

A Measure of Light

Beth Powning

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Synopsis: Mary Dyer is a seventeenth-century Puritan who flees persecution in England, only to find the colony of Massachusetts Bay as dangerous as the country she left behind. Though she is the wife of a successful merchant and mother to their children, she becomes stigmatized following a birth gone terribly wrong and is reviled as a friend to the infamous heretic Anne Hutchinson. Mary tries to accept New England's harsh realities, but is outraged by the cold-hearted Puritan magistrates, with their doctrinaire stranglehold on church and state, their subjugation of women, their wars against the natives in the surrounding territories and their vicious treatment of any who challenge their rule.

Mary becomes one of America's first Quakers. As both outcast and privileged citizen, caught between the callings of faith and the ambitions of her husband, she comes to the realization that she must follow her convictions in order to bring an end to the brutal repression of the Quakers in Massachusetts, for whom death by hanging is the ultimate punishment.

Critique: A deftly constructed, impressively well written, and thoroughly entertaining read from beginning to end, "A Measure of Light" reveals author Beth Powning's extraordinary skills as a novelist. Very highly recommended for community library American Historical Fiction collections, it should be noted for personal reading lists that "A Measure of Light" is also available in a Kindle edition (\$9.99).