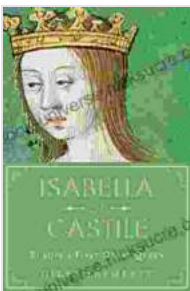


# Isabella of Castile: Europe's First Great Queen

Isabella I of Castile (Spanish: Isabel I de Castilla; 22 April 1451 – 26 November 1504), also known as Isabella the Catholic (Spanish: Isabel la Católica), was Queen of Castile and León from 1474 to 1504, jointly with her husband, Ferdinand II of Aragon. Their marriage—the dynastic union of their two kingdoms—is often credited with unifying Spain under one monarchy, although technically the kingdoms remained separate until the 18th century.

Isabella was born in Madrigal de las Altas Torres, Spain, to King John II of Castile and his second wife, Isabella of Portugal. She was the third of five children, and her elder siblings died in infancy. Isabella was a devout Catholic and a strong supporter of the Spanish Inquisition. She also played a major role in the Reconquista, the centuries-long struggle to expel the Moors from Spain. In 1492, Isabella and Ferdinand sponsored the voyage of Christopher Columbus, which led to the discovery of the Americas.



## Isabella of Castile: Europe's First Great Queen

by Giles Tremlett

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
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Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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Isabella was a complex and fascinating figure. She was a powerful and successful ruler, but she was also a devout woman who was deeply concerned with the welfare of her people. She was a patron of the arts and sciences, and she founded several universities and hospitals. Isabella died in Medina del Campo, Spain, in 1504. She was succeeded by her daughter, Juana I of Castile, who was also known as Juana the Mad.

## **Early Life and Education**

Isabella was born on 22 April 1451, in the castle of Madrigal de las Altas Torres, in the province of Ávila, Spain. Her father was King John II of Castile, and her mother was Isabella of Portugal. Isabella was the third of five children, but her elder siblings died in infancy. Isabella was a sickly child, and she was often tutored at home. She received a well-rounded education, which included instruction in history, literature, and religion.

Isabella was a devout Catholic, and she was deeply influenced by the teachings of her confessor, Fray Hernando de Talavera. She was also a strong supporter of the Spanish Inquisition, which was established in 1478 to combat heresy. Isabella believed that the Inquisition was necessary to protect the purity of the Catholic faith.

## **Marriage and Accession to the Throne**

In 1469, Isabella married Ferdinand II of Aragon. The marriage was a political alliance, but it also turned out to be a love match. Ferdinand and Isabella were both intelligent and ambitious rulers, and they shared a deep commitment to their Catholic faith. In 1474, Isabella's half-brother, Henry IV

of Castile, died without a male heir. Isabella was the next in line to the throne, and she was crowned Queen of Castile in 1474.

Isabella's accession to the throne was not without its challenges. Her claim to the throne was disputed by her niece, Juana la Beltraneja, who was supported by Portugal and France. Isabella and Ferdinand had to fight a civil war to secure their rule. The war lasted for several years, but Isabella and Ferdinand were eventually victorious. In 1479, Isabella and Ferdinand signed the Treaty of Alcáçovas, which recognized Isabella as the rightful Queen of Castile.

### **The Reconquista and the Spanish Inquisition**

One of Isabella's primary goals as queen was to complete the Reconquista, the centuries-long struggle to expel the Moors from Spain. In 1482, Isabella and Ferdinand launched a campaign against the Moorish kingdom of Granada. The campaign lasted for ten years, and it culminated in the surrender of Granada in 1492. With the fall of Granada, the Reconquista was finally complete.

Isabella was also a strong supporter of the Spanish Inquisition. She believed that the Inquisition was necessary to protect the purity of the Catholic faith. The Inquisition was responsible for the persecution of thousands of people, including Jews, Muslims, and Protestants. Isabella's support for the Inquisition has been criticized by many historians, but it was in keeping with the religious beliefs of the time.

### **The Discovery of the Americas**

In 1492, Isabella and Ferdinand sponsored the voyage of Christopher Columbus. Columbus was an Italian explorer who believed that he could

reach Asia by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. Isabella and Ferdinand provided Columbus with the ships and supplies he needed for his voyage. Columbus set sail from Palos de la Frontera, Spain, in August 1492. He reached the Bahamas in October 1492, and he claimed the land for Spain. Columbus made several more voyages to the Americas, and he established Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

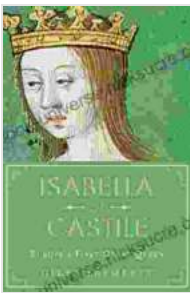
The discovery of the Americas had a profound impact on Spain. It brought Spain vast new wealth and territory, and it helped to make Spain the leading power in Europe. Isabella and Ferdinand were hailed as the "Catholic Monarchs" for their role in the discovery of the Americas.

## **Death and Legacy**

Isabella died in Medina del Campo, Spain, on 26 November 1504. She was succeeded by her daughter, Juana I of Castile, who was also known as Juana the Mad. Isabella was a complex and fascinating figure. She was a powerful and successful ruler, but she was also a devout woman who was deeply concerned with the welfare of her people. She was a patron of the arts and sciences, and she founded several universities and hospitals. Isabella's legacy as Queen of Castile is immense. She helped to unify Spain under one monarchy, she completed the Reconquista, and she sponsored the voyage of Christopher Columbus, which led to the discovery of the Americas. Isabella was one of the most important figures in European history, and she is still remembered today as one of the greatest queens of all time.

## **Image Alt Tags:**

- "Isabella of Castile" - A portrait of Isabella of Castile, Queen of Castile and León.
- "Ferdinand and Isabella" - A portrait of Isabella of Castile and her husband, Ferdinand II of Aragon.
- "The Reconquista" - A depiction of the Reconquista, the centuries-long struggle to expel the Moors from Spain.
- "The Spanish Inquisition" - A depiction of the Spanish Inquisition, which was established in 1478 to combat heresy.
- "Christopher Columbus" - A portrait of Christopher Columbus, the Italian explorer who discovered the Americas.



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