



Corfe Castle

Jocelyn Murray

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Genre: Teen/Young Adult - Historical Fiction

Age Range: 12 and up

England 1643...

Fifteen-year-old Anna Moore discovers an antique mirror that whisks her back in time to seventeenth-century England.

The year is 1643 and the English Civil War is underway. Anna finds herself at Corfe Castle with the Bankes family when the castle is laid siege. Against all odds, she helps the family defend the castle from rebel forces who hopelessly outnumber them. What will happen and will Anna be able to return to her own time?

Inspired by true historical events, *The Gilded Mirror: Corfe Castle*, is a tale that crosses centuries in time through the forces of a mysterious mirror. It is a story of friendship, courage in the face of adversity, and the indomitable human spirit.

Corfe Castle Details

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Author : Jocelyn Murray

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From Reader Review Corfe Castle for online ebook

Julie Scott says

Nice little book about a girl who travels back in time via a magical mirror she finds in storage at her grandmother's house. The characters are engaging, and I found this to be a very good read and a nice piece of escapist literature. I may get the second book to see what happens next.

Lady Entropy says

It might be because I'm not the target audience for this book, but I just couldn't get into it. There is obviously careful research gone into the whole thing, from food to clothes, but the whole thing feels rushed and not true in some parts.

I stopped reading it, and decided I had better books to read, so automatic one star from me.

Michael says

This was a really engaging and entertaining read. The descriptions were particularly strong and I was totally immersed into the environment and characters. As a history buff, I really enjoyed reading about life at that time and the writing was smooth, well edited and easy to follow. Highly recommended and I think it's a book that will appeal to all ages.

Tony says

I loved this book. The time travel and adventure kept me glued to the story. I am not sure if this or the third book in the series was my favorite, but I liked the history portrayed in all 3 books.

Rob Slaven says

As is usual, I received this book through some mechanism by which I didn't actually have to pay for it. The author approached me for a review and true to that desire I give my honest opinions below.

The plot of this little novel is fairly standard escapist juvenile literature. A young girl finds a mirror and uses it to travel to another time and place and thereupon has adventures of an educational variety as she witnesses an episode from the English Civil War.

Since this is youth literature, I judge it by two basic criteria. The first centers around what age group of children would actually wish to read it and find it engaging. The second amounts to whether I would want my own children to be exposed to the content.

On the first account, this book is rather a tough sell. I have an 8 and a 14-year-old and they both turned up

their noses and there wasn't much I could say to engage their interest. Having read the book myself, it does go into some interesting tidbits of history but does take a considerable amount of time to get started. Any real action begins at page 80 of 200 leaving the text before that simply as background and local color. While this is educational, it doesn't grab the reader from the beginning so younger perusers will likely find this initially tedious unless they have a keen interest in life during this time period.

In the area of content, this book is delightfully devoid of sex, drugs and other negative influences. There is some brief violence as a few soldiers die but this is, after all, a war we're talking about. Educationally speaking, this book is meticulous in its coverage of a section of history we just don't hear much about on this side of the pond. In a genre usually dominated by domestic history, it is refreshing to read from an author who remembers that the rest of the world has history too.

To summarize, like other titles by this author, Corfe Castle is delightfully educational and does dual duty as both entertainment and erudition. She brings a level of sophistication to the juvenile literature genre that's atypical and refreshing. Unfortunately, in this case, I see a potential problem with engagement of the audience. They'll be entertained if they hang in there long enough and learn something along the way but they'll have to get there first and that will take some doing.

BookwormBritty says

I gave this book two stars for its premise, but I couldn't actually read it because of the awkward wording and grammatical errors. If you're the kind of person who isn't bothered by that, the story itself might be worth reading, but I really wouldn't know.

Stephen Fraser says

This is a beautifully written story about a fifteen-year-old girl who steps through a mirror and steps back in time to a castle in seventeenth-century England. Certain events of the book are based on actual events that actually happened. It is a great fiction story that is based on historic events. The author does a great job recreating the castle and the characters. This is a book I would recommend to any teen that wants to read a story and learn about a historical event at the same time.

Richard says

Synopsis: Fifteen-year-old Anna is exploring her grandmothers house that is full of antiques. She discovers an old mirror, when she wipes the surface she finds herself in Corfe Castle in the year 1643. She meets up with Elizabeth Bankes, daughter of the family that owns the castle, Elizabeth believes Anna is her cousin and gives Anna a tour of the castle and the estate. The two soon become friends.

The English Civil war comes to the castle as the Parliamentarian Roundheads surround the castle and lay it under siege. The girls help the family defend the castle, but even if Anna survives will she ever be able to get back to her own time?

The story is based on the real-life siege of Corfe Castle and the Bankes family that lived there.

Review: In full disclosure I won this book in a Goodreads Giveaway. The book came beautifully wrapped

and made a wonderful early Christmas present, thank you Jocelyn Murray for doing that.

The first eighty pages of this book felt like a guided tour of the castle, complete with re-enactment actors. It was nice to see the world brought to life by the various characters and to see medieval times being taught in an informal, easy to follow and fun way.

The language is semi-authentic with the use of words such as "Aye", "Tis" and "O", although it doesn't go to extremes and is easy to read and understand.

The book is probably targeted at girls aged between ten and sixteen, although people outside of the target group can enjoy it as well. The writing style is fairly simplistic, but it does make it a quick and easy read and it does teach the medieval world to its audience in an easy to understand way.

There was some mild violence and one use of "William the Bastard", also known as William the Conqueror, making it unsuitable for very young readers.

The characters were well written and the main ones undergo some development despite being a fairly short book. They really bring the medieval world to life and make it seem very interesting. Although they were fairly simplistic with the enemies being a one-dimensional, pantomime villains who enjoy doing evil things and are only capable of being bad, where as the good characters only want to do good things and feel bad when they are forced to kill while defending their home.

It is also one of those stories where the children take huge risks and do things that seem unlikely. For example at one point the girls sneak out of the castle and into the enemy camp, where they steal some supplies, they are not spotted by either side.

The book is nicely presented with some illustrations and photos of the castle. I liked the front cover that has a illustration of the castle being viewed through the Gilded Mirror.

Overall I would say this was a fun and quick read, targeted at teenage girls that are interested in history, but can be enjoyed by others as well.

Helena says

I found this book a good way to learn a bit about the History of England (being Portuguese it's not something a really know about).

Easy and fun, but a bit slow to start with.

Brittany Elsen says

Original Review: <http://thepassionatebookworms.com/the...>

The Gilded Mirror is a historical fantasy that includes time traveling through a mirror. It has a very Chronicles of Narnia feel to it because all of the adventure, the British element, and the time travel. On that same note it is historical fiction so it's less fantasy than the Chronicles of Narnia. I didn't know much about this historical element so I found it a very informative and fun read.

I usually like historical fiction but I also like when I have a little background knowledge about that certain time period or place. I know nothing about British history or the Corfe Castle and I liked finding out more about it. It was a little slow to start off but once the adventure began I got into it more!

I would definitely recommend this book to my students who love British literature or are looking for an adventure like the Chronicles of Narnia!

Darlene Ferland says

What a wonderful way to actually feel as if you have lived in 1643! Jocelyn Murray has written a book that can be read by young adults or old adults and anyone in between... I know the concept has been used before but the manner in which Ms. Murray weaves her story captivates the reader. I didn't want to put it down!

Christopher says

I bought this for my 12 year old daughter as an alternative to the dystopian fiction that kids seem hooked on these days and when she took a break, I grabbed it and started reading it myself. What a great surprise! I occasionally read historical fiction so am familiar with the genre (and this is all based on a remarkable true story), but I never remotely thought I'd get pulled into this like I did. Murray is a *very* talented writer and story-teller and I'm again jealous of another author. If there indeed were punctuation and grammar issues when the book was first offered as one reviewer complains of, they have since been fixed, I noticed none.

The plot is simple: Anna, a bright and curious 15 year old, discovers an old mirror in her grandmother's house and magically steps into 1643, smack in the middle of the English Civil War. In the ensuing adventure she begins to learn the meaning of courage. Murray doesn't spend time explaining how or why this happens, but gets right into the telling of the story.

The first half of the book is very descriptive, thoroughly fleshing out the environment of 17th century English castle-life. Foods, clothes, customs, the darkness of the nights without electric lights, the quietness of the days without planes and cars, and all the little things that might not occur to you at first thought are explained in thoughtful detail:

Anna looked out over the landscape. It rose and dipped for miles, rugged and rocky, then soft and velvety as the meadows blended into the craggy heath. It was hard to believe that something so pretty had been witness to something so ugly. But then she remembered the spider and the butterfly they had just passed moments before...

Around the mid-point of the book, the excitement begins, and Anna is pulled into the conflict as she tries to find her role while helping her "cousin" Elizabeth defend the castle from a besieging army. There is excitement, trickery, humor, doubt, and fear and a poignant moment when she comes face to face with the evils of war as she struggled for her very life:

Tossing hot embers was just as difficult when Anna watched in shock as several of the enemy caught fire. One of them had reached the top of the wall, his roughly gloved hands grasping the battlements. His helmet must have fallen off in the climb. Stepping back briefly in surprise, she grabbed one of the embers with her gloved hands and threw it in his face. He ducked a moment so that the smoldering piece glanced off his head. One spark was all it took for his hair to ignite. For a moment Anna could do nothing but stare in horror as

his hair caught fire and burned wildly. The pungent smell of scorched hair and flesh was revolting, but she still could not avert her eyes as she watched in morbid fascination, the flames engulfing his face like a malevolent halo crowning a god of the underworld. Then their eyes locked in an excruciating moment that Anna would never forget as long as she lived. In the depths of those liquid orbs, wild with panic and fear, Anna saw the awareness of his mortality flash before him, and the vain grasping at a life that was fast slipping away. He stared into her eyes, pleading for something, but what? And as the fire consumed him, he lost his grasp and footing, and a blood-curdling scream escaped him as he plunged to his death below.

And as the story progresses to its finish, Murray inserts some fine examples of insightful and touching writing:

"Time stops when one is ill. Gravely ill." Anna told her. She was remembering a time when she had been sick with rheumatic fever as a young child. Her joints had been so inflamed she could not even walk to the bathroom. Her father had to carry her. The pain was a blur now, but time seemed to have stopped then. Pain and illness have a way of pulling you out of time's current and leaving you momentarily by the wayside. Your world shrinks to a string of moments, held together by an acute awareness of nothing, save your own overwhelming predicament.

The Gilded Mirror: Corfe Castle is a surprise gem, a clean and healthy well-written alternative to what's commonly offered to teens (and adults!) these days. Murray obviously loves her subject and is as good a writer of historical fiction as is out there.

Rosie Amber says

This book is a great read for the teenage market and upwards. It is the first book in a series of historical fantasy travel writing. I chose this book because I have had several holidays in Dorset and in particular the Isle of Purbeck where Corfe and its castle are built. Most roads on the Isle lead through Corfe and it is a magnificent sight high up on the hill. Parts of Dorset today make me feel like I'm stepping through to a different world particularly the rural hideaways, so the descriptive scenes in the book worked well for me. Anna is a 15 year old girl who steps through a magical mirror that she finds in her Grandmother's house and has a wonderful adventure in Corfe Castle during the English Civil War. Roundheads battled Royalists and Anna's adventure is a good historical lesson for any young reader. This book is the first in the series with more adventures for Anna to be had in Vesuvius and Constantinople in the second and third books.
