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Mary Queen of Scots and her Hopeless Husbands

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Mary Queen of Scots was Queen of Scotland at 6 days old, Queen of France at 17, and a widow a year later. After two more husbands, one of whom died in spectacular and mysterious fashion, she was executed at the age of 45. She spent most of her adult life under one sort of house arrest or another, and much of the rest at the mercy of other people's ambitions. This is a shamelessly anachronistic biography, of the 'Horrible History' lineage, mixing narrative, comic strip, fake tabloid reportage, personal correspondence and 'secret diaries'. Well supported by the comic costume drama of Reeves's illustrations, it relies on humour and gore to keep its audience's attention. Simpson uses it all to great effect for 8-12 year-olds raising interesting questions about Mary's life and her place in British history. Most telling is Simpson's implicit comparison with Mary's cousin and eventual executioner Elizabeth I, another woman whose descent gave her power, but whose sex made her vulnerable.

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