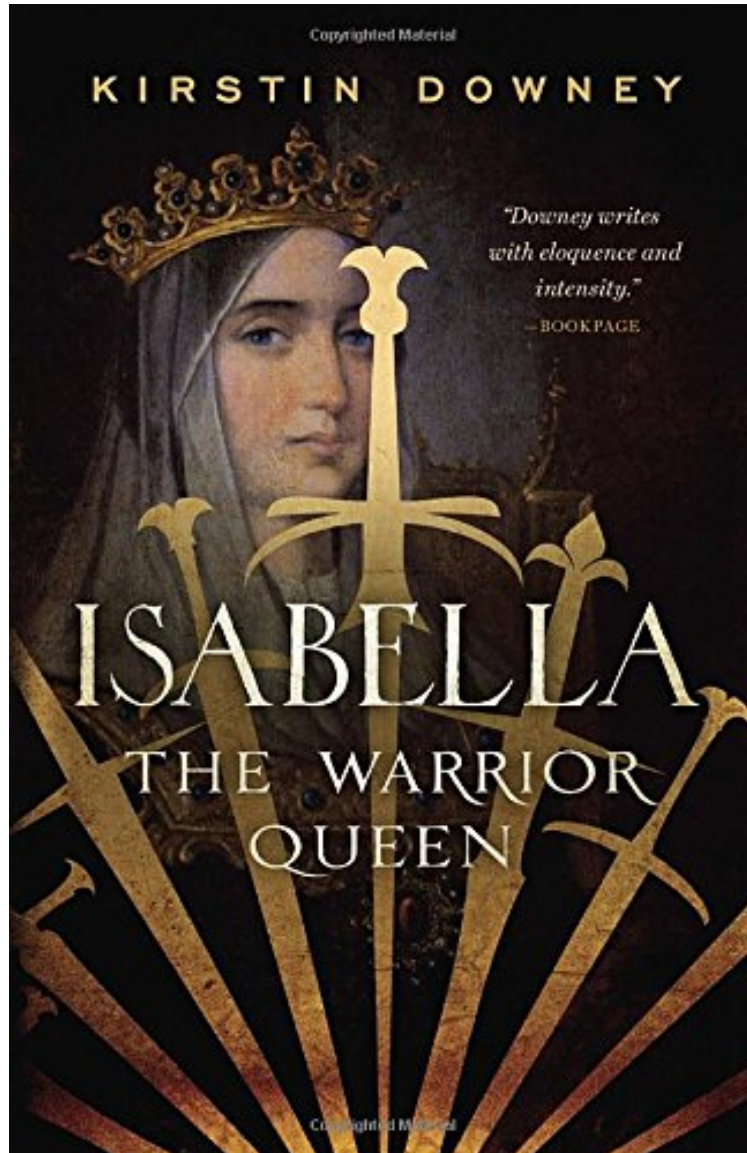


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## Isabella: The Warrior Queen

Kirstin Downey

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**Kirstin Downey : Isabella: The Warrior Queen** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Isabella: The Warrior Queen:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. There is so much more to Isabella than I knew! By Shauna A. Wow, this book finally makes some historical facts make sense. It is incredibly well written and sourced, it was a pleasure to read. I hope it's translated to Spanish and they get a chance to see this version of Isabella, although they may know it all, it's just here we fail to see the big picture. This book was full of Ah-Ha! Moments. The Ottomans were conquering

the world! Having a Muslim state in Spain (Granada) was very dangerous thing... all those ports where the Ottomans would be welcomed! By both Muslims and Jews as happened 700 years earlier. The Ottomans were not an idle threat. It was their goal to conquer Europe, as they were doing in Constantinople, Albania and Greece! And most of the Western Monarchies were too far away to understand the threat. I didn't say the Inquisition is excused, but the "why" is clearer. The Ottomans were a real threat, and I am really glad Isabella and her descendants stopped them. I doubt we would live in a free country if there had been no Isabella. So take her out from behind Ferdinand's undeserved shadow, and show us the real leader to whom we owe so much! I owe the fact that I don't have to wear a burka to Isabella.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Haunting Biography of a Remarkable Leader By Debbie the Librarian This biography had as much color, intrigue and conflict as the best novel you can imagine. Downey succeeds in capturing the essence of Queen Isabella and all the characters that surrounded her including philandering King Ferdinand. Downey's journalistic writing style ensures an action-packed read, a real page turner, which is rare for a biography. The author shows sides of Isabella readers would have never imagined, and then just as readers feel that empathy and understanding for Isabella, Downey reminds us of Isabella's darker side including the Inquisition. This is truly a haunting biography that only gets better and better. The last chapter is the crowning glory of this remarkable biography.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Chance to Feel who Isabella Really Was in History By Deborah Jacob This is one of my favourite biographies. Kirstin Downey has managed to capture Isabella as a complex person and leader while making her story read like a novel. This is a real page turner, an unbelievable story filled with fascinating characters. It is difficult to hear anyone outside of Spain speak Spanish and not think this is because of Isabella. Every character from Ferdinand, to Isabella's trusted supporter Gonzalo, her children and even Christopher Columbus come alive like no other biography I have ever read.

An engrossing and revolutionary biography of Isabella of Castile, the controversial Queen of Spain who sponsored Christopher Columbus's journey to the New World, established the Spanish Inquisition, and became one of the most influential female rulers in history. In 1474, when most women were almost powerless, twenty-three-year-old Isabella defied a hostile brother and a mercurial husband to seize control of Castile and Leon. Her subsequent feats were legendary. She ended a twenty-four-generation struggle between Muslims and Christians, forcing North African invaders back over the Mediterranean Sea. She laid the foundation for a unified Spain. She sponsored Columbus's trip to the Indies and negotiated Spanish control over much of the New World. She also annihilated all who stood against her by establishing a bloody religious Inquisition that would darken Spain's reputation for centuries. Whether saintly or satanic, no female leader has done more to shape our modern world. Yet history has all but forgotten Isabella's influence. Using new scholarship, Downey's luminous biography tells the story of this brilliant, fervent, forgotten woman, the faith that propelled her through life, and the land of ancient conflicts and intrigue she brought under her command.

Finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize Longlisted for the 2015 PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography A Kirkus Best Biography of 2014 A tale of feminist ambition that reads like a pulpy novel. (Don't be a snob that's a good thing.) TIME [An] immensely provocative figure . . . [who] successfully maneuvered in an almost exclusively male world of politics. Kathryn Harrison, The New York Times Book Downey humanizes rather than idealizes her subject. . . . Isabella offers the reader a deeply satisfying portrait of a fascinating and complex woman.

Barbara Mujica, Washington Independent of Books In a fascinating revisionist portrait, Downey sketches a monarch both adored and demonised, and makes the case that Isabella laid the foundation for the first global superpower.

BBC.com From Game of Thrones to Pillars of the Earth, popular culture offers up medieval stories where royal blood grabs for power, where crucial alliances are built between church and state, where important people suddenly fall over dead after a sumptuous meal, poisoned by a hidden rival. But this world did, in fact, exist, and the subject of Kristen Downey's new biography, Queen Isabella of Castile, maneuvered through it with unlikely and thrilling success. . . . Downey writes with eloquence and intensity about Isabella's life, making what could have been a distant history into a dramatic page turner.

BookPage A strong, fascinating woman, Isabella helped to usher in the modern age, and this rich, clearly written biography is a worthy chronicle of her impressive yet controversial life. Kirkus s, (starred review) Kirstin Downey triumphantly restores Isabella to her rightful place in history. This is an engrossing new portrait of one of the most fascinating and controversial women who ever lived.

Amanda Foreman, author of the New York Times bestseller Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire Kirstin Downey makes medieval history read like a modern day thriller. Queen Isabella's life unfolded at the pivotal moment when the old world was astonished by the discovery of the new, and this graceful and insightful biography reveals her crucial role in making it happen.

Deirdre Bair, National Book Award-winning author of Samuel Beckett In this astonishing biography, Kirstin Downey brings to life the most powerful queen in history, whose extraordinary impact on the world for good and ill continues to this day. Downey is particularly good at showing the human side of Isabella, whose life was an unending struggle to assert herself while navigating the countless intrigues and treachery of men who wanted to bring her down, including her own faithless and jealous husband, Ferdinand. It's a fascinating story with great resonance for today.

Lynne Olson, author of the

New York Times bestseller *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh and America's Fight Over World War II* Queen Isabella was the most important woman in the history of Europe, and more than any person of her era she set the stage for modern Europe and America. Using Muslim, Jewish, and Christian sources, Kirstin Downey's gripping biography reveals how Isabella acquired such importance and vividly narrates the incredible drama of her life. Jack Weatherford, author of the New York Times bestseller *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* Perfect for both historical novices and experts in European history, this solidly-researched, engaging description of Isabellas achievements also humanizes her through discussion of her intricate relationships with combative family members and allows readers to see Isabellas fingerprints on Renaissance culture and religion. Publishers Weekly

About the Author KIRSTIN DOWNEY is the author of *The Woman Behind the New Deal*, which was a finalist for the 2009 Los Angeles Times Book Prize. She was one of the writers of the New York Times bestselling *Report of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission*, and was previously a staff writer at the Washington Post, where she shared in the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the Virginia Tech shootings. She was a Neiman fellow at Harvard University in 2001. She is married to Neil Warner Averitt, and together they have five children. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Prologue In a castle on a steep promontory overlooking the windswept plains of north-central Spain, a slender red-haired princess finalized the plans for a ceremony that was likely to throw her nation already teetering toward anarchy into full-fledged civil war. Her name was Isabella, and she had just learned that her older brother, King Enrique known as Enrique El Impotente, which symbolized his failings, both administrative and sexual had died. King Enriques lascivious young wife, who had occupied her time bestowing her favors on the other gentlemen of the court, had produced a child, but many people doubted that the king was actually the child's father. Isabella had decided to end the controversy over the succession by having herself crowned queen instead. The twenty-three-year-old woman was essentially orchestrating a coup. No woman had ruled the combined Kingdoms of Castile and Len, the largest single realm on the Iberian peninsula, in more than two hundred years. In many European countries, it was illegal for a woman to rule alone. On the rare occasions when women reigned, it was usually as regent for a son who was too young to govern. Isabella had a husband, Ferdinand, who was heir to the neighboring Kingdom of Aragon, but he had been traveling when the news of Enriques death arrived, and she had decided to seize the initiative. She would take the crown for herself alone. On that bitter-cold morning in December 1474, Isabella added the finishing touches to an ensemble intentionally designed to impress onlookers with her splendor and regal grandeur. She donned an elegant gown encrusted with jewels; a dark red ruby glittered at her throat. Observers already awed by the pageantry now gasped at an additional sight. On Isabellas orders, a court official walked ahead of her horse, holding aloft an unsheathed sword, the naked blade pointing straight upward toward the zenith, in an ancient symbol of the right to enforce justice. It was a dramatic warning gesture, symbolizing Isabellas intent to take power and to use it forcefully. Acknowledging nothing out of the ordinary, Isabella took a seat on an improvised platform in the square. A silver crown was placed upon her head. As the crowd cheered, Isabella was proclaimed queen. Afterward she proceeded to Segovias cathedral. She prostrated herself in prayer before the altar, offering her thanks and imploring God to help her to rule wisely and well. She viewed the tasks ahead as titanic. She believed Christianity was in mortal danger. The Ottoman Turks were aggressively on the march in eastern and southern Europe. The Muslims retained an entrenched foothold in the Andalusian kingdom of Granada, which Isabella and others feared would prove a beachhead into the rest of Spain. A succession of popes had pleaded in vain for a steely-eyed commander, a stalwart warrior, to step forward to counter the threat. Instead it was a young woman, the mother of a young daughter, who was taking up the banner. The means she used were effective but brutal. For centuries to come, historians would debate the meaning of her life. Was she a saint? Or was she satanic? As she stood in the sun in Segovia that winter afternoon, however, she showed no trace of fear or hesitation. Inspired by the example of Joan of Arc, who had died just two decades before Isabella was born and whose stories were much repeated during her childhood, Isabella similarly began to fashion herself as a religious icon. Inwardly infused with a sense of her own destiny, a faith that was fervent, mystical and intense, Isabella was confident to her core that God was on her side and that He intended her to rule. The questioning would only come much later.