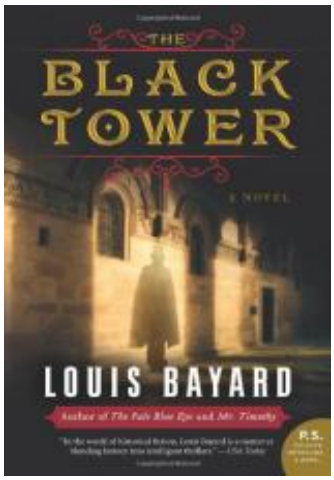
The Black Tower

by Louis Bayard



About the Book

Welcome to Paris, c. 1818. After the execution of Marie Antoinette and King Louis XVI, and the death of their son, the Dauphin, the Bourbon monarchy has at last been restored. But a remnant core of Republicans is still working to fulfill the promise of the Revolution, and the great Napoleon is plotting his next return to power from the rocky exile of St. Helena. Partisans on every side will do whatever it takes to advance their causes. Dr. Hector Carpentier is a partisan of no cause. His father, Dr. Julien Carpentier, saw first-hand the ravages of the Revolution and remained resolutely impartial to politics. His son, cowed by his domineering mother and missing his deceased father, leads a very quiet life.

Until he meets Vidocq, Paris?s most legendary police officer. As founder and chief of the newly created plain-clothes force called the Sûreté, Vidocq has used his mastery of disguise and surveillance and his extensive knowledge of the Parisian underworld to capture some of France?s most notorious and elusive criminals. And now he needs the help of the shy, provincial Hector Carpentier. Between the two of them, they may prove that the Dauphin, like Anastasia, lives, which could change the course of history.

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Discussion Guide

1. In **The Black Tower**, Louis Bayard depicts a Paris that has gone through many political and social upheavals. How have the attempts to sweep away the past failed? Are countries able to shed their history completely?

2. The relationship between parent and child is a theme that plays out throughout the book. How are the characters' lives affected by the actions of their parents?

3. How can the senior Dr. Carpentier reconcile the things he did and saw in the Temple with his medical ethics? How do his notes reflect the change in his feelings? Why do you think he never told his family of his experiences?

4. How does the relationship between Hector and Vidocq evolve over time? Does it ever approach an equal partnership?

5. How much of Vidocq's personality is shaped by his past? How much is a self-creation?

6. Vidocq is considered by many to be the father of modern detection. How are his methods different from today's? How are they the same? In what ways did Vidocq's policing techniques represent a departure from his predecessors?

7. What is the significance of the Baroness having different-colored eyes? How are her actions shaped by her experience as an emigré?

8. Hector comments that the Duchesse d'Angoulême left the Temple but the Temple never left her. What does he mean by that? How is the Duchess changed by her contact with Charles?

9. Even after the French Revolution, Paris was visibly split between the upper and lower classes. How does that division play out in criminal terms? Do the events of **The Black Tower** predict, in any way, the ultimate downfall of the Bourbon dynasty?

10. Do you believe Charles was the lost dauphin? How would history have been different if Louis the Seventeenth had reclaimed his throne?

Author Bio

In the words of the *New York Times*, Louis Bayard ?reinvigorates historical fiction,? rendering the past ?as if he?d witnessed it firsthand.?

His acclaimed novels include THE PALE BLUE EYE, adapted into the global #1 Netflix release starring Christian Bale; JACKIE & ME, ranked by the *Washington Post* as one of the top novels of 2022; the national bestseller COURTING MR. LINCOLN; ROOSEVELT'S BEAST; THE SCHOOL O

His reviews and articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Salon*, and he is a contributing writer to the Washington Post Book World.

A former instructor at George Washington University, he was the chair of the PEN/Faulkner Awards and the author of the popular "Downton Abbey" recaps for the *New York Times*. His work has been translated into more than a dozen languages.

Critical Praise

Readers be grateful, THE BLACK TOWER breathes life into the world?s first police detective, Vidocq, an overdue literary feat that happily waited for this novelist. As the gripping and nuanced story races through the parlor rooms and back alleys of Paris, Louis Bayard shows why he is at the forefront of literary historical fiction today.

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