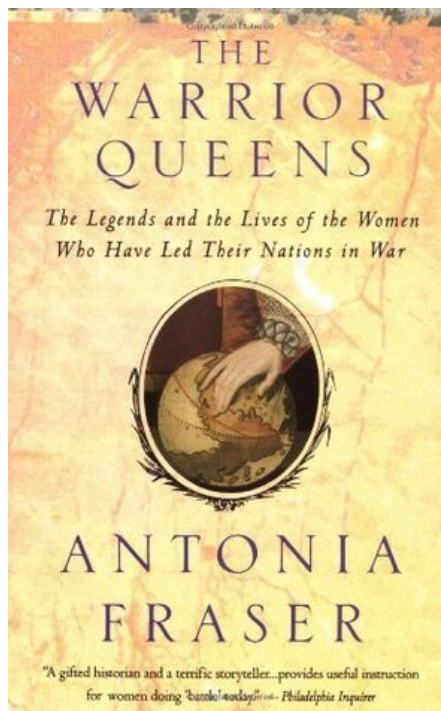




## Warrior Queens

*Antonia Fraser*

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# Warrior Queens

*Antonia Fraser*

## Warrior Queens Antonia Fraser

How does a woman take on the reins of military and political power? Having obtained power, how does she hang on to it? And how do the male contemporaries of a remarkable "warrior queen" feel about her? Starting with Boadicea, the Celtic queen who led a bloody uprising against the Romans, and ending with India Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, and Golda Meir, the "iron ladies" of recent times, Antonia Fraser tells the story of how remarkable women wield power.

## Warrior Queens Details

Date : Published April 30th 2014 by Anchor (first published January 1st 1988)

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Author : Antonia Fraser

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## From Reader Review Warrior Queens for online ebook

### Aimee says

**2.5 stars**, rounded up because at least it included some non-European queens for a change

This book was so dry, it was impossible to read more than a chapter at a time and even then it would take me days to summon up enough courage to tackle the next one. The information it imparts is useful and I learnt a lot I didn't already know - including about some women, the Rani of Jhansi for instance, I hadn't heard of before - but I wish it had been presented in a more accessible and easily-digestible way.

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### Tracy says

This was an interesting book but not enough detail for me. I wanted more information on each woman, but at least it gives an overview of several women from history.

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### Rebecca Grace says

Couldn't resist this one, what with all the gender & power issues swirling around Hillary Clinton's bid for President. Also must read anything given a thumbs-up by Margaret Atwood because she is an absolute literary goddess a mon avis... But in the end I felt that Fraser attempted to cover too much ground between the covers of this book. I would have appreciated reading about fewer subjects but in greater depth. Also, as a non-Brit, I was not previously familiar with the story of Boadicea and it was difficult to piece it all together from the author's non-linear storytelling. Nevertheless, it was an informative read, and it has profoundly influenced my perspective as an observer of (and a voter for!) women in positions of leadership.

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### Charli says

I barely got to the end of this book - which was surprising as I'm a great fan of Fraser's work ordinarily. However, I found the structure of this book somewhat convoluted and confusing, and it didn't really give the insight I was expecting on key female historical figures.

Fraser has based the book around the history of Iceni Queen Boadicea/Boudica - a fascinating story, however almost half of the book is about her - which is surprising as so little is known of the 1st century AD queen. This means that the prose tends to digress from the subject at hand and is therefore difficult to keep track of.

Also, when Fraser then writes of other historic 'warrior queens', she continually relates back to Boadicea - which provides some interesting viewpoints not ordinarily explored (especially for Elizabeth I, my personal favourite historical figure here). Saying this, some of the biography of these women is then lost in the telling as the prose again feels to drift without adding any value to the telling.

All in all, some very interesting viewpoints in this book, however personally speaking, not exactly what I was expecting. Definitely a good read for ancient history enthusiasts, rather than any era more current though.

## Carol Storm says

WARRIOR QUEENS is okay, but Lady Antonia obviously likes the modern queens more than the ancient ones. She spends as much time on parades and pageantry in the 19th century, where "symbolic" warrior queens just bless the troops and appear in very becoming but only sort-of military poses, as she does on actual fighting women in the ancient world, like Boudica of England.

It's also noticeable that with Boudica Lady Antonia plays down the bloody war and butchery and plays up the Roman era that came later. She mentions several times that "other" Britannic warrior queens (names not mentioned) were more peaceable, marrying Roman governors and building Roman-style villas with beautiful artwork and frescoes which still catch the eye today. Indeed, the image she gives of that time period is that most upper-class women willingly chose the comforts and luxuries of life as a Roman lady to the blood and grime of constant war. Warlike Boudica was probably the exception rather than the rule. In fact Lady Antonia quotes several Roman sources saying that the daughters of the fierce British tribes were quick to adapt Roman customs, bathing and finery -- so much so that they were often accused of being more Roman than their Roman husbands!

This book is okay overall, but instead of being a story of "warriors" it really describes women rulers who sometimes presented themselves in military roles.

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## Sarah Finch says

This is one of the most intelligent and thoughtful books I have read in a long while. Using Boudica (Boadicea) as her starting point, Antonia Fraser traces a loose chronology of "warrior queens" from Zenobia to Queen Isabella to Golda Meir and Indira Gandhi. The final chapter or two on Margaret Thatcher is particularly insightful. Along the way she discusses how sexuality, maternity, and religion have shaped the conversations surrounding these women for generations, as well as the Appendage Syndrome wherein a female ruler can only validate her reign through her ties to a strong male. This is a great read, and one not at all outdated by the twenty-some years that have passed since its publication in 1988.

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## Yasmin says

It was an okay book but I have to say the author's continuous usage of "syndrome" did make one think that there was something wrong with the women! Also a little too much of "warrior" women in the European world and not so much with other countries. I guess in the 80s her research was limited but even so there must have been other women known then like Nurjahan during the Mughal period of India and I can't believe there was only one queen to cite in Africa! And I didn't have that much interest in reading about Margaret Thatcher, none at all in fact! Nor was I that compelled for Indira Ghandi, I think I'll leave my own personal politics out of this, as it is a book review and not a political debate.

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## Carly says

I finished this book and exhaled loudly while screaming FINALLY! Finally it is over. I am stubborn and when I hit the halfway point, I refused to quit. But, good God, this book is dry. And long. My brain felt like a glazed donut when I read more than 30 pages in a sitting. Maybe I am just not bright enough to appreciate it.

But I'm giving it three stars for a few reasons: 1) I now know about Caterina Sforza taunting soldiers who were about to kill her children by lifting her skirt to show her pregnancy and saying, "You fools! Don't you know that I can make more?" Brilliant. My life is forever richer; 2) Queen Nzinga. Enough said; 3) A few choice anecdotes about the remaining queens that I couldn't help but read aloud to anyone within earshot. One star for each spark of joy.

Complaints: 1) Focuses way too briefly on non-European queens; drags and drags when it comes to European queens; 2) Dry. So dry. Engaging history is all about creating narrative out of facts and tidbits. Fraser is good at this 15% of the time, and awful the other 85%; 3) Though her analysis was sharp, naming the facets of historical queendom "syndromes" (e.g. Appendage Syndrome) makes them sound like diseases.

I still can't believe I am done reading this book. I thought it would never, ever end.

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### **Iset says**

Surprisingly in depth considering that this is a book that examines many subjects, Fraser examines both the history in facts and the way in which warrior queens have been presented as social entities. Very thoroughly researched and referenced - although it must be noted that some information is not up to date, which is not surprising given the release date of the latest edition.

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### **Kelly says**

I really enjoyed this book. The beginning was terribly slow for me, but once it picked up I couldn't put it down. I think I was thrown off in the beginning because she kept saying that this book was a study of Warrior Queens. The first 3 chapters read like a text book to me. Boring! But once the book started flowing, and each chapter was a different Warrior Queen, I really enjoyed it. It also gave me lots of women to try to find books on and maybe learn even more about these remarkable Warrior Queens.

I was also surprised that Margeret of Anjou wife of Henry VI was not in here. If she wasn't a Warrior Queen I don't know the meaning of the words.

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### **Joe says**

[My prior knowledge of Fraser was limited to her writing popular history books (hide spoiler)]

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### **Carolina Casas says**

An account of all the warrior women who left their mark on history and why some were successful and

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others weren't. The warrior queens who earned their reputation as fearsome and holy were only because they evoked popular sentiment of unity and religion, and perpetuated the stereotype of the "weak and feeble woman" (Elizabeth) and feminine virtues of chastity, homeliness (Golda Meyer, Louise of Prussia, Queen Tamara of Georgia, etc) and religious fervor (Isabel before she was married and after she married, and a tool that she used against 'La Beltraneja' -her niece Juana whom she always held was not her brother's daughter). In using rebelling against the norm while perpetuating the stereotype of the weak and virtuous female these monarchs and rulers managed to keep their positions and become celebrated icons (to this day); while those who refused to play by the rules were slandered, publicly and physically humiliated and some of them were forced to take their lives (such as Boudicca, Cleopatra, etc) or die in battle (the Rani of Jhansi). It's an engrossing account that doesn't end with a simple everything is okay now but makes the points that many of these attitudes on women have changed very little and women leaders today still have to use certain stereotypes to be accepted.

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### Jessica says

I stopped reading this book after 233 pages (about 2/3 finished) because life is too short to read bad books. This is only the second book in the last 8 years I have failed to finish without plans to try again.

The first few chapters are dry analysis of what it means to be a "Warrior Queen", and it doesn't pick up pace until 1/3 of the way into the book. Then it tries to tell the stories of these Warrior Queens with a chapter apiece, but the author insists on comparing everybody to Boadicea (both the legend and the historical figure). I had to stop when halfway into Jinga's chapter, there wasn't any information provided on this character. Most of the information presented was the use of Boadicea in literature throughout history. Why wasn't that included in Boadicea's chapter?

The author also gets bits of history wrong - Isabella's family tree as she explains the succession. You can't forget a daughter and assign her son to a different daughter! (This isn't The Tudors!)

I have read long history books (Postwar, Dreadnought, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, etc.) and have never come across book as tedious and repetitive nor with the same appalling lack of organization. It was absolutely frustrating to read about all the "syndromes" these women had while ignoring the rich detail or their lives. The lack of detail is understandable in the earliest stories where there is little written history and/or it is unreliable, but I expected the stories to include more detail as the book progressed and that simply didn't happen.

Don't completely give up on Fraser - her biography on Marie Antoinette is excellent, and she probably should adapted that format for this book - sort histories of Warrior Queens and their achievements. This book probably really deserves a 2, but since I couldn't bring myself to finish it I had to rate it a 1.

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### Abigail Hartman says

I picked up "The Warrior Queens" for two reasons. One, back in January I read another book about female rulers (Helen Castor's *She-Wolves*) and found it interesting but lacking in some respects, particularly in the writing. Two, I'd read Fraser's *Faith and Treason* and enjoyed it immensely, which made me willing to read *Warrior Queens* and see how her thoughts and approach might differ from Castor's.

I did find it both interesting and an easy read; after I'd added it to my Goodreads account I saw a number of

reviews saying how boring it was, and I can't say I had the same reaction. On the contrary, I typically found myself wanting more information rather than less. This is a study of the attitudes of and toward women who have led their people in times of war, and while Boadicea is the central figure, each individual woman is treated in a relatively brief, self-contained overview; you can't and wouldn't go to this book for an in-depth examination of any one of the characters (and some of them are intriguing enough that I wanted a real, detailed biography of them). Possibly it's the archeology in the earlier chapters that strikes many readers as boring? At any rate, I found it generally engaging -- nor did I think that Fraser was more interested in telling the stories of modern/contemporary women than those of the ancient and medieval examples. Certainly one could argue that the many female leaders of the 20th century (most notably, Margaret Thatcher) inspired Fraser to consider writing such a book; but I thought she devoted an even amount of space to the women across the centuries.

That said, I can't say this one ranks up there with *Faith and Treason*. In any work like this one is liable to sense an agenda, and while I certainly find it useful to consider the special challenges women face in exercising power, I don't have a whole lot of patience for a "battle of the sexes" theme. It could certainly have been more annoying in this book than it was, but little things were nonetheless exasperating: things like putting "male" or "female" in parentheses to draw more attention to them, a habit that always seems to me to create an unnecessarily sarcastic tone. I also could not quite tell what the larger point was (or if there really was any) regarding the Warrior-Queen-as-harkening-back-to-some-primordial-goddess thing. Is Fraser actually suggesting some kind of matriarchal society in the distant past? She raises the possibility and almost dismisses it, but apparently quite wistfully; and then it continues to crop up.

The more strongly feminist threads, then, did not appeal to me, but the book does point out interesting historical themes that did strike me as worthwhile (even if they are called "syndromes," which, like another reviewer, I find rather annoying). Elements like the Warrior Queen's tendency to see herself as unique among her sex and unwilling to promote "women's rights," and the tendency for the Warrior Queen to come to power by virtue of some connection to a powerful man -- these I found compelling. The more psychological aspects less so.

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## Susan Abernethy says

Link to my review of this book:

<http://flhwnotesandreviews.com/2015/0...>

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