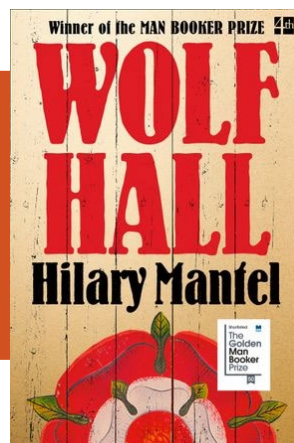




Wolf Hall

Hilary Mantel



Author Background

Dame Hilary Mantel is well known for her bleak comedy and socially probing novels set in a range of contemporary and historical contexts. She has studied at the London School of Economics and the University of Sheffield, after which she worked as a social worker and then as a store assistant.

After moving to Botswana with her husband, she was driven to write by the cultural isolation she experienced in Africa and the inactivity imposed on her by a chronic medical condition. In 1983 she and her husband moved to Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, where she completed her first novel *Every Day is Mother's Day*, before eventually moving back to England.

She is the two-time winner of the Man Booker Prize for her best-selling novels, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*. In 2006 she was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire and in 2014 she was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Book Summary

England in the 1520s, Henry VIII is a king with no heir. He wants to annul his marriage of twenty years and marry Anne Boleyn. The Pope and most of Europe oppose him. Cardinal Wolsey, his chief advisor, is charged with securing the divorce the Pope refuses to grant. Into this world of distrust and need comes Thomas Cromwell – first, Wolsey's clerk, and later his successor.

Cromwell is the son of a blacksmith. He is charming, a political genius, a bully and a man expert in manipulating people and events. He is ruthless in pursuit of his own interests and wildly ambitious.

Fluctuating between romantic passions and murderous rages, Henry turns to a radical solution to his problem - a complete break with Rome. But accomplishing such a task is a daunting political feat, and while Henry and Anne Boleyn both wait impatiently, Cromwell must plot against his enemies and prepare the country for a fundamental religious transformation.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ There are many historical accounts of Cromwell's life. Was his portrayal as a sympathetic character surprising? Was it believable?
- ❖ How well does Hilary Mantel merge historical fact with the narrative?
- ❖ What do you think about Cromwell's relationship with Thomas More?
- ❖ What do you think about Cromwell's relationship with Cardinal Thomas Wolsey?
- ❖ How does Cromwell perceive Anne Boleyn? How does she come across in this book?
- ❖ Why does Cromwell dislike the Catholic clergy? What are his motives for helping Henry marry Anne Boleyn and sever ties to the Pope? Are his goals selfish or selfless?
- ❖ What do you think about the title, 'Wolf Hall'?

References

- ❖ Britannica - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hilary-Mantel>
- ❖ Harper Collins Australia - <https://www.harpercollins.com.au/9780007230204/wolf-hall/>
- ❖ Picador reading group guide - <https://images.macmillan.com/folio-assets/rgg-guides/9780312429980RGG.pdf>
- ❖ Book Club Forum - <https://bit.ly/390Vtr8>
- ❖ Kalamazoo Public Library - <https://bit.ly/3hw4Bsh>