



## Royal Mistress

*Anne Easter Smith*

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From the author of *A Rose for the Crown* and *Daughter of York* comes another engrossing historical novel of the York family in the Wars of the Roses, telling the fascinating story of the rise and fall of the final and favorite mistress of Edward IV.

Jane Lambert, the quick-witted and alluring daughter of a silk merchant, is twenty-two and still unmarried. When Jane's father finally finds her a match, she's married off to the dull, older silk merchant William Shore—but her heart belongs to another. Marriage doesn't stop Jane Shore from flirtation, however, and when the king's chamberlain and friend, Will Hastings, comes to her husband's shop, Will knows his King will find her irresistible.

Edward IV has everything: power, majestic bearing, superior military leadership, a sensual nature, and charisma. And with Jane as his mistress, he also finds true happiness. But when his hedonistic tendencies get in the way of being the strong leader England needs, his life, as well as that of Jane Shore and Will Hastings, hang in the balance.

This dramatic tale has been an inspiration to poets and playwrights for 500 years, and told through the unique perspective of a woman plucked from obscurity and thrust into a life of notoriety, *Royal Mistress* is sure to enthrall today's historical fiction lovers as well.

## Royal Mistress Details

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Author : Anne Easter Smith

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# From Reader Review Royal Mistress for online ebook

## Annette says

### Summary:

Jane Lambert is the daughter of a textile mercer. At age 22 she is unmarried. Her parents, especially her pious and controlling father wants her to be married and out of his home. Any sexuality in his view is despicable and sin. When he looks at his daughter his eyes show hatred. On the other hand Jane's younger sister Isabel is the father's darling. Jane is happy to be unmarried; although she pines for love, or rather a lover who will sweep her off her feet and out of the controlling home of her father. Jane's romantic nature, coupled with her sensual and beautiful body, as well as her charming personality, makes her intoxicating to any virile man.

Jane's father arranges a marriage for her. Her new husband is also a mercer, William Shore. Jane is prompt in the duties of working in a mercer's trade. She is appalled at being married to a dour-faced icy-cold man. Their union is a mistake for both.

Edward IV is King of England, his wife is Elizabeth Woodville, they have a large family. Edward IV, as typical of king's takes a mistress. His choice is Jane. The beginning of their relationship is lust, but love takes root.

### My Thoughts:

I kept having to tell myself while reading this story that Jane was very young and naive. She was also a bit full of herself---because she was a natural beauty, and added to her nature a sensuality that oozed Marilyn Monroe. Men naturally fell in lust with her and tried to bed her.

She thought as a young woman that lust and sex equaled love. Not.

Lesson #1. Lust and sex is not love in and of itself. Sex should be an expression of love, or at least it shouldn't be confused as love itself.

Jane hadn't learned this life experience, yet.

### What I liked about this story.

I knew little about Jane Shore. Recently I've read books about Edward IV, Elizabeth Woodville, Richard III. Yet, when Jane was mentioned it was as the kings whore. Such a tart name.

Jane's character has a transformation.

It was difficult to not like her. I could identify with her naiveness in her youth, and having a realization of how life really is as I grew older. She is a likable person. She has a great love for the down-trodden---for those in need, and she gave graciously. Her gracious giving left her with an additional reputation that helped. There is a bit of symbolism in this story which I didn't expect. Often rats were seen scurrying. Rats are opportunists, scavengers, they eat whatever they can devour. This idea carried over to the people in royal court. Opportunists and scavengers, wanting to devour any person that outshone them, was a hindrance to or a threat, or was in their way of advancement.

I learned about the mercer's trade, court life, the life of a mistress, 15th century England, culture of women both in the royal court and in civilian life.

Richard III is not displayed as a complete villain.

### What I disliked about this story.

One thing that I thought could have been written more tastefully is the sex scenes. I felt they were sensationalistic-----over-done and annoying. I'm aware that other reader's will love this, but I didn't.

Over-all I gave this story 4 stars. Even with my one dislike, I recommend this story!

Thank you to Touchstone and Simon and Schuster for my free review copy!

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### **Jill Lapin-Zell says**

Anne Easter Smith has done it again.

As a huge fan of Anne Easter Smith's, I eagerly looked forward to reading "Royal Mistress" after thoroughly enjoying each of her previous novels. I have yet to come across an author who makes history and its characters come alive the way she does.

This is the story of Jane Shore, the favored mistress of Edward IV. It is a compelling story about not just the mistress of a king, but much more than that. It is the story of a multi-faceted and intriguing woman who learns that there are many facets to love. She learns about courtly love, intense and passionate love, and the love of family and friends. Jane takes away a valuable lesson from each relationship she has, from her father to the king, to the love of her life. And each of these relationships contributes to the strong and independent woman she finally becomes.

If you've enjoyed her previous novels, you will love this one as well. It does not disappoint. One thing that I particularly enjoyed, is how she bridges each of her novels with the previous ones, tying her stories together like a tapestry or mosaic, yet you do not necessarily have to have read them to fully appreciate any given novel. For example, Edward IV makes reference to his mother, Cecily Neville, as "Proud Cis" and also refers to her as "queen by right", the title of her novel about Cicely.

Moreover, there are several references to Kate Haute (Richard III's mistress to whom we are introduced in "A Rose For The Crown") and the protagonist of this novel, Jane Shore, even meets up with Kate on a London street and the two women have an entertaining bit of conversation. There is also a passage where Edward compares his relationship with Jane to his brother Richard's relationship with Kate. It is also worth noting that these references are skillfully woven into her story and do not seem contrived or irrelevant.

By her own admission, the author is a staunch Richardian and reflects and upholds the belief in this book that Richard III was not directly responsible for the disappearance of his nephews, "the princes in the tower". The Richard the author depicts is not an evil or conniving power-hungry king (as others, such as Shakespeare, have depicted him); rather, he is a rather sympathetic character with flaws as well as strengths.

All in all, a wonderfully written story, which both educates and entertains.

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### **Stephanie says**

Anne Easter Smith is one of my favorite authors. She writes stories that take place in one the time periods in England I enjoy reading about. When I saw this book as a goodreads giveaway, I was so excited to discover I had won it. As soon as I received it in the mail, I was literally jumping for joy. This story takes place during

Edward IV rule of England. For those who know the history, even though he was married to a beautiful woman and had many children by her, he had an appetite for woman and he often strayed...

This story is about a silk merchant's daughter, Jane Lambert. Who is beautiful and marries the man her father has chosen for her. It is an unhappy marriage and her husband focus is solely on growing his business and he neglects nurturing his relationship with Jane.

Alas, her marriage does not stop her flirtation with other men and she soon captures the eye of Will Hastings. Will is captivated by her and knows that his King will be as well.

So begins Jane's and Edward's affair and soon after their relationship gets in the way of Edwards leadership. There is so much more to this story and I loved the characterization and how the story flowed. The author gives you a real sense of the court life and how people lived in England during that time. This book will not disappoint you. I highly recommend.

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### **Patty says**

This is my second novel by Anne Easter Smith, the first being Queen by Right. In this tale Ms. Easter Smith tells the story of Jane Shore, Edward IV's last mistress. Jane was the daughter of a mercer (basically a fabric seller) who was apparently beautiful, smart and born into the wrong time. Smart women were not fully appreciated in a time that saw them as not much more than brood mares. Her father married her off to another mercer but they were not well matched and she soon caught the eye of the King's chamberlain, Will Hastings. This led to her being seen by the King and well - what choice did she really have?

The period of time covered during the life of Jane Shore is well trodden history for those of us that read a lot of historical fiction so it is somewhat refreshing to view the well known events through the eyes of a character of which I knew very little. To pass through the death of Edward IV, the protectorate and then reign of Richard III through a commoner's eyes was interesting. Richard was, at least as drawn in this novel, a bit of a stick in the mud and he perceived Jane as the ruin of his brother. As if, as I wrote above, she had any choice when a King comes calling.

This was a well written, fascinating look at a woman caught between powerful men at a very tumultuous time in history. She remained true to herself and to the people from where she came in spite of being cared for by the King. Ms. Easter Smith knows how to draw her reader into her characters' worlds so you almost feel as if you are right there with them. I can't wait for her next book!

4.5

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### **Kelly A. says**

Anne Easter Smith writes fascinating historical fiction about some of the most intriguing characters. People that you only read about in history books beautifully come to life in the pages of her books, and her newest, Royal Mistress, is no exception!

Royal Mistress mainly follows Jane Shore, a simple merchant's daughter who catches the eye of the Queen's

son, Tom Grey. They are both married (or are about to be married) and Jane doesn't want to stoop to being his mistress, so they part ways. Several years later, after Jane's divorce (something that was a HUGE deal in this period of time), she this time catches the eye of Tom's stepfather, Edward, the King of England. Jane is older now and realizes that being a mistress to a high ranking man has many advantages. She becomes Edward IV's final and most beloved mistress, staying by his side for eight years until his death. Edward's brother, Richard, then claims the throne, and as a very moral man, he heartily disapproves of Jane and her background. Jane must struggle to survive using her wits in this turbulent and unstable time in England's history.

I LOVE LOVE LOVE this period of time. I usually like to jump ahead and read about Henry VIII, but it's always great to come back to his ancestors. Edward IV and his family drama is more entertaining than any show on television. So much betrayal, jealousy, murder, secrets, and, depending on who you ask...incest. I liked that Royal Mistress told us this story through the eyes of several key players, though mostly through Jane, who was a fascinating woman. She truly did care for Edward, but she states that she never really loved him, as she truthfully had no choice in the relationship. It's such a realistic look at how mistresses felt. No romantization here, just reality. The only problem I had with the story was Jane and Tom's relationship: they meet two times before they part ways and see each other maybe another two times in the following ten years - yet Jane is forever hung up on how he is her "true love" and is convinced they could live happily ever after if only they could be together. She hardly knew him! I know their relationship is historically accurate but it just seemed so far fetched here. Still, overall, this was a fascinating read, not just for historical fiction buffs, but lovers of drama, romance, and books that keep you intrigued every page.

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### **Viviane Crystal says**

Jane Shore lived a harsh life! Rejected by her father, married to an impotent mercer, loved by many men but chosen by King Edward, she was grateful for the favors of her King. Londoners and members of the Court grew to respect her because of her many acts of charity and care for those far less fortunate. Jane is not one to involve herself in the political intrigues and betrayals of the Court, but she does relate them without bias. After Edward's untimely end due to his own decadent lifestyle, Jane is accused of crimes that force her to undergo public penance; the accuser is Edward's brother, Richard, first Protector of the heir and then King after Edward's children are proven to be illegitimate. Richard is given an interesting portrayal in this novel; determined to "clean up" the Court he is extremely harsh. We also get an interesting take on the "disappearance" of the two Princes and an amazing execution ordered without the granting of a trial to Jane's second lover. Yes, everything herein has been presented in other novels, but Anne Easter Smith's comprehensive depiction of all the significant characters and their alliances and betrayals is fascinating and unique. Very, very well written and presented! Highly recommended!

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### **Jani Brooks says**

This is the story of Jane Shore, Edward IV's mistress. Told from her perspective, we get to see down and dirty how difficult it was for a woman of intelligence, wit, and beauty to survive on her own. Does Jane set out to be a concubine to the king? No, she wants what others have - an adoring husband, and children. But her father marries her off to a much older man who is anything but lusty! There are few choices in Jane's era, and when she catches the eye of one of Edward's closest advisors, as well as his step son, Jane's life changes dramatically.

Beautifully researched and written, I highly recommend this excellent book - due to come out on May 7.

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### **Tracy says**

----- I received this book from Edelweiss and the publisher for my honest review-----

I have eagerly read all of Anne Easter Smith's books. Ever since I found and read *The King's Grace* I jump at any chance to read one of her books. And I have to say that *Royal Mistress* was a joy to read. Once I started I couldn't stop till I finished the book. I like learning about Jane Shore, after all I have known of this lady from reading other books about King Edward and so I knew who she was but not really her whole story. I found her to be a girl that while pretty smart was very naive and tended to think mainly of herself and of her wants and needs in the beginning of the book. She recognized that men fell for her beauty and she wasn't above flirting with them, but I like that especially when she was the youngest with Tom Grey she didn't just give herself away to him. It wasn't till she was married and her husband wasn't living up to her dreams and when the King approached her that she gave herself to him. I like that even when she was with Edward she kept true to herself, she kept doing her best to help those in need. Jane is a character that many people will like and be able to relate to in at least some way. Which I think is very important and makes the story that much better and worth while reading. If you enjoy historical fiction books, or if you like any other books by Anne Easter Smith then you will definitely like this book too.

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### **Mirella says**

*Royal Mistress* is an absorbing tale about Jane Lambert, the daughter of a mercer who becomes the mistress of King Edward IV and other noblemen in the fifteenth century. Born with the gift of beauty, Jane easily turns heads and attracts the attention of every man she encounters. When she meets Thomas Grey, the Marquess of Dorset, Jane falls irretrievably in love. He betroths her to William Shore, a much older, but wealthy merchant. Jane soon discovers her husband is impotent and her eye begins to wander as she contemplates seeking an annulment. When she catches the eye of William Hastings, the king's own chamberlain, he recommends her to the king, a man with a voracious sexual appetite. Jane willingly becomes his mistress until his death. Years later, when Richard III ascends the throne, he is determined to cleanse the depraved court and Jane is one of the first to be accused.

This novel is well researched, full of historic characters, places, and items, and the story compelling. There is plenty to entertain; betrayal, suspense, and plenty of romance. The vivid prose evokes strong images, making the story engrossing and colored with the sights and smells of the 16th century. Jane Shore is presented as a bold, spirited woman, witty and confident in all she does and says. How else could she have caught the discerning eye of so many men of lofty rank. A very entertaining novel!

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### **Orsolya says**

Although Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV, is known for her perhaps unscrupulous catching of Edward's eye; he is more so to blame if looking at his track record of sexual debauchery. Anne Easter Smith follows the course of Jane Shore, his last and possibly most well-known, concubine in "Royal Mistress".

Immediate credit must be given to Smith's inclusion of a list of characters forthright which clearly depicts which are true to history and which are fictional. This is quite useful for those readers new to the cast of characters and helps strongly mark the line between history and fiction.

On the flip side, "Royal Mistress" has a much too slow and flimsy start, focusing on a fictional romance between Jane Shore and Tom Grey. Approximately 60 pages are filled with her yearnings and love when they met all but two times. This becomes annoying (as the novel reads like a YA high school romance) and also bores as the plot refuses to move forward.

As more characters are introduced, "Royal Mistress" unfolds from various viewpoints and becomes more entertaining. However, the plot is **still** thin and focuses solely on Jane seeking (and receiving) attention from every man she encounters; while, the characters are oversimplified and lack depth. "Royal Mistress" is heavier on the fiction, using the historic figures as the character roles versus of strong historical credence.

Smith applies the tactic of each character recalling historical events or the, "As you know, Bob..." – method. At least, these portions are historically accurate, well researched, and garner more interest than the fictional plotline. Perhaps Smith would be stronger at penning nonfiction writing.

Frustratingly, Jane's character arc doesn't expand and both her personality and the plotline merely revolve around her being a mistress. There are no subplots concerning her role which results in the reader not learning about either Jane or history. Plus, it consequentially gives the impression that Jane was nothing more than an empty-headed whore. Often times, "Royal Mistress" simply seems pointless.

Excitement doesn't begin to build until approximately page 250 (very late), as Smith incorporates more historical happenings to various characters. However, even here there are issues: the characters are quite stereotypical, the plot has too much foreshadowing, and some of the fluff is overly ridiculous (the murder of George, Duke of Clarence, to name one). Plus, Smith presents this fictionalized romanticism with such ease, that it will certainly cause those who are new to the topic to believe it all as fact.

As "Royal Mistress" focuses on the drama of Richard III's reign and the Princes in the Tower; the plot is slightly thickened and has an ounce more of depth. Even Smith's historical liberties (and there are many) are somewhat interesting at this point, as they explore theories of the events. However, Jane's characterization is **still** shallow and pointless, while Richard's is too "good". It appears that Richard is either always a saint or sinner in novels and Smith makes her Ricardian stance clear, excusing all of this behavior to the point where even a Ricardian would his/her eyes.

A highlight of the novel is Smith using actual quoted letters and excerpts of speeches, true to text. On the contrary, the habit of Jane's random poem/lyric writing is, bluntly: silly.

The ending of "Royal Mistress" is much too 'cheesy' and 'happily ever after' diminishing believability. However, the epilogue brought creativity to the table, exploring possibilities behind Thomas More's written "history" of Richard III. This leads into a much appreciated "Author's Note" in which Smith explains her motives and historic deviations.

Overall, "Royal Mistress" is one-dimensional, fluffy, and more fiction than history. Yet, it is entertaining if searching for a light historical fiction 'filler' novel and in such a case, I would read Smith again. Just don't expect a deep, historically accurate, literary novel.

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## **Elizabeth Moreau Nicolai says**

Thing is, I really wanted to like this book. It has a lot of elements of books I enjoy: English royalty, fascinating historical period, lots of descriptions of clothing, outsider perspective (you don't get much more outsider than a commoner mistress), but it never really coalesced for me.

Jane Shore is the "favorite mistress" of King Edward IV, he of the Wars of the Roses. She rose from being a commoner, daughter of a merchant (portrayed here as running a fabric shop) as she gained the attention and affection of a string of very important, very noble and sometimes royal men. It's a great historical story, portrayed often because of the scandal and romance.

I expected to really enjoy this book, at the least to find it a light and fun summer read (ala Philippa Gregory), but the writing was still and awkward. I'd find myself drawn out of the story by the choppy sentences, awkward dialog, and overly stilted narration.

Perhaps a greater crime was that ancient trespass of "telling not showing". Over and over again we are told a characters motivation, back story, experiences, etc., but only rarely are we shown those elements and allowed to draw our own conclusions.

For example, early on in the story, Jane Shore is being berated/punished by her father and wonders at her mother not intervening for her. As she storms off there is a throwaway line to the effect of Jane not having seen the myriad ways in which her mother has been beaten down so far that she will not help her children. That's a good backstory and motivation; it's an important part of her family dynamic and the main character's personality. And it could have been handled better/more subtly/more fully then one throwaway line that gives an easy answer with no work for the reader to do.

Between the writing and the showing not telling I just kept wondering away from this book. After 5 weeks, I am going to admit, that I am not going to finish this book. I made it halfway through and have no desire to finish it.

This might just be me. Since I didn't finish the book, you are free to take my entire review with a grain of salt. The reviews so far on Goodreads are positive, but Amazon has more mixed reviews. Libraries with large paperback collections and/or previous books by this author should probably pick this book up, but I will pass on recommending it to my friends and patrons.

Review here: <http://bornlibrarian.blogspot.com/201...>

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## **Kara says**

The problem with movies like *Minions* or *Penguins of Madagascar* is that as awesome as these characters are, they just can't carry a whole story by themselves. As side characters, they bring an excellent amount of spice to the overall plot, but make them the main characters, and it starts to feel like eating an entire cup of powdered sugar straight.

I think Jane Shore might fall into the same category. As excellent an addition she makes to your average War

of the Roses story as a side character, making her the main character of her own full length novel is a tricky feat to pull off. Even Shakespeare knew to hold back, using her to establish King Edward's licentious character trait in Act 1 what with her "passing, pleasing tongue" and all that, but that's the extent of her appearance in *Richard III*.

Here, even Easter Smith can't get Jane to carry the whole story, constantly switching the third person POV to get inside everyone's head, and with narration that annoyingly tells us when a character is forgetting something about current or past events.

It takes a good first quarter of the book to solidly establish the time and place. The book starts out in just a vaguely medieval setting that doesn't properly convey the anxiety of a city in the middle of a civil war and it lacked just that little bit of grit to texture the setting with a sense of realism.

The whole first half of the book, unfortunately, reads like the kind of fanfiction written by someone who ships two characters *so hard* that she sits down and writes a piece of fanfiction where her two characters get together, all obstacles are easily overcome, they coo their love at each other, loll around in beautiful homes wearing beautiful clothes, and unicorns prance around farting rainbows.

(Yes, I wrote one of these when I was 15. No, I will not tell you which copyrighted characters were involved.)

But the plot picks up when Edward IV dies, as all the characters go into defensive mode, drawing lines in the sand, with everyone convinced that everyone else is out to get them.

Here we see some very fine writing as Easter Smith lays out the tangled knot of court factions into a clear series of Venn diagrams, making a very good case for how Hastings went from an ally to an enemy of Richard III. It was a brilliant use of misunderstandings gathered together and given a malicious twist by someone eager to stab Hastings in the back. The time period of April to September of 1483 is a murky one, and Easter Smith does a good job of both showing the confusion, anxiety, fear and anger people felt while still making events clear to the reader.

And, of course, we reach the Princes in the Tower. In this version Buckingham kills the boys because he thinks that's what the king wants. Richard throws a royal fit, both on a how-could-you-kill-little-kids? level and this-is-so-bad-for-me-politically level.

Meanwhile, Jane has been bracing herself for her fortune's wheel to go from pinnacle to nadir, but even then she's surprised by the malicious prudishness of Richard as he lashes out at her, determined to stamp on those he deems 'immoral.' There's a hilarious scene where she is formally charged with having sex and she basically responds with "yes, and?"

Once she does her famous Walk of Shame, (Take that Ceresi! *That* is how you do that!) she quickly hooks up with her long time crush, and her life turns into a Lifetime movie *real* quick, complete with jealous fits and theft.

Luckily, a second accusation of treason turns out to be the Best Thing Ever since it leads to one of the most hilarious marriage proposals in all of legal history.

The rest of the book takes a little too long to wrap things up from there, establishing in rather too much detail how happily-ever-after things worked out for Jane.

End of the day, the tension points make for the best reading, while the good times tend to be just too sugary.

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## Caz says

### 3.5 stars

Despite the fact that few details of the private life of Jane Shore are actually known, she has nonetheless been the subject of a number of plays and historical novels, including *The Goldsmith's Wife* by Jean Plaidy, and now this, the latest novel from Anne Easter Smith.

Born Elizabeth Lambert, Jane was born into a reasonably well-to-do merchant's family, and was married to William Shore, who was – like her father - a mercer by trade (and not a goldsmith as had been believed until fairly recently). She is reputed to have been very beautiful and both her father and her husband were not above exploiting this fact in order to gain custom; she was also intelligent, witty and well-mannered, her daily life in the running of her father's business having brought her regularly into contact with well-born ladies whose behaviour and deportment she was able to observe.

*Royal Mistress* tells Jane's story from just before the time of her marriage until almost the end of her life, taking as its final event, the true story of a chance meeting between Jane – now in her sixties – and Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII.

Jane is an attractive character and her story is told in a very straightforward manner. She is vivacious, generous and down-to-earth and does not take the decision to become King Edward IV's mistress at all lightly. During her time with him, Jane earned herself the name of *The Rose of London* for her kindness and generosity towards those who asked for her help and the fact that she never forgot her origins or used her status as the King's mistress to enrich herself or to ride roughshod over the people of her own class.

If there was one thing about this fictionalised version of Jane that didn't ring true however, it was her nine-year infatuation with Elizabeth Woodville's eldest son from her first marriage, Tom Grey, Marquis of Dorset. The author has him and Jane literally bumping into each other in the street at the beginning of the book; having then arranged a secret assignation in order to seduce Jane, Tom realises she is expecting declarations of love and a proposal – and he confesses that he is already married. They see each other only a very few times over the course of the book and yet Jane – even when she is happily sharing Edward's bed – is still fixated on Tom. It's true that Jane *did* become Tom Grey's mistress after Edward's death; and although I imagine the torch Jane carries for Grey is the author's invention, I did find that Jane's constant hankering for him became annoying very quickly.

Jane's relationship with Edward seems to have been one of mutual affection. She appears to have conducted herself modestly and gained the respect of much of the court for her common sense, wit and good manners. But although Jane has always known her position to be a somewhat precarious one, it is only when Edward becomes ill suddenly and dies – aged only forty – that she realises just how precarious it is. For me, this was when the book really started to come to life as Jane's life is turned upside down and she becomes unwittingly involved in a Woodville plot to wrest the Protectorate from Edward's brother Richard.

It was at this point – around half-way through the book – that I thought things moved up a gear and I began to feel a greater engagement with the story than I had up until then. The pacing picks up as Jane is swept up

in events she does not fully understand, and I thought the scenes in which she and Hastings say farewell for what will turn out to be the last time, were truly heartfelt.

On a personal level, I was pleased to discover that the narrative is written in the third person omniscient rather than the first person as seems to be the favoured viewpoint for so much of the historical fiction being written today. This means that the author is able to include scenes depicting events of which Jane could have no knowledge without having to resort to too much of the "as you know, Bob", style of dialogue in having someone later recount to her in order to keep the reader informed. That's not to say that this doesn't happen in the book – it does. But it's not as frequent or intrusive as it might otherwise have been.

I imagine that authors of historical fiction have a difficult line to tread when it comes to deciding on the level of detail to include. Is your audience likely to have a reasonable background knowledge of the period about which you are writing, or do you assume it knows next to nothing? I venture to suggest that if you fall into the latter category, you will find *Royal Mistress* to be engaging and informative; but if, like me, you are in the former group, you might find it to be somewhat simplistic in tone with a little too much repetition as to who everyone is, what is their position at court, to whom they are related and so on.

That said, I think the book does have plenty to recommend it. I found it enjoyable overall; the story is well-told, Jane is an attractive and sympathetic protagonist and some of the secondary characters - such as William Hastings and Thomas Lyneham - are very nicely drawn indeed. The historical detail has been well-researched, and even when I didn't completely agree with the author's interpretation of some of the historical figures (Richard of Gloucester was frequently presented as a po-faced killjoy, for example) I could understand why she had made those decisions.

I'm not sure that *Royal Mistress* is a book I will re-read in the near future, but I would certainly say that it is worth reading if you are interested in the tumultuous events of the latter part of the fifteenth century and in the lives of the last two Plantagenet monarchs. Ultimately, I think the degree to which you enjoy it will depend on how much you already know about the period and how annoyed you get when being repeatedly told things you already know.

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## Gary says

I love stories - including historical novels- about the 'whore with the heart of gold'  
From Rahab, the harlot to heroine who hid the Hebrew spies in Jericho to Julia Robert's Pretty Woman. I have long loved Mistress Jane Shore, described as 'the merriest whore in court' the beloved mistress of Edward IV

Jane Shore appears in the 1955 Laurence Olivier of Shakespeare's Richard III , played by Pamela Brown, in a role where she appears but only speaks one line 'Good Morrow'  
Jean Plaidy's The Goldsmith's Wife featuring Jane Shore is a rewarding read, and I mistress Shore also appears in The Sunne in Splendour by Sharon Kay Penman, figures in Silk by Vanora Benett and the White Queen by Phillipa Gregory

Royal mistress is compelling and engaging, well researched and I found myself sustaining a strong sympathy for Jane Shore from beginning to end.  
she is portrayed as beautiful and sexy, good hearted, intelligent and fun.  
During her period as Edward IV's favoured mistress she used her position to go great things for the poor of

London earning herself the name the 'Rose of London '

The book begins in 1475 with Jane Lambert as a 22 year old unmarried daughter of a mercer, who is an uncaring and abusive father.

she begins a romance with the dapper son of the queen Elizabeth Woodville, Earl Thomas Grey, who declines to commit to her as he is already married. And she is forced by her father to marry the older mercer William Shore who is not just austere and cold but is actually impotent, can cannot give her love or children. It is clearly the lack of love from her father and her first husband that leads Jane to seek it elsewhere.

The novel then moves to her discovery by Edward IV's leading advisor William Hastings who introduces her to the king, leading her to become the favourite mistress of the king, and giving her an eye on the court, including the rebellion by the kings brother George, Duke of Clarence and his death by drowning in a butt of malmsey!

She also gains the enmity of the Queen. Elizabeth Woodville, and the kings younger brother Earl Richard of Gloucester.

On Edward's death she finds love with William Hastings who is soon after executed on orders of the by the regent Richard, who as Richard III has Jane thrown into the hellish Ludgate prison for 'harlotry' and allegedly consorting with Elizabeth Woodville.

She is forced to do a cruel penance on Richard's orders of being paraded through London's streets, waering only her kirtle before prostrating herself before the kings priests in the cathedral.

After being thrown into prison a second time, she is rescued by the king's solicitor Thomas Lyneham, who falls in love with her, and despite King Richard's disapproval has Jane released and marries, her giving her f happiness and contentment after so much hardship. The author though a Ricardian writes from the perspective of someone who had eevry reason to hate Richard III.

She also like most historical novelists of today absolves Richard of the death of the princes in the tower, having it done by his advisor, without the king's knowledge.

The book ends with the meeting of a widowed Jane , a widow, now an old woman in her late 60s having been reduced to beggary, and her meeting with Sir Thomas More.

I enjoyed this book, the author's craftsmanship with words, the identification of the lead character and window into history of the time

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## **Malacima says**

3.5-4 star

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