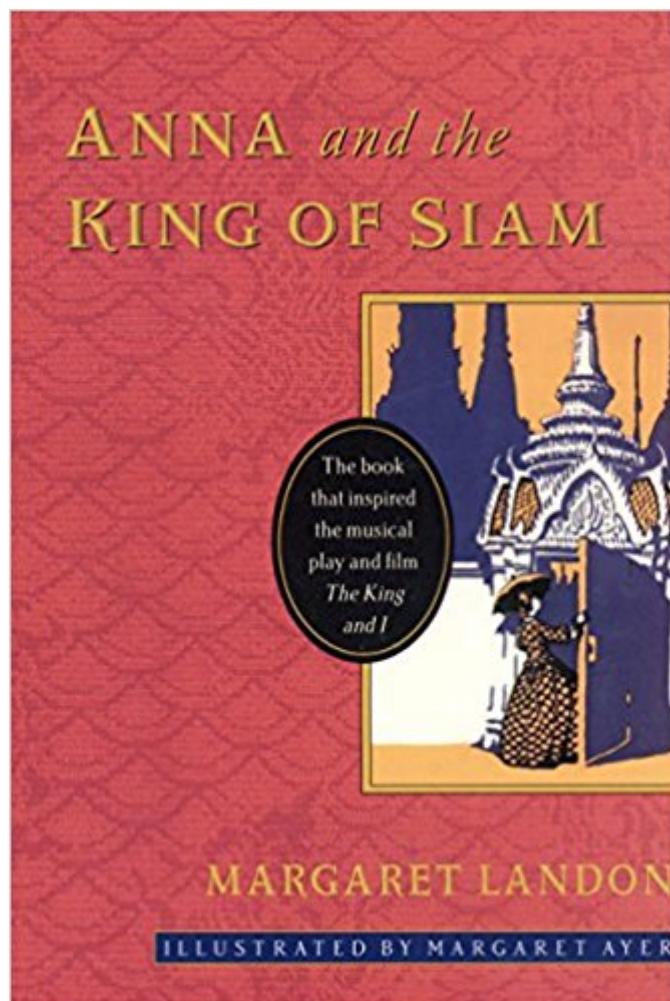


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Anna And The King Of Siam



Synopsis

Anna Leonowens, a proper Englishwoman, was an unlikely candidate to change the course of Siamese (Thai) history. A young widow and mother, her services were engaged in the 1860's by King Mongkut of Siam to help him communicate with foreign governments and be the tutor to his children and favored concubines. Stepping off the steamer from London, Anna found herself in an exotic land she could have only dreamed of lush landscape of mystic faiths and curious people, and king's palace bustling with royal pageantry, ancient custom, and harems. One of her pupils, the young prince Chulalongkorn, was particularly influenced by Leonowens and her Western ideals. He learned about Abraham Lincoln and the tenets of democracy from her, and years later he would become Siam's most progressive king. He guided the country's transformation from a feudal state to a modern society, abolishing slavery and making many other radical reforms. Weaving meticulously researched facts with beautifully imagined scenes, Margaret Landon recreates an unforgettable portrait of life in a forgotten exotic land. Written more than fifty years ago, and translated into dozens of languages, Anna and the King of Siam (the inspiration for the magical play and film The King and I) continues to delight and enchant readers around the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An enchanting book. The author wears her scholarship with grace, and the amazing story she has to tell is recounted with humor and understanding. And what a story it is!" -- "Atlantic Monthly" An inviting escape into an unfamiliar, exotic past. Ms. Landon's is one calculated to transport us

instantly."-- "New York Times

12 1.5-hour cassettes --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The tragedy of this book is that it was turned into a classic film. On its own merits, the book is interesting, informative and entertaining. But we have seen the film so often, with its dramatization of the main points, the music and the characters, that the book falls a bit flat by comparison. It's a pity, as the book shades in the characters far more fully, and is far more realistic than the dramatization. It must have been a sensation at the time of publishing, but from this vantage-point it was a bit of a yawn.

This book gets boring rather quickly. I bought it after seeing a performance of the revival of the musical made from Anna's life in "Siam" which I enjoyed enormously. This book had none of the charm.

Novelized account of Anna Leonowens, tutor to King Rama V (Chulalongkorn.) Landon fictionalized the diaries of Leonowens (The English Governess at the Siamese Court .) Leonowens herself portrayed the events with a lot of editing or outright deception, according to many. The account Landon gives here may stray far from reality, but as a novel it worked so exceptionally well that it became beloved (outside of Thailand where is it not in favor, portraying the king in a less-than-perfect light in a country that has deep reverence bordering on worship of their royals.) Landon was a skilled writer, but none of her other books reached the success of "Anna." A fictionalized account of her own missionary experience in Asia (Never Dies the Dream) has conflict and well-drawn characters but falls flat compared to the rich material from Leonowens' own eventful life. Landon did good research on Leonowens and did impart some of the character of the self-made (and self-styled) adventurer into the novel. The musical did not fully elucidate the book's drama, to Landon's satisfaction and she felt it was cheapened by the Rogers and Hammerstein version--little of Mongkut's complexity comes through but still--it's loved. I've read many versions of Leonowens' story, some purchased in Thailand and none comes close to the Landon novel, though it may be lacking in truth in spots. The theme of slavery is well handled and the scene of the brass door and the shackled slave and her son is one you can't forget. Nor the execution of Tuptim and her monk lover.

This classic narrative is an eye-opener to the actual characters we only have known from the musical, "The King and I." It was heartening to see the tremendous effects of Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation on the Siamese government.

I really enjoyed this book! It gave a more in depth character development for when I watch "The King and I" and "Anna and the King" which are both fantastic movie adaptions of this book!

Anna Leonowens had a very interesting adventure to tell, providing it's true. The King of Siam of that time denied its truth, and the king's following. Because of my knowing a deposed Thailand princess, and deported to the USA, and my personal experience in Thailand, I tend to believe the story is true. However, she writes poorly and makes her book difficult to read.

Excellent story, what history to life for me. What a fascinating, strong, determined woman. Felt like you were an insider in the Royal Palace. I would most definitely recommend this book.

I enjoyed the book as a story and for the atmosphere it creates. I was in Bangkok and I could imagine the way life was at that time. Historically it may not be 100% accurate but the atmosphere that make it real.

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