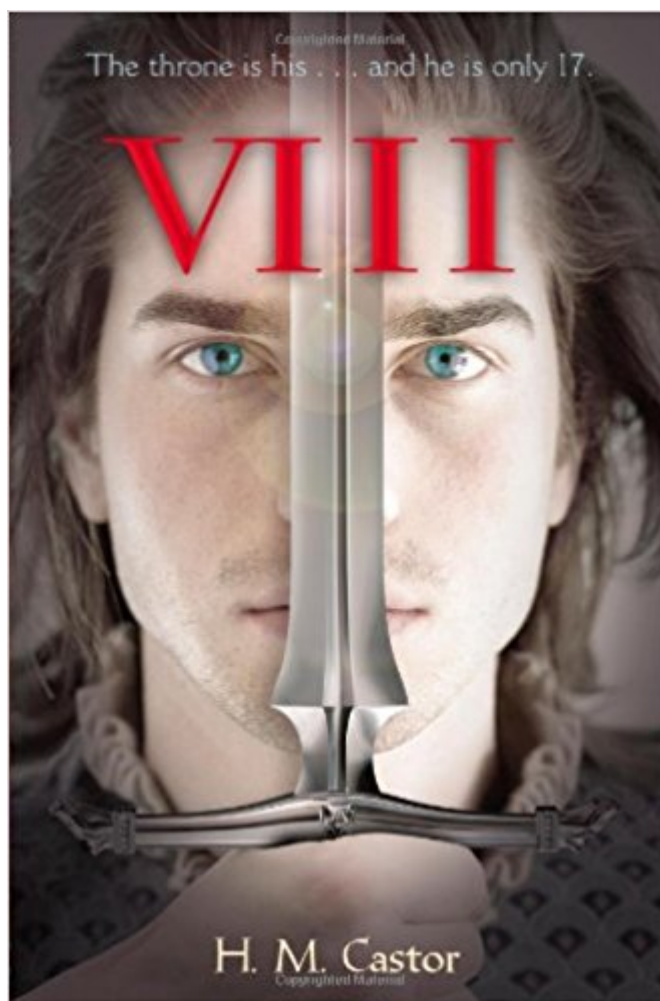


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# VIII



## Synopsis

>Hal is a young man of extraordinary talents, astonishing warrior skills, sharp intelligence, and a fierce sense of honor and virtue. He believes he is destined for greatness. His father wishes he would disappear. Haunted by the ghosts of his family's violent past, Hal embarks on a journey that leads him to absolute power and brings him face to face with his demons. "History comes alive from the first page to the last" (>) in this fascinating, previously untold story of how a charismatic, athletic young man grew up to become the murderous, vengeful King Henry VIII.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 770L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 432 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (August 20, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1442474181

ISBN-13: 978-1442474185

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.5 x 8.2 inches

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

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,774,798 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > Teens >

Historical Fiction > Biographical > European #192 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > European #494 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Medieval

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

The most notorious king in British history tells his own story in this Tudor-era novel. A maligned son spurned by a cruel father, "Hal" is athletic, ambitious, and yearning for empire, and he haughtily assumes the throne upon the greedily anticipated demise of his father. He then proceeds to develop the monstrous ego of legend. Castor's lively descriptions of Tudor pageantry, political intrigue, and the daily goings-on will have much appeal to historical-fiction fans: picture tournament scenes, dastardly plots, military maneuvers, and the specter of London's infamous tower. But it is the inner workings of Hal's mind that set the story apart as a unique and highly psychological tale. Readers follow Henry's descent into

despair and paranoia as the years tick away, and the long-suffering wives are a tragic tale in themselves. Henry's macabre visions of a zombielike child interspersed at pivotal moments throughout add an edge of horror to this powerful look at a dark side of history. Grades 7-10. --Anne O'Malley

"Accessible, enjoyable and full of fascinating detail, VIII is a page-turner that encourages readers to look at this Tudor icon in fresh light." (The Guardian)"History comes alive from the first page to the last." (The Independent)"Great stuff...Exciting, fascinating and surprisingly scary." (Charlie Higson, author of *The Enemy*)"In H.M. Castor, YA fiction has found its Philippa Gregory." (Celia Rees, author of *Witch Child* and *The Fool's Girl*)"Tightly written and faithful to history, H.M. Castor brings Henry VIII to life by giving us a fascinating glimpse into his innermost thoughts and fears. You'll be hooked from the very first line." (Katherine Roberts, author of *I Am the Great Horse*)Readers will be caught up by the sweeping tale, which is more successful than many similar attempts at bringing a fascinating historical character and period to life. (Kirkus Reviews)\* "A must-read for fans of all things Tudor." (BCCB, starred review)"[A] powerful look at a dark side of history." (Booklist)"A satisfying and engrossing portrayal of an incredible personality." (School Library Journal)\* "A quick review of VIII: just read it; it is awesome...VIII is an ideal read-alike for *The Song of Fire and Ice* series." (VOYA, 5Q 4P J S, starred review)

I have always been fascinated by the Tudors and love all I can find to read. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves history. Henry VII held my attention to the very end. I look forward to reading more about the TUDORS.

great product

I love reading about the Tudor era. Started with *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* when I was 10. I've read dozens--fact and fiction. This particular book did not thrill me. The beginning wasn't bad--Henry's early childhood. But after that, it got strange. The author tends to leap forward in time, skipping a lot of "good stuff". Made me think of skipping stones--just touching the surface but not getting into the real story. I'll be deleting it from my kindle.

Source: Received an e-ARC through Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.The Tudor period is one of my favorite times in history and once about which there is a plethora of material. And yet

this look at Henry VIII from childhood to death still seemed unique enough to stand out and be worthy of a read. After finishing, I feel like I received a lot from this book. It is interesting to see how Henry's childhood shapes his future particularly with this first-person narrative guiding us through his life. Though he was born a second son, he does end up succeeding to the throne. He absorbs his father's lesson of having heirs to secure continuity but ignores the warning about practicing thriftiness as he pursues the crown of France. He sees the death of his beloved mother hurt his father but goes on to divorce or kill 2/3 of his wives. Henry is such a complicated, multifaceted character-it is easy to see how he and his continue to enthrall us after all these centuries. As usual, Anne Boleyn is pretty much my favorite character. I just want to bring her to our present-I bet she could do great things when her worth isn't based on her ability to produce a son with a particular man. I adore her cunning and ambition and though this isn't my favorite version of Anne, I still enjoyed her. Some important historical events seemed to be missing to my mind: for instance his affairs with Bessie Blount, resulting in Henry Fitzroy, and Mary Boleyn before his romance with Anne. I think the former would have been especially useful to the narrative, which focuses in large parts on Henry's attempts to ensure the succession and to carve out an empire for his heir. The birth of a son to a mistress gives further proof to Henry that he can father sons and the fact that none are legitimate is the fault of his wives. My memory also brings to mind Charles Brandon, Henry's best friend, who runs off with Henry's sister Mary. This pisses Henry off but the situation is never mentioned in this book, perhaps because Brandon does ingratiate himself again. I also personally am not very familiar with the War of the Roses and the beginning of Henry's life, having tended to read more about his wives and children; thus I found the early chapters very difficult though a bit of googling helped to clear of some points of confusion. They took a long time to get going. Additionally I thought the later chapters were compressed, missing some of the detail of the Catherine/Anne years. This maybe because it covers fewer years but it felt rushed to me. SPOILER: I'm not sure this should be classified as a spoiler as people probably know the history but since it occurs in the final pages, I figured I'd keep it secret just in case. Throughout the book Henry is plagued by visions which he assumes mean that he will be an amazing ruler, but which he later interprets as being the fate of his son. At the time of his death though, he discovers it is his second-born child, Elizabeth, who will be the great ruler of England, to his surprise. I just thought it was so cool how this was done although I was also predicting that was the case based on my superior knowledge of British history :) END SPOILER Overall: A different take on Henry VIII that should interest fans of the period. Pleased to see that Castor is working on a sequel of sorts, tracing how Henry VIII and other factors impacted the shaping of the personalities of his daughters as well

as looking at the complicated sister-sister relationship of Mary and Elizabeth.

VIII by H.M CastorHardback: 399 pagesPublisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers - first print edition, UKLanguage: EnglishISBN-10: 144247419XISBN-13: 978-1442474192The book starts out with Henry VIII as a young boy being whisked away to the Tower of London while his father is defending his throne against an impersonator of one of the young princes that were lost in the Tower years before. It's a little awkward at first because the author writes the book in first person, and I am not used to reading large stories this way. It took a bit of getting used to. Also the book is aimed toward a younger audience, so the chapters can be extremely short. With a book this large, short chapters make for a very long read.Out of all the characters that Henry encounters throughout the book, it is his relationship with his father that truly stands out to me. At first, the relationship is almost non-existent, until his brother Arthur dies. Then he is brought to his father so that he can properly be groomed to rule as King someday. Henry envisions himself as King even before then, and feels that he is being given signs that he will be a King and God will pave a way for him. He has many different encounters with unnatural things, and some of them are quite scary even for the reader.As Henry prepares himself to sit on the throne in the event of his father's death someday, he gets ideas of how great it will be to be King of England as well as France. He anticipates being a conqueror and the people of England loving him for it. During his few conversations with his father, he is scolded for being so naive and lectured on what it is like to be a King, and the many responsibilities that he will have in doing so. I think that toward the end of his life he realizes just how much he learned from his father, even if the book doesn't say so. I thoroughly enjoyed the part that Henry VII played in this book, and think that he wasn't just seen as a money grubber, but as a detail oriented, organized, self disciplined man who had a softer side for his family, especially his wife. I like that he said what was on his mind. It was very easy for me, the reader to cling to each word he said with much respect.The book takes Henry from childhood until death. Although quite interesting in the beginning, it dragged on for a spell while he was with Katherine of Aragon. This is as it should be though, because in real life, he was married to her longest. But once he becomes involved with Anne Boleyn, and the others, the book becomes much more interesting and reads much quicker.The author has a nifty way with words, and the details that are in this story are woven together brilliantly like a beautiful tapestry. Some of the scenes are quite powerful and leave you thinking about them long after you close the book.One such scene, is a favorite of mine. I will add it here for an example. Henry is being teased by Anne when he leaves the court room during his trial to divorce Katherine of Aragon. He is angry and feels like Katherine is too loved by

the people and that she makes a fool of him. He feels that his people should love him above all others, and doesn't understand why they do not. Anne is standing in the shadows of his private room, and tells him it is because he is not 'believable' when he speaks. She gets onto the subject of him not having a male heir, and brings up that things would all be well had his son lived, that died 17 years prior. This hits a tender spot in Henry and he becomes quite agitated with her chiding. He goes on to say this: "You know, sometime I really must ask your brother about your favourite childhood hobby. I believe he will tell me it was tearing the wings off birds. Or drowning puppies." This is a fine example of the author's magnificent way with words. They are packed full of a punch, and play out like a movie in the readers mind. Another such example prior to this scene that I almost forgot is also quite good. Henry is questioning his then wife, Katherine of Aragon about her loyalty to him or her family. She reminds him that her loyalty has always been with him, but then he scolds her and tells her that if this was so, she would have given him a son by now. The scene plays out like this: Silence. We hold one another's gaze. I say, quietly and distinctly, "This is what you are for. Do you think I married you for love? I married you to give me an alliance with Spain, And sons." I look down at her belly. "Will this one live, do you think? For a change?" My God, her control is magnificent. Not a single muscle in her face twitches. But her eyes... She looks as if she is drowning. After reading this scene, I could see it in my mind as if it were happening in front of me. A very powerful look into what it must have been like to know Katherine in person. It is just as I imagine her to be. My admiration for her still stands. She was tough as nails. If you have an interest into the life of Henry VIII, then this book will definitely interest you. Just be prepared to read many short chapters, and each starting at different points in Henry's life. If you are an Anne Boleyn fan, her role in this book is quite short. For me though, that is quite refreshing. It didn't hash out the whole execution scene again, as seen in so many other books. The book stays focused on its true subject; Henry VIII. The ending comes quickly, but is very interesting. I enjoyed it very much. It left me satisfied. When I closed the book, I was smiling. I highly recommend it, with a four star rating. It's different, and unique. I hope to read more from this author in the future. The above scenes are from pages: 298 and 236.

H.M. Castor's "VIII" is a masterful novelization of the life of England's King Henry VIII. Castor picks up the story from a slightly different viewpoint in his early youth not long after his father King Henry VII takes the throne & takes the young adult reader on an odyssey across the years from there through his coronation to his death. We see a haunted & obsessed Henry at times & the struggles from youth into adulthood & the paranoia that plagued him as a ruler across 6 marriages &

countless children. Castor's story is told from the first person which is a unique touch for this as well as the story quickly moves across these decades & doesn't bog down the target audience (young adult readers) with too much of the quirks of the era & the politics of why he did what he did. Overall, a very well done look at perhaps the most famous Tudor monarch of all.

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