



# La Princesse de Montpensier

*Madame de La Fayette , Jacques Perrin (Préface)*

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Madame de La Fayette devance Racine quand elle montre les ravages de la passion aveugle, celle qui entraîne vers la ruine et la mort. Au temps des Valois et des guerres de religion, Madame de Montpensier aime ainsi le jeune duc de Guise, bafouant un mari de circonstance ivre de jalousie. Elle ignore les sentiments qu'elle inspire au duc d'Anjou, le futur roi de France. Avec une férocité inconsciente, elle torture le pauvre comte de Chabannes chargé de l'éduquer, follement amoureux d'elle lui aussi. Du dépit, de la rage, de la haine, des assassinats, voilà le portrait de l'amour que Madame de La Fayette peint avec du sang.

## La Princesse de Montpensier Details

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# From Reader Review *La Princesse de Montpensier* for online ebook

## Aurélie Knit & Read says

Même si je l'ai trouvé évidemment moins bien que *La Princesse de Clèves*, chef d'œuvre absolu de la littérature française, on y retrouve des thèmes communs (le conflit entre l'amour et le devoir, notamment, qui a si bien réussi à Corneille, ce contemporain de Madame de Lafayette).

Si la nouvelle m'a laissée sur ma faim et aurait mérité de devenir un roman, je me souviens avoir beaucoup aimé le film de 2010 : casting impeccable, décors, costumes, histoire... tout était éblouissant !

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## Siobhán says

This was both enlightening and hilarious. It was hilarious because as a person in the 21st century, reading a 17th century tale about 16th century French nobles, you cannot help but laugh at everyone swooning and fainting continuously, and the ludicrousness of, within only a few pages, four separate men all coming to love the same woman who is constantly described as ignorant of her own charm and beauty. So in that sense, it is exactly what you think it will be.

However it was also very enlightening, not necessarily as to the late 16th century and the lives of the characters, but more to the mid 17th century view of such people and events, which was the main reason I set about to read this. In that sense, this more than delivered.

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## Yann says

J'adore!

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## Michela says

This is certainly an interesting take on love - in this novella it closely resembles war, and jealousy is one of the most prevalent emotions the characters feel. *La Princesse* is like a piece on a chess board, moved about by men, subject to the love men have for her, which causes many problems.

Reading it in French, I found it a bit difficult and dense, but overall worthwhile.

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## Danny says

La Fayette's historical romance comes out of the salon culture of 17th-century Paris and is a wonderful and gripping work of fiction, marred only by the somewhat contrived and abrupt ending. La Fayette is a master psychologist and reveals her penetration of mind on a sentence-by-sentence basis. The story is set against the backdrop of the wars of religion, or the wars of the counter-reformation, that ravaged France in the 15th

century. The wars were fought between Huguenots (French Protestant converts) and Catholics, with all of the characters in La Fayette's narrative on the Catholic side—except perhaps for the Count de Chabannes, who formerly belonged to the Huguenot army and whose allegiance is sometimes questioned. La Fayette does not adopt the elaborate and highly sentimentalized style of "préciosité," so much in vogue during her day, but writes in a straightforward and spare manner.

The narrative centers on the young Marie de Mézières and the four men who pursue her as a lover. Forced to abandon the love of her childhood (the Duc de Guise) and marry The Prince de Montpensier, she submits herself to a life a duty. The Prince's best friend, the Conte de Chabannes, is entrusted with role of tutor, and he, too falls in love with her, as does Henri, Duc d'Anjou, the son of Catherine de' Medici and Henry II. She finds herself surrounded by these men when she visits the Parisian Court (the setting of La Fayette's other princess novella, *La Princesse de Clèves*). The men constitute a rivalrous quartet: her jealous husband; her old lover, whose military exploits during the war spread through France and win him fame; her tutor, and the heir to the throne—figures representing something like duty, passion, wisdom, and power, respectively. Forget triangular desire, La Fayette engineers a predicament of pentangular desire, with each of her rivals competing for the affection of the beautiful princess. The most worthy—the one who cares most for her happiness—is the almost masochistic Conte de Chabannes who suffers the cruelest indifference to his passion and even acts as a go-between for the Princess and the man who successfully woos her, the Duc de Guise. The Princess and the Duc de Guise try to keep their affair a secret, but the Duc d'Anjou finds out and attempts to sabotage their passion. Her husband jealously spirits his wife away to his country castle, where Chabannes helps the Duc de Guise see the Princess by helping him to sneak in; however, they are caught, although Chabannes covers for Guise in an ultimate act of altruism. In the end, Chabannes dies in the St. Bartholomew's day massacre and—get this—the Duc de Guise ditches the princess for another women, having grown tired of the Princess, who regrets the cruelty with which she treated Chabannes.

The novella is a penetrating study of the selfishness and ruthlessness that romantic ardor engenders—and of competitive desire—that is, desire born of competition—and—of course—of the deceptive world of court, where nothing is as it seems.

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### **Claire-Emmanuelle says**

J'hésite vraiment entre mettre 2 ou 3 étoiles ... Je suis frustrée qu'on ne puisse pas mettre de 1/2 étoile ^^ J'ai voulu lire "la princesse de Montpensier" car je lis très peu de nouvelles, et c'est là une lacune qu'il me faut combler, mais aussi car ça me permettait de remplir le mois de janvier du challenge #readingclassicschallenge2018 (Merci Coraline pour l'idée à la fois du challenge, et de cette nouvelle). Le style d'écriture un peu ancien m'a légèrement troublée sur les toutes premières pages, mais je m'en suis vite accommodée. Je me suis un peu emmêlée les pinceaux entre les différents comtes et princes (il faut dire que j'ai une mémoire de poisson rouge). En dehors de ça, et malgré le fait qu'il ne se passe vraiment pas grand chose, je n'ai pas eu de mal à finir cette nouvelle. Par contre, je n'ai pas du tout aimé la fin que j'ai trouvé "baclée" et un peu trop facile.

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### **Gabrielle Dubois says**

The Princess of Montpensier or The Misfortune to be Beautiful and Princess when you don't live in the kingdom of Disney!

If you know me a little, you know that I'm trying to read only books which I'm pretty sure will please me. There are so many books, why should we read some that may quite please other readers? If a book can make a reader happy, I also believe that a happy reader makes a book happy.

And yet, here's a novel which, although short, I wondered if I would finish it.

Madame de Lafayette's monotonous, soporific writing lengthens this reading, which becomes as endless as a schoolchild's punishment after class on a blackboard!

However, this short novel is considered, in France, as a *petit chef-d'œuvre*. I who was ready to offer generously 5 stars to Madame de Lafayette because she's a woman (I'm partial and I don't mind!) and a writer of the 17th century, despite all my desire, I cannot. Therefore, don't hesitate to read this book, because perhaps I totally missed this beautiful princess who makes mad with love, if not desire, at least four men: the Duke de Guise, his childhood love, the Count de Chabannes, the Duke d'Anjou, and finally the Prince de Montpensier.

De Guise is a big fickle, de Chabannes is a big fool, d'Anjou is a big plotter and de Montpensier is blind and... a husband!

Among them, our princess tries to remain virtuous and careful. But will she succeed?

This is a classic story, whether historical or fictional; it can be treated like a comedy, a tragedy, or vaudeville. But in this novel, all we have are facts, nothing but facts one after the other. We cannot get attached to the characters. We cannot hate them or love them. It's indifference, and I think there's nothing worse than indifference.

Oh! I wish I would never have chosen to read this book, so I would never have had to review it! Good resolution for 2018: read another book by Madame de Lafayette so that she forgives me what I just wrote!

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### **Ziad Tannoury says**

Toutefois la personnalité du Comte de Chabannes est vraiment impressionnante et m'a beaucoup marqué. Quel bel amour désintéressé, quelle parfaite loyauté...

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### **Céline says**

Une histoire courte mais percutante. Plus que la passion de la Princesse de Montpensier pour le duc de Guise, plus que l'inconstance de ce dernier, plus que la jalousie dévorante du Prince de Montpensier, j'ai été marqué et touché par la force et la fidélité des sentiments du comte de Chabannes.

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### **Tiffany says**

I realize -- with horror -- that I had never finished reading this book. While Mme de Lafayette's voice can be crystalline, sometimes her mega high context multiclausal sentences can be leaden. Here's an example:

*Le duc d'Anjou, qu'était fort galant et fort bien fait, ne put voir une fortune si digne de lui sans la souhaiter ardemment: Il fut touché du même mal que M. de Guise et, feignant toujours des affaires extraordinaires, il demeura deux jours à Champigny, sans être obligé d'y demeurer*

*que par les charmes de Mme de Montpensioer, le prince son mari ne faisant point de violence pour l'y retenir.*

The problem with this novelette is that between scene and summary it is all summary, which is to say the language is so attenuated and refined, it is always coldly removed. As an exploration of emotions it suffers from never swooping into close-up. We are told, in the finest, most truffled language, *how the princess talks to her her loyers and her erstwhile lovers*, but never is there a sense of proximity. Everything happens at arm's length.

This is precisely the style of 16th century prose, but I must confess, while I loved La Princesse de Clèves, I don't remember suffering from frostbite the way I did reading this. Nevertheless, I was excited to read about the siege of La Rochelle from another perspective, having just finished *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. A lovely, short read, with language as fine as anything ever written in French.

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### **Darío says**

First read done! Now I've got to reread it a thousand times more until I memorize it (I am reading it for french literature class).

Stop the french.

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### **Karyne Gaouette says**

Petite histoire avec une morale, finalement, comme quoi il est important de rester fidèle à son mari...

Comme c'est une histoire d'antan, le prince n'a rien de charmant. Et celui qu'elle aime, son amant, se retrouve à être un peu con. Mais bon. J'ai quand même apprécié cette lecture.

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### **Kaya says**

A tale of love and jealousy and what can happen if you play outside the rules. I imagine it was a difficult time for women, and even men back then, to be pawns in a game and not be allowed to marry who you wanted.

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### **Hillary says**

Just can't get into Mme de Lafayette's monotonous soap-operatic melodrama. Perhaps I don't deserve this masters degree in French literature after all?

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**Gwen says**

5/10

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