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Succeeding to the throne at the age of only nine months, Henry VI had a turbulent reign: he inherited a war with France and, in time, found himself at war with his own nobles. James Ross surveys this eventful life, including Henry's deposition at the hands of Edward IV and his eventual return to the throne.

'After my death,' George V said of his eldest son and

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heir, 'the boy will ruin himself within twelve months.' The forecast proved uncannily accurate. Edward VIII came to the throne in January 1936, provoked a constitutional crisis by his determination to marry the American divorcée Wallis Simpson, and abdicated in December. He was never crowned king. In choosing the woman he loved over his royal birthright, Edward shook the monarchy to its foundations. Given the new title 'Duke of Windsor' and essentially sent into exile, he remained a visible skeleton in the royal cupboard until his death in 1972 and he haunts the house of Windsor to this day. Drawing on unpublished material,

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notably correspondence with his most loyal (though much tried) supporter Winston Churchill, Piers Brendon's superb biography traces Edward's tumultuous public and private life from bright young prince to troubled sovereign, from wartime colonial governor to sad but glittering expatriate. With pace and panache, it cuts through the myths that still surround this most controversial of modern British monarchs.

Edward I (1272-1307) is one of the most commanding of all English rulers. He fought in southwest France, in Wales, In Scotland and in northern France, he ruled

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with ruthlessness and confidence, undoing the chaotic failure of his father, Henry III's reign. He reshaped England's legal system and came close to bringing the whole island of Great Britain under his rule. He promoted the idea of himself as the new King Arthur, his Round Table still hanging in Winchester Castle to this day. His greatest monuments are the extraordinary castles--Caernarfon, Beaumaris, Harlech and Conwy--built to ensure his rule of Wales and some of the largest of all medieval buildings. Andy King's brilliant short biography brings to life a strange, complex man whose triumphs raise all kinds of

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questions about the nature of kingship - how could someone who established so many key elements in England's unique legal and parliamentary system also have been such a harsh, militarily brutal warrior? Although he styled himself 'His Highness', adopted the court ritual of his royal predecessors, and lived in the former royal palaces of Whitehall and Hampton Court, Oliver Cromwell was not a king - in spite of the best efforts of his supporters to crown him. Yet, as David Horspool shows in this illuminating new portrait of England's Lord Protector, Cromwell, the Puritan son of Cambridgeshire gentry, wielded such influence that it

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would be a pretence to say that power really lay with the collective. The years of Cromwell's rise to power, shaped by a decade-long civil war, saw a sustained attempt at the collective government of England; the first attempts at a real Union of Britain; the beginnings of empire; a radically new solution to the idea of a national religion; atrocities in Ireland; and the readmission to England of the Jews, a people officially banned for over three and a half centuries. At the end of it, Oliver Cromwell had emerged as the country's sole ruler: to his enemies, and probably to most of his countrymen, his legacy looked as likely to last as that

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of the Stuart dynasty he had replaced.

Elizabeth and Mary: Cousins, Rivals, Queens

James I (Penguin Monarchs)

Oliver Cromwell (Penguin Monarchs)

She-Wolves

Elizabeth I (Penguin Monarchs)

Aethelred the Unready (Penguin Monarchs)

Edward I (Penguin Monarchs)

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format

Henry VII was one of England's unlikeliest monarchs. An exile and outsider with barely a claim to the throne, his

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victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field seemed to many in 1485 like only the latest in the sequence of violent convulsions among England's nobility that would come to be known as the wars of the roses - with little to suggest that the obscure Henry would last any longer than his predecessor. To break that cycle of division, usurpation, deposition and murder, he had both to maintain a grip on power and to convince England that his rule was both rightful and effective. Here, Sean Cunningham explores how, in his ruthless, controlling and personal kingship, Henry VII did so; in the process founding the Tudor dynasty and, arguably, helping to lay the foundations for modern government. Sean Cunningham is a Principal Records Specialist at The

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National Archives. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he has published widely on late medieval and early Tudor England. His books include, most recently, a historical biography of Henry VII.

'A masterful biography' Amanda Foreman 'A gripping story of Queen Elizabeth's last years, authoritatively researched and engagingly recounted by the leading Tudor historian of our age' James Shapiro, author of 1599 and 1606 _____ An ageing queen, an heirless state, conspiracy all round: here is the court of Elizabeth I as never known before History has pictured Elizabeth I as Gloriana, an icon of strength and power. But the reality, especially during her later years, was not so simple. In 1583 Elizabeth is fifty years old,

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past childbearing, but her greatest challenges are still to come: the Spanish Armada; the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots; relentless plotting among her courtiers. This gripping and vivid portrait of her life and times - often told in her own words ('You know I am no morning woman') - reveals a woman who is fallible, increasingly insecure, and struggling to lead Britain. This is the real Elizabeth, for the first time. _____ 'One of the very best historians we have in the country . . . It is brilliant, vigorous history, and a triumph of storytelling and scholarship' Jessie Childs, Telegraph 'The best biography ever written of the Virgin Queen - a revisionist, sensitive, compelling, majestic masterwork that you can't put down' Simon Sebag-Montefiore,

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Evening Standard 'Guy's careful work with documents known and unknown allows him to paint a novel portrait of a complex - maybe even unknowable - queen' John Gallagher, Guardian

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Queen Victoria inherited the throne at 18 and went on to become the longest-reigning female monarch in history, in a time of intense industrial, cultural, political, scientific and military change within the United Kingdom and great imperial expansion outside of it (she was made Empress of India in 1876). Overturning the established picture of the dour old lady, this is a fresh and engaging portrait from one of our most talented royal biographers. Jane

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Ridley is Professor of Modern History at Buckingham University, where she teaches a course on biography. Her previous books include The Young Disraeli; a study of Edwin Lutyens, The Architect and his Wife, which won the 2003 Duff Cooper Prize; and the best-selling Bertie: A Life of Edward VII. A Fellow of the Royal Society for Literature, Ridley writes for the Spectator and other newspapers, and has appeared on radio and several television documentaries. She lives in London and Scotland.

This long-awaited and masterfully edited volume contains nearly all of the writings of Queen Elizabeth I: the clumsy letters of childhood, the early speeches of a fledgling queen, and the prayers and poetry of the

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monarch's later years. The first collection of its kind, Elizabeth I reveals brilliance on two counts: that of the Queen, a dazzling writer and a leading intellect of the English Renaissance, and that of the editors, whose copious annotations make the book not only essential to scholars but accessible to general readers as well. "This collection shines a light onto the character and experience of one of the most interesting of monarchs. . . . We are likely never to get a closer or clearer look at her. An intriguing and intense portrait of a woman who figures so importantly in the birth of our modern world."—Publishers Weekly "An admirable scholarly edition of the queen's literary output. . . . This anthology will excite scholars of Elizabethan history, but there is

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something here for all of us who revel in the English language."—John Cooper, Washington Times

"Substantial, scholarly, but accessible. . . . An invaluable work of reference."—Patrick Collinson, London Review

of Books "In a single extraordinary volume . . . Marcus and her coeditors have collected the Virgin Queen's letters, speeches, poems and prayers. . . . An impressive, heavily footnoted volume."—Library Journal "This

excellent anthology of [Elizabeth's] speeches, poems, prayers and letters demonstrates her virtuosity and afford the reader a penetrating insight into her 'wiles and understandings.'"—Anne Somerset, New Statesman

"Here then is the only trustworthy collection of the various genres of Elizabeth's writings. . . . A fine edition

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which will be indispensable to all those interested in Elizabeth I and her reign."—Susan Doran, History "In the torrent of words about her, the queen's own words have been hard to find. . . . [This] volume is a major scholarly achievement that makes Elizabeth's mind much more accessible than before. . . . A veritable feast of material in different genres."—David Norbrook, The New Republic

Henry VII (Penguin Monarchs)

Edward VI (Penguin Monarchs)

The Making of England

George III (Penguin Monarchs)

Elizabeth I and Her Circle

The Reign of Anarchy

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Henry V (Penguin Monarchs)

Edward VI, the only son of Henry VIII, became king at the age of nine and died wholly unexpectedly at the age of fifteen. All around him loomed powerful men who hoped to use the child to further their own ends, but who were also playing a long game - assuming that Edward would long outlive them and become as commanding a figure as his father had been. Stephen Alford's wonderful book gives full play to the murky, sinister nature of Edward's reign, but is also a poignant account of a boy learning to rule, learning to enjoy his growing power and to come out of the shadows of the great aristocrats around him. England's last child monarch, Edward would have led his country in a quite different direction to the

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catastrophic one caused by his death.

In the popular imagination, as in her portraits, Elizabeth I is the image of monarchical power. The Virgin Queen ruled over a Golden Age- the Spanish Armada was defeated and England's enemies scattered; English explorers reached almost to the ends of the earth; a new Church of England rose from the ashes of past conflict, and the English Renaissance bloomed in the genius of Shakespeare, Spenser and Sidney. But the image is also armour. In this illuminating new account of Elizabeth's reign, Helen Castor shows how England's iconic queen was shaped by profound and enduring insecurity-an insecurity which was both a matter of practical political reality and personal psychology. From her precarious upbringing at

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the whim of a brutal, capricious father and her perilous accession after his death, to the religious division that marred her state and the failure to marry that threatened her line, Elizabeth lived under constant threat. But, facing down her enemies with a compellingly inscrutable public persona, the last and greatest of the Tudor monarchs would become a timeless, fearless queen.

No English king has so divided opinion, both during his reign and in the centuries since, more than Richard III. He was loathed in his own time for the never-confirmed murder of his young nephews, the Princes in the Tower, and died fighting his own subjects on the battlefield. This is the vision of Richard we have inherited from Shakespeare. Equally, he inspired great

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loyalty in his followers. In this enlightening, even-handed study, Rosemary Horrox builds a complex picture of a king who by any standard failed as a monarch. He was killed after only two years on the throne, without an heir, and brought such a decisive end to the House of York that Henry Tudor was able to seize the throne, despite his extremely tenuous claim. Whether Richard was undone by his own fierce ambitions, or by the legacy of a Yorkist dynasty which was already profoundly dysfunctional, the end result was the same: Richard III destroyed the very dynasty that he had spent his life so passionately defending.

William III and Mary II, England's only ever 'joint monarchs', changed the course of the country's history, coming to power

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through a coup, re-establishing parliament on a new footing and initiating a long period of expansion that transformed England into a world power. Jonathan Keates' account of their dramatic reign makes both monarchs vivid: the shrewd 'Dutch' military champion William of Orange, and the vulnerable, shortlived Mary, whose life as a 'celebrity' royal and untimely death at thirty-four inspired Purcell to write some of his greatest music. As Keates makes clear, William and Mary's reign was crucial to the evolution of the modern nation, from the 'Glorious Revolution' that began it, to the creation of the Bank of England, the modern British armed forces and, most crucially, a realm in which royal power required popular consent.

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The Unexpected King

The Last Boy King

The Failed King

Mary I (Penguin Monarchs)

The Father of His People

The Uncrowned King

George II (Penguin Monarchs)

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short, fresh, expert accounts of

England's rulers in a collectible

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outsider with barely a claim to the throne, his victory over Richard III at Bosworth Field seemed to many in 1485 only the latest in the sequence of violent convulsions among England's nobility that would come to be known as the Wars of the Roses - with little to suggest that the obscure Henry would last any longer than his predecessor. To break the cycle of division, usurpation, deposition and murder, he had both to maintain a grip on power

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and to convince England that his rule was both rightful and effective. Here, Sean Cunningham explores how, in his ruthless and controlling kingship, Henry VII did so, in the process founding the Tudor dynasty.

In 1461 Edward earl of March, an able, handsome, and charming eighteen-year old, usurped the English throne from his feeble Lancastrian predecessor Henry VI. Ten years on, following outbreaks of civil conflict that

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culminated in him losing, then regaining the crown, he had finally secured his kingdom. The years that followed witnessed a period of rule that has been described as a golden age: a time of peace and economic and industrial expansion, which saw the establishment of a style of monarchy that the Tudors would later develop. Yet, argues A. J. Pollard, Edward, who was drawn to a life of sexual and epicurean excess, was a man of limited

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vision, his reign remaining to the very end the narrow rule of a victorious faction in civil war. Ultimately, his failure was dynastic: barely two months after his death in April 1483, the throne was usurped by Edward's youngest brother, Richard III.

The story of Elizabeth I's inner circle and the crucial human relationships which lay at the heart of her personal and political life. A vivid and often dramatic account, offering a deeper

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insight into Elizabeth's emotional and political conduct, and challenging many popular myths about her.

William II (1087-1100), or William Rufus, will always be most famous for his death: killed by an arrow while out hunting, perhaps through accident or perhaps murder. But, as John Gillingham makes clear in this elegant book, as the son and successor to William the Conqueror it was William Rufus who had to establish permanent Norman rule. A

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ruthless, irascible man, he frequently argued acrimoniously with his older brother Robert over their father's inheritance - but he also handed out effective justice, leaving as his legacy one of the most extraordinary of all medieval buildings, Westminster Hall.

Athelstan (Penguin Monarchs)

A Study in Insecurity

Elizabeth I

Henry VIII (Penguin Monarchs)

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Richard III (Penguin Monarchs)

The Daughter of Time

Film Tie-In

WINNER OF THE WHITBREAD BIOGRAPHY AWARD Now a major film, this is a dramatic reinterpretation of the life of Mary Queen of Scots by one of the leading historians of this period. For centuries, Mary, Queen of Scots has been a figure of scholarly debate. Where many have portrayed her as the weak woman to Elizabeth's rational leader, John Guy reassesses the young queen, finding her far

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more politically shrewd than previously believed. Crowned Queen of Scotland at nine months old, Queen of France by age sixteen and widowed the following year, Guy paints Mary as a commanding and savvy queen who navigated the European power struggles of the time to her advantage in a life of drama and conflict. Re-examining the original sources, resulting in a riveting new argument surrounding Mary's involvement in her husband murder, Guy's deft storytelling and insightful new arguments provide compelling

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and dramatic reading. 'An absorbing biography . . . meticulously researched . . . scholarly and intriguing' Peter Ackroyd, The Times 'Rarely have first-class scholarship and first-class storytelling been so effectively combined' John Adamson, Daily Telegraph

In medieval England, man was the ruler of woman, and the King was the ruler of all. How, then, could royal power lie in female hands? In *She-Wolves*, celebrated historian, Helen Castor, tells the dramatic and fascinating stories of four exceptional women

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who, while never reigning queens, held great power: Matilda, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou. These were women who paved the way for Jane Grey, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I - the Tudor queens who finally confronted what it meant to be a female monarch.

On Christmas Day 1066, William, duke of Normandy was crowned in Westminster, the first Norman king of England. It was a disaster: soldiers outside, thinking shouts of acclamation were treachery, torched the

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surrounding buildings. To later chroniclers, it was an omen of the catastrophes to come. During the reign of William the Conqueror, England experienced greater and more seismic change than at any point before or since. Marc Morris's concise and gripping biography sifts through the sources of the time to give a fresh view of the man who changed England more than any other, as old ruling elites were swept away, enemies at home and abroad (including those in his closest family) were crushed, swathes of the

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country were devastated and the map of the nation itself was redrawn, giving greater power than ever to the king. When, towards the end of his reign, William undertook a great survey of his new lands, his subjects compared it to the last judgement of God, the Domesday Book. England had been transformed forever.

Henry II (1154-89) through a series of astonishing dynastic coups became the ruler of an enormous European empire. One of the most dynamic, restless and clever men ever

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to rule England, he was brought down both by his catastrophic relationship with his archbishop Thomas Becket and his debilitating arguments with his sons, most importantly the future Richard I and King John. His empire may have ultimately collapsed, but in Richard Barber's vivid and sympathetic account the reader can see why Henry II left such a compelling impression on his contemporaries.

**Ladybird Histories: Kings and Queens
The Steadfast**

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Henry III (Penguin Monarchs)

Elizabeth

Treason and Trust

Henry VI

A Failed King?

Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a collectible format In the popular imagination, as in her portraits, Elizabeth I is the image of monarchical power. The Virgin Queen ruled over a Golden Age: the Spanish Armada was defeated and England's enemies scattered;

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English explorers reached almost to the ends of the earth; a new Church of England rose from the ashes of past conflict, and the English Renaissance bloomed in the genius of Shakespeare, Spenser and Sidney. But the image is also armour. In this illuminating new account of Elizabeth's reign, Helen Castor shows how England's iconic queen was shaped by profound and enduring insecurity—an insecurity which was both a matter of practical political reality and personal psychology. From her precarious upbringing at

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the whim of a brutal, capricious father and her perilous accession after his death, to the religious division that marred her state and the failure to marry that threatened her line, Elizabeth lived under constant threat. But, facing down her enemies with a compellingly inscrutable public persona, the last and greatest of the Tudor monarchs would become a timeless, fearless queen.

Charismatic, insatiable and cruel, Henry VIII was, as John Guy shows, a king who became mesmerized by his own legend - and in the

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process destroyed and remade England. Said to be a 'pillager of the commonwealth', this most instantly recognizable of kings remains a figure of extreme contradictions: magnificent and vengeful; a devout traditionalist who oversaw a cataclysmic rupture with the church in Rome; a talented, towering figure who nevertheless could not bear to meet people's eyes when he talked to them. In this revealing new account, John Guy looks behind the mask into Henry's mind to explore how he understood the world and his place in it - from

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his isolated upbringing and the blazing glory of his accession, to his desperate quest for fame and an heir and the terrifying paranoia of his last, agonising, 54-inch-waisted years.

From the celebrated historian and author of *Europe: A History*, a new life of George II George II, King of Great Britain and Ireland and Elector of Hanover, came to Britain for the first time when he was thirty-one. He had a terrible relationship with his father, George I, which was later paralleled by his relationship to his own son. He was short-tempered and

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uncultivated, but in his twenty-three-year reign he presided over a great flourishing in his adoptive country - economic, military and cultural - all described with characteristic wit and elegance by Norman Davies. (George II so admired the Hallelujah chorus in Handel's Messiah that he stood while it was being performed - as modern audiences still do.) Much of his attention remained in Hanover and on continental politics, as a result of which he was the last British monarch to lead his troops into battle, at Dettingen in 1744.

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King of Britain for sixty years and the last king of what would become the United States, George III inspired both hatred and loyalty and is now best known for two reasons: as a villainous tyrant for America's Founding Fathers, and for his madness, both of which have been portrayed on stage and screen. In this concise and penetrating biography, Jeremy Black turns away from the image-making and back to the archives, and instead locates George's life within his age: as a king who faced the loss of key colonies, rebellion in

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Ireland, insurrection in London, constitutional crisis in Britain and an existential threat from Revolutionary France as part of modern Britain's longest period of war. Black shows how George III rose to these challenges with fortitude and helped settle parliamentary monarchy as an effective governmental system, eventually becoming the most popular monarch for well over a century. He also shows us a talented and curious individual, committed to music, art, architecture and science, who took the duties

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of monarchy seriously, from reviewing death penalties to trying to control his often wayward children even as his own mental health failed, and became Britain's longest reigning king.

Edward IV (Penguin Monarchs)

Queen, Matriarch, Empress

Victoria (Penguin Monarchs)

The Summer King

Mary I

The Quest for Fame

Henry I (Penguin Monarchs)

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'To be a medieval king was a job of work ... This was a man who knew how to run a complex organization. He was England's CEO' The youngest of William the Conqueror's sons, Henry I came to unchallenged power only after two of his brothers died in strange hunting accidents and he had imprisoned the other. He was destined to become one of the greatest of all medieval monarchs, both through his own ruthlessness, and through his dynastic legacy. Edmund King's engrossing portrait shows a strikingly charismatic,

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intelligent and fortunate man, whose rule was looked back on as the real post-conquest founding of England as a new realm: wealthy, stable, bureaucratised and self-confident.

Edward VI, the only son of Henry VIII, became king at the age of nine and died wholly unexpectedly at the age of fifteen. This book gives full play to the murky, sinister nature of Edward's reign, and also an account of a boy learning to rule, learning to enjoy his growing power and to come out of the shadows of the great

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aristocrats around him.

A major new title in the Penguin Monarchs series In his fascinating new book in the Penguin Monarchs series, Richard Abels examines the long and troubled reign of Aethelred II the 'Unraed', the 'Ill-Advised'. It is characteristic of Aethelred's reign that its greatest surviving work of literature, the poem The Battle of Maldon, should be a record of heroic defeat. Perhaps no ruler could have stemmed the encroachment of wave upon wave of Viking raiders, but Aethelred will

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always be associated with that failure. Richard Abels is Professor Emeritus at the United States Naval Academy. He is the author of Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England and Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

This is the first biography of the fateful relationship between Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. It was the defining relationship of their lives, and marked the intersection of the great Tudor and

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Stuart dynasties, a landmark event in British history.

Elizabeth II (Penguin Monarchs)

Madness and Majesty

Collected Works

The Women Who Ruled England Before Elizabeth

A New King Arthur?

George V (Penguin Monarchs)

Edward VI

In September 2015 Queen Elizabeth II becomes Britain's longest-reigning monarch. During her long lifetime Britain and the world have

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changed beyond recognition, yet throughout she has stood steadfast as a lasting emblem of stability, continuity and public service. Historian and senior politician Douglas Hurd has seen the Queen at close quarters, as Home Secretary and then on overseas expeditions as Foreign Secretary. Here he considers the life and role of Britain's most greatly admired monarch, who, inheriting a deep sense of duty from her father George VI, has weathered national and family crises, seen the end of an Empire and heard voices raised in favour of the break-up of the United Kingdom. Hurd creates an arresting portrait of a woman

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deeply conservative by nature yet possessing a ready acceptance of modern life and the awareness that, for things to stay the same, they must change. With a preface by HRH Prince William, Duke of Cambridge

Known as 'the anarchy', the reign of Stephen (1135-1141) saw England plunged into a civil war that illuminated the fatal flaw in the powerful Norman monarchy, that without clear rules ordering succession, conflict between members of William the Conqueror's family were inevitable. But there was another problem, too: Stephen himself. With the nobility of England and Normandy anxious

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about the prospect of a world without the tough love of the old king Henry I, Stephen styled himself a political panacea, promising strength without oppression. As external threats and internal resistance to his rule accumulated, it was a promise he was unable to keep. Unable to transcend his flawed claim to the throne, and to make the transition from nobleman to king, Stephen's actions betrayed uneasiness in his role, his royal voice never quite ringing true. The resulting violence that spread throughout England was not, or not only, the work of bloodthirsty men on the make. As Watkins shows in this

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resonant new portrait, it arose because great men struggled to navigate a new and turbulent kind of politics that arose when the king was in eclipse.

George IV spent most of his life waiting to become king: as a pleasure-loving and rebellious Prince of Wales during the sixty-year reign of his father, George III, and for ten years as Prince Regent, when his father went mad. 'The days are very long when you have nothing to do' he once wrote plaintively, but he did his best to fill them with pleasure - women, art, food, wine, fashion, architecture. He presided over the

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creation of the Regency style, which came to epitomise the era, and he was, with Charles I, the most artistically literate of all our kings. Yet despite his life of luxury and indulgence, George died alone and unmourned. Stella Tillyard has not written a judgemental book, but a very human and enjoyable one, about this most colourful of all British kings.

The elder daughter of Henry VIII, Mary I (1553–58) became England's ruler on the unexpected death of her brother Edward VI. Her short reign is one of the great potential turning points in the country's history. As a

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convinced Catholic and the wife of Philip II, king of Spain and the most powerful of all European monarchs, Mary could have completely changed her country's orbit, making it a province of the Habsburg Empire and obedient again to Rome. These extraordinary possibilities are fully dramatized in John Edward's superb short biography. The real Mary I has almost disappeared under the great mass of Protestant propaganda that buried her reputation during her younger sister, Elizabeth I's reign. But what if she had succeeded?

William I (Penguin Monarchs)

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William II (Penguin Monarchs)

John (Penguin Monarchs)

Partners in Revolution

Mary Queen of Scots

Henry II (Penguin Monarchs)

William III and Mary II

The formation of England occurred against the odds: an island divided into rival kingdoms, under savage assault from Viking hordes. But, after King Alfred ensured the survival of Wessex and his son Edward expanded it, his grandson Athelstan inherited the rule of both Mercia and Wessex, conquered Northumbria and was hailed as Rex totius Britanniae: 'King of the whole of Britain'. Tom Holland recounts this extraordinary story with relish and drama,

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transporting us back to a time of omens, raven harbingers and blood-red battlefields. As well as giving form to the figure of Athelstan - devout, shrewd, all too aware of the precarious nature of his power, especially in the north - he introduces the great figures of the age, including Alfred and his daughter Aethelflaed, 'Lady of the Mercians', who brought Athelstan up at the Mercian court. Making sense of the family rivalries and fractious conflicts of the Anglo-Saxon rulers, Holland shows us how a royal dynasty rescued their kingdom from near-oblivion and fashioned a nation that endures to this day.

For a man with such conventional tastes and views, George V had a revolutionary impact. Almost despite himself he marked a decisive break with his flamboyant predecessor Edward VII, inventing the modern monarchy, with its emphasis on

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frequent public appearances, family values and duty. George V was an effective war-leader and inventor of 'the House of Windsor'. In an era of ever greater media coverage--frequently filmed and initiating the British Empire Christmas broadcast--George became for 25 years a universally recognised figure. He was also the only British monarch to take his role as Emperor of India seriously. While his great rivals (Tsar Nicolas and Kaiser Wilhelm) ended their reigns in catastrophe, he plodded on. David Cannadine's sparkling account of his reign could not be more enjoyable, a masterclass in how to write about Monarchy, that central--if peculiar--pillar of British life.

Foremost medieval historian Anne Curry offers a new reinterpretation of Henry V and the battle that defined his

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kinship: Agincourt Henry V's invasion of France, in August 1415, represented a huge gamble. As heir to the throne, he had been a failure, cast into the political wilderness amid rumours that he planned to depose his father. Despite a complete change of character as king - founding monasteries, persecuting heretics, and enforcing the law to its extremes - little had gone right since. He was insecure in his kingdom, his reputation low. On the eve of his departure for France, he uncovered a plot by some of his closest associates to remove him from power. Agincourt was a battle that Henry should not have won - but he did, and the rest is history. Within five years, he was heir to the throne of France. In this vivid new interpretation, Anne Curry explores how Henry's hyperactive efforts to expunge his past failures, and his experience of

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crisis - which threatened to ruin everything he had struggled to achieve - defined his kingship, and how his astonishing success at Agincourt transformed his standing in the eyes of his contemporaries, and of all generations to come.

Ladybird Histories: Kings and Queens is the ideal first reference book for primary school children. It is packed with information about England's monarchs, in chronological order, including King Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I, and Queen Victoria. Full of fascinating facts, this handy book will help schoolchildren with their history studies.

Not Just a British Monarch

A Prince Among Princes

England's Conqueror

Stephen (Penguin Monarchs)

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The Red King

England's Protector

From Playboy Prince to Warrior King

King John ruled England for seventeen and a half years, yet his entire reign is usually reduced to one image: of the villainous monarch outmanoeuvred by rebellious barons into agreeing to Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215. Ever since, John has come to be seen as an archetypal tyrant. But how evil was he? In this perceptive short account, Nicholas Vincent unpicks John's life through his deeds and his personality. The youngest of four brothers, overlooked and given a distinctly unroyal name, John seemed doomed to failure. As king, he was reputedly cruel and treacherous, pursuing his own interests at the expense of his country,

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losing the continental empire bequeathed to him by his father Henry and his brother Richard and eventually plunging England into civil war. Only his lordship of Ireland showed some success. Yet, as this fascinating biography asks, were his crimes necessarily greater than those of his ancestors - or was he judged more harshly because, ultimately, he failed as a warlord?

Henry III was a medieval king whose long reign continues to have a profound impact on us today. He was on the throne for 56 years and during this time England was transformed from being the private play-thing of a French speaking dynasty into a medieval state in which the king answered for his actions to an English parliament, which emerged during Henry's lifetime. Despite Henry's central importance

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for the birth of parliament and the development of a state recognisably modern in many of its institutions, it is Henry's most vociferous opponent, Simon de Montfort, who is in many ways more famous than the monarch himself. Henry is principally known today as the driving force behind the building of Westminster Abbey, but he deserves to be better understood for many reasons - as Stephen Church's sparkling account makes clear. Part of the Penguin Monarchs series: short, fresh, expert accounts of England's rulers in a highly collectible format

James's reign marked one of the very rare major breaks in England's monarchy. Already James VI of Scotland and a highly experienced ruler who had established his authority over the Scottish Kirk, he marched south on Elizabeth I's

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death to become James I of England and Ireland, uniting the British Isles for the first time and founding the Stuart dynasty which would, with several lurches, reign for over a century. Indeed his descendant still occupies the throne. A complex, curious man and great survivor, James drastically changed court life in London and presided over such major projects as the Authorized Version of the Bible and the establishment of English settlements in Virginia, Massachusetts, Gujarat and the Caribbean. Although he failed to unite England and Scotland, he insisted that ambassadors acknowledge him as King of Great Britain and that vessels from both countries display a version of the current Union Flag. He was often accused of being too informal and insufficiently regal - but when his son, Charles

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I, decided to redress these criticisms in his own reign he was destroyed. How much of the roots of this disaster were to be found in James's reign is one of the many problems dramatized in Thomas Cogswell's brilliant and highly entertaining new book.

The Phoenix King

An Evil King?

The Forgotten Years

Edward VIII (Penguin Monarchs)

George IV (Penguin Monarchs)

A Simple and God-Fearing King

King in Waiting