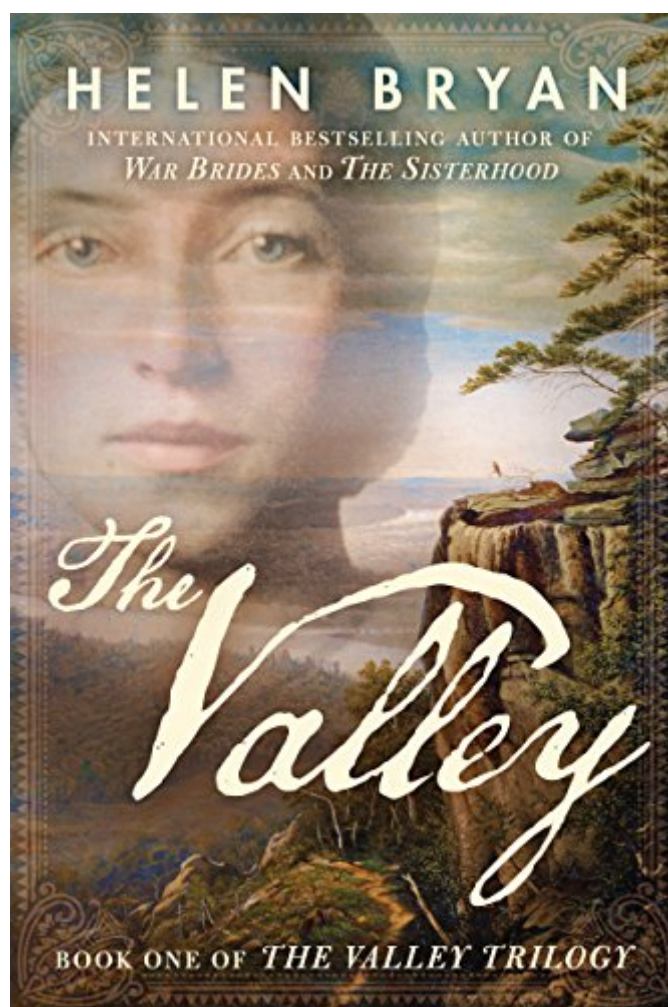


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# The Valley (The Valley Trilogy Book 1)



## Synopsis

Left suddenly penniless, the Honorable Sophia Grafton, a viscount's orphaned daughter, sails to the New World to claim the only property left to her name: a tobacco plantation in the remote wilds of colonial Virginia. Enlisting the reluctant assistance of a handsome young French spy at gunpoint she gathers an unlikely group of escaped slaves and indentured servants, each seeking their own safe haven in the untamed New World. What follows will test her courage and that of her companions as they struggle to survive a journey deep into a hostile wilderness and eventually forge a community of homesteads and deep bonds that will unite them for generations. The first installment in an epic historical trilogy by Helen Bryan, the bestselling author of *War Brides* and *The Sisterhood*, *The Valley* is a sweeping, unforgettable tale of hardship, tenacity, love, and heartache.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Folks, I can't sugar coat it--this book was a mess. I was actually quite excited to read this book because, based on the summary, this was totally up my alley. Instead, it just failed on several levels. I'm not going to rant on about this book (as I have already done when telling people about it). But I do want to point out the 3 biggest problems that I had with it. The first issue that I came across here

is that there are some serious plot issues. As in, there really isn't a plot. The first 100 or so pages of this book shouldn't even exist. I could see a very short prologue of when Sophia first met Henri when they were children, as that actually has some bearing on the rest of the novel, but I really didn't need (or care for) Sophia's complete life history up to the point where she stands on a ship heading to the Colonies (where this book should have begun). Any other pertinent information could have been revealed to the reader as the story progressed. I never found a real plot here--there were whiffs of a plot, but then that story line would be dropped. There were story lines that just sort of appeared out of nowhere and then never connected to anything bigger. Probably most infuriating of all, Bryan ends the book with an entirely new story line, with new characters, that she never connects to anything or ties up. I guess she might have been trying to create a cliffhanger for the second book in the trilogy, but it only created frustration. The second issue is that there needed to be far more editing. The writing was both overly florid and sloppy. The point of view, which was never truly omniscient, would jump between characters at odd places--like the middle of paragraphs--so much that it was hard to follow.

2.5 stars When I read the back cover blurb for *The Valley*, I was intrigued. When I found out that the book & series are based on the author's family history, I was even more intrigued. And then I received the book in the mail and while the official page count might be 606, my advance reader's copy weighs in at a lofty 643. At that point, I was intrigued and more than a wee bit intimidated lol. The first 100 or so pages could have been summarized a great deal more succinctly, in my opinion. The information found here was, I felt, largely superfluous or better suited for a prequel novel. Mostly narrative with precious little dialogue, these first several chapters set an unfortunately tedious tone for the book right from the beginning. When the narrative does finally make way for some dialogue, it's really more of a monologue. Page upon page of narrative disguised as monologue. So it's really still narrative. Eventually, as more characters than just Sophia enter the book's landscape, dialogue does actually take more of a solid hold and occasionally fights its way through the narrative to give us a brief respite. Additionally, the part of the book that intrigued me--the part described in the back cover blurb seen above--doesn't start until 230 or so pages in to the novel. At that point, I started to find the story interesting and became invested in the rather ragtag band of characters that were forging their way across Virginia to find Sophia's valley. The hardships they faced, the dangers that waited for them around every turn--all of this made me appreciate even more those that have gone before me to make it possible for me to live in relative comfort today. However, a couple of hundred pages later, new characters start

popping in and out of the story.

Sophia Grafton who, after the death of her English viscount father, inherits an estate in serious financial difficulty because of a tobacco plantation in the remote wilds of the colony of Virginia. Sophia has no other options than to travel to the colony, take over the property and use proceeds from its crop to pay off her father's debts. The story follows her journey from England to Virginia by ship and then onwards through the wilderness to the plantation. Along the way Sophia meets an old acquaintance Henri, who is working as a spy for the French government. Henri reluctantly accepts a lucrative offer to help her get to the plantation with her other travel companions, a group of escaped slaves and indentured servants looking for a better future. The group's journey is one of courage, hardship and endurance as they struggle and fight to survive the harsh wilderness. Eventually they reach the plantation but it turns out to be nothing like Sophia was expecting. Stuck in the middle of nowhere the group has no choice but to make the best of it and over time establish a close community of homesteaders. The story is well written covering a historical period that is very interesting, giving insight into the early years of the colony of Virginia and the issues, dangers and challenges faced by the early settlers. It also sheds light on the sad consequences that such settlement had on the native populations, the hardship the indigenous people endured because of it. Disappointingly, the book seems hurried towards the end. The main story concludes around 1790 but then two rushed chapters are added, set in the 1830s, which seem lacking in background information.

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