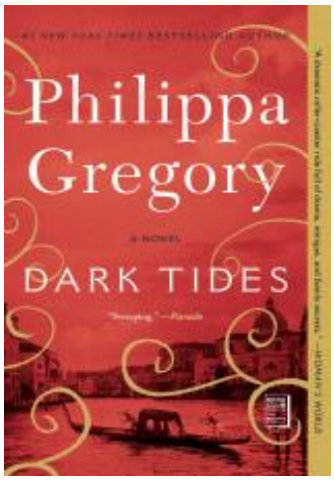
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Dark Tides

by Philippa Gregory



About the Book

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Philippa Gregory?s new historical novel tracks the rise of the Tidelands family in London, Venice and New England.

Midsummer Eve 1670. Two unexpected visitors arrive at a shabby warehouse on the south side of the River Thames. The first is a wealthy man hoping to find the lover he deserted 21 years before. James Avery has everything to offer, including the favour of the newly restored King Charles II, and he believes that the warehouse's poor owner Alinor has the one thing his money cannot buy --- his son and heir.

The second visitor is a beautiful widow from Venice in deepest mourning. She claims Alinor as her mother-in-law and has come to tell Alinor that her son Rob has drowned in the dark tides of the Venice lagoon.

Alinor writes to her brother Ned, newly arrived in faraway New England and trying to make a life between the worlds of the English newcomers and the American Indians as they move toward inevitable war. Alinor tells him that she knows --- without doubt --- that her son is alive and the widow is an imposter.

Set in the poverty and glamour of Restoration London, in the golden streets of Venice, and on the tensely contested frontier of early America, this is a novel of greed and desire: for love, for wealth, for a child and for home.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel begins with a letter from Alinor, the protagonist of TIDELANDS, to her brother Ned, with news that her son, Rob, has reportedly drowned in Venice. She does not believe this can be true. How does this letter set up what is to come? What role do letters and communications play throughout the novel?

2. Ned tells a selectman that he didn?t come to the New World ??to be a king looking down on subjects, forcing my ways on them in blood. I came here to live at peace, with my neighbors. All my neighbors: English and Indian.?? How does Ned abide by this intention, especially as tensions mount between the settlers and Native Americans in New England? How does his previous support for Cromwell and the republicans affect his life during this period?

3. When Alinor is presented with Matteo as a replacement for Rob, she tells Livia, ??I don?t think that one child can take the place of another. Nor would I wish it.?? Consider this in terms of all the characters and children in the novel. Can any of these characters or children stand in for one another? How does this affect Matteo?s fate at the end of the novel?

4. Alinor, Alys and Livia form an unusual trio of women, all women living without the protection of a man, all operating in a man?s world. How does each woman respond to the challenges of the patriarchal society in which she lives?

5. Alys explains to Livia that the Reekie family was ?always on the edge, between poverty and surviving, between friends and enemies, in the tidelands between water and fields. We were on the edge of everything. At least here we are in a world with a firm footing. At least Uncle Ned is making a new life in a new land as he wants.? How do the characters exist in the space between land and sea? By the end of the novel, how do you think the family?s position has changed?

6. When James asks if Livia is willing to give up her ideals in order to get ahead, she replies, ??If it was exiled: let it return. If it burns down: rebuild it. If it was robbed: restore it. If it is free --- let us take it.?? How does this reflect Livia?s point of view? Has she lived by this edict?

7. Alinor believes that Sarah shares her gift of sight. She explains that ??For some people, this world is not quite...watertight. The other world comes in...sometimes we can reach out to it. It?s like Foulmire --- sometimes it?s land and sometimes it?s water. Sometimes I know this world, sometimes I glimpse the other. Don?t you??? How does Alinor?s sight affect her perception of the world around her? Do you believe that Sarah has her gift?

8. Livia tells Alys, ??I am a beautiful liar, if you like. I am all twists and turns and misdirection. You cannot trust me. I recommend that you do not trust me. I am not actually evil; but I am not straightforward. I am not simple.?? Livia tells Alys exactly who she is. Why does Alys refuse to believe her? How do the other characters react to Livia?s treatment of Alys?

9. Mrs. Rose feels trapped by her circumstances, having come to the New World for the ??same reason as everyone.... I came in the first place as I had hopes of a better life. God called me and my master ordered me. I didn?t know it would be like this. I hoped for better, I still hope. And I don?t have the money for my passage back home anyway.?? Do others in this novel feel hemmed in by their lack of opportunity as they search for better lives?

10. Alys rebukes her mother, stating, ?You were a fool once for love! Are you going to be a fool for spite?? How do characters act as fools for love in this novel? Does anyone become a fool for spite?

11. When Sarah arrives in Venice, Signor Russo tells her that ??Everyone here is either a spy or a villain. Or both.?? Does Sarah find this to be true in Venice? Do you believe that Signor Russo is a villain? Do you believe that the Reekies are heroes, as Sarah later suggests? Or does the complexity of these characters exist outside of the concept of heroes and villains?

12. Wussausmon, Ned?s friend and advisor to the Massasoit Po Metacom, says, ??I pass like a spirit from one world into another, I tell of what I have seen. But then I go back and speak of where I have been.... And every day I fear that I am not translating one to another; but just making the misunderstanding worse. I am trying to bring these two worlds together but all they do is grind against each other. They don?t trust each other, nobody wants to hear what I say, and they both believe I am a liar and a spy.?? How do all of these characters live between worlds? Between the lives they have and the lives they aspire to? Between who they are and who they could be?

13. Signor Russo instructs Sarah that ??Every profit comes at someone?s cost.?? What are the costs in this novel? Who do you think pays the greatest cost? Why?

14. The ending of DARK TIDES mirrors that of TIDELANDS. Then, Alinor and Alys were driven from their home and setting out on a journey to a new life; now, Ned leaves his home in search of ?unclaimed unused lands, where he could live without choosing sides, where he could be himself: neither master nor man.? Why do you think the author chooses to end the story in this way?

Author Bio

Dr. Philippa Gregory is an internationally renowned historian and novelist. She holds a PhD in 18th-century literature at the University of Edinburgh and is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Universities of Sussex and Cardiff, an honorary research fellow at Birkbeck University of London and she was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for her services to literature and to charity. Her novels have been adapted for stage and screen, and in 2023 she published her groundbreaking history book, NORMAL WOMEN: 900 Years of Making History, which also was released as a podcast, a teen edition and a series for young children.

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