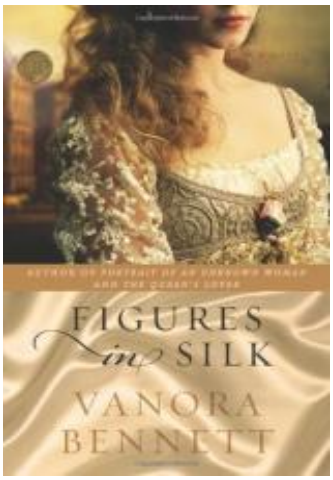
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Figures in Silk

by Vanora Bennett



About the Book

When silk merchant John Lambert marries off his two beautiful daughters? their fortunes are set to change forever. Elder daughter Jane starts a notorious liaison with Edward IV? while her sister? Isabel? as the new silkweaver to the court? becomes privy to its most intimate secrets. Could they hold the keys to power in this time of uncertainty? Vanora Bennett brings to life a time of passions and politics? a time of turmoil and tension? a world in flux and a country up for grabs.

Discussion Guide

1. One of the interesting aspects of Vanora Bennett's novel is that she shows how ordinary people managed their lives and their businesses during times of great political upheaval. How do you think the conditions for people then compare to now?

2. The fifteenth century was a time when people felt change was in the air? the end of the medieval and the beginning of the modern. What kinds of change could you see displayed in this novel?

3. Isabel and Jane are very different women, not just in appearance. What differences do you see in their manners and habits? They are still sisters however --- what similarities do you see in them?

4. Sensuality of silk --- In a time of repression of women as well as emotions silk was a powerful sensory experience. How does Vanora use this in the novel?

5. Women had very little choice in the course of their lives in fifteenth century England. How does Isabel gain more control over her own destiny than she might otherwise have had?

6. In one scene Isabel recalls something Dickon taught her about chess, ?The aim of the game is to kill the king.? How does this observation play out in the novel?

7. Flame and fire are constant companions at this time in history and bring with them the obvious dangers. Throughout the book there are references to fiery reds as well as to flickering candlelights and fires. What do you think is symbolized by these references?

8. In the fifteenth century, the Queen was introduced to the game of chess. How does the author use this metaphor in the novel?

9. Discuss the relationship between Alice Claver and Isabel --- how does it change over the course of the novel?

10. Do you think it was wise for Isabel to follow her heart or should she have used her head?

11. Which sister made the best choices and why or why not?

Author Bio

Vanora Bennett is an award-winning journalist whose work has appeared in numerous publications, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Times of London*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*. She lives in north London.

Figures in Silk
by Vanora Bennett

Publication Date: March 2, 2010
Paperback: 496 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0061689858
ISBN-13: 9780061689857