

The Duke and I

Julia Quinn

Reviewed by: Bailey McFadden, 15

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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The Duke and I is a romance novel set in a dramatized version of Victorian London. It follows Daphne Bridgerton, the fourth child of the eight Bridgerton children, and Simon, the Duke of Hastings. Daphne is kind but has been unable to secure a suitor because she ends up befriending all bachelors who might have been interested. Simon is uninterested in marriage and is reconciling his hatred of his late father with his sudden ascendance to the Dukedom. The story follows them through their courtship and into their marriage.

I liked the way Quinn writes the character dynamics between Daphne and Simon. They have a good rep and their relationship builds up naturally. Daphne is a strong female character within the bounds of the world she lives in, and Quinn does a good job of balancing that line. Simon is also very realistically portrayed, and the way he confronts the trauma that his father inflicted on him and deals with it so he can be a good husband to Daphne was very heartwarming and a great message. Lady Whistledown was also a highlight of the book for me - she is a gossip columnist who comments on the gossip for each week in London, and the excerpts of her publications were funny and very well done foreshadowing. The only issues I had with it were the dubious consent given at parts. Both Daphne and Simon initiate sex acts without the other party consenting fully. On Simon's part, he doesn't explain to Daphne what exactly she is agreeing to before initiating sex, and she has no way of knowing since she has been sheltered her whole life. And on Daphne's part, she instigates previously-not-agreed-upon things during sex, and doesn't give Simon an opportunity to say no. There is also a significant power imbalance between them - Simon is twenty-nine while she is twenty-one, and he is substantially more informed about the world than she is. However, those parts don't take up a large part of the book and I can look past it because of the otherwise very well written romance.

This book is most appropriate for people 15 or above, since there are some semi-graphic sex scenes that cannot be skipped over without missing a significant part of the story. I would suggest you get this book from the library, as while it's a fun read it's not the type of book I would buy unless you plan on re-reading it.

This book also provides a great introduction in a large expanded universe. The Duke and I is the first in the Bridgerton book universe. There are eight books in the original series - one for each child - a stand-alone sequel book to the first eight, a prequel series with four books, and a duology from the perspective of Lady Whistledown. The Duke and I (and the second book in the series, with the third season in production) have also been adapted into a Netflix show.

Recommended Titles:

That Inevitable Victorian Thing, E. K. Johnston

The Wisteria Society of Lady Scoundrels, India Holton

Bringing Down The Duke, Evie Dunmore