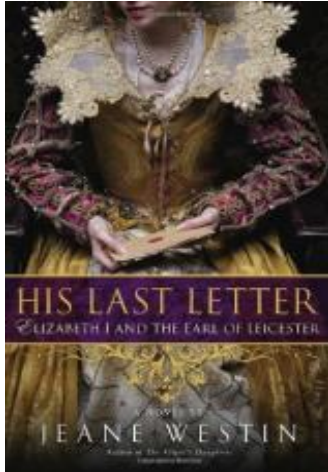

His Last Letter: Elizabeth I and the Earl of Leicester

by Jeane Westin



About the Book

One of the great loves of all time --- between Elizabeth I and Robert Dudley --- comes to life in this vivid novel.

They were playmates as children, impetuous lovers as adults --- and for 30 years were the center of each others' lives. Astute to the dangers of choosing any one man, the Virgin Queen could never give her "Sweet Robin" what he wanted most --- marriage --- yet she insisted he stay close by her side. Possessive and jealous, their love survived quarrels, his two disastrous marriages to other women, her constant flirtations, and political machinations with foreign princes. **His Last Letter** tells the story of this great love, especially of the last three years Elizabeth and Dudley spent together, the most dangerous of her rule, when their passion was tempered by a bittersweet recognition of all that they shared --- and all that would remain unfulfilled.

Discussion Guide

1. Elizabeth I has been portrayed countless times in novels, biographies, movies, and plays. Discuss the different versions of her, and which ones you especially like or don't like. How does Elizabeth in **His Last Letter** measure up to the others?
2. If a movie were made of **His Last Letter**, who should play Elizabeth? Who should play Dudley and the other major characters?
3. It's been suggested that Elizabeth loved Dudley but was so afraid of sex and childbirth that she vowed early in life that she would never marry. Discuss the emotional and political reasons why she might have made that decision. What were the advantages? The disadvantages?

4. Discuss the mental process Elizabeth might have undergone to both consummate her love for Dudley and convince herself that she was a virgin queen.
5. In your mind, should Elizabeth and Dudley's love be called one of the great love affairs of all time? Must all great loves remain unfulfilled, or is that just an idea fostered by male writers and mythmakers?
6. Discuss the dynamics of the relationship between Elizabeth and Dudley in **His Last Letter**. Were they obsessed and emotionally unstable, or do you think their love matured over the years?
7. What particularly interests you about the Tudor period? Why do you think it's so popular now?
8. Discuss the role of Lettice Knollys in the Elizabeth/Dudley relationship.

Author Bio

Jeane Westin began as a journalist, then wrote nonfiction books, and now writes historical novels. She lives in California with her husband, near their daughter, and has been rehabilitating a Tudor cottage.

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