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*Norah Lofts*

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A biography of the woman whose marriage to King Henry VIII of England resulted in an irreversible break between the Church of England and the Papacy, the birth of the future Queen Elizabeth I, and in her own beheading.

## **Anne Boleyn Details**

Date : Published May 1st 1986 by Putnam Publishing Group (first published 1979)

ISBN : 9780698110052

Author : Norah Lofts

Format : Hardcover 192 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Biography, English History, Tudor Period, Historical, European Literature, British Literature

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## **From Reader Review Anne Boleyn for online ebook**

### **Linda says**

What I liked best about this book about Anne Boleyn is that it was condensed, yet hit all the highlights and low times of her life. Also included were photographs I'd never seen before and pictures of some of Anne and Henry's belongings that were new to me as well. I also enjoyed a fresh opinion on why Henry lost interest in Anne once they married. A really quick, yet totally absorbing, read!

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### **Karen Renee Collins says**

I found this book very frustrating. Ms. Loft seems to believe that it is a foregone conclusion that Anne "tricked" Henry with her charms and never loved him... the whole "evil woman" thing. I can't say that that is not indeed the case, but I don't believe that it has been proven one way or the other. Is there evidence that her father was complicit in setting her up? If so, where is it? Loft actually spends quite a bit of space giving credence to the theory that Anne was a witch who used her powers to lure in the king (and mentions several times that witchcraft is handed down through maternal lines, making Elisabeth a witch as well). It's understandable that this issue should be addressed, as it was a popular theory at the time; however, discussing it as a real explanation of the very complex situation between Anne and Henry is a bit weak. Additionally, the book was poorly referenced and contained a lot of, what seem to be, Ms. Loft's personal opinions on Anne. The saving grace for this book is the wonderful group of images collected here... many Holbein sketches and paintings. The End.

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### **Donna says**

This was my first Kindle book and my first non-fiction by Norah Loft. Having recently completed Hillary Mantel's two novels about Thomas Cromwell and his role in Anne's life, I found this version provided me an intriguing comparison of perspectives on these two historical figures and their intertwining lives.

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### **Carolina Casas says**

Comprehensive, and up to date for its time, biography on Anne Boleyn. Norah Loft is very sympathetic in her account on the famous queen of Tudor times. I enjoyed reading her fiction on Anne, Katherine and other English queens so when I saw she had a biography on one of them, I immediately picked it up. It's not boring and it doesn't boggle you down with too many details you won't remember but sticks to the facts that were relevant to Anne and her complicated relationship with Henry and what led her to fall.

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### **Sarah Bryson says**

While I quite enjoyed this book and the detail and attention that Norah Loft paid to Anne Boleyn's life,

there seemed to be an underlying current running through the book which really made me scratch my head at times. While reading it appeared to me that Lofts actually believed that Anne Boleyn was a witch – or at least had some knowledge of and involvement with witchcraft. This idea really shocked me as I thought that we as learners and researchers of Anne Boleyn’s life had moved past this ridiculous idea. I will explain Lofts thoughts on this idea a little more in the next paragraph.

Initially Lofts presented the reader with the idea that Anne Boleyn had a sixth finger or at least an extra nail on the side of her finger. She also stated that Anne had a large mole on the side of her neck. While not openly stating the fact, Lofts seems to suggest that Anne had some knowledge of witchcraft and magic and this may have been the reason why she managed to hold Henry’s attention for so long without physically giving into his desire to sleep with her. Lofts also goes on to state that the marks on Anne’s body, the mole on her neck and extra finger, were associated with witchcraft during the Tudor period. During the Tudor times women were often associated with witchcraft as they were believed to be the weaker of the sexes. Any unusual markings or disfigurements were thought to be related to witchcraft, either by the person being born of a witch or being a witch themselves.

There is no evidence at all to suggest that Anne Boleyn had an extra finger, or finger nail or a large mole on her neck. I believe these suggestions are nothing more than ridiculous lies given by those who wished to see her downfall. If she did have an extra finger or a large mole on her neck Henry VIII would have certainly noticed. Henry was a very intelligent, well read man who knew a lot about religion and other matters. Since witchcraft was a strong belief in the Tudor times I would be seriously surprised if Henry would want to marry a woman who would appear ‘deformed’ or at least physically carrying the signs of a witch. And there would have been no way Anne could have hid an extra finger or an ugly mole from a man whom she spent so much time with and desired her so completely and wholly. I think the whole witch thing is a complete farce, lies spread to make Anne Boleyn’s image look terrible and to give a reason why Henry VIII was seduced by her. (Because let us not forget that Henry was not accountable for anything!)

I was really disappointed that Lofts carried on with this idea right throughout her book and even at the end she suggested that Anne Boleyn did come back after her death. Instead of appearing as a ghost she appeared as a large hare, an animal in which witches were reportedly able to change into. This whole concept of witchcraft really frustrated me as personally I do not believe there is any evidence to suggest Anne was a witch. I also think this idea takes away from the talent, wit and natural charm that Anne did have and used to her advantage. Anne had natural flair, allure and abilities and it saddens me that Loft did not give Anne the true credit she was due, instead she tried to label her as a witch.

There were several other mistakes which stood out that I feel should be noted. The first is that Lofts claims that Anne Boleyn went across the ocean for the first time as a lady in waiting or a maid to Mary Tudor. Of course history tells us that this is not true. Anne Boleyn first went to be educated under the Archduchess Margaret of Austria. After some time when Mary Tudor did go to France to Marry King Lois, Anne was transferred into Mary Tudor’s services. After the French King’s death Anne Boleyn stayed at the French court and was educated by the new King’s wife, Queen Claude. Although it is not a huge issue mixing up the details of Anne Boleyn’s early life (as there is not a great deal of information on these years) it does frustrate me that such a mistake could be made. While the evidence is thin there is still enough research out there to tell us at least the places and the order of places that Anne Boleyn travelled in her younger years.

Lofts also suggests that Henry VIII and Anne’s relationship started sometime in 1523 and that it was Henry, not Wolsey behind the order to break up Henry Percy and Anne Boleyn. Other historians (for example Alison Weir and Eric Ives) would suggest that Henry did not meet and start showing interest in Anne until around 1526/1527.

Lastly Lofts claims that Anne miscarried twice in 1534, in January and June yet there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case, nor does Loft provide any research to back up her statement. While the evidence we do have is a little sketchy it would still seem to suggest that yes Anne did indeed miscarry sometime in 1534 and again in January 1636. Besides Elizabeth I's birth it would appear that Anne was only pregnant three times.

While there were several inaccuracies (I believe) I will give Norah Lofts credit as her book was beautiful written. It was very easy to read and her writing style is fluid and approachable. I also greatly enjoyed the inclusion of many beautiful images related to Anne Boleyn and other people, places and objects of the Tudor age. This for me was the real highlight of the book as at least every second page had a wonderful portrait or picture which captured my attention. While many of the images are in black and white they are still extremely detailed and quite beautiful to look at. The portraits included helped the reader to visualise all the people in and around Anne Boleyn's life, including Anne, Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon, King Francis, Cranmer, Cromwell and other important people. There were also some beautiful sketches and drawings of what life would have been like during Anne's time. The images included, I believe, were the real stand out.

Lofts also makes a very good statement of Henry VIII that really stuck out to me. She says that, "he could be brutal, give brutal orders, but he could not bear to face his victims, or to watch the orders being carried out" (p. 81). I think this is a perfect summary of what Henry VIII was like with his victims (many of which did not deserve the cruel fate they received). Henry VIII could be a very cruel, spiteful man; he could quite easily hand out punishments but he was unable, or unwilling to see them carried out. This in itself gives us some insight into the type of man Henry VIII really was.

While I strongly disagree with the idea that Lofts presents that Anne Boleyn could have been a witch, or at least have some knowledge of witchcraft – I still did enjoy this book. As I mentioned Lofts has a beautiful and simple writing style which appealed to me. She did give a lot of detailed information on Anne's life and the inclusion of such stunning portraits and pictures was a wonderful addition to this book.

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### **Brandi says**

I don't know why I'm so fascinated with British monarch history. This was the most honest account I've read. This is history, not historical fiction, but still very interesting. I thought it was written well. And is a quick read, with pictures. oooohh. :)

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### **Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says**

Where do I even start with this book? If you look at my status updates, you see my state of mind deteriorate further and further to ravings of a madman. Why? Because I love Anne Boleyn. She was an ambitious woman who knew her mind and how to manipulate people, yet she was caring and soft and she did love Henry. She was a brilliant woman born far before her time. If she lived now rather than then, she would be a CEO and in charge of the whole world by using her mind.

I'll at least start with the things I liked about this book.

1.) It was very inclusive. I mean, it went over so many things about Anne's life and the people around her. It even talked about things I don't remember reading in the many Tudor history books that I've read. So, for me, that's a huge plus, just having new information I've never heard before.

2.) Lots of nice pictures. Made the reading faster, which was good for me because these are literally the only two pluses for me.

Now, to the negatives.

1.) The word "undersexed". Just... no. I know this was written in 1979, but holy shit is that word offensive. At least, I take great offense to it. The term means: Having unusually weak sexual desires. Not only is there literally no evidence that Anne had a low libido or was uninterested in sex, but that term just can be taken offensively to the many people who literally have no sexual desire. I know it's minor, but it was highly offensive to me and turned me off as a reader, not to mention shut me off further from wanting to even hear what Ms Lofts had to say.

2.) Suggesting Anne was a witch. Man, I thought we were past this part of history. I thought that by the 70s and the whole women's rights movement that we'd be past that, even in the history academia. Guess not. Ms Lofts just kept going for the whole witch thing. She suggested that Anne was a witch and that being a witch was passed through the maternal line (X-linked gene?), so Elizabeth was a witch as well. Not only that, but she suggested that Elizabeth Woodville -- Henry's grandmother -- was a witch as well. So, by that logic, Elizabeth of York was a witch, too, and Henry could have been a warlock if he inherited that X from his mother, that is if she was a carrier. But, why am I even considering this as an option?

3.) Ms Lofts went with whatever sensational thing she could pick up. Juana la Loca -- Katherine of Aragon's sister -- and how she was crazy; but, she didn't take into consideration that perhaps she wasn't crazy and that she was locked up just to get her out of the way. The witch comment. Katherine of Aragon lying about her virginity. Mark Smeaton being tortured. Mark Smeaton and Anne actually committing adultery. Jane Boleyn accusing her husband. Anne being a ghost.

Reading this makes me hesitant to read anything else by Ms Lofts, specifically her fiction book, *The Concubine*, about Anne Boleyn. If I couldn't handle her nonfiction, then how the hell am I supposed to handle her fiction? It's going to be like how pissed I got with Anne's representation in *The Other Boleyn Girl*.

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### **Marti says**

very good research material on Anne Boleyn including some amazing portraits.

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### **Damien says**

A fascinating coffee table sort of book with lots of interesting pictures, photographs of documents and letters from the time. It is very informative, telling the events of Anne's life in a most readable way. It gives the reader much to think about and creates a rounded picture of Anne as a human being, but not only Anne, Henry too! It doesn't allow us to glibly condemn either of them.

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### **????? Jenn ???? says**

Norah Lofts writes a brief biography, which is easy to read, about the unfortunate life of Anne Boleyn. A young woman wanting popularity and status, catches the eye of Henry VIII, a charming and handsome young king. He was also a man that was unforgiving and if his needs weren't met heads would roll (pun intended). The Tudor King had a very clever counsel that sought to meet the king's needs or their own selfish agenda (vengeance, power, etc. & not evaluated in the novel). Henry VIII's main concern was to spawn a male heir, which neither Catherine of Aragon or Anne Boleyn produced, thus he had to battle the papacy for a divorce or annulment. In the end, he created his own church and expected everyone in England to follow his Act of Supremacy, an area that sparked much debate and ire. So, in the end, Anne is accused of immoral acts of adultery, and pays the treason with the penalty of death. I often wonder if she was as composed and gentle as many eyewitnesses claimed.

Much of Lofts' short novel fails to mention the intricacies involved in the plotting to crown & dethrone Anne Boleyn, however this is a well written story for those beginning their reading on the Tudors of the 16th century. My favorite elements in the book were the quotes leading into the chapter, several were Shakespearean, & the speculations of where Anne Boleyn was put to rest & her possible hauntings at cemeteries and/or estates.

3/5 stars

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### **Linda Hoffman says**

#### **What you would expect.**

Norah Lofts does her research with totally believable results. Keeps getting more interesting page after page. I would have been happy with more.

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### **Peggy says**

Norah Lofts gives us a concise and tightly written biography, focusing mostly on the complicated relationship between Henry and Anne and the series of events that set in motion the break with the Catholic Church. The writing flows smoothly and the illustrations are beautiful.

I love how Lofts ended this biography with a humorous anecdote. She reminded us that Anne was a woman who loved to laugh and loved a good joke, two details that are usually overlooked when we think of the tragedy in her life.

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### **Megan says**

Nice introductory biography on Anne Boleyn.

Keep in mind than if you've already done extensive research on Anne or the Tudor Dynasty you won't find anything new in this text. It's basically a short summation of her life for those unfamiliar with one of history's most famous monarchs. I've also used it as a helpful "refresher" from time to time.

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### **Sarah says**

Great informational book did not realize her age at the time of marriage. I am so happy to be alive during this century. Marriage customs and gender roles are drastically different!

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### **Gwen says**

This book was very well written. Sadly questions are left unanswered because of poor record keeping in that time period. Thank God I was not living then. Life must have been so very difficult and we think we have it bad now with our rules and regulations. It is amazing that civilization has come as far as it has, however, that same greed that drove generations before us, still causes problems in this generation, not to mention.....lust.

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