ReadingGroupGuides
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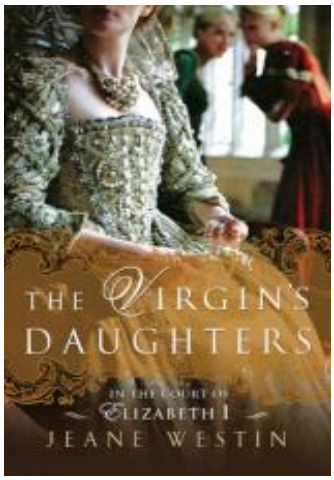
The Virgin's Daughter

by Jeane Westin



About the Book

The story of Elizabeth I, as it?s never been told before --- through the eyes of two ladies-in-waiting closest to her...

In a court filled with repressed sexual longing, scandal, and intrigue, Lady Katherine Grey is Elizabeth?s most faithful servant. When the young queen is smitten by the dashing Robert Dudley, Katherine must choose between duty and desire --- as her secret passion for a handsome earl threatens to turn Elizabeth against her. Once the queen becomes a bitter and capricious monarch, another lady-in-waiting, Mistress Mary Rogers, offers the queen comfort. But even Mary cannot remain impervious to the court?s sexual tension --- and as Elizabeth gives her doomed heart to the mercurial Earl of Essex, Mary is drawn to the queen?s rakish godson...

Discussion Guide

1. Which female character in the novel do you find most interest¬ing and sympathetic, and why?

2. How does Jeane Westin?s portrait of Elizabeth I differ from others you?ve seen in books, onstage and in film? Which aspects of her character most fascinate you?

3. What do you consider to be some of Elizabeth?s greatest strengths as a monarch? Her greatest weaknesses? Do you agree that she ushered in a ?golden age? for England?

4. Which male character in the novel most fascinates you, and why?

5. There are many references in the novel to people who were executed by one monarch or another for treason. Discuss what might motivate someone to challenge the reigning king or queen, and what factors Elizabeth in particular considered when decid¬ing whether or not to execute someone.

6. Given Elizabeth?s past, in which her father ordered her mother?s execution and her succession to the throne was often in doubt, do you think her fears of treason were justified? In her shoes, would you have acted differently?

7. Do you think Elizabeth should have married Robert Dudley? What might have happened if she had?

8. Discuss Elizabeth?s status as ?the virgin queen.? What political purpose did that description serve? Do you think she was techni¬cally a virgin?

9. Discuss living conditions at Elizabeth?s various court palaces. Would you have enjoyed living there?

10. Lady Katherine Grey might be considered reckless, even foolhardy, in her pursuit of Edward Seymour despite the queen?s rejection of the match. What aspects of Kate?s upbringing and character might explain her behavior?

11. In contrast, Mary Rogers waits years to find fulfillment with John Harington. What in her background and character might explain such patience?

12. Which secondary character do you find most interesting, and why?

13. What do you think accounts for the current popularity of the Tudors?

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.

Critical Praise

"Jeane Westin has brought the Elizabethan court vividly to life. Her heroines walk a delicious knife-edge between love and disaster. I couldn?t put it down."

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