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The Bad Queen: Rules And Instructions For Marie-Antoinette



Synopsis

History paints her as a shallow party girl, a spoiled fashionista, a callous ruler. Perhaps no other royal has been so maligned and so misunderstood as Marie-Antoinette. From the moment she was betrothed to the dauphin of France at age fourteen, perfection was demanded of Marie-Antoinette. She tried to please everyone courtiers, her young husband, the king, the French people but often fell short of their expectations. Desperate for affection and subjected to constant scrutiny, this spirited young woman can't help but want to let loose with elaborate parties, scandalous fashions, and unimaginable luxuries. But as Marie-Antoinette's lifestyle gets ever-more recklessly extravagant, the peasants of France are suffering from increasing poverty and becoming outraged. They want to make the queen pay. In this latest installment of her acclaimed Young Royals series, Carolyn Meyer reveals the dizzying rise and horrific downfall of the last queen of France. Includes historical notes, an author's note, and a bibliography.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

The Bad Queen is the story of Marie-Antoinette, the queen of France who was married to King Louis XVI and ultimately was guillotined when the French Revolution happened. The story takes us from her beginnings in the Austrian Hapsburg court of Empress Maria Theresa who was Marie's mother. Marie's real name was Maria Antonia, but she had to change it to a French-sounding name when it

was decided that she would be a match for the dauphin of France. She had to stop speaking German and had voice lessons in French. This is the full and complete story of Marie and I am sure that basically the facts are true although Marie's feelings and some of her acts in this novel have been dramatically padded out - but in any case it is a good read. It details all the tutoring and practicing Marie endured before she was sent to France to be the dauphine. She had to have her teeth straightened (by wearing golden braces on her teeth) and having her hair done so that her low hairline did not make her appear unattractive (ultimately her hairdressers decided she should wear her hair up, of course). She was groomed for being queen of France before she was a mature adolescent, and every month she waited breathlessly for the onset of puberty. These parts of the story - her puberty, her wishing to grow breasts and become a woman, her attempts to become pregnant and bear a child to inherit the throne - are all handled very sensitively so that the book is suitable for young adults. The chapters of the book are the list of dos and don'ts listed by her mother the Empress before she left for France. Some of the rules she obeyed, and some she decided to not pay attention to.

I have already been interested in Marie Antoinette, so I thought this might be a fun read. There will be some SPOILERS in this review, but not really because it's all historical fact. The book is written from the POV of Antoinette. The very beginning of the book deals with Antoinette getting ready for her marriage (under the direction of her impossible to impress mother) and traveling to meet her husband. Some of the details involved in that arrangement were very interesting. Things happened to her that you think would never be 'standard tradition' for a queen. After the couple marries, the queen frets for many, many years because the marriage is not consummated. The king is shy and not interested, despite Antoinette trying desperately to seduce him. While the book discusses this problem a lot, they skip over the actual bedroom part to make it very YA-safe. In fact, early on she *thinks* they have finally 'done the deed', only to find out much later that they still hadn't. During this time the queen's excesses are extravagant, and the citizens of France are becoming worse off. Though the king and queen love each other, it is not a passionate or romantic relationship. Things start moving faster after Antoinette finally has children. The state of France quickly declines, and before we know it the royal family is imprisoned. This part of the story is truly heartbreakingly. The book shows Antoinette in a sympathetic light - she had fancy balls and spent too much money and did not listen when warned, but she also wasn't cut out for the job, did not truly mean any harm to the people, and was lonely and sad for much of her life. Still, the book does not give her an out. It shows how stupid she is being and she is constantly given warnings she could have heeded.

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