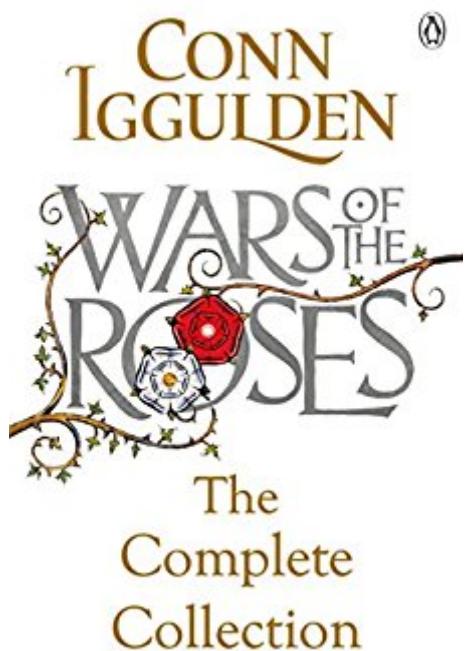


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Wars Of The Roses



Synopsis

'Iggulden is in a class of his own when it comes to epic historical fiction' Daily Mirror Conn Iggulden's Wars of the Roses Ebook Bundle contain the following: Trinity, Stormbird, Bloodline, Ravenspur

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Customer Reviews

History rarely presents a neat narrative, and the Wars of the Roses are about as messy as it gets. Multiple royal houses battling for the throne of England in the 15th century; social unrest caused in part by the hardships imposed by the Hundred Years' War; buckets of Richards and Henrys to keep track of it; a hell of a jumble. But the bloody, backstabbing complexity offers excellent source material for storytellers up to the challenge of sorting through it; George R. R. Martin mined the period for inspiration while planning his fantasy series A Song of Ice and Fire (commonly known by the title of its first entry, A Game of Thrones). Conn Iggulden sets himself a tougher task by attempting a historical-fiction version, which he begins with Wars of the Roses: Stormbird. Stormbird starts slowly, largely because Iggulden sets his prologue in 1377, 66 years before the main events of the story. We see Edward III on his deathbed, and hear his attending sons drop hints about the coming succession crisis. Historically speaking,

this may well be the proper point to begin unraveling the threads, but it makes for a choppy opening once Iggulden skips ahead to 1443 and leaves behind the characters we just began to know. The story picks up as Iggulden portrays the machinations behind a secret truce between Henry VI, the current King of England, and Charles VII, King of France and Henry's uncle. In exchange for peace and a bride, Henry quietly relinquishes his claim to the provinces of Maine and Anjou, French territories captured by his predecessors during earlier stages of the Hundred Years' War. The catch: English families living in Maine and Anjou have to leave their homes. Many refuse, and bitter fighting in Maine eventually destroys the peace. To explain how Henry, a mentally infirm ruler, brokered such a deal, Iggulden invents a calculating spymaster, Derry Brewer. Iggulden also creates an archer, Thomas Woodchurch, who leads the resistance in Maine before joining Jack Cade's peasant rebellion in England. Margaret of Anjou, Henry's French bride, features as well, as do other scheming nobles, such as Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York and aspirant to Henry's throne. In other words, there's a lot going on. But Iggulden handles the chaos well, managing to make us root for several members of the upper and lower classes rather than a single, central protagonist. I occasionally tripped over Iggulden's use of third-person omniscient, however he mostly sticks with one point of view per scene, but sometimes hops in and out of another character's head; I would have preferred an entirely fixed camera, or one that roamed more consistently. I also thought the torturing and execution of a Jewish moneylender was an unnecessary tangent. Even so, I liked Stormbird on balance, and I'm curious to see how Iggulden navigates the rest of the Wars of the Roses now that he's set them up so entertainingly. (For more reviews like this one, see [...])

This was one of my most anticipated books to read this year, and it did not disappoint. I have never read a Wars of the Roses novel that was so complete in its description of why battle actually broke out. Beginning with a prologue that placed Edward III on his death bed, surrounded by his three remaining sons, Iggulden sets the stage for family drama. Throughout the novel, as Richard of York makes his quiet play for power, the words of Edmund of Langley to his brother John of Gaunt echo through the reader's mind. "Have you thought, John, that there is just a boy now between you and the crown? If it weren't for dear little Richard, you would be king tomorrow." Rather than taking the simplified approach that strong, ambitious Richard of York wrested power from a weak, timid King Henry VI, the author details the events leading up to Richard becoming Protector and Defender of the Realm. Richard is not a central character, but he is always seen lurking around the edges,

making sure that things turn out the way that he has planned. The focus is split between Margaret of Anjou, fictional Derry Brewer, and Thomas Woodchurch who eventually joins the Jack Cade rebellion. The reader learns about the various aspects of Henry VI's downfall through each of these characters. Margaret is written in a way that enabled me to feel some sympathy for her for the first time. As a fourteen year old bride, she cares for and ambitiously defends her young, ill husband. Though other authors have attempted to build her character as something other than a she-wolf who tormented England with foreign troops, this is the first time I started believing that history may have treated her too harshly. Derry Brewer is a creative invention of Iggulden's. This character is developed as a mastermind behind Henry's plans but with no real power of his own. How he came to be so devoted to the king or in such personal service is not really explained, but he does his best to defend those York has marked as enemies, including William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, and King Henry himself. Through Tom Woodchurch's character the reader is shown the true effects of Henry and Margaret's marriage truce that allowed Anjou and Maine to revert back to France. The complete devastation of the English living in these territories never even seemed to be a consideration to those playing with lives as if they were pieces on a chess board. Tom's path intersects with Jack Cade's, allowing another point of view to be told. How was this unknown man able to rally thousands of troops to march on London? With so much going wrong in England, Henry's months-long mental lapse was all the opening Richard of York needed. With his own royal blood giving him just as much right to the throne as Henry, his ability to rule made him the obvious choice to those looking for a leader. Still his success comes across a little more like the rise of Darth Vader than a savior for the kingdom. I am looking forward to reading more of Iggulden's detailed view of the Wars of the Roses in the sequel, *Trinity*.

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