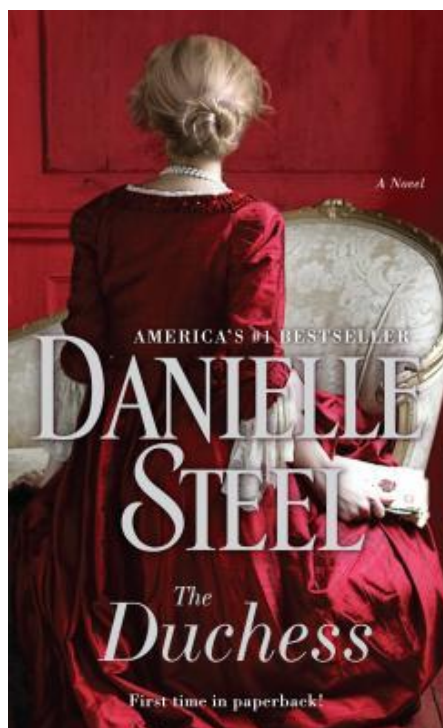




The Duchess

Danielle Steel

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER - The incomparable Danielle Steel breaks new ground as she takes us to nineteenth-century England, where a high-born young woman is forced out into the world--and begins a journey of survival, sensuality, and long-sought justice.

Angelique Latham has grown up at magnificent Belgrave Castle under the loving tutelage of her father, the Duke of Westerfield, after the death of her aristocratic French mother. At eighteen she is her father's closest, most trusted child, schooled in managing their grand estate. But when he dies, her half-brothers brutally turn her out, denying her very existence. Angelique has a keen mind, remarkable beauty, and an envelope of money her father pressed upon her. To survive, she will need all her resources--and one bold stroke of fortune.

Unable to secure employment without references or connections, Angelique desperately makes her way to Paris, where she rescues a young woman fleeing an abusive madam--and suddenly sees a possibility: Open an elegant house of pleasure that will protect its women and serve only the best clients. With her upper-class breeding, her impeccable style, and her father's bequest, Angelique creates Le Boudoir, soon a sensational establishment where powerful men, secret desires, and beautiful, sophisticated women come together. But living on the edge of scandal, can she ever make a life of her own--or regain her rightful place in the world?

From England to Paris to New York, Danielle Steel captures an age of upheaval and the struggles of women in a male-ruled society--and paints a captivating portrait of a woman of unquenchable spirit, who in houses great or humble is every ounce a duchess.

The Duchess Details

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From Reader Review The Duchess for online ebook

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

*<https://mrsbbookreviews.wordpress.com>

My book club read this month was a Danielle Steel book of our choice. I selected a recent release from the worldwide bestselling author, *The Duchess*. I was quite taken in by the beautiful cover that features an aristocratic woman in an eye-catching hat. I was also in the mood for a historical fiction novel and *The Duchess* seemed to fulfil my needs.

Belgrave Castle, owned by the Duke of Westerfield in Hertfordshire, is the home to Angelique Latham. The daughter of a Duke and an aristocratic French mother, Angelique is the product of a second marriage for the Duke. When her beloved father dies, despite being schooled in managing the family estate and being her father's protégée, Angelique is soon cast away from her childhood home by her cruel half brothers. British law in the nineteenth century prevented female offspring and younger siblings from inheriting the family fortune. Instead, Angelique leaves Belgrave Castle with a secret stash of money her father gifted to her. She is quickly forced into a position in service as a nanny to one of her brother's friends. Work as a nanny is far removed from the life Angelique has known but she takes it in her stride. At first difficult, Angelique soon becomes quite attached to her new role. The children seem to adore her and her new employer is impressed by their new charge. However, an attempted assault at the hands of a friend of Angelique's employer ruins everything. Angelique's employer believes the story of the man who tried to attack her and immediately banishes her from service, with no reference. With no references, Angelique is unable to gain employment in England. Angelique decides to draw on her mother's French roots and makes the crossing over the channel to seek employment in France. Again, Angelique is faced with the same dilemma, no employer will take her on without a reference. By chance, Angelique falls upon a young French prostitute, who has almost been beaten to death. While caring for this young woman, Angelique has an enterprising idea. Using her father's money, Angelique establishes a business that is very unconventional for a young woman of Angelique's background but it soon becomes lucrative and profitable. When a tragic accident occurs at Angelique's establishment, she must cut ties and is forced to flee to the US. When love eventually comes her way, Angelique must fend off the scandal that threatens her future happiness.

The chance to read a Danielle Steel book of my personal choice via my book club this month was a welcome one and I am pleased with my selection. *The Duchess* is one of the best books I have read by Danielle Steel, as a few selections I have made in the past have given me mixed reactions to this author. *The Duchess* was a book that helped this reader see why Steel holds such long-lasting and international appeal.

I liked the historical grounding for this novel. *The Duchess* is set in the nineteenth century and spans a number of tumultuous years and continents (Britain, France and the United States) for the daughter of a Duke. The title is perhaps a little misleading, as the main character Angelique is never truly bestowed the title of 'Duchess'. It is robbed from her by her unfeeling half brothers and is loosely given to her as a nickname in the business Angelique establishes for herself in the latter parts of the story. Although there is not a huge focus on specific period detail and language, I did find *The Duchess* a very accessible historical fiction novel. There were a few references to the shifts in royalty both in Britain and France that gave this novel some historical backdrop.

Angelique is a strong, determined and enterprising young woman. Steel puts her heroine in a situation often faced by young women of this time. Steel focuses her energies in highlighting the plight of women in this era. They were often placed in a bind, unable to inherit their family estates in the case of death, with all monies going to their elder male siblings. Steel draws our attention the problems faced by those directly impacted by these inheritance laws through her novel. In Angelique's case, she is tossed aside by her jealous

older half brother and is cruelly sent to work below the stairs, as a Nanny, at a friend's estate. To add further insult, Angelique is given the new identity of a 'poor distant cousin', so all ties between the siblings are severed. Angelique must sit back and watch as her brother, his wife and family alter her family's estate, ultimately sending it into financial ruin. This is a huge point of frustration for a young girl, who under her father's devoted tutelage was given the skill set to manage the family estate. Steel also uses this angle of the narrative to show how desperate these situations make those subjected to it become. In Angelique's situation, her strength of spirit and enterprising mind help get her through the bad times, despite her moves being quite unconventional.

The Duchess divides its time and location three ways and I enjoyed the scandal and intrigue that followed each one. We begin with Angelique's upbringing in the family castle of Belgrave, through to her father's sad passing and her cruel banishment from the only home she has known. Steel then moves the action to another opulent estate in Britain as we learn about the occupation of a nanny to a wealthy family in Britain during the 1800's. The novel moves to France after Angelique's unfair dismissal from service. In France, the novel makes a real shift and I found this change a little confusing, especially in keeping with Angelique's character. I couldn't quite get my head around the fact that a young woman of Angelique's breeding and refinement would so readily place herself at a brothel. For a virgin and woman who so fiercely protected her honour when faced with more than one sexually motivated attack, I felt a bit slighted by Angelique's career move. On the other hand, this story does work to highlight the pure desperation faced by those placed in these situations. When the action of the novel moves to its third and final different location, New York, Steel chooses this section of the narrative to incorporate a fairytale style romance. The Duchess builds up to a fitting ending and I liked the final turn of events.

Steel has cast a memorable heroine in her 2017 release, *The Duchess*. This was the perfect choice for my book club read as it offered up plenty to discuss in the form of inheritance laws and the treatment of women in this era. The scandals and difficult binds lead protagonist Angelique finds herself faced with was both interesting and provided enough material for our book club to consider. Fans old and new will be sure to appreciate this light historical fiction based read from renowned storyteller, Danielle Steel.

αα says

2.75 stars

The Duchess is is certainly a heart wrenching tale, and it has a very strong beginning and ending in my opinion — easily worth 4-5 stars. And that was very nearly the rating I would've given it.

However, after the high (you know the high and amplified emotions you experience right after completing a book) had passed, I found myself unable to ignore the problems during the middle portion of the book, during which there is a certain element that I felt justified something because of the main character's circumstance. ~~Running a brothel and providing a means for men to cheat on their wives — no matter how well you treat the ladies working for you — was not handled well in my opinion. Despite her being pushed into a corner, I did not like the way in which Angélique began to view her business in the slightest.~~

~~This is a huge pity, because like I said, I found the first half and the ending to be amazing.~~

kathie says

OMG...I am half embarrassed to even admit I read this book but here goes. The last time I read a Danielle Steel book has to be at least 25 years ago. However, I see this historical (almost always my first choice) highly rated (GR: 4.21 and Amazon over 4 stars) novel available to borrow as an e-book from Overdrive library. I figure what the heck, perhaps I should give Steel another chance. If I were to buy the book on Amazon it would be \$14.99 so why not take the opportunity to borrow.

I should have just went with my first inclination and just stayed away. But once I started reading, much like watching a train wreck, I finished the whole book.

I don't even know where to start with my complaints. Of course, the heroine, as is the case with every Steel heroine, possesses beauty and intelligence that defies human expectations. We are told repeatedly of this extraordinary beauty and near genius like intelligence on a regular basis.

The year is approximately 1826. The 18 year old daughter of a Duke, Angelique, is left at the mercy of her half brother upon her father's death. Of course, the brother has always resented Angelique because he hated her mother, who actually died at her birth. Her father, on his deathbed, feared that Angelique would not fare very well at the mercy of brother so he gives her a bag of money for her to hold onto just in case she needs it. Steel went to great lengths to describe how this was necessary since the property and all the riches were entailed and therefore Angelique could not inherit anything and the oldest brother would become Duke and inherit everything. It does seem to me that in 1826 the father could have provided a dowry separately for Angelique or at the very least, contacted a lawyer or friend and asked them to look out for her since he didn't trust the eldest son. But then of course, we the reader would not have had the opportunity to witness the extraordinary feats of Angelique.

The evening of the father's funeral, Tristan, now the Duke, lets Angelique know that she will not be staying at the family estate. She has to leave and, in fact, the brother has secured a position as a nanny for her. Evidently, she has no one else to turn to and with her bag of money hidden she goes off to live the life of a servant. Now she has never been around children but has to become the nanny to four children 4 1/2 years and younger. Not to worry though, Angelique excels at whatever she faces and within a day or two has the four children firmly under control. The self absorbed mother of these children rarely sees them and Angelique comes to love them and they her (of course). Eventually, we find out the mother is pregnant again and this time she has twins. Angelique will now have SIX children to take care of with only occasional help from another servant. Again, the very capable Angelique who before this lived a sheltered, pampered life as a Duke's daughter, is now a servant taking care of SIX kids.

After around a year and a half of living as a servant, Angelique is "sacked" after rebuking the advances of one of the male houseguests and he lying and accusing her of attempting to seduce him. Now poor Angelique is on her own again. She heads to London but her attempts to secure a new nanny position are futile because she was fired without a reference. It is suggested she try France because they might not be as strict about these things as they are in England. She is still carrying around the 25 pounds that her father gave her but doesn't want to use it unless she has to.

Now she is in France but facing the same issue...no references so no job. One day soon after arriving, she finds a young girl lying beaten in the street. Fabienne is 18 and a prostitute who was trying to make it on her own without protection of a pimp or a madam. Angelique takes Fabienne back to her hotel room and helps nurse her back to health. Upon learning Fabienne's story, Angelique decides she will open a brothel and it will be the finest, most exclusive brothel available in Paris. Now mind you, she is not quite 20 years old at this time. But, this is Angelique, perhaps one of the most capable, did I mention beautiful, young women of all time.

Fabienne rounds up around 8 more women and Angelique, now finally using some of her father's money (I'm sure he would have been so proud of her) she has been carting around for almost two

years, rents a house and next thing you know, Angelique is running the most exclusive, prosperous brothel in all of Paris. Now Angelique is still a virgin and she plans to keep it that way. She does none of the entertaining but men are still as enthralled as ever with her beauty and keen intelligence and they flock around her, even knowing they can't have her. It's enough to just be in her presence I guess.

After around a year and half of this, Angelique is forced to close up the brothel and leave France. A murder occurred at the brothel and even though one of Angelique's admirers (high up in the government) did his best to hide the location and facts surrounding the murder, he advised Angelique to close up for a while and leave the country. Why this had to occur is a mystery to me because none of Angelique's employees were involved in the murder and to operate a brothel was not against the law. But of course, Angelique needs to move on and the author couldn't figure out a better way to get her to America I guess.

On the ship over to America, Angelique meets Andrew and they fall in love. He too was enthralled with her beauty and intelligence. They marry and have a son. Fastforward six years--now this is where the author really slayed me. I'm no expert on English law but I believe the historical inaccuracy in this book was outrageous. Not only were dates and events mentioned that made no sense but the final craziness was when Angelique heard that her brother Tristan, now the Duke, had blown through all their father's money and was going to sell the ENTAILED property. He also was willing to SELL his title. The other half brother had died so he wasn't around to protest. And to top it off, it was stated that Angelique's son would be the heir to the Dukedom. Again, I'm no expert but can the son of the daughter of a Duke inherit the title? I thought all heirs came from only the male side, unless you are talking Kings and Queens. Even so, the Duke could not have put entailed property up for sale. That is the whole idea behind making it entailed. It seems like an author with the resources available to Danielle Steel would have researched some of this. And what about her editor? I think this is sloppy work at best.

As I write this, I wonder if I am being overly generous giving it two stars. The language used was very modern and did not have the feel of a historical. I consider this book a huge disappointment and I feel bad for those who fork over \$14.99 or more to read this and am so glad I only borrowed. There are so many better authors out there with worthy books and I would encourage readers to find them.

Bj says

I gave this audiobook a B+ for the story and A for the narration at AudioGals

Narrated by Gideon Emery

It has been a long time since I've read or listened to a Danielle Steel story. The blurb of *The Duchess* intrigued me though, so I thought I'd go back to try the latest from an author that used to be a mainstay on my library shelves. Interestingly, *The Duchess* turned out to be more historical fiction than romance, though it does have romance elements. Moreover, the plot of this story set in London, Paris, and New York in the early 19th century, seemed somewhat predictable but nonetheless enjoyable particularly given the family saga and injustice rectified angle of the listen. And if the story is not enough to get you to listen, new-to-me narrator Gideon Emery was simply magnificent and I will certainly be looking for more of his narrations in the future!

Angelique Latham's ultimate future was in question from the minute she was born. Born the daughter of the Duke of Westerfield in Hertfordshire by his second wife (a French woman with French nobility blood), she was left motherless at birth, and never secured the love of her half-brothers, who hated her mother and by

extension her. So, it is no surprise that when her father passes away and the dukedom goes to her older brother, she is left with no benefactors and doomed to find her own way in the world.

Fortunately, her father had the foresight to see the true nature of his children, and he loved Angelique so much (the daughter who stood by his side until his death when she was only 18) that he set her up with 25,000 pounds that he kept hidden from his sons. Her father's bed was not even cold when her brother swoops in to claim his birthright and forces Angelique to go work as a nanny, claiming she wouldn't want to be "a burden" on him and his family. Too embarrassed to share his despicable nature with Angelique's employers, her brother tells them she is a distant cousin, not his sister (a fact which makes this cruel act even more egregious).

Angelique, however, makes do with what life has handed her and carves out a somewhat happy existence with her new charges (6 children in all, with only her as nanny), even if her employers are callous and indifferent, even when it comes to their own children. When, two years later, a man changes her fate yet again (by accusing her of something she didn't do), she is quickly fired and left homeless again.

With no recommendation, no one will hire her in London, so she makes her way to Paris. Again, even though she is fluent in French, no one will take a chance on her without a recommendation, so she is left adrift until she stumbles upon a woman of the night who has been badly beaten. Showing the compassion no one has showed her, she takes the woman in and as she helps slowly nurture her back to health, Angelique comes upon a plan to change both her and other downtrodden women's plights. With her new friend's help, she will open up a bordello unlike that that ever existed before: one that caters solely to the upper class and provides that upmost discreetness, while at the same time treating the women who work there fairly and ensuring their health and safety. Meanwhile Angelique will function as the madame who entertains the men with conversation and manages the establishment's affairs – she vows to never "go upstairs" with the men.

It is in this venture that Angelique becomes known as "The Duchess" for her high-class manner and second to none conversation skills, not to mention management of Le Boudoir. The establishment features the most exotic and beautiful women who men come from all over the world to visit. She quickly attains many admirers (including men of supreme political influence), all of whom aspire to make her theirs (especially given that she refuses to take any of them "upstairs"). But even with many good choices among the men, Angelique refuses to compromise her virtue or settle for anything less than love. Could there possibly be a HEA in the cards for Angelique now that she is viewed in society's eyes as a "ruined" woman?

See the full review at [AudioGals](#).

KYReader says

Regular Danielle Steel. Heroine is battered by life. Makes it through tragedy after tragedy. Finally happy and husband dies. Gets back at everyone who's wronged her.

Jeanne says

In typical Danielle Steel fashion, we have lifestyles of the rich and famous, but around the times of the French Revolution. "The Duchess" basically goes from riches to rags . . . will she get back to riches? Read to see how this inspiring and entrepreneurial young woman makes lemonade out of lemons! Enjoyable read - 6 out of 10.

Suzanne says

The beginning you will just hate a lot of the characters. However, as the book goes on you are so wrapped up in Angelique's unfolding story that you can overlook the meh moments at the beginning. Redemption is beautiful!

Overall, a great lead character who you cannot help but root for. Her way of redeeming career move is one very unforgettable route!

Marianne says

The story is a little far fetched. But the main reason I just started to skim through it, was that many things were very repetitive. I really got tired reading the same thing over and over.

Jennifer Manley says

What a great story!

By the time I was finished with this I felt emotionally drained from reading about this one woman's life. So many ups and downs especially downs but when she triumphed boy did she ever. But going through her losses with her just wrung me out. I have read Steel all my life but I have to say that for some reason I related to this woman I felt her pain and suffering and I felt her joy and love and happiness. Steel just did a magnificent job with her character and she came alive for me and jumped right off the page into my heart. I was hooked from the beginning and heartbroken when it ended. Thanks again Danielle Steel for sharing your talent and heart and soul~Your loyal reader

Amy says

Steel's The Duchess started off regally but had a pauper continuance. I felt the overabundance of misfortune that fell-upon Angelique Latham took away from the novel and at one point I even said "enough already!" The final chapters made up for the lackluster middle but I was disappointed in the read and was surprised to find others giving it such high marks. Although my favorite Steel genre is when she takes on historical matters such as in "Echoes" I felt this one was a noble intent but without lasting valor.

Jayne says

In the spirit of trying everything at least once, I picked this up.

It was very floofy and felt like what you might get at a creative writing workshop. The premise was interesting but suffered terribly at the hands of bad writing. I'm not quite sure how or why Steel can be so

popular. The whole book felt like a never-ending summary and the writing was childlike.

Am never coming back to Steel again.

Denise says

Sadly, the story did not live up to expectations. The most interesting part of the story was Paris and that just felt rushed and was completely lacking the details and time it deserved. By the time she got to New York, I just didn't give a f*ck anymore what happened.

Betsy Wolfenden says

For such an accomplished author, this book was awful. The plot was thin, predictable and the character development was poor at best. Why does the author feel she needs to tell us what the characters think. Why not reveal it through better dialogue.

Don't waste your money or your time....

MaryannC.Book Fiend says

Originally 3 Stars. A fairly quick read that I will say was Historical Fiction fluff. 18- year old Angelique Latham has just lost her father The Duke of Westerfield when her half brothers from the Duke's first marriage promptly throw her out since British Law does not entail women to inherit only the first born son. On her father's deathbed he secretly gives her a large sum of money to live by in case her greedy brothers didn't help her, with that, her newly titled brother Tristan informs her that he has secured her a position as a nanny to a rich couple with 4 children. Alone and afraid with no work experience ever she learns to take care of her charges with ease and grow to love them, all is well for a time when a lecherous male house guest tries to seduce Angelique, she refuses then is she accused of being the aggressor and later dismissed with no references. 2 years later out on her own again with no where to go and no prospects she goes to Paris where she finds and nurses back to health a young beaten up prostitute she found on the streets named Fabienne. After hearing about the unfair treatment Fabienne and other prostitutes have suffered at the hands of pimps and madams of bordellos Angelique comes up with the great idea of opening up her own bordello with the money her father gave her where the women will be smart, beautiful and attract the best men of social status. She secures a large home and lavishly furnishes the house with silks and draperies where she will be the madam but not engage in any of the sexual encounters taking place at the house named Le Boudoir. Once opened Le Boudoir attracts the sort of men she has hoped for making it a celebrated success and she and her girls are rolling in the dough, some of her customers fall in love with her, she prospers and she's only 20 years old! The premise of this book had me interested but what got me throughout it was everything just always fell into place, when she's a nanny she learns the job effortlessly, the servants in the house she works for all admire her, the kids love her and she manages them wonderfully. When she ends up in Paris she finds the perfect house, the loveliest furniture and the best girls to work for her, there's never any thought to pregnancies or diseases her girls may get everything is wonderful there are no complaints from suspecting neighbors no one beats on her door to shake her down for money and then suddenly there's a murder and

political uprising that causes her to close up shop and flee. So she flees to New York where she meets a wonderful man on the ship she is sailing on and finally finds happiness in her impeccable outfits that make her the envy of other women. Ok, I won't give up any more details to what happens next, but this just didn't have any of the grittiness I thought it may have had to make me feel anything for Angelique and her dire situation, it was just a fluffy sort of read.

After much mulling over I decided to downgrade my stars to 2.75, it was ok because it held my interest but it wasn't great for me.

Kathryn says

Enjoyable enough. However a little too much telling with long sections of prose. Just felt a tad lack of character development or something. I liked the main character but felt a step removed from her.
