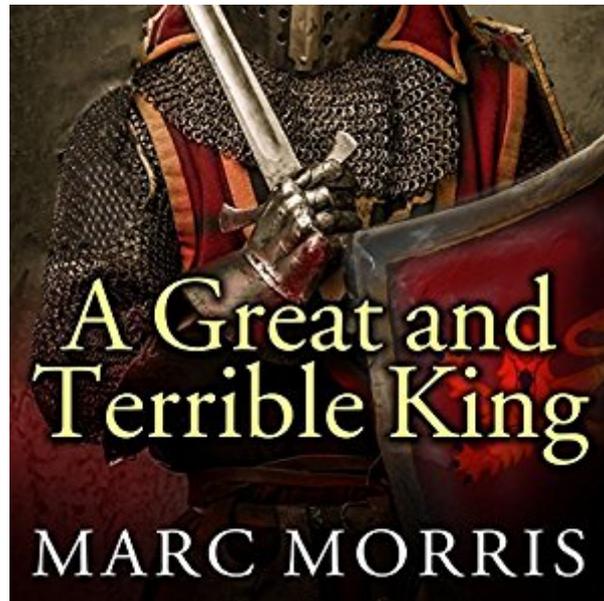


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A Great And Terrible King: Edward I And The Forging Of Britain



Synopsis

Edward I is familiar to millions as "Longshanks", conqueror of Scotland and nemesis of Sir William Wallace (in Braveheart). Yet this story forms only the final chapter of the king's action-packed life. Earlier, Edward had defeated and killed the famous Simon de Montfort, traveled to the Holy Land, and conquered Wales. He raised the greatest armies of the Middle Ages and summoned the largest parliaments. Notoriously, he expelled all the Jews from his kingdom. In this audiobook, Marc Morris examines afresh the forces that drove Edward throughout his relentless career: his character, his Christian faith, and his sense of England's destiny - a sense shaped in particular by the tales of the legendary King Arthur. He also explores the competing reasons that led Edward's opponents (including Robert Bruce) to resist him.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Good:DETAIL: This book has been well-researched and is engaging to read. It is not easy to do this when writing about medieval historical figures, but Morris almost makes it look easy. It's all fine and good to see Edward I portrayed in Braveheart and come away with the idea that he was a ruthless monarch, but if you want to learn more about this ruler - how complicated his life was, how much he devoted himself to religion, family, and to uniting Britain - this is a great book to examine.**STORYTELLING:** I learned loads of useful facts and stories about Edward in this book. It was interesting to see how many times he almost died young: Crusade, fall from collapsing floor in a cathedral, illness, etc. I especially enjoyed the chapter about Edward using the Arthurian legend and staging a reburial of King Arthur to prop up his throne. Great insight into medieval propaganda and

maintaining one's power through the use of myth and legend. Most of the time, it's good, highly-interesting history to read. OVERALL: I think Edward could just as easily be called the Hammer of the Welsh in addition to the effigy on his tomb: HAMMER OF THE SCOTS. There's a lot of compelling, little-known history in this book and it's worth telling. The Not-So-Good: 1) Some grammatical errors, especially in the first 1/3 of the book. Try to overlook these. 2) A bit dry sometimes. This is not quite an exhaustive history, but there are sections where you'll find yourself wishing Morris would move on to something else. The book is written chronologically, which is a great strength, but there are inevitably going to be a few dry spells. This is especially so if you're not already familiar with some of the history from that period or with English geography.

Marc Morris' work was been advertised as the first biography of Edward I in years, and in many ways it may have been a necessary one. Edward I 'Longshanks' stands today as one arguably one of the most notorious and despised Kings of Medieval England (perhaps in part with good reason), many people may know him only as the baddie in Braveheart. Some (as a result of the said movie) have seem even to regard him as a 'pagan' King. Morris explores Edward's life in its entirety to present a more well-rounded view of Edward the man, far removed from the diabolical movie baddie. From his birth and early childhood, to his turbulent teenage years in which the England was in the grip of political upheaval, to his ascension and reign spanning thirty years, revealing Edward's varying roles as warrior, crusader, ruler, lawmaker, friend, adversary, and faithful husband. Perhaps most significantly, the author generally tries to avoid the pitfalls of judging the King by modern standards, though I did not feel that this prevented him from being critical upon occasion. One reviewer said that this biography 'bordered on hagiography'. I disagree, not everything Morris says about Edward was positive as far as I could see, and sometimes a rather unflattering picture of the King or Prince emerges. This said, the author does shed light on some of the perhaps more controversial and unpalatable actions of Edward by the standards of the time, by which they might not have been considered so heinous. For instance, the infamous massacre at Berwick upon Tweed, as terrible as it was, was consistent with the medieval laws of war regarding sieges.

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