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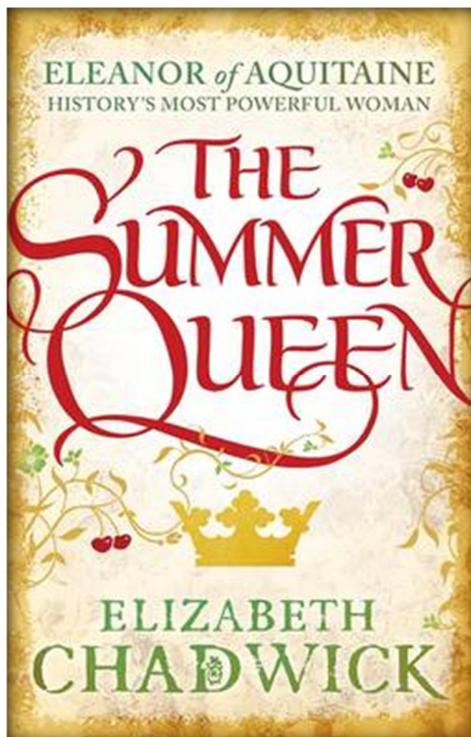
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LoveReading Reader reviews of  
**The Summer Queen**  
Book One of  
The Eleanor of Aquitaine series

by Elizabeth Chadwick

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



**Angie Rhodes**

*Eleanor of Aquitaine, has to be one of the powerful women in history. Sent to be Louis, Prince of France's wife at the tender age of thirteen, was her father's wish, this she does dutifully, and is soon, learning the ways of the French. Louis is a loving husband but he has a cruel side to him, one that frightens Eleanor, but she keeps her worries hidden, learning to stand up for herself against her harridan of a mother in law who enjoys nothing more than saying underhanded comments, indirectly, while looking at her, to see if she hit a nerve. **Elizabeth Chadwick has brought to life Eleanor, her affairs and those of her Court. The first in a trilogy, this is a must read for all History lovers, one of romance,***

*intrigue, and affairs of the heart.*

**Helen Appleby**

*'The Summer Queen' is the first book in a Trilogy describing the life of Eleanor (Alienor) of Aquitaine. **A very well researched and thought out book... historical fiction at its best.** Elizabeth Chadwick brings the real Eleanor of Aquitaine to light in the first novel of the Trilogy which begins with the story of Eleanor marrying prince Louis of France at the tender age of 13 after her beloved father dies in the summer of 1137. The story of Eleanor's life unfolds*

*throughout the book and we are able to experience the many twists and turns that her life takes and that it is not as straightforward or glamorous as one would expect as Louis is pulled to and fro by his advisers and the marriage starts to unfold, the turmoil she faces with being unable to bear a child and the events that happen when Louis embarks on his crusade to free Jerusalem. The author also contrasts the marriage of Eleanor and Louis with that of her sister Petronella's marriage to Raoul which is filled with love and affection.*

*Through reading this book I was able to gain a more in depth understanding and insight into the history of the royals during this period. **If you like historical novels and Philippa Gregory books then you will love this.** I can't wait to read the next two instalments of this trilogy.*

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### **Rachael Anderson**

*An engaging historical novel about Eleanor of Aquitaine. 'The Summer Queen' is the first novel in a trilogy by Elizabeth Chadwick about Eleanor (referred in the book as Alienor) of Aquitaine. The action takes place over a period of nearly twenty years. I am ashamed to say I knew very little about this time in history. Moreover, this is the first occasion I have read anything by Chadwick.*

*At the start of the novel, Alienor and her sister, Petronella, lose their father and are consequently, put in a vulnerable position. Alienor shortly afterwards finds herself forced to marry the young French prince, Louis. The character of Alienor is engaging, she is incredibly strong and admirable. It is unbelievable that she is only thirteen when she is forced to marry Louis and send off to the unknown French court. Thankfully, she is a very resilient young woman who manages to survive the intrigues and divisions of the complex environment that she finds herself in.*

***Wonderfully written, it is a real page turner of a book. I would heartedly recommend it and will be getting the second one in the series as soon as I can.***

### **Jo-anne Atkinson**

***The early life of Eleanor of Aquitaine is fleshed out in a strong piece of historical fiction from acclaimed writer Elizabeth Chadwick. A heady whirl of love, passion and intrigue. Born into a life of wealth and privilege, young Alienor of Aquitaine is destined for greatness. However when***

*her father dies prematurely the 13 year becomes the heiress to a vast fortune and is married off to Louis of France. Louis was destined for the Church but the death of his brother meant that he became King of France, however Louis is influenced by ascetic churchmen and this leads to conflict in his marriage to Alienor. Growing to dislike one another the two struggle with their marriage.*

*The story of Eleanor of Aquitaine is very well-known and has been told many times both as fact and fiction. However her early life is less well covered on the fictional front and in the first book of a planned trilogy Chadwick seeks to address this. In common with most medieval marriages the marriage of Louis and Alienor was dynastic move rather than a love match and, as often is the case, in an age where divorce was unheard of the getout was annulment. The excuse given was consanguinity but given that all the royal houses intermarried this was impossible to avoid. Louis wanted a pious, compliant wife to give him sons, Alienor was too passionate and quite probably his intellectual superior. Whilst much of this book is complete fiction it is backed up by strong research therefore the known facts are not messed with and the day to day life of Alienor is pretty accurate. It is only the emotional parts and the dialogue that are pure fiction. Whilst Chadwick is a writer who does play to the very romanticised end of historical fiction she is a strong writer with a good ear for dialogue and that is what makes this a very readable book.*

[www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com](http://www.pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com)

## **Helen Lowry**

*At the age of 13, Eleanor finds herself married off to Louis of France. Starting a new life in the French court would be a challenge for anyone. The Summer Queen covers Eleanor's early life.*

*Eleanor of Aquitaine was a larger than life character most of us have heard about, but perhaps we don't know that much about the real Eleanor. This is the first of three books and covers Eleanor's early years. After her father dies suddenly, at a tender age, her life changes forever. She has to marry into French royalty and deal with the complexities of the French court. Not an enviable task for anyone let alone a girl of 13.*

*The descriptions of court and the relationship between Eleanor and Louis are well- accounted for and make interesting reading at times! Once the marriage ends in divorce, her second to the future Henry II of England takes place.*

*At times a complex character but one who had to negotiate difficult times in a*

*world dominated by men and she did it well. All the characters are written about considerately.*

**Overall, a well-researched and well-written piece of historical fiction and highly recommended.** Thank you for the chance to read this book. This is the first time I have read a book by Elizabeth Chadwick but I look forward to reading more by her.

### **Sarah Webb**

***Page-turning historical drama – from a female perspective.***

*This is the story of young Eleanor of Aquitaine, who we first meet as a young teenager. In quick succession, her father dies and she's married off to Prince Louis of France. Shortly after his father dies and they become King and Queen of France. All before she's 13! With lots of political and personal intrigue this book follows nearly 20 years in her life, from her perspective. It's a real page-turner.*

*Good news – if you enjoy this, it's the first in a trilogy with the final part to be published soon.*

### **Karen Clark**

***If you enjoy historical fiction, you will love this book. I knew little about this period of history but felt myself drawn into Eleanor's world as seen from the point of view of a strong woman.***

*The maps (maybe these could be more detailed) and family trees are vital to be able to keep track of who is who, where they come from, the areas they control and the route Eleanor and Louis travel to Outremer. The action is fast paced and at times I found myself holding my breath over the machinations of almost every character and the risks some of them take. It was also a shock to realise how young girls were when they married and had children.*

*Eleanor does not always come across as likeable but it is obvious that she often acts out of necessity to protect herself, her family and her lands. Indeed most characters are shown in both good and bad light, making them seem real, although the women tend to be more sympathetically portrayed than the men. I look forward to reading the next two volumes in the trilogy.*

**Tina Tse**

***Elizabeth Chadwick's Eleanor of Aquitaine is a powerful, sympathetic character who has to rely on her own intelligence to survive the machinations of courtly life. A real page-turner.***

*Although I had heard of Eleanor of Aquitaine, I didn't know anything about her so I jumped at the chance to find out more.*

*The story traces Eleanor's history back to her life as heiress of Aquitaine and her privileged upbringing. However, right from the start the author succeeds in creating an atmosphere of foreboding so the reader is waiting for her life to take a very different turn.*

*Despite her father's best efforts, her happiness is far from assured with her marriage to Louis of France.*

*Elizabeth Chadwick has created a very sympathetic and eminently believable character who needs to rely on her instincts and intelligence to survive. It really illustrated how vulnerable women were at the time, requiring the presence of a male, irrespective of how capable she was.*

*I found myself constantly referring to the family trees at the beginning of the book so I could clarify the historical context in my mind.*

*Such was the pull of the book, I finished it in a single evening.*

*I'm looking forward to the second book in the trilogy.*

**Joanne Dibb**

***Elizabeth Chadwick has done a marvellous job of creating an incredibly detailed look at Eleanor's life, as every detail seems to be captured in such a realistic manner.***

*The Summer Queen is the first in a new trilogy by Elizabeth Chadwick which looks at the life of one of history's most powerful and intriguing women, Eleanor of Aquitaine. This first book looks at Eleanor's early life from age thirteen when she was married to Prince Louis of France and later became Queen of France and ends when she later marries Henry II and becomes Queen of England.*

*Elizabeth Chadwick has done a marvellous job of creating an incredibly detailed look at Eleanor's life. Capturing her reluctance to marry the young Prince and then her hopes as she begins to look forward to her role as Queen and Duchess of Aquitaine and ultimately her despair as she realises her marriage is over and*

*she must find a way to protect her beloved Aquitaine from its demise under Louis' rule and finally as she begins to find happiness in her new life with Henry II.*

*I truly felt I was on Eleanor's journey with her as every detail seems to be captured in such a realistic manner, from the opulence of Eleanor's gowns worn during palace life to the squalor and fear encountered while she was on the crusade.*

*What comes out of the book is what an incredible woman Eleanor was, she believed she was destined for greatness and power and didn't give up on that thought even when she was in the depths of despair.*

*A fascinating read and I'm looking forward to the next book.*

[www.thattingshereads.blogspot.com](http://www.thattingshereads.blogspot.com) / @joanne2913

### **Emma Barton**

*This is part one of a trilogy about Eleanor of Aquitaine, beginning with her marriage at the age of 13 to Prince Louis of France.*

*I found the story of Eleanor of Aquitaine to be fascinating and absorbing. **I am not a huge fan of historical novels, but really enjoyed this, and would happily seek out the rest of the trilogy.***

*Eleanor's marriage to Prince Louis of France is arranged by her father shortly before his death, when she is only thirteen years old. The couple quickly become King and Queen of France, and the story follows the highs and lows of their marriage and the political struggles they face.*

*The book is well written and easy to read without being too simplistic. I can also imagine a successful TV series or film being made from this novel.*

### **Carrie Jones**

***What an absolute delight to read a proper historical novel about such a fascinating character.***

*Recently I have been in a reading world which consisted of contemporary thrillers, so it was an absolute delight to read a proper historical novel about such a fascinating character.*

*Elizabeth Chadwick's detailed research ensures that the imagined story about young Eleanor, or Alienor, as she is more accurately called is totally believable, peopled with vibrant and credible personalities whom I cared about, empathised with or felt frustrated with on Alienor's behalf. She is a strong and fascinating character in history and this book made me want to continue on the journey with her.*

*I am excited that the third book in the trilogy, *The Autumn Throne* has just been published, and look forward to then working my way through the numerous other historical novels Ms Chadwick has written.*

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### **Jane Gilman**

***This was a fascinating read and I will be rushing to the next books in the trilogy.***

*This first part of the story concentrates on the early life of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her sister Petronella. Their childhood comes to an abrupt end with the death of their father. As mere women they become pawns in a power struggle. Eleanor is married off to Louis and within a short time the young couple find themselves King and Queen of France. The marriage quickly sours when Louis comes under the influence of Eleanor's enemies at court and because she fails to conceive a male heir. This is direct contrast with Petronella who though disgraced is happily married. Eleanor is a much more capable personality than Louis but is constrained in what she can achieve by being a woman. A royal romp of a read. Full of intrigue scandal sex and politics. This is not a period of history I was familiar with nor had I read Elizabeth Chadwick before but I am hooked. I can't wait to see what happens next. **I must read for lovers of historical fiction. If you like Philippa Gregory then you will love Elizabeth Chadwick.***

### **Mary Gibson**

*The Summer Queen by Elizabeth Chadwick is the first in a trilogy of novels about Eleanor of Aquitaine. The eldest daughter of the Duke of Aquitaine and heir to his lands, she would become Queen of France and then of England and mother of three English kings. Her character and vibrant personality still resonate today. In 1137 at the tender age of thirteen, the Duke of Aquitaine dies and Eleanor marries Prince Louis, pious heir to the French throne. When the*

*King of France dies, Eleanor becomes Queen, though still only a child. The marriage at first is passionate and loving but Eleanor is soon plunged into the threatening atmosphere of court politics and makes enemies amongst the senior churches and her husband's courtiers. Accompanying Louis on a gruelling two year crusade to the Middle East, Eleanor seeks annulment of her marriage from the Pope on grounds of consanguinity but it is refused. After giving birth to a second daughter, the weak minded Louis realising she may never give him a son, seeks annulment which is granted. Fifteen years of marriage over, her daughter's given in custody to her husband, Eleanor is now at risk from the circling barons who are eager to gain control of wealthy Aquitaine through marriage. Eleanor is a pawn and out of necessity arranges marriage with the much younger Henry, Duke of Normandy and heir to the throne of England. I enjoyed this novel very much. **Elizabeth Chadwick brings the iconic character of Eleanor and the French court to life with rich detail. I look forward to reading the rest of the trilogy.***

### **Neil Williams**

*A disappointing story of a young girl forced into responsibility by the death of her father.*

*A story of a young girl forced into responsibility by the death of her father. I found this disappointing. **As a lover of historical novels, I found that until the final chapters, this lacked anything to interest me and the pace was lacking.** At the end I was hoping to find out more but wouldn't want to go onto another volume.*