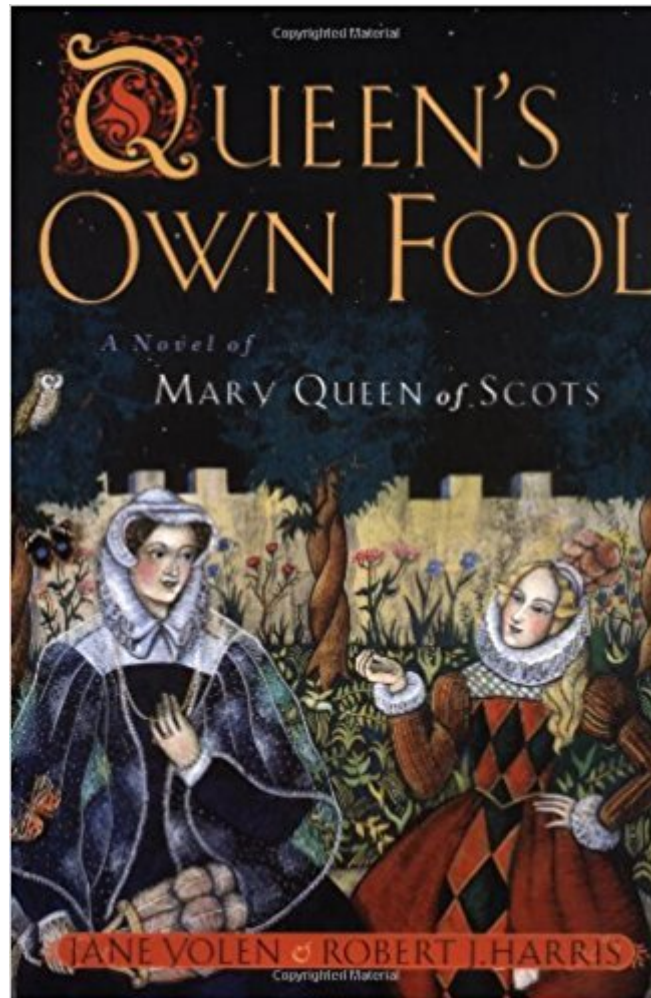




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# Queen's Own Fool: A Novel Of Mary Queen Of Scots (Stuart Quartet)



## Synopsis

Nicola Ambruzzi, a poor traveling player, is an unlikely person to end up "fool" and friend to Mary Queen of Scots. But tumbling and clowning at court, she catches the young queen's eye and heart. As Mary is caught in the winds of fate--running from France to Scotland, confronted by rebellious lords and her unpredictable Scots, Nicola--Le Jardinier--is there, buffeting and aiding the queen with her wit and wiles. This epic adventure by Jane Yolen and Robert Harris takes us into the intimate circle of one of the most intriguing queens of all time, the courageous Mary Queen of Scots.

## Book Information

Series: Stuart Quartet

Hardcover: 448 pages

Publisher: Philomel (May 22, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0399233806

ISBN-13: 978-0399233807

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1.1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 44 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,965,545 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in [Books > Teens >](#)

[Historical Fiction > Biographical > European](#) #1071 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction >](#)

[Europe](#) #46427 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Where history ends, storytelling begins," writes Jane Yolen in her author's note to this exciting novel based on the life of Mary, Queen of Scots. Only a few facts are known about Mary's young female jester, le Jardinier, but Yolen and her collaborator, Scottish writer Robert Harris, have created a fascinating girl narrator based on this historical oddity. Le Jardinier relates the true and tragic tale of the ill-fated 16th-century queen of Scotland. In 1559, when a ragtag troupe of traveling entertainers is snatched from the sodden streets of Rheims to amuse the bored visiting French court, 13-year-old Nicola Ambruzzi impresses the queen with her wit and honesty. The beautiful young Mary takes the girl under her protection as "the queen's own fool," commissioned to speak the truth boldly amid the fawning lies and schemes of the courtiers. Around them swarm secret plots, duplicity, and betrayal; death is a constant threat. After her weak boy-husband King Francis dies, the kindhearted Mary is unwilling to hear Nicola speak the truth about her suitors. She

experiences two disastrous marriages, first with the handsome wastrel Darnley and then--for political expediency--with his murderer, the treacherous Bothwell. When he plots against her, she must flee back to Scotland to try to resume her throne in the midst of swirling conflict between the Protestant lords and their Catholic rulers. Nicola's wit and daring get them through some dangerous situations, but Mary is eventually imprisoned in the stark castle of Lochleven, where their hairsbreadth attempts at escape wind up a story from history as exciting and deeply affecting as any of Yolen's fantasy novels. (Ages 12 and older) --Patty Campbell

"La Jardiniere," one of the court jesters to Mary Queen of Scots, is the subject of this collaborative offering from veteran Yolen (*Off We Go!* and *How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?*, reviewed above) and Scottish debut author Harris. The resulting lengthy first-person novel will appeal to fans of historical sagas, but it lacks the emotional punch that would seem to accompany its interesting subject. A member of a slovenly traveling troupe, young Nicola performs for Queen Mary, wife of the newly crowned King Francis, in Rheims while the royal family mourns the death of Francis's father. Nicola's clever and fearless observations soon win the queen's favor as well as a place at her side: "I am sure it befits a nobleman of France to be to be grand in every sense," she quips, punning on their girth. Nicola remains loyal to the royal through the latter's two subsequent husbands (both nefarious), persecution for her Catholicism in a Protestant Scotland and the queen's being falsely accused of murder. While Nicola's wit sparkles, Mary remains an elusive character. At times the authors seem confined by the facts: several prolonged illness and escape sequences have very little effect on the story's outcome, and the numerous members of court may well blur together for readers. Unfortunately, the curious position of court jesters--intimates with royalty, yet never equals--is only hinted at and never fully explored. Ages 10-14. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Absolutely riveting! The authors have a true sense of style and are wonderfully witty. They also did a great job of sticking to history and blending the varying views of Mary, Queen of Scots. I highly recommend!

Happy with my purchase. Shipped in reasonable time. Good condition. I read this book when I was a teenager and wanted to get it but didn't want to pay a hefty price.

“Queen’s Own Fool” is Nicola, who is given the

nickname *La Jardiniere*. *La Jardiniere* was real, although we know almost nothing about her. Yolán and Harris have used her as a lens to view the life of Mary Stuart, the Queen of France and of Scotland. Mary, at the time Queen of France, buys orphaned Nicola from her uncle's entertainment troop when she is a girl. Nicola is witty and, more important, honest. Mary values honesty above all- she hears so little of it at court- and relies on Nicola to remind her that she, despite being Queen, is mortal like her subjects. The novel takes us through the death of the young King of France and Mary's decision to live in Scotland, so she can rule rather than being an extraneous female for her uncles to marry off to further their political aims. This turns out to be a bad decision; Scotland is full of internal strife between Catholics (which Mary is one of) and the Protestant rebels. She walks into this situation fairly blindly and makes her situation worse by marrying pretty boy Lord Darnley. No one likes Darnley; he's ambitious politically but mannerless, forces himself on serving women, cares nothing for the people of Scotland, and rather reminds me of Donald Trump. Mary is helpless as rebels take over the country. I've never much cared for Mary Stuart; she always struck me as fairly witless and ruled by her heart rather than attempting good governance - not good traits in a queen. Seeing her through Nicola's eyes, though, I could see other sides to Mary; she was kind and smart (in book learning, at least). She was a woman in the wrong place at the wrong time; a pawn of first her uncles, then the rebels, then prisoner of her cousin Elizabeth I of England. Other than her years at the court of France, she led a pretty sad life. Nicola's version of Mary made me sympathetic to her as a woman who cared deeply for her friends and her people. Nicola herself is witty, brave, and fast thinking. She acts as Mary's eyes and ears when Mary is held prisoner and helps her out of several scrapes. Nicola is almost too good to be true, but I enjoyed her and think she makes a great heroine for the YA crowd for which this book was written. This was a fast, couldn't put it down read for me. While I knew there could be no happy ending for Queen Mary, I couldn't help but be rooting for her and being tense over a lot of the scenes, hoping for the best. Great book.

This book is FASCINATING. Literally from the very first page you realise that what you are looking at is not a painting but a tapestry, with depth and texture to fill up the world it depicts. The enigmatic character of Nicola Ambruzzi, *La Jardiniere*, one of Mary Queen of Scots' female jesters (this is historical fact), is beautifully and quite believably depicted from the opening page through all the wild swings of Mary's fate and the poignant ending. All of the main characters are rounded and complex

- few writers have the ability to make characters so flawed, so interesting, and so very human. Poor doomed Queen Mary is made understandable and, indeed, irresistible, as seen through the eyes of one who loved her as her guiding light. Even Mary's disastrous marital decisions make a kind of sense in view of the character as seen by the eminently witty and very clever narrator Nicola, whom we grow to care a great deal for through the course of the novel, from meeting her first as a precocious child of eleven through the course of her life in the service of the Queen. I found the use of poetry written by Mary herself to introduce each new section very effective, and a fine tie with real history. This NOVEL is wonderfully evocative and well-researched, and as I live near Edinburgh I know many of the landmarks the authors refer to, which added a fun dimension to that section of the book. Jane Yolen and her new partner-in-crime Robert Harris write together seamlessly, producing a new voice between them of great power and depth. There are scenes in this book - of Nicola hanging by a rope in Kirk O'Field while death waits before and behind - that will stay with me for a very long time, and that is one of the hallmarks of really fine writing. I can only hope that Yolen and Harris will continue this partnership, for if this is only their first outing, I cannot wait to read what the future holds!

I got this book and could hardly put it down for the next three days. "Queen's Own Fool" is about a young girl, Nicola, who just happens to meet Mary Stuart. Nicola is a traveling performer and then becomes Queen Mary's fool. Nicola follows the Queen everywhere, including into imprisonment. She is there when Francis, Mary's husband and good friend, dies to comfort her. She travels to Scotland and reminds the Queen that she is only mortal. Nicola befriends few people, but the ones she does meet prove to be more than true friends. This book had me laughing at nine-thirty at night and practically crying an hour later. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is the least bit interested in Tudor England or Mary, Queen of Scots. I would also recommend "Mary, Queen of Scots, Queen Without A Country" too. This book may seem a bit large for some younger readers, but don't stress, it will end when it ends. When I finished, I practically started to cry because I thought of what happens to Nicola and the Queen. Knowing the end of Mary's life didn't help at all either. Read this book if you want to be touched deeply. Some might not like it, but I was searching for a good book about Mary, Queen of Scots, and this was just what I was looking for. This could be read by a reader as young as eight and up. I am not sure if younger readers would be able to understand some of the words or be able to read such a long book, but if you might read it to a young person, but explanation might be needed. I WILL NEVER BOOK THIS BOOK IN A BOX AND THROW IT INTO THE BASEMENT, GARAGE, OR SHED. A MAGNIFICENT READ!!!!!!!!!!!!1

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