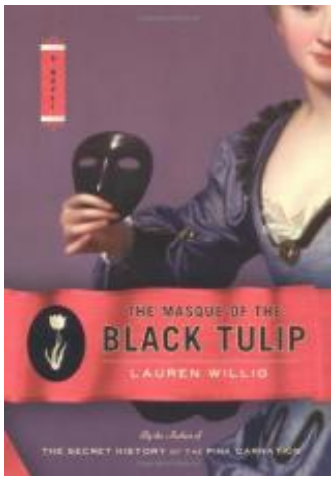
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The Masque of the Black Tulip

by Lauren Willig



About the Book

Two hundred years ago, secret documents so sensitive they could alter the course of history were stolen from a courier with the London War Office. At the scene of the crime, the victim was left with a curious note containing only a small black symbol pinned to his chest. Authorities were baffled. It took two centuries for a young American history student, Eloise Kelly, to uncover the missing pieces of the puzzle...

As Eloise reads from an old codebook, she discovers that the Black Tulip, the deadliest spy in Napoleon's arsenal, had returned to England with a terrifying mission. Only a pair of star-crossed lovers stands in the way of the Black Tulip. But, would stopping the Black Tulip's secret mission cost them their lives, or even worse their love?

Discussion Guide

1. The Masque of the Black Tulip alternates between the present day story of Eloise, researcher and archivist, and the past story of Henrietta Selwick set in 1803. How do these two stories enhance each other? What do they suggest about women's roles?

2. How does Lauren Willig create an aura of mystery and suspense surrounding "The Black Tulip"?

3. In chapters five and six, we are introduced to several characters --- Turnip, the Marquise de Montval and Lord Vaughn --- who might be "The Black Tulip?" Who do you suspect?

4. How does the ironic tone and humor contribute to the novel?

5. At the beginning of each chapter, we are given the definition of a word taken from the Personal Codebook of the Pink Carnation. For example, chapter eleven begins with "Quadrille: a deadly dance of deceit." How do these quotations

enhance the story?

6. How does Henrietta and Miles' story parallel Eloise and Colin's story?

7. In chapter twenty, we switch briefly to the Pink Carnation's point of view. Why does Lauren Willig choose to do this?

8. How does Lauren Willig account for the very explicit love scene between Henrietta and Miles?

9. How is the story of **The Masque of the Black Tulip** different from Jane Austen's novels such as **Northanger Abbey** to which Lauren Willig refers?

10. Does Henrietta and Miles marriage come as a surprise?

11. Were you surprised at The Black Tulip's real identity?

12. How does Henrietta behave in the climactic scene (chapter 35)?

13. Compare **The Masque of the Black Tulip** with **The Secret History of the Pink Carnation**. How are they the same/different?

14. At the end of the novel, "The Black Tulip" escapes. Where does Eloise believe the Black Tulip is headed and who might the Black Tulip meet?

15. Will Colin call Eloise?

16. In the Historical Note at the end of **The Masque of the Black Tulip**, Lauren Willig explains that "although the Scarlet Pimpernel, the Purple Gentian and the Pink Carnation are all fictitious, there were flower-named spies romping across the Channel." What other historical details contribute to the story's authenticity?

Author Bio

Lauren Willig is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of more than 25 works of historical fiction, including BAND OF SISTERS, THE SUMMER COUNTRY, THE ENGLISH WIFE, the RITA Award-winning *Pink Carnation* series, and five novels co-written with Beatriz Williams and Karen White.

Her books have been translated into over 20 languages, picked for Book of the Month Club, awarded the RITA, Booksellers Best and Golden Leaf awards, and chosen for the American Library Association?s annual list of the best genre fiction.

An alumna of Yale University, she has a graduate degree in history from Harvard and a JD from Harvard Law School. She lives in New York City with her husband, two young children and vast quantities of coffee.

Critical Praise

"Lauren Willig balances her knowledge of English history with a veritable passion for English spies, turning out a deftly hilarious, sexy novel."

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