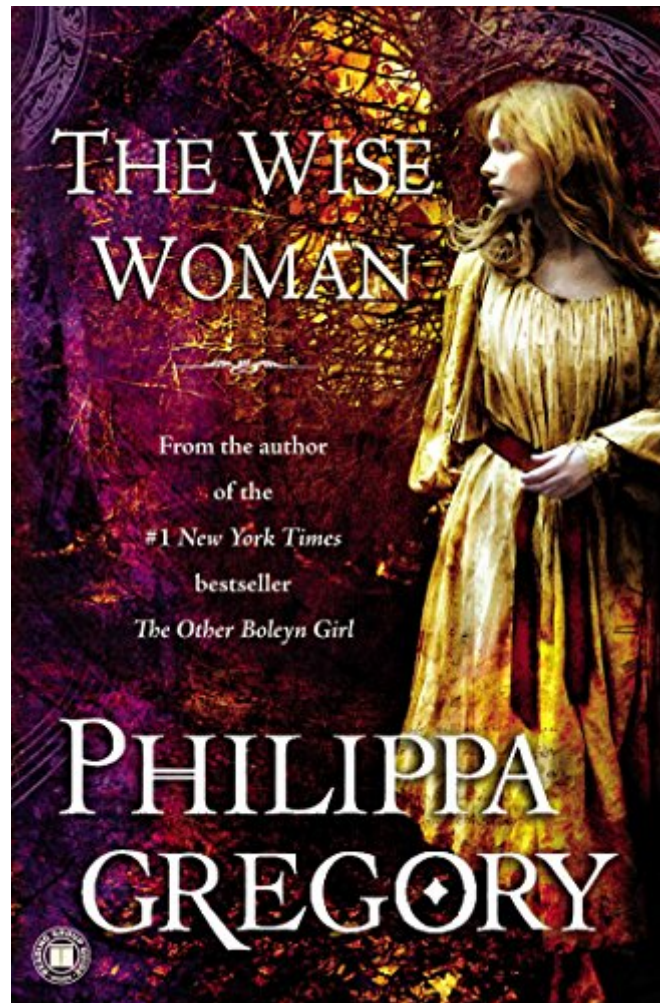


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The Wise Woman: A Novel (Historical Novels)



Synopsis

#1 > bestselling author Philippa Gregory weaves an unforgettable tale of a young woman's sorcery and desire in Henry VIII's England, where magic, lust, and power are forever intertwined. Growing up as an abandoned outcast on the moors, young Alys's only company is her cruel foster mother, Morach, the local wise woman who is whispered to practice the dark arts. Alys joins a nunnery to escape the poverty and loneliness she has felt all her life, but all too soon her sanctuary is destroyed. King Henry VIII's followers burn the holy place to the ground, and Alys only just manages to escape with her life, haunted by the screams of her sisters as they burned to death. She finds work in a castle not far from where she grew up as an old lord's scribe, where she falls obsessively in love with his son Hugo. But Hugo is already married to a proud woman named Catherine. Driven to desperation by her desire, she summons the most dangerous powers Morach taught her, but quickly the passionate triangle of Alys, Hugo, and Catherine begins to explode, launching them into uncharted sexual waters. The magic Alys has conjured now has a life of its own—a life that is horrifyingly and disastrously out of control. Is she a witch? Since heresy means the stake, and witchcraft the rope, Alys is in mortal danger, treading a perilous path between her faith and her own power.

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Customer Reviews

I've been a Phillipa Gregory fan for at least eight years now and loved every book she has written but this one was harder for me to get through...I love the imagery and plot twists but this plot got really strange and even odd in part, and it was the first time I didn't like the main character.

Normally I like Phillippas books but I don't care for the theme of this series occult and witchcraft not my cup of tea

She's a great author. does her historical homework and makes you feel emotionally there.

Not one of the best this writer has to offer. A worthwhile read, but it did not hold my attention as most of the author's books do. Glad I read it but will not keep it!

This book started out well enough. Gregory always has a flair for imagery, and this book is no exception. However, about a hundred pages in I found these folks began to suffer from what I like to call dumb a** character syndrome. Particularly, the main character-Alys/Ann. It seemed that she frequently chose the most difficult route for the sake of the story, ignoring common sense and sanity. Right from the start, Gregory asks us for too much. To believe that Alys loves a woman as her mother, then in turn, loves almost on sight the man she knows to be responsible for her death. And what of her being able to manipulate people, places and events with the aid of candlewax dolls? Alys, our brilliant heroine comes up with the idea that, in order for her and the man she loves to be together, she'll have him impregnate her, so that his wife will be sated and content with their child and hero and heroine can be alone. Umm, what? Why not put you and Hugo together, ask for the love and affection of his father, etc. etc.? That took me about two seconds. Hmmm. And as for that ending, I was far from moved. I felt cheated. Alys hardly seemed ready for martyrdom up to that point. I thought that section a dream and looked for more and realized the book was over. More than once in this book I wished for the death of not only the main character, but several others, they seemed so vile. And we won't even GET into the grotesque imagery in a few of the scenes, most notably that of Catherine in labor. I liked to have vomited. And that from a Stephen King fan. Gregory fan's, stay away from this AND Wideacre. Look for other works, if you want quality from Gregory.

I wasn't prepared for the considerable suspension of disbelief required to read this novel. About half way through, a startling scene makes it clear that we have left the realms of reality and taken a turn to the fantastical. (Those who have read the book will recognize the moment referred to.) From that point forward, what had been a fairly standard work of historical fiction became a work of fantasy. Just be ready. Gregory does her usual good job creating the world of the 1500's and I appreciate her efforts at historical realism. Her characters are essentially believable and human, including Our Heroine, a young nun, Alys, who has fled her convent as it is burned down around her ears by Our Anti-Hero who later becomes the object of her sexual obsession. The underlying theme of the entire work is Alys's ambitious determination to become the Lady of the Manor, despite not being nobly born and there being a rival already occupying that position. Alys's skill with healing herbs shortly morphs into perilous experiments with dark magic in order to achieve her aim. She scruples at nothing in performing magical operations to enthrall Our Hero and disadvantage her antagonists. It is a truism that such magical acts most often rebound against the conjurer, as they do here, to her ultimate undoing. I appreciated Gregory bringing the narrative full circle with the final scene mirroring the opening events. The action moves briskly, the dialogue rings true and I remained interested in the plot development throughout. Unlike others, I was not in the least offended by the sexual descriptions which were necessary to advance the plot. Despite the fact that Alys is an unscrupulous, grasping, ruthless protagonist, I was still interested in finding out what happened to her and felt the conclusion to be quite satisfactory. This is not a serious work of historical fiction a la Penman, for example, but not a trashy bodice ripper either. Entertaining, but ultimately silly.

I couldn't put this book down. And yet, when I was finished, I was extremely disappointed. (It's kind of like eating fast food--you enjoy it while you're eating it and then afterwards you just feel "ughhhh.") There were so many loose ends that never got tied up. Some truly fascinating ideas/thoughts/dreams that aren't explained. Prophecies that didn't come true combined with ones that did. The love/hate she had for Hugo, the way she felt about Mother Hildebrande--all never really developed. Unlike Anne Bolyen, whose obsession for power I understood, I couldn't really understand and sympathize with a girl who at first felt happy and satisfied because the convent was "clean" and then, once she was in the castle, suddenly would stop at nothing to reach the highest possible position. Her lust for power seemed to come, like her lust for Hugo, from out of nowhere. The ending of the book was cruel and too quick--so little about Alys was resolved before this surprising and disappointing ending. I didn't like the Wildacre series--I hope SOME of Gregory's

books live up to the quality of The Other Boleyn Girl!!

The early Phillippa Gregory books are not as good as her later one. Guess she grew better as time went on.

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