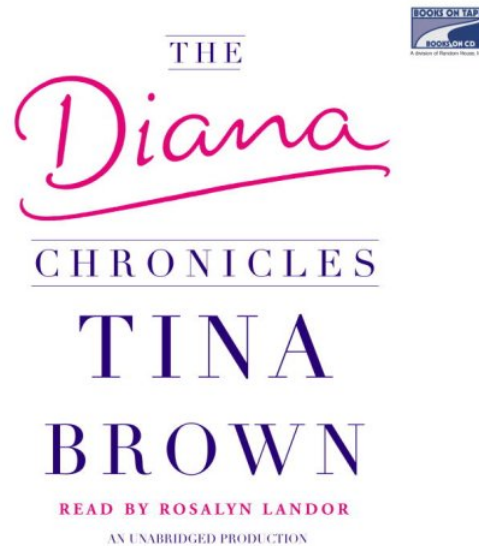


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"Intensely well researched and an un-put-down-able read, Tina Brown's extraordinary book parts the brocaded velvet and allows us an unprecedented look at the world and mind of the most famous person on the planet. A social commentary, a historical document and a psychological examination, written by a superb investigative journalist."

–Academy Award® Winning Actress Helen Mirren

Ten years after her death, Princess Diana remains a mystery. Was she “the people’s princess,” who electrified the world with her beauty and humanitarian missions? Or was she a manipulative, media-savvy neurotic who nearly brought down the monarchy?

Only Tina Brown, former Editor-in-Chief of Tatler, England’s glossiest gossip magazine; Vanity Fair; and The New Yorker could possibly give us the truth. Tina knew Diana personally and has far-reaching insight into the royals and the Queen herself.

In The Diana Chronicles, you will meet a formidable female cast and understand as never before the society that shaped them: Diana's sexually charged mother, her scheming grandmother, the stepmother she hated but finally came to terms with, and bad-girl Fergie, her sister-in-law, who concealed wounds of her own. Most formidable of them all was her mother-in-law, the Queen, whose admiration Diana sought till the day she died. Add Camilla Parker-Bowles, the ultimate "other woman" into this combustible mix, and it's no wonder that Diana broke out of her royal cage into celebrity culture, where she found her own power and used it to devastating effect.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Most helpful customer reviews

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Not Diana for beginners-- and also not the last word

By PMcC-DC

Tina Brown has put together a remarkably multifaceted portrait of Diana. At first blush it's hard to imagine a more exhaustively researched biography; it draws on the perspectives of literally hundreds of people who knew Diana (including Brown herself). She takes an analytical approach, questioning some of the claims Diana made via Andrew Morton's book and in the momentous BBC interview with Martin Bashir. Brown offers extensive source notes throughout.

There are some shortcomings in Brown's approach, however. She assumes her audience is familiar with the biggest events in Diana's life, and this causes her to downplay or even omit some of the most famous moments or quotes. Brown makes most chapters thematic rather than strictly chronological; the text weaves among adjoining years, making it more confusing than it needs to be to discern what happened when.

Perhaps to avoid overdramatizing complex material, Brown tends not establish turning points or a strong narrative arc. Her text may be highly accurate, but there is not a clear sense of just when and how Diana and her relationship with Charles are changing. The book is highly readable throughout, but it becomes more gripping where there is more of a recounting of events, for example on Diana's last night in Paris and during the week leading up to her funeral.

In some places it seems that Diana's story is still too recent for a clear historical perspective-- or maybe Brown was less able to get people to talk, especially about the period between the BBC interview and Diana's death, where the pieces don't all seem to fit together. Brown makes much of Diana's loneliness in this period, yet she mentions various close friendships Diana had at the time-- perhaps Brown just doesn't have an inside perspective on any of them. The closeness Diana established with her sister Sarah McCorquodale toward the end, which other writers have noted, goes unmentioned. For this last period, Brown seems to have less clear evidence, but perhaps also less of the detachment she brings to earlier sections of Diana's story.

At times, Brown seems to apportion space to events based more on the information she has, or her desire to analyze, than on their relative importance. Hence we have a lengthy discussion of whether Diana trusted with Charles on the royal train during their engagement, but a comparatively brief (and not especially definitive) discussion of claims that James Hewitt might have been involved with Diana early enough to have fathered Prince Harry.

People like me, who can't get enough information about Diana-- and know a lot already-- will love this book. Those needing more of a primer would get a clearer, if more one-sided view of her life from Morton's "Diana: Her True Story." For the long term, the value of Brown's book may lie in her having gathered so much evidence from Diana's contemporaries. But a definitive biography seems to await a historian's judgment.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Tina's Take on the Diana Myth

By MJS

I'm not a Diana-phile but when I heard that Tina Brown was writing a book on Diana I knew I'd have to read it. Tina Brown's take on popular culture is unique. She's not afraid to challenge conventional wisdom, you may not always agree with her but at her best Tina Brown is thought-provoking.

I approached this book as Tina's Take on the Diana Myth rather than an in depth biography full of new and startling revelations and it met my expectations, in a few cases it exceeded them. Brown offers more information about the breakup of the Spencer's marriage, it's impact on Diana, Diana's childhood and years as a Sloane Ranger. It's not exactly a sympathetic portrait, that's not Brown's style, but it is far from harsh.

Brown's POV is that Diana was used by the royal machine but that Diana was hardly the hapless victim. You won't be filled with admiration for any of the major characters in the book, especially not Camilla Parker-Bowles. Ultimately Brown does express some good old fashioned righteous indignation at Diana's plight but I couldn't help feeling that Brown was more outraged at the royal family than truly sympathetic toward Diana.

The best, most comprehensive biography of Diana is still Sally Bedell Smith's in terms of thoroughness and clarity. (I haven't read of the ex-lover/former servant/body guard books /Morton books nor any of the standard hagiographies, so I can't comment on them.) Brown's book is effective as interpreting the "icon of bloneness" but doesn't add a tremendous amount to our understanding of the woman behind the icon. Take it for what it is and this is great beach reading.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

highly recommend

By Victorian Catmom

WOW, can this woman write! i'd read anything from her i could get my hands on, that's how much i loved this book. Incredibly detailed, well-researched (well she had the inside scoop, after all), painstakingly documented, but highly readable. and funny! written very reflectively where she gives her viewpoint on the facts but very fair coverage. Probably the best book i've ever read on Diana, and boy have i read a lot!

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