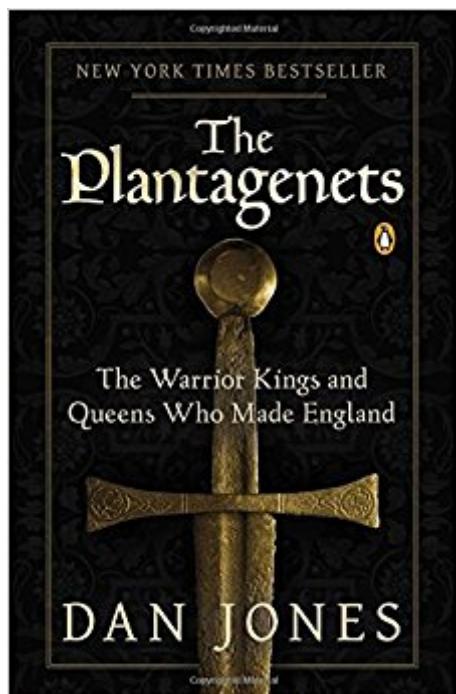


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The Plantagenets: The Warrior Kings And Queens Who Made England



Synopsis

The New York Times bestseller that tells the story of Britain's greatest and worst dynasty • "a real-life Game of Thrones" (The Wall Street Journal) Look for Dan Jones' *The Templars* in September 2017! The first Plantagenet kings inherited a blood-soaked realm from the Normans and transformed it into an empire that stretched at its peak from Scotland to Jerusalem. In this epic narrative history of courage, treachery, ambition, and deception, Dan Jones resurrects the unruly royal dynasty that preceded the Tudors. They produced England's best and worst kings: Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, twice a queen and the most famous woman in Christendom; their son Richard the Lionheart, who fought Saladin in the Third Crusade; and his conniving brother King John, who was forced to grant his people new rights under the Magna Carta, the basis for our own bill of rights. Combining the latest academic research with a gift for storytelling, Jones vividly recreates the great battles of Bannockburn, Crâfcy, and Sluys and reveals how the maligned kings Edward II and Richard II met their downfalls. This is the era of chivalry and the Black Death, the Knights Templar, the founding of parliament, and the Hundred Years' War, when England's national identity was forged by the sword.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

They may lack the glamour of the Tudors or the majesty of the Victorians, but in Jones's latest book, the Plantagenets are just as essential to the foundation of modern Britain. As he chronicles the entire dynasty, beginning with Geoffrey of Anjou (commonly adorned with a sprig of

Planta genista, which gave his line their moniker), familiar dramatis personae emerge. Of course, there are the recklessly brave Lionheart and the incomparably inept John, but Jones devotes ample time to the forces at work that shaped the kingdom. The great battles against the Scots and French and the subjugation of the Welsh make for thrilling reading but so do the equally enthralling struggles over succession, the Magna Carta, and the Provisions of Oxford. Many of these early inklings toward a permanent parliament and the rule of law would find a much fuller and fraught expression under the Stewarts, but they begin here. Written with prose that keeps the reader captivated throughout accounts of the span of centuries and the not-always-glorious trials of kingship, this book is at all times approachable, academic, and entertaining. --James Orbesen --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Praise for The Plantagenets

“Like the medieval chroniclers he quarries for juicy anecdotes, Jones has opted for a bold narrative approach anchored firmly upon the personalities of the monarchs themselves yet deftly marshaling a vast supporting cast of counts, dukes, and bishops. . . . Fast-paced and accessible, *The Plantagenets* is old-fashioned storytelling and will be particularly appreciated by those who like their history red in tooth and claw. Mr. Jones tackles his subject with obvious relish.” •*The Wall Street Journal* “Delicious . . . Jones has produced a rollicking, compelling book produced a rollicking, compelling book about a rollicking, compelling dynasty, one that makes the Tudors who followed them a century later look like ginger pussycats. . . . The Plantagenets is told with the latest historical evidence and rich in detail and scene-setting. You can almost smell the sea salt as the White Ship sinks, and hear the screams of the tortured at the execution grounds at Tyburn.” •*USA Today* “Jones has brought the Plantagenets out of the shadows, revealing them in all their epic heroism and depravity. His is an engaging and readable account—its own accomplishment given the gaps in medieval sources and a 300-year tableau—and yet researched with the exacting standards of an academician. The result is an enjoyable, often harrowing journey through a bloody, insecure era in which many of the underpinnings of English kingship and Anglo-American constitutional thinking were formed.” •*The Washington Post* “Brilliant and entertaining . . . a set of fine vignettes relating dynastic life, death, war, peace, governance, and palace intrigues. The result is a history book that frequently reads like a novel and can be opened to any chapter.” •*Tampa Bay Times* “Blood-soaked medieval England springs to vivid life in Jones’ highly readable, authoritative, and assertive history.” •*Publishers Weekly* “They may lack the glamour of the Tudors or the

majesty of the Victorians, but the Plantagenets are just as essential to the foundation of modern Britain. . . . The great battles against the Scots and French and the subjugation of the Welsh make for thrilling reading but so do the equally enthralling struggles over succession, the Magna Carta, and the Provisions of Oxford. . . . Written with prose that keeps the reader captivated throughout accounts of the span of centuries and the not-always-glorious trials of kingship, this book is at all times approachable, academic, and entertaining. *Booklist* “A novelistic historical account of the bloodline that . . . stamped their mark forever on the English imagination Perhaps Jones’ regular column in the *London Standard* has given him a different slant on history; however he manages, it . . . is certainly to our benefit. . . . For enjoyable historical narratives, this book is a real winner. *Kirkus Reviews* “A riveting portrait of the royal lineage from Henry II through Richard II Despite the density caused by any attempt to cram centuries of English history into one volume, Jones manages to create a work that is highly accessible to readers with only a basic knowledge of this era. . . . This is an excellent study of the period, both an overview and a series of character studies. It will be thoroughly enjoyed by Anglophile history buffs and others who love popular history or even historical fiction. *Library Journal* “Outstanding . . . Majestic in its sweep, compelling in its storytelling, this is narrative history at its best. A thrilling dynastic history of royal intrigues, violent skullduggery, and brutal warfare across two centuries of British history. *Simon Sebag Montefiore*, author of *Jerusalem: The Biography* “The Plantagenets played a defining part in shaping the nation of England, and Dan Jones tells their fascinating story with wit, verve, and vivid insight. This is exhilarating history. *Helen Castor*, author of *She-Wolves: The Women Who Ruled England before Elizabeth* “This is history at its most epic and thrilling. I would defy anyone not to be right royally entertained by it. *Tom Holland*, author of *Rubicon: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic* “Jones has written a magnificently rich and glittering medieval pageant, guiding us into the distant world of the Plantagenets with confidence. This riveting history of an all-too-human ruling House amply confirms the arrival of a formidably gifted historian. *Sunday Telegraph* “Entertaining and informative . . . Jones has produced an absorbing narrative that will help ensure that the Plantagenet story remains . . . stamped on the English imagination . . . for another generation. *Sunday Times (London)* “Traditional narrative history at its best. *The Spectator* “Jones, a protégé of David Starkey, writes

with his mentor's erudition but also exhibits novelistic verve and sympathy. . . . This is a great popular history, whether you are au fait with the machinations of medievalism or whether Magna Carta mystifies you. . . . *The Plantagenets* is proof that contemporary history can engage with the medieval world with style, wit and chutzpah. •The Observer (London) "This action-packed narrative is, above all, a great story, filled with fighting, personality clashes, betrayal and bouts of the famous Plantagenet rage. . . . Jones is an impressive guide to this tumultuous scene. . . . *The Plantagenets* succeeds in bringing an extraordinary family arrestingly to life. •Daily Telegraph "An excellent book . . . *The Plantagenets* is a wonderful gallop through English history. Powerful personalities, vivid descriptions of battles and tournaments, ladies in fine velvet and knights in shining armour crowd the pages of this highly engaging narrative. •The Evening Standard

The Plantagenets and their Queens sweep through history, not a dull one to be found. If they are not busy trying to take land from the French King or better yet be the French King, they are rushing off to a crusade, or taking time out to march on Scotland to subdue the rebellious inhabitants and extend their kingdom northwards. Enlarging their Kingdom was a major preoccupation for the Plantagenets. They arranged marriages, changed and made laws, administered justice mainly to suite themselves. This book gives you not only many personal insights into the lives of the monarch and his court but also the peasants who were continually being caught up in wars not of their making. They paid taxes, battled hunger, and high infant mortality they got slaughtered on the battlefield and at home if they were on the wrong side. When the Black Death reduced the number of skilled tradesmen to a few and they raised their rates the king legislated them down to pre plague rates. The sheer savagery with which the Plantagenets dealt with any opposition, noble, peasant, or on occasion another wayward Plantagenet is horrifying. One quibble, the author has Henry de Bohun challenge Bruce to single combat before Bannockburn, all other books I have read from Prebble to Caroline Bingham agree that Bohun charged the King without warning, the King riding a palfrey was somewhat outmatched, however, he managed to cleave the Knights head in two and win the following battle. Dan Jones has written an informative, entertaining, fast moving book you will not want to put down.

I listened to the 17-CD version of Dan Jones' fantastic account of the Plantagenets and wished there were 17 MORE CDs so that I could keep going! If you choose the CDs vs. the book, you will surely enjoy the wonderful narration of Clive Chafer (I'd happily listen to him narrate anything!) That

said, CDs or book, the narrative is at once highly accessible yet admirably rich. I CANNOT WAIT for Dan Jones' "War of the Roses" to come out later this year. While I found Alison Weir's "War of the Roses" to be my guilty pleasure when I read it a year ago and could not have imagined anyone else doing equal justice to that period, I now eagerly await Dan Jones' perspective and voice on the subject - along with Clive Chafer's, I hope!

It seems to me that the Plantagenets represented both the best and the worst of the middle ages. They were glorious, larger than life, exciting to read about, and at the same time they could be vicious, grasping, petulant, and tyrannical. From Henry II to Richard II, we see the prestige and the degradation of England. As complex monarchs, as England grew into its heritage. Little by little the nobles, then the commons, started to participate in the national government through a Parliament that could air its grievances and even dictate terms to a king. "Whereas Norman England had been little more than a colonized realm, ruled from above and afar, the England created by the Plantagenets had become one of the most deeply engaged and mature kingdoms in Europe." But of course, this did not come naturally. The country was bled many times by a king who needed funds to finance endless Crusades or wars of conquest or recovery in France. When a Plantagenet king became too autocratic or too unreasonable, his overmighty Dukes, Lords and Barons became strong enough in their own right to chastise and even overthrow him. Even if the king recovered and destroyed his enemies, a future batch of aristocrats grew up to take their place. Only Edward III saw the best way to control his nobles; he made them his friends and allies rather than his antagonists. Too bad Richard II did not follow his lead. But all in all, the people never forgot the lessons of the Magna Carta, and even though Parliament was obliged to bring it up again and again for the kings kept trying to renege, the principles of this great document never faded. It seems that every one of the Plantagenet kings tried to overreach his authority (it was much easier in the beginning) and it is a wonder the country kept finding means to support their demands. My take-away is an almost constant struggle of might against right, and even the most triumphant king left a trail of broken promises, bloody conflicts, and reluctant support. As for the worst of them, it seems their rule must have been almost unbearable. Dan Jones has tackled the dynasty in an all-encompassing format that leaves the reader with a very good understanding of the major events and movements that shook the nation. He has a gift for prose that eludes many historians, and gives this large volume the feel of a well-written novel. But make no mistake:

although the lives of these dynamic rulers sometimes reads like a wild story-tale, this is a serious work presented in an unbiased manner. It will certainly hold up under close scrutiny. Every generation of historians tends to view their subject from a slightly different angle, which makes the reading all the more interesting. I would venture to say that between Dan Jones and the last generation's Thomas B. Costain, a reader could absorb all they need to know about the Plantagenets from these two authors.

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