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# Eliza Rose

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Lucy Worsley is best known as a TV historian and this is her first foray into fiction for young people. She has taken the story of Katherine Howard, the fifth of Henry VIII's wives who was beheaded for adultery after a very short marriage. Eliza Rose is a fictional cousin, who first meets Katherine when she is sent to learn to be a lady whose main aim in life would be to catch a rich husband at court. The author paints a convincing picture of a rebellious young girl who leaves her beloved home which she is supposed to save by a good marriage, but whose reputation is already blotted by a 'failed' marriage. Eliza finds Katherine beautiful but difficult, and already aware of her own sexual power. The two girls are sent to become ladies in waiting to Anne of Cleves, number four of Henry's wives, who after a brief marriage is cast aside so that Katherine can become number five. Eliza has had an unhappy conversation with her father who advises her to become Henry's mistress - that was never on the cards, although there is an uncomfortable scene in the story when Henry presses himself up against Eliza. Meanwhile Eliza has met and fallen in love with an illegitimate son who is a page at court, but a marriage to Ned would not save her family home. Katherine is caught in adultery and sent away, accompanied by her cousin, and Eliza discovers the pressure that the marriage to Henry, who is by this time is impotent, has brought on the girl.

This is a well written story as one would expect with a great deal of historical atmosphere and a very rounded and sympathetic heroine. The court with the figure of an ailing and ageing Henry at its centre is very well drawn, in particular the sexually charged atmosphere with so many young and ambitious people around. The story starts with Eliza at twelve, and ends with her in her late teens and grows in depth and detail as she matures, to the level of a teen/adult novel so the understanding needed for the details of court life, Henry's marital difficulties, his supposed impotence, and Katherine's purported solution to the problem is more than the beginning of the book suggests.

Read **Geraldine Brennan's** [interview](#) [4] with **Lucy Worsley**.

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