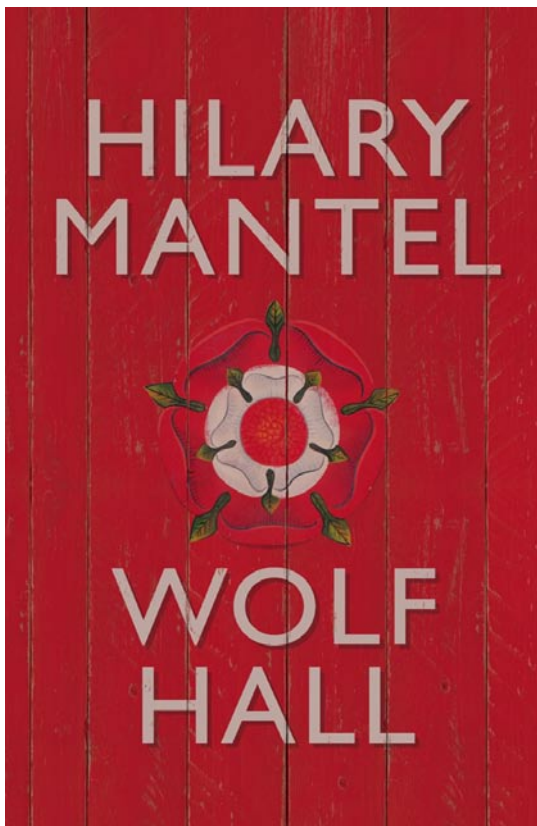


Reader's Guide



Other books by Hilary Mantel

Every Day is Mother's Day (1985)
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A Place of Greater Safety (1992)
A Change of Climate (1994)
An Experiment in Love (1995)
Giving up the Ghost (2003)
Beyond Black (2005)

Wolf Hall Hilary Mantel

Published by Fourth estate
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About the author

Hilary Mantel was born in Glossop, Derbyshire, England in 1952. She studied Law at the London School of Economics and Sheffield University. She was employed as a social worker, and lived in Botswana for five years, followed by four years in Saudi Arabia, before returning to Britain in the mid-1980s. In 1987 she was awarded the Shiva Naipaul Memorial Prize for an article about Jeddah, and she was film critic for *The Spectator* from 1987 to 1991.

Wolf Hall

Set in England in the 1520s, when Henry VIII is on the throne, but has no heir. Cardinal Wolsey is his chief advisor, charged with securing the divorce the Pope refuses to grant. Into this atmosphere of distrust and need comes Thomas Cromwell, first as Wolsey's clerk, and later his successor.

Cromwell is a wholly original man: the son of a brutal blacksmith, a political genius, a briber, a charmer, a bully, a man with a delicate and deadly expertise in manipulating people and events. Ruthless in pursuit of his own interests, he is as ambitious in his wider politics as he is for himself. His reforming agenda is carried out in the grip of a self-interested parliament and a king who fluctuates between romantic passions and murderous rages. With a vast array of characters, and richly overflowing with incident, *Wolf Hall* peels back history to show us Tudor England as a half-made society, moulding itself with great passion and suffering and courage.

Discussion points

There are many and varied historical accounts of Cromwell's life. Did you find his portrayal as a sympathetic character surprising and believable?

Do you think that Hilary Mantel successfully merges historical fact with the narrative?

Why do you think that Hilary Mantel chose the title *Wolf Hall* (Jane Seymour's family home) when Jane Seymour is a relatively minor character in the novel?

What is the effect of the book being in the present tense?

There is a planned sequel; did *Wolf Hall* leave you wanting more?

Themed reading

Thomas Cromwell Robert Hutchinson
Henry David Starkey
The Other Boleyn Girl Philippa Gregory

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