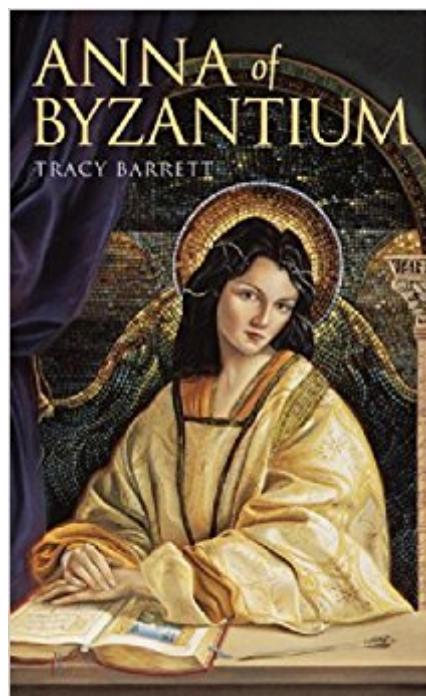


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Anna Of Byzantium (Laurel-Leaf Books)



Synopsis

For fans of Joan of Arc and Alexander the Great, comes "a gripping saga of alliances, intrigues, deceits, and treacheries" about Anna Comnena of the Byzantine Empire. Anna Comnena has every reason to feel entitled. She's a princess, her father's firstborn and his chosen successor. Someday she expects to sit on the throne and rule the vast Byzantine Empire. So the birth of a baby brother doesn't perturb her. Nor do the "barbarians" from foreign lands, who think only a son should ascend to power. Anna is as dismissive of them as are her father and his most trusted adviser--his mother, a manipulative woman with whom Anna studies the art of diplomacy. Anna relishes her lessons, proving adept at checkmating opponents in swift moves of mental chess. But as she matures into a young woman, her arrogance and intelligence threaten her grandmother. Anna will be no one's puppet. Almost overnight, Anna sees her dreams of power wrenched from her and bestowed on her little brother. Bitter at the betrayal, Anna waits to avenge herself, and to seize what is rightfully hers. Praise for *Anna of Byzantium*: A Bulletin Blue Ribbon Book An ALA Quick Pick An ALA Best Book for Young Adults A Booklist Editor's Choice A Booklist Top Ten Historical Fiction Pick [STAR] "[Anna of Byzantium] involves readers in a gripping saga of alliances, intrigues, deceits, and treacheries worthy of a place among the tragic myths." • The Bulletin, Starred review "In the tradition of E. L. Konigsburg's *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver* and Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy* comes this story of a real-life historical figure, Anna Comnena, groomed to be the sovereign of the Byzantine empire." • Barrett uses an effective first-person narrative to draw readers into Anna's story, and the author's precise use of detail helps re-create Anna's world, the palace of Constantinople in the ninth century. . . Readers will be caught up in this exciting read." • Booklist, Boxed review "A fascinating mix of history, mystery, and intrigue." -The Horn Book Magazine "Barrett does a remarkable job of painting moods and emotions with spare, elegant sentences. . . This splendid novel about a neglected period of history is the perfect choice. . . Hard to imagine it being any better written." • VOYA "This wonderfully engaging novel both entertains and serves as a lively history lesson with its well-researched background, dramatic plot and dimensional characters. Barrett's descriptive, engaging prose will draw readers into a fascinating historical time, filled with political intrigue and a complex, admirable teen protagonist who faces her changing future with an inspiring combination of heart and mind." • Wichita Eagle

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

This uneven first novel is narrated by Anna, the first-born daughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, poised to inherit the throne. Inspired by the real Anna Comnena (1083-1153) who chronicled her father's reign in *The Alexiad*, the story begins in a convent, where 17-year-old Anna lives in exile. Most of the book flashes back to the princess's upbringing and her attempt on her brother John's life that led to her monastic imprisonment. Although the author successfully evokes an aura of claustrophobia within the castle and convent, she provides few details to distinguish one setting from another. The scenes in the throne room involving visiting dignitaries or soldiers do little to illustrate the pageantry or politics of the age, and the main characters lack definition with the exception of the Machiavellian grandmother. Anna herself, with her education in history, classics and science, may reverse any preconceived assumptions about the ignorance and lowly position of women in the Middle Ages, but her character as portrayed here is not likable until the book's conclusion. Readers may not stay around long enough to witness her humbling fall from power and transition to scholar. Ages 10-up. (June) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 6-10-The 11th-century Byzantine princess Anna Comnena was a remarkable woman.

Designated as a child to inherit the throne, she was educated to be a ruler. She learned, from her

mother and grandmother, to manipulate the intrigues and factions of the court, and when she was displaced as heir by her brother, she schemed, without success, to assassinate him and regain her position. In this novel, Anna tells her own story, looking back on her former life from the convent to which she has been banished. The first-person device serves well to focus the action on the princess and to build a plausible character study of a brilliant and tempestuous young woman frustrated and embittered by the loss of her expectations of achieving supreme power. However, the book exemplifies the difficulty of writing a historical novel about a real person. Anna's brother is depicted throughout as a spoiled monster who (in contrast to the brilliant Anna) refuses to learn to read. Yet historians characterize John's rule as one of personal virtue and administrative competence and tell that he forgave his sister for her many conspiracies against him. Barrett acknowledges in an afterword that she "changed some of the facts," but, unfortunately, it is the story she spins that will remain with young readers. Still, few books, with the notable exception of Peter Dickinson's *The Dancing Bear* (Little, Brown, 1972; o.p.), have as their backdrop the colorful and historically significant Byzantine Empire. Shirley Wilton, Ocean County College, Toms River, NJ
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Anna of Byzantium transports the reader back to the time of the Byzantine empire through the perspective of the young heir to the throne, Anna Comnena. This book offers an intimate look at the inner workings of the royal family, including all the politics and work required by just being a royal. Anna of Byzantium was written by Tracy Barrett and was first published in 1998. It was her first novel and was received well. Barrett leads the reader through young Anna's life as she is prepared for her duties as the future empress. Her whole world turns upside down when the throne is ripped out from underneath her by the hands of her power-hungry grandmother and younger brother. Plotting revenge, Anna waits for the right time to seize the throne and take back what is rightfully hers. The subsequent themes of pride, vanity, and revenge recur throughout the novel. Barrett uses a frame-narrative to describe what's happening in the story. A frame narrative is essentially a story within a story. In this case, Anna's fate is introduced at the beginning of the novel to set the stage for a more emphasized second narrative. The reader stays in the past and learns of the events leading up to the end of the story with the ending already in mind. This technique worked well with the story and helped build suspense and empathy for the characters. The story kept my interest throughout the novel. I never felt bored or anxious to get the book over with; I can genuinely say I enjoyed it. The characters were well

developed and the ending of the story satisfied me. If there is one thing I could change, it would be more involvement and development of supporting characters. The princess only interacted with them when necessary, and there weren't many details about their lifestyles or personalities. Other than that, I felt that the development of the main character, Anna, was well done. I believe the story to be historically accurate. I appreciated that at the end of the story, the author specified what exactly she had changed from fact to fiction. The intended audience for this book is middle and high schoolers. I myself am a high schooler, and I can say that Barrett did a wonderful job delivering a complex and interesting story from a time that isn't frequently talked about. Anna's development from vengeful, vain, and power-hungry to accepting, aware, and humble was enjoyable and relatable. At the beginning her sense of entitlement was irritating, but I found myself rooting for her towards the end. This is the mark of good storytelling. I found the book easy to navigate and enjoyable to read. I would recommend this book to a friend and I plan on reading it again.

Anna was a real person who wrote an eleven-book epic about her father, The Alexiad. Her book is where we get much of our information about Byzantium today. Anna of Byzantium is an excellent historical fiction about Anna. The author's note at the end tells what is real and what was made up or changed. I found the story extremely engaging and well-written. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys historical fiction or is studying the Byzantine Empire.

I don't normally read Young Adult literature, but I chose this book as part of a class assignment, as I enjoy historical fiction and haven't read anything from this area or time period. I read this book in 3 hours! It was a very nice, easy read (for an adult) and I'm sure children would enjoy it. You really feel for Anna and what she is going through. There were parts of the story that were a bit weak but nothing that someone couldn't get through. There isn't a lot known from this period, but you learned most of the background information needed during the reading. There are some historical inaccuracies, but the author addresses them at the end instead of trying to pass off her book as the truth. I understand why they're there- they simply wouldn't have fit with the story in the time frame necessary for her book. **SPOILERS BELOW** The only part that really upset me was the scene when we father made John his new heir. I felt that this scene was particularly sudden and weak. It would have been from Anna's point of view, but I still felt like the author should have developed this scene a bit more. At the end, we are told that while we've hated John during the whole book, we're supposed to like him at the end because he became a great ruler who was loved by his people. It

would have been nice to see SOME redeeming quality earlier in the book other than allowing Anna to go to a convent instead of killing her.

Great inside look at Byzantium at the time of the Crusades and gives a different perspective of History than the usual Western view. Wish I had read this when working on my MA in Medieval history. Now reading Anna's ALEXIAD. enjoying her writing and getting to know her better. Found this book cover on Ancestry.com as a hint when researching my family tree and found she was my 25th great aunt. Tracy Barrett's style makes the book hard to put down and a most enjoyable read.

I was really disappointed in this novel; I tried to like it, but the protagonist was completely un-engaging and the plot gave me no hooks to want to keep reading. It seemed like it should have been a better book than it was, considering the author's command of language, but the actual story just wasn't there. No plot, no consequences, the whole story is already over by the time the book has started. Just a huge letdown.

Engaging historical account of one of Europe's high achieving women. Raised in a royal household to be a ruler, Anna was later imprisoned by her power hungry brother. Her confinement / Imprisonment in a convent gave her the opportunity to record her memories of her Emperor father Alexius Comenus. Historians have acknowledged Anna as one of the most important historians of her age and milieu.

I read this one because my granddaughter was reading it for a school assignment. I really enjoyed the story and being able to discuss it with her.

Good writing and excellent choice of subject material and historical detail. The book clearly should have been much longer. The end seems rushed and it would have been interesting to have a more detailed account of Anna's life ahhh .. oh don't want to give the plot away away, The writing is strong enough that I definitely will be buying Barrett's next book.

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