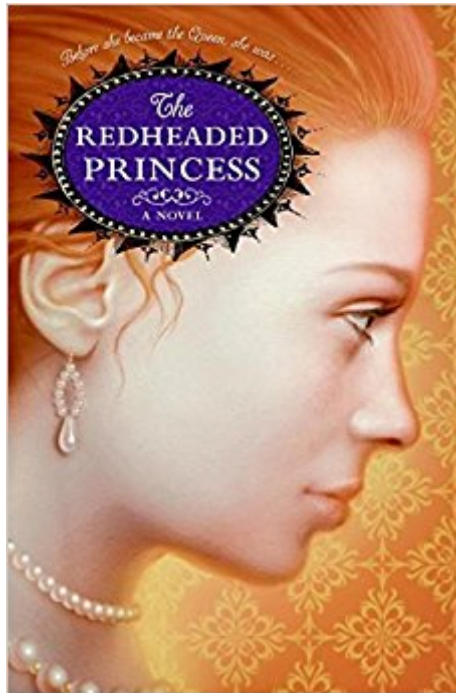




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The Redheaded Princess: A Novel



Synopsis

Growing up, Elizabeth fears she can never be Queen. Although she is the King's daughter, no woman can ever hope to rule over men in England, especially when her mother has been executed for treason. For all her royal blood, Elizabeth's life is fraught with danger and uncertainty. Sometimes she is welcome in the royal court; other times she is cast out into the countryside. With her position constantly changing, the Princess must navigate a sea of shifting loyalties and dangerous affections. At stake is her life—beheading is not uncommon among the factions that war for the Crown. With the vivid human touch that has made her one of the foremost writers of historical fiction, Ann Rinaldi brings to life the heart and soul of the young Elizabeth I. It's a portrait of a great leader as she may have been as she found her way to the glorious destiny that lay before her.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

"The rich scene-setting and believable, appealing heroine will satisfy Rinaldi's many fans" (Booklist (starred review)) "Fascinating...compelling and engaging." (Detroit Free Press) "Rinaldi knows how to tell a good story...entertaining." (KLIATT) "Believably depicted...Rinaldi's writing style is

accessible...enjoyable.~ (School Library Journal)~“Fans of Rinaldi~s work will be happy with this book...the book is a treat.~ (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA))

Ann Rinaldi is known by her many fans for her richly satisfying historical fiction. Eight of her novels have been named ALA Best Books for Young Adults, including *Time Enough For Drums*, *The Last Silk Dress*, *A Break With Charity*, and *Wolf By the Ears*. Author of more than thirty books for young readers, including a book in the *Dear America* series, she was awarded the National History Award by the Daughters of the American Revolution. She lives in Somerville, New Jersey.

Loved the book. I am a big Ann Rinaldi fan and have yet to find a book I don't like by her.

As an adult reading a young adult book I felt the need to address parents of the marketed age group for this book. If you look under the product details and book description areas above you will find that the book is written for children ages 8 and up. I would have to disagree and suggest the book be read by a mature older child of about 13 and up or more. While I do not wish to keep my child from reading about real life events or possible true events of history, I do believe there is a proper time for a child to read the contents of this book. For my child that would not be 8 years old. So this review is for the concerned parents who research book titles diligently before giving a book to their child to read. My one star rating is for the way the book was poorly written, but also reflects appropriately for the content as well. The book begins with the future Queen at 9 years old, and immediately discusses her illegitimate sister Mary. The story then goes right into the beheading of her mother Anne for adultery. The book skips from nine and quickly at eleven years old she has a "fascination with Sir Thomas Seymour". Again the book quickly skips two years ahead and at thirteen she discusses Sir Thomas Seymour at forty years of age being attracted to Elizabeth who is not yet even fourteen years old. They discuss how he's been attracted to her for years. So she would have been eleven years old or less when this man was finding her attractive. (I guess back then they liked their women very young.) After this discussion, while Elizabeth is still not yet fourteen, she receives a proposal of marriage from Sir Thomas Seymour. She replies that she would need at least two years before even considering the marriage. So he quickly moves on to her newly widowed Step-mother Catherine, marries her and moves in with both women. (the author complicates the story by sometimes referring to Katherine as Catherine) Shortly after moving in, Sir Thomas visits Elizabeth in her bedroom and introduces himself as her Step-father. He would then continue to "barge in" on Elizabeth in her bedroom every morning. She locked her door. He had a

key made for it. He continued to "visit" Elizabeth. Telling her "You're not a child any longer" as "His eyes went over my pink nightdress." He engaged in tickling Elizabeth during these sessions. Elizabeth enjoyed it and it excited her very much saying "It aroused in me feelings I never knew I had for him." Later in the garden Sir Tom and Elizabeth embrace. Elizabeth "felt the maleness of him", "Soon he was kissing me, not like an Uncle, but like a man". Shortly after this the book states that she is now fifteen, and a woman. Rumors swirled that she was now pregnant with Sir Tom's child. "They were told of ...my and his sexual play in my chamber". The book continues on, discussing her many suitors as well as the many deaths and beheadings. This book is packed full of information, however, differentiating the truth from fiction is very hard. The author mentions wives, children, men and women so fast and so often it is hard to keep them all straight. The years fly by leaving you wondering what happened in those times. One minute Mary hates her sister, the next she is sending her gifts. What changed in their relationship that Mary behaved this way? This just did not play out very smoothly at all.

I got this for my 12 year old daughter, who was doing a report on Queen Elizabeth. When it arrived, I previewed the book and was very disappointed to find so much emphasis on the inappropriate relationship between the young Elizabeth and her Step Father. The frequent focus on the flirtatious, titillating relationship throughout this novel makes it inappropriate for the tweens for whom it is written. It seemed more like reading a soap opera than an historical fiction. There's just not enough historical substance in this book to justify having my daughter be exposed to the obvious sexual pandering being used. My child loves to read and doesn't need this enticement, if that is what its there for. We will be looking for something of more historical depth and literary quality.

Historical fiction, especially concerning European royalty, is a popular genre but generally too bloody, racy or complicated for young readers. Ann Rinaldi's latest novel seeks to remedy that by telling a simplified yet dynamic version of England's Elizabeth I's life before her ascension to the throne. **THE REDHEADED PRINCESS** starts when Elizabeth is just nine years old. Her mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed upon her father Henry VIII's order. She lived in her own household far from her father and half-siblings. Younger brother Edward was in line to be king and did ascend while still a child, after Henry's death. Edward was sickly and all of Europe knew he would die young, leaving Mary to be queen. Mary, daughter of the Spanish Catherine of Aragon, was staunchly Catholic, even though her father had broken England's ties with the Roman Church. After Edward's death (and a brief rule by the teenage Jane Gray) and Mary's coronation, Mary and

Elizabeth's respective factions battled for the crown. It was a time of confusing religious change and violence. As long as Mary was queen, Elizabeth was unsafe; she was even imprisoned by her older sister. Yet those around her always told her she would be queen one day. And they were right. Ann Rinaldi's story captures, in first-person narrative, Elizabeth's and England's uncertainty. In this version Elizabeth is less calculating than history tends to remember her. She is sometimes certain and sometimes unsure of herself, torn between love for her family and the desire to be on the throne. She is at once the beautiful, headstrong daughter of her mother and the powerful and confident daughter of her father. Still, in *THE REDHEADED PRINCESS*, she is ever aware of her royal blood, her position and power in society, and her future role as queen of her people. Although known as the "Virgin Queen" Elizabeth was a flirtatious young woman, and Rinaldi touches on that here, even including the infamous scene of Elizabeth found passionately kissing her stepfather while sitting on his lap. This theme, along with some more complicated history and a series of tortures and executions (beheadings and burnings), makes this book more appropriate for readers older than the 8-12 age range recommended by the publisher. Elizabeth I is a compelling and complex historical figure, and Rinaldi's version is nuanced and interesting. *THE REDHEADED PRINCESS* is dramatic and exciting with plenty of history, and it is a good introduction to the historical fiction genre for middle school and even young high school readers. --- Reviewed by Sarah Rachel Egelman

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