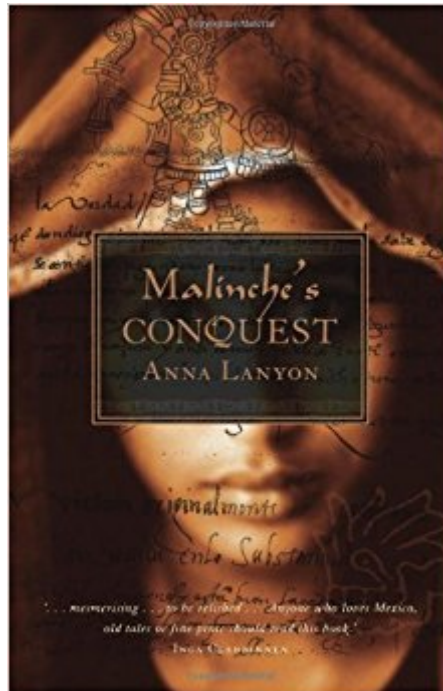




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Malinche's Conquest



Synopsis

Malinche was the Amerindian translator for Hernán Cortés — from her lips came the words that triggered the downfall of the great Aztec Emperor Moctezuma in the Spanish Conquest of 1521. In Mexico, Malinche's name is synonymous with "traitor," yet folklore and legend still celebrate her mystique. The author traverses Mexico and delves into the country's extraordinary past to excavate the mythologies of this exceptional woman's life. Malinche — abandoned to strangers as a slave when just a girl — was taken by Cortés to become interpreter, concubine, witness to his campaigns, mother to his son, yet married to another. She survived unimaginably precarious times relying on her intelligence, courage, and gift for language. Though Malinche's words changed history, her own story remained untold, until now.

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Customer Reviews

To the Spanish conquistadores on the Cortes expedition, she was the honored "Dona Marina," who served as both interpreter for and mistress of Cortes. To the Aztecs and other Amerindians who viewed the Spanish as ravenous plunderers, she was "Malinche," a pejorative slur roughly translated as "betrayers." Although it is known that she bore a son by Cortes, little else is known of her life before or after the conquest. Lanyon is an Australian who teaches Spanish. Her interest in Malinche was stoked during her visits to Mexico. The result is a highly speculative but enjoyable "biography" of one of the more intriguing subjects of the Age of Exploration. Of course, Lanyon

cannot reveal the "true" Malinche, but her suggestions and ruminations upon the history and culture of Mexico are both provocative and engrossing. For Lanyon, Malinche is a symbol for a somewhat schizophrenic culture that has yet to fully synthesize its dual European and Amerindian heritages. Readers will gain valuable insight into the Mexican national character. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

An imaginative, vivid reconstruction of a Mexican Indian woman who profoundly shaped New World history--and then was reviled for four centuries. La Malinche, as she is known in Mexico, was probably 18 or 19 when Spanish soldiers first landed near Veracruz in 1519. A Mayan speaker who also knew Nahuatl, and who was thus conversant with various peoples of central Mexico, Malinche (whom the Spanish called Marina) guided the conquistadors to Tenochtitlan and negotiated their entrance into the capital of the people erroneously known to us as Aztecs. (One of the many contributions of Lanyon's study is that it restores the name Culua-Mexica to Moctezuma's people; Azteca, she writes, was an archaic and obsolete term that crept into a Spanish report and was repeated uncritically ever since.) After Cortes and his soldiers overthrew the regal government of Moctezuma and Cuahtemoc and established Spanish rule over Mexico, Malinche was put to other uses than as an interpreter; in fact, she bore a child to Cortes, one of the first mestizos born (that child, named Martin, has since been apotheosized as the founder of the cosmic race of Mexicans). She died around March 1528, probably in one of the great and horrifying plagues that were sweeping Mexico at the time, and was buried in an unmarked grave. Australian historian Lanyon has done her homework well to resurrect Malinche from the ashes of history and to restore her reputation, for she has been viewed for nearly 500 years as a traitor who delivered Mexico into enemy hands. Lanyon also defends Malinche from the ridiculous charge, propounded in Gary Jennings's novel *Aztec* and many other books, that she was a promiscuous vixen in beads and buckskin, something that contemporary Spanish reporters such as Bernal Diaz, who was an ardent gossip, would certainly have noted. Lanyon's well-written life of Malinche will be of much interest to historians and general readers alike. -- Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

I've known about Malinche since I read Prescott's history of the Conquest as a boy. This interest has only grown stronger with time and experience. The world is full of Malinches. Not all have had the influence on history as the enigmatic Indian woman who became Cortez's "sleeping dictionary" nor have they been as reviled as she in modern times. But anyone who has ever been with an

invading or occupying army in a distant land understands something important about the relationship between Malinche (Dona Marina was her baptismal name) and Hernan Cortes that most of their defenders and detractors can never know, that people compelled by forces beyond their control do what they can to survive. And then their guardians, like Pinkerton in "Madama Butterfly," go home and leave them on their own. One thing about these Malinche commentators whether novelists, historians, essayists, no matter what position they take, is they think they own her. This sense of ownership drives them to accept even the slightest evidence that supports their preconceptions about Malinche vis-à-vis Hernan Cortes and the Spanish conquerors. Not Anna Lanyon. In this highly personal narrative of her search for Malinche in modern Mexico she remains faithful to the one cardinal rule of historical inquiry: "You listen, you weigh the possibilities and in interpreting what you hear you try to steer a path between romance and cynicism, accepting that you will never know for certain what went on..." Keep that rule in mind next time you listen to Amparo Ochoa's haunting ballad, "La Maldicion De La Malinche," and you may realize that some people want to blame everyone but themselves, even Malinche, for what's wrong with the world.

An enjoyable walk through one writer's search for Malinche. Lanyon's writing style is easy and conversant as she takes us with her on her travels to uncover as much as she can about the hidden life of this famous historical character. My only thought is that because her trip was limited, we don't get a comprehensive view, but the story holds up regardless. The author does an excellent job of putting us in the middle of meetings that can only be imagined. Nearly all are tied to artistic representations found throughout Tinochitlan and the surrounding area. It's a lovely tie-in of history (real vs. perceived), cultural conquest, and how Cortes' force sculpted a nation like no other.

I chose this rating because it is a true account of historic events during the Spanish conquest of a land previously occupied and ruled by the Aztec civilization. I especially wanted to read this book because my parents were both born in Mexico & migrated to the U.S. in 1905 & 1911, thereby making me a native born American citizen of Mexican heritage and completely bilingual, which provided me a career in U.S. Government service which valued my Spanish speaking reading, writing & speaking ability. I now have both the English version of Anna Lanyon's book and the Spanish translation as well. This is an excellent account of "La Malinche", portrayed by Ms. Lanyon as no other writer has ever accomplished. Moses A. Alemán

When I wrote the review of the book Fire and....i thought it was this book.this book takes patience to

read just as the auther

I wanted a novel, with historical facts and fiction, having no real idea who Malinche was, it was what I could envision. Having only known Malinche as that legendary woman who betrayed her people, this book offered me another perspective and an opportunity to look at the real woman.

Fascinating, well-researched, spell-binding. I couldn't put it down, and when I did, I couldn't wait to pick it up and start reading again. It's give me an incredible new perception of Malinche.

If you have any interest in the history of Mexico and neighboring areas, this book provides the reader a glimpse into the role one woman (supposidly) had in shaping the future of this area. Told like a story by the author and her adventures in finding the information for this book, she does a great job of keeping your interest from beginning to end.

Lanyon wrote a compelling perspective of Malinche through the lens of today. The author also analyzed facts without speculating or conjecturing. A great read for both a student of history and Mexican culture today.

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