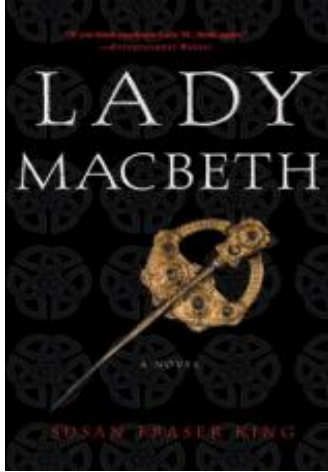


# Lady Macbeth

by Susan Fraser King

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## About the Book

Lady Gruadh, called Rue, is the last female descendent of Scotland's most royal line. Married to a powerful northern lord, she is widowed while still carrying his child and forced to marry her husband's murderer: a rising war-lord named Macbeth. Encountering danger from Vikings, Saxons, and treacherous Scottish lords, Rue begins to respect the man she once despised --- and then realizes that Macbeth's complex ambitions extend beyond the borders of the vast northern region. Among the powerful warlords and their steel-games, only Macbeth can unite Scotland --- and his wife's royal blood is the key to his ultimate success.

## Discussion Guide

1. What did you already know about Gruadh and Macbeth before reading **Lady Macbeth**?
2. In the prologue Lady Gruadh tells us, "Malcolm Canmore . . . will order his clerics to record Macbeth's life. Within those pages, they will seek to ruin his deeds and his name" (page 3). Did Malcolm Canmore succeed in destroying Macbeth's reputation?
3. Gruadh was named "Hreowe" by Father Anselm. What does this name mean? How does it define and affect Gruadh's life?
4. Describe the "marking" on Gruadh's shoulder. What is its significance? (see page 24)
5. Discuss the differences between the Saxon practice of primogeniture and the Celtic pattern of inheritance of titles and land. How did this affect Macbeth and Gruadh? How did it affect Scotland?
6. Bodhe approved of Macbeth taking Gruadh in marriage. Do you believe her father anticipated Gilcomgan's death? If

Bodhe had hoped for Gruadh to marry Macbeth all along, then why was Macbeth not her first husband?

**7.** Thorfin Sigurdsson, the Raven-Feeder, first steals Gruadh away from her father when she is thirteen years old. Why? When does she see Thorfin again? Does she learn to trust him?

**8.** When Gruadh meets Macbeth for the first time she tells him she would never marry him because "men intent on destroying each other cannot make very good husbands" (page 49). How was her initial reaction correct? How was it inaccurate?

**9.** Old Celtic traditions and Catholicism were practiced by Gruadh and Macbeth, as well as by most people in Scotland at the time the novel takes place. How were these two belief systems intertwined? What were the tensions between the two?

**10.** When did Gruadh first know she had a hint of talent for the Sight? Did any of her visions come true?

**11.** Gruadh makes an oath: "Upon this sword, which Bodhe gave me . . . I swear to protect my child from all your cold scheming. . . ." (page 105). What does she do specifically to uphold that oath? Would you have done the same?

**12.** Catriona was Gruadh's "womb-woman," but later their relationship changed. How? Did they ever restore their friendship? Why or why not? What would you have done?

**13.** After her father's death Gruadh thinks, "Had I been a son to Bodhe, revenge would have been mine quick. As his daughter, I had to wait upon others" (page 171). Discuss the gender limitations imposed on Gruadh. Was she ever able to eschew those strictures?

**14.** What is the story of Deirdre? How did it relate to Gruadh's own fate (page 190)?

**15.** What was Duncan's motivation for granting Gruadh the responsibility of crowning rights? What was her response? (page 218) How did this later affect her family line?

**16.** Discuss Gruadh's visits to Mother Enya. What does Enya give Gruadh to help protect Macbeth?

**17.** Macbeth says: "When kin slaughters kin, it cannot always be judged poorly. It may look like the devil's work, but sometimes it is necessary" (page 236). What does "necessary" refer to in this instance?

**18.** What was Gruadh's promise to Sybilla? How does she fulfill it, and seal her husband's fate?

**19.** Shakespeare's play immortalized Macbeth, associating him with witches, ghosts, and overambition; the play is considered by many to be cursed. Do you believe Macbeth himself was cursed?

**20.** How is Susan Fraser King's Macbeth different from Shakespeare's character? What are their similarities?

## Author Bio

SUSAN FRASER KING is a multi-published, bestselling, award-winning author and a former art history lecturer. She holds a B.A. in art and an M.A. and most of a Ph.D. in art history, with postgraduate work in medieval studies. Her books are widely praised for historical detail and a lyrical writing style, and she has won multiple honors and awards for her novels w/a Susan King and Sarah Gabriel. *Queen Hereafter*, is Susan's latest novel. *Lady Macbeth: A Novel* (Crown Publishing, February 2008) was her first hardcover mainstream novel. Susan visits Scotland as often as possible for research and relaxation, and lives in Maryland with her family.

## Critical Praise

?Weaves fact and fiction seamlessly, and transports the reader to eleventh century Scotland. Fluidly written, sometimes lyrical, **Lady Macbeth** is fascinating, exciting and memorable.?

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