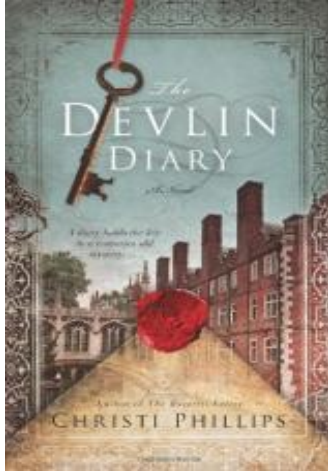


# The Devlin Diary

by Christi Phillips

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## About the Book

From the bestselling author of **The Rossetti Letter** comes a thrilling novel of intrigue, passion and royal secrets that shifts tantalizingly between Restoration-era London and present-day Cambridge, England.

London, 1672. A vicious killer stalks the court of Charles II, inscribing the victims' bodies with mysterious markings. Are the murders the random acts of a madman? Or the violent effects of a deeply hidden conspiracy?

Cambridge, 2008. Teaching history at Trinity College is Claire Donovan's dream come true --- until one of her colleagues is found dead on the banks of the River Cam. The only key to the professor's unsolved murder is the 17th-century diary kept by his last research subject, Hannah Devlin, physician to the king's mistress. Through the arcane collections of Cambridge's most eminent libraries, Claire and fellow historian Andrew Kent follow the clues Hannah left behind, uncovering secrets of London's dark past and Cambridge's murky present and discovering that the events of 300 years ago still have consequences today.

## Discussion Guide

1. What is your first impression of Claire Donovan? What did you think of Andrew Kent at the beginning of the novel? How did your feelings about these characters change throughout the story? What were major turning points for you?
2. **The Devlin Diary** has two major settings: the court of Charles II and present-day Trinity College, Cambridge. Each of these places has unique characteristics, yet they share a few similarities. How are these two communities similar and how are they different?
3. Claire Donovan and Hannah Devlin are both strong women in predominantly male cultures. How does each woman approach difficult or delicate situations throughout the book? Compare and contrast Claire's and Hannah's situations and

personalities. Which female character did you relate to more? Why?

4. What motivates Hannah Devlin to step beyond the circumscribed role of a respectable woman in seventeenth-century London society? What does Hannah appear to sacrifice by flouting society's conventions?

5. Lord Arlington tells Hannah "You are a woman, after all" and Hannah thinks "A woman, after all. Something inferior to man is his implication --- what all men imply when they speak of the 'weaker' sex, the 'gentler' sex, a woman's 'modesty'." (pages 253-254) Do you believe that either Claire or Hannah is a feminist? Why or why not? What does it mean to be a feminist?

6. Many of the characters in this novel harbor secrets from others and many characters are not entirely honest with themselves. Which characters in both the historical and contemporary stories seem straightforward and at ease with themselves and their desires?

7. Ralph Montagu and Edward Strathern, two very different male characters, are attracted to Hannah Devlin. Do the same aspects of Hannah's character attract each man? How did your opinion of each man change during the course of the novel?

8. What is the role of Theophilus Ravenscroft in the novel? Do you believe the author inserted him in the historical story merely to provide some comic relief? Does he have a counterpart in the contemporary story?

9. How is Colbert de Croissy, the French ambassador, different from the English courtiers at King Charles's court? What differences between French and English cultures during the late 17th-century do you infer from the novel?

10. How does the author use language and imagery to bring the characters to life? Did the novel's characters or style remind you of another novel in any way?

11. Several characters during the course of the novel seem to have ulterior motives or act oddly. "Odd is simply odd --- anyone can see it. Or, at least, most people can see it, if they're paying attention." (page 264) Claire points out that Andrew Kent does not seem to have the ability to notice when someone is acting oddly. Do you believe that women have this innate ability more often than men?

12. Whose story is **The Devlin Diary**? If you had to pick one, is it Claire's story or is it Hannah's? Why? Who changes the most from the beginning to the end?

13. How did this book touch your life? Did it inspire you to do or learn something new?

## Author Bio

Christi Phillips is the author of **The Rossetti Letter**, which has been translated into six foreign languages. Her research combines a few of her favorite things: old books, libraries, and travel. When she's not rummaging around in an archive or exploring the historic heart of a European city, she lives with her husband in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she is

at work on her next novel, set in France.

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