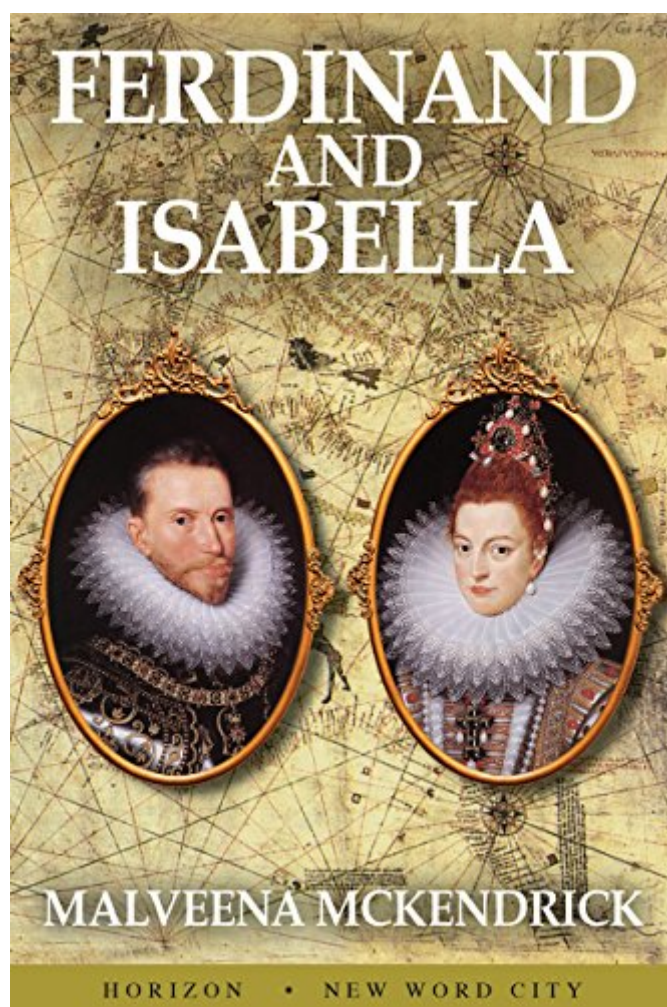


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Ferdinand And Isabella



Synopsis

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain are most often remembered for the epochal voyage of Christopher Columbus. But the historic landfall of October 1492 was only a secondary event of the year. The preceding January, they had accepted the surrender of Muslim Granada, ending centuries of Islamic rule in their peninsula. And later that year, they had ordered the expulsion or forced baptism of Spain's Jewish minority, a cruel crusade undertaken in an excess of zeal for their Catholic faith. Europe, in the century of Ferdinand and Isabella, was also awakening to the glories of a new age, the Renaissance, and the Spain of the "Catholic Kings" - as Ferdinand and Isabella came to be known - was not untouched by this brilliant revival of learning. Here, from the noted historian Malveena McKendrick, is their remarkable story.

Book Information

File Size: 13950 KB

Print Length: 154 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: New Word City, Inc.; 1 edition (October 26, 2015)

Publication Date: October 26, 2015

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01781D3DE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #389,579 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #77

inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Spain & Portugal #129 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Europe > Spain & Portugal #404 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Royalty

Customer Reviews

I bought this because I didn't know much more about Ferdinand and Isabella than that they financed Columbus. If you read only one book on this fascinating couple and their era, it would be good to spend your time with this one. It's comprehensive and packed with interesting detail, but also a fast

read. I was amazed at what these two clever people accomplished in their lifetimes -- profoundly changing Spain and the whole world forever. The book starts with a fairy tale-like story about the teenaged prince Ferdinand sneaking into Castille to meet Isabella. He was disguised as a tender of mules for a group of traveling merchants and even had to wait on his "masters" to keep up the disguise. The trip was dangerous because the reigning King Henry (Isabella's brother) and others in Castille strongly opposed the marriage. When the couple were married, they had to borrow money to pay for the week-long celebrations. The book provides interesting background on the history of the Iberian peninsula, which had been mostly ruled by Muslims for 500 years. There is a good summary of the reconquest of Spain from the Moors by the Christian kingdoms starting in the 1100s. At the time of the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, Moors still controlled the Kingdom of Grenada in the south. The author also describes some of the incompetence and poor behavior of previous Spanish monarchs -- especially Isabella's father and brother -- that had crippled the Kingdom of Castille before. It took ten long years from the time of their marriage until Ferdinand and Isabella were able to control all of Spain. They struggled through a civil war, then had to reduce the power of aristocratic factions.

Ferdinand and Isabella, was an amazing royal couple, the type rarely seen in the history of nations. Full of energy, determination and devotion to their people and to each other, they lifted old Spain from feudal anarchy into the European renaissance in a short lifetime. One cannot help but wonder how did they achieve all this in such a short period, and so efficiently. Malveena Mcknendrick, the author of this book, with a fluent but brief style tells us their story - a bright and optimistic one, but with a somewhat troubled ending. One can only marvel at Isabella's sacrifices riding on horseback (often while pregnant) through the plains and hills of central Spain trying to unite her people and motivate them into a more independent and modern life style. She was fighting not only the remaining Moors but an old feudal system in the clutches of lords, dukes and financial giants of the previous age. Thanks to her religious strength and a supportive husband, she was able to overcome huge obstacles and win the love and respect of her people. The tail end of the struggle, however, was tedious at both the national as well as the personal level. Liberating Granada, the last territory under the Moors, was bloody and merciless ending with a crushing defeat of the remaining Moors. In a way it was also embarrassing; after all, those Arab rulers had been in Spain for more than 750 years and were nearly, if not entirely, as Spanish as the original natives. One feels the author has underplayed the harshness with which the Spaniards dealt with this remaining minority. It was not unusual to see the Spaniards publicly butchering men, women and even children in the course of

fighting.

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