



Anna of Byzantium (Laurel-Leaf Books)

By Tracy Barrett

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For fans of Joan of Arc and Alexander the Great, comes "a gripping saga of alliances, intrigues, deceits, and treacheries" about Anna Comnena of the Byzantine Empire.

Anna Comnena has every reason to feel entitled. She's a princess, her father's firstborn and his chosen successor. Someday she expects to sit on the throne and rule the vast Byzantine Empire. So the birth of a baby brother doesn't perturb her. Nor do the "barbarians" from foreign lands, who think only a son should ascend to power. Anna is as dismissive of them as are her father and his most trusted adviser--his mother, a manipulative woman with whom Anna studies the art of diplomacy. Anna relishes her lessons, proving adept at checkmating opponents in swift moves of mental chess. But as she matures into a young woman, her arrogance and intelligence threaten her grandmother. Anna will be no one's puppet. Almost overnight, Anna sees her dreams of power wrenched from her and bestowed on her little brother. Bitter at the betrayal, Anna waits to avenge herself, and to seize what is rightfully hers.

Praise for *Anna of Byzantium*:

A *Bulletin* Blue Ribbon Book

An ALA Quick Pick

An ALA Best Book for Young Adults

A *Booklist* Editor's Choice

A *Booklist* Top Ten Historical Fiction Pick

[STAR] "[*Anna of Byzantium*] involves readers in a **gripping saga of alliances, intrigues, deceits, and treacheries** worthy of a place among the tragic myths."

— *The Bulletin*, Starred review

"In the tradition of E. L. Konigsburg's *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver* and Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy* comes this story of a real-life historical figure, Anna Comnena, groomed to be the sovereign of the Byzantine empire...Barrett uses an effective first-person narrative to draw readers into Anna's story, and the author's precise use of detail helps re-create Anna's world, the palace of Constantinople in the ninth century. . . Readers will be caught up in...this exciting read."—*Booklist*, Boxed review

"A fascinating mix of history, mystery, and intrigue."-*The Horn Book Magazine*

"Barrett does a remarkable job of painting moods and emotions with spare, elegant sentences. . . This splendid novel about a neglected period of history is the perfect choice. . . **Hard to imagine it being any better written.**" —VOYA

"This wonderfully engaging novel both entertains and serves as a lively history lesson with its well-researched background, dramatic plot and dimensional characters. Barrett's descriptive, engaging prose will draw readers into a fascinating historical time, filled with political intrigue and a complex, admirable teen protagonist who faces her changing future with an inspiring combination of heart and mind."— *Wichita Eagle*

From the Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This uneven first novel is narrated by Anna, the first-born daughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, poised to inherit the throne. Inspired by the real Anna Comnena (1083-1153) who chronicled her father's reign in *The Alexiad*, the story begins in a convent, where 17-year-old Anna lives in exile. Most of the book flashes back to the princess's upbringing and her attempt on her brother John's life that led to her monastic imprisonment. Although the author successfully evokes an aura of claustrophobia within the castle and convent, she provides few details to distinguish one setting from another. The scenes in the throne room involving visiting dignitaries or soldiers do little to illustrate the pageantry or politics of the age, and the main characters lack definition. With the exception of the Machiavellian grandmother, Anna herself, with her education in history, classics and science, may reverse any preconceived assumptions about the ignorance and lowly position of women in the Middle Ages, but her character as portrayed here is not likable until the book's conclusion. Readers may not stay around long enough to witness her humbling fall from power and transition to scholar. Ages 10-up. (June)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6-10-The 11th-century Byzantine princess Anna Comnena was a remarkable woman. Designated as a child to inherit the throne, she was educated to be a ruler. She learned, from her mother and grandmother, to manipulate the intrigues and factions of the court, and when she was displaced as heir by her brother, she schemed, without success, to assassinate him and regain her position. In this novel, Anna tells her own story, looking back on her former life from the convent to which she has been banished. The first-person device serves well to focus the action on the princess and to build a plausible character study of a brilliant and tempestuous young woman frustrated and embittered by the loss of her expectations of achieving supreme power. However, the book exemplifies the difficulty of writing a historical novel about a real person. Anna's brother is depicted throughout as a spoiled monster who (in contrast to the brilliant Anna) refuses to learn to read. Yet historians characterize John's rule as one of personal virtue and administrative competence and tell that he forgave his sister for her many conspiracies against him. Barrett acknowledges in an afterword that she "changed some of the facts," but, unfortunately, it is the story she spins that will remain with young readers. Still, few books, with the notable exception of Peter Dickinson's *The Dancing Bear* (Little, Brown, 1972; o.p.), have as their backdrop the colorful and historically significant Byzantine Empire.

Shirley Wilton, *Ocean County College, Toms River, NJ*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 5⁺-7. In the tradition of E. L. Konigsburg's *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver* (1973) and Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy* (1994) comes this story of a real-life historical figure, Anna Comnena, groomed to be the sovereign of the Byzantine empire. But events intervene, and the birth of a baby brother is just as bad as the invasion of barbarians. Barrett uses an effective first-person narrative to draw readers into Anna's story, and the author's precise use of detail helps re-create Anna's world, the palace of Constantinople in the ninth century. The story is told in a flashback; Anna has already been exiled to a convent by her brother for trying to overthrow him. Readers will be caught up in Anna's evolution as she moves from loving child and heir of the emperor to pawn in her grandmother's plan to continue as the power behind the throne to discarded princess, stripped of all she holds dear, especially her future. The author's note at the book's conclusion is informative, but it also raises several questions, including why Anna's brother, depicted as nasty and spiteful in the book, became one of the empire's most beloved emperors. The Byzantine empire is

often neglected in studies of the Middle Ages. This exciting read--with a particularly enticing cover--will help change that oversight. *Ilene Cooper*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Helen Arnold:

What do you think about book? It is just for students since they are still students or that for all people in the world, what best subject for that? Merely you can be answered for that query above. Every person has several personality and hobby for each and every other. Don't to be obligated someone or something that they don't want do that. You must know how great and also important the book Anna of Byzantium (Laurel-Leaf Books). All type of book can you see on many methods. You can look for the internet sources or other social media.

Donna Young:

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John Damm:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try to and must have the free time or they will get wide range of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , once we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not a robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the book you have read is usually Anna of Byzantium (Laurel-Leaf Books).

Angel Sullivan:

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try point that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love Anna of Byzantium (Laurel-Leaf Books), you may enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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