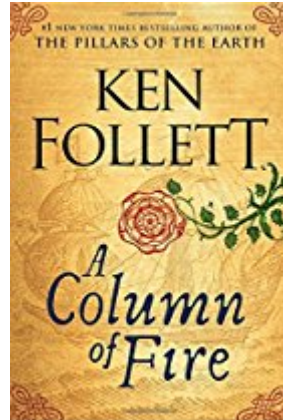


# Read A Column of Fire (Kingsbridge) By Ken Follett



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International bestselling author Ken Follett has enthralled millions of readers with *The Pillars of the Earth* and *World Without End*, two stories of the Middle Ages set in the fictional city of Kingsbridge. The saga now continues with Follett's magnificent new epic, *A Column of Fire*. In 1558, the ancient stones of Kingsbridge Cathedral look down on a city torn apart by religious conflict. As power in England shifts precariously between Catholics and Protestants, royalty and commoners clash, testing friendship, loyalty, and love. Ned Willard wants nothing more than to marry Margery Fitzgerald. But when the lovers find themselves on opposing sides of the religious conflict dividing the country, Ned goes to work for Princess Elizabeth. When she becomes queen, all Europe turns against England. The shrewd, determined young monarch sets up the country's first secret service to give her early warning of assassination plots, rebellions, and invasion plans. Over a turbulent half century, the love between Ned and Margery seems doomed as extremism sparks violence from Edinburgh to Geneva. Elizabeth clings to her throne and her principles, protected by a small, dedicated group of resourceful spies and courageous secret agents. The real enemies, then as now, are not the rival religions. The true battle pitches those who believe in tolerance and compromise against the tyrants who would impose their ideas on everyone else—no matter what the cost. Set during one of the most turbulent and revolutionary times in history, *A Column of Fire* is one of Follett's most exciting and ambitious works yet. It will delight longtime fans of the Kingsbridge series and is the perfect introduction for readers new to Ken Follett.

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Review Praise for *The Pillars of the Earth*: “Follett is a master.” —The Washington Post  
 “Enormous and brilliant . . . a great epic tale . . . crammed with characters unbelievably alive across the great gulf of centuries . . . touches all human emotion—love and hate, loyalty and treachery, hope and despair. See for yourself. This is truly a novel to get lost in.” —Cosmopolitan “Wonderful . . . will hold you, fascinate you, surround you.” —Chicago Sun-Times “A towering tale . . . a ripping read . . . There’s murder, arson, treachery, torture, love, and lust.” —The New York Daily News “Ken Follett takes a giant step.” —San Francisco Chronicle “With this book, Follett risks all and comes out a clear winner. . . . A historical novel of gripping readability, authentic atmosphere, and memorable characterization. Beginning with a mystery that casts its shadow, the narrative is a seesaw of tension, suspense, impeccable pacing . . . action, intrigue, violence, passion, greed, bravery, dedication, revenge, and love. A love that entertains, instructs, and satisfies on a grand scale.” —Publishers Weekly “An extraordinary epic buttressed by suspense . . . a mystifying puzzle involving the execution of an innocent man . . . the erection of a magnificent cathedral . . . romance, rivalry, and spectacle. A monumental masterpiece . . . a towering triumph from a major talent.” —Booklist

Praise for *World Without End*: “[A] well-researched, beautifully detailed portrait of the late Middle Ages . . . Follett’s no-frills prose does its job, getting smoothly through more than a thousand pages of outlaws, war, death, sex, and politics to end with an edifice that is as well constructed and solid as Merthin’s bridge.” —The Washington Post “Follett tells a story that runs the gamut of life in the Middle Ages, and he does so in such a way that we are not only captivated but also educated. What else could you ask for?” —The Denver Post “So if historical fiction is your meat, here’s a rare treat. A feast of conflicts and struggles among religious authority, royal governance, the powerful unions (or guilds) of the day, and the peasantry . . . With *World Without End*, Follett proves his *Pillars* may be a rarity, but it wasn’t a fluke.” —New York Post “A work that stands as something of a triumph of industry and professionalism.” —The Guardian (UK) “The four well-drawn central characters will captivate readers as they prove to be heroic, depraved, resourceful, or mean. Fans of Follett’s previous medieval epic will be well rewarded.” —The Union (CA) “Populated with an immense cast of truly remarkable characters . . . this is not a book to be devoured in one sitting, tempting though that might be, but one to savor for its drama, depth, and richness.” —Library Journal “Readers will be captivated.” —Publishers Weekly

About the Author Ken Follett is one of the world’s best-loved authors, selling more than 160 million copies of his thirty books. Follett’s first bestseller was *Eye of the Needle*, a spy story set in the Second World War. In 1989 *The Pillars of the Earth* was published and has since become Follett’s most popular novel. It reached number one on bestseller lists around the world and was an Oprah’s Book Club pick. Its sequel, *World Without End*, proved equally popular and the *Kingsbridge* series has sold 38 million copies worldwide. Follett lives in Hertfordshire, England, with his wife Barbara. Between them they have five children, six grandchildren, and three Labradors. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Prologue We hanged him in front of Kingsbridge Cathedral. It is the usual place for executions. After all, if you can’t kill a man in front of God’s face you probably shouldn’t kill him at all. The sheriff brought him up from the dungeon below the guildhall, hands tied behind his back. He walked upright, his pale face defiant, fearless. The crowd jeered at him and cursed him. He seemed not to see them. But he saw me. Our eyes met, and in that momentary exchange of looks there was a lifetime. I was responsible for his death, and he knew it. I had been hunting him for decades. He was a bomber who would have killed half the rulers of our country, including most of the royal family, all in one act of bloodthirsty savagery—if I had not stopped him. I have spent my life tracking such would-be murderers, and a lot of them have been executed—not just hanged but drawn and quartered, the more terrible death reserved for the worst offenders. Yes, I have done this many times: watched a man die knowing that I, more than anyone else, had brought him to his just but dreadful punishment. I did it for my country, which is dear to me; for my sovereign, whom I serve; and for something else, a principle, the belief that a person has the right to make up his own mind about God. He was the last of many men I sent to hell, but he made me think of the first . . .

Customer Reviews Most helpful customer reviews 481 of 486 people found the following review helpful. A real Ken Follett - and that is great (with minor flaws) By Chris Melzer (ChrisDMelzer@aol.com) We waited three years for a new Ken Follett novel and almost ten for the next, the third, book of his Kingsbridge story. So here is his new novel, the name is "A column of Fire" (I never get his naming) and it is a real Ken Follett - with all pros and cons. If you know novels by Ken Follett, you know what you get: Tension, entertainment, a lot of well researched knowledge - and unfortunately a little black and white where you expect more gray. Two things first: Ken Follett gets back to Kingsbridge, his fictional town in England, for the third time, ten years after "World Without End" and 28 (!) years after "The Pillars of the Earth". But it is not really a sequel. Yes, he makes a lot of references. But the plot is individual and you can read absolutely this book without even seeing the two others. Second point: This is not a medieval novel, as some say. It plays in Modern History, right after the reformation by the German monk Martin Luther (these days exactly 500 years ago). It plays a little later in the 16th century when in England first the Catholics burnt the Protestants and then the Protestants burnt the Catholics on the stake. When France was devastated by terrible wars of religion. And when Spain reached the heyday of its power - and gave it away to an awakening England, powered by religious tolerance (kind of) and the beginning of democracy (kind of). Main character is Ned Willard (I almost wrote Ned Flanders). He has a great future as a merchant. And because this is a Follett we would become of course an honest merchant with values that match perfectly our values in the 21st century. But there are evil villains, sexist and racist, very bad according to these our values and these guys giving him a hard time. And that's the problem with this Ken Follett like with (almost) every Ken Follett else: The good guys are almost perfect; the bad guys are just mean and without any good quality. Everything is black or white, good or evil. But experience told us that the world is gray and evil characters are more interesting if they are complicated. If this is NOT your first Ken Follett novel you probably know what I mean. And if this is not your first Ken Follett novel you will also read this one. Because they are real page-turners. Because Follett is such a good writer that you never lose track, also there are so many persons and plots. This guy can write and he never stops thinking about his readers. Und you read this books because you can learn so much about history. Here as well: The most important events of the 16th century are described with many details. Yes, I love history. But with books like that everyone can experience the glamour of history. And after about 1150 pages you are sad that this is over. Not the common reaction to a history book. You like that review? Than I am grateful for a vote. If not please leave a comment. Because to help other readers is the sole purpose of this review. And sorry for the English, not a native speaker (German). 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Ken Follett in all his glory.... By R. R. Williams So! The third installment of Kingsbridge is HERE and I am absolutely loving Column! 5 stars all the way, everything you'd want from Ken F. in a book. I want to talk directly to the reader who has not yet read any of the 3 Kingsbridge books. You must start with Pillars of the Earth. It's the greatest book I've ever read and it unearthed my passion for historical fiction. Even IF you're not into historical fiction, it's impossible that you wouldn't love this book or its series or any of Ken's novels. Pillars has had a lifelong impact on me. It's that book that just stays with you after you've finished the amazing journey it will lead you on. I'm not a master with words or reviews, but if you've yet to read any of these all I have to say is: you're in for a treat! 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Tremendously disappointed By Dark Walker I loved Pillars so much and am very sorry to express tremendous disappointment in "Column of Fire." I am not too far into it but just don't think I will invest fifteen hours in its completion. The characters are two dimensional and they talk too much. That they seem too modern is periodically reinforced by the inclusion of words and phrases such as "dreamboat," "talking trash" and "puke,"--somewhat jarring to come across. I am so disappointed to not be transported to an earlier century as I was with "Pillars." See all 17 customer reviews...

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