

*The White Queen*

**For Discussion**

1. Discuss Elizabeth's first few encounters with Edward and her motives for seeking him out. Do they marry for love? Did you find it surprising that Edward defied his mentor Warwick and upheld his secret marriage to Elizabeth? Why or why not?
2. How does Elizabeth and Edward's clandestine marriage change England's political landscape?
3. Anthony tells Elizabeth that she and Edward are creating enemies by distributing wealth to their "favorites, not the deserving" (page 204). What are your thoughts on Edward and Elizabeth as monarchs? How adept is Elizabeth at playing the political game, both before and after Edward's death?
4. What is your view of Elizabeth as a daughter, a sister, and a mother? Her daughter Elizabeth says to her, "You love the crown more than your children" (page 312). Does Elizabeth, in fact, place her ambition ahead of her children's well-being? How does she regard her daughters versus her sons?
5. Compare the Plantagenets and the House of York with the Woodvilles. What are the most apparent differences between the two families? What similarities do they share?
6. Elizabeth makes some questionable moral choices, such as standing silently by while her husband and his brothers murder Henry IV and knowingly putting a page boy in harm's way by sending him to the

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Tower in place of her son. Are her actions justifiable or not? How does she feel about the choices she made?

7. What is the significance of the legend of Melusina? Anthony dismisses Elizabeth's belief in Melusina and in her own mystical abilities as "part fairy tale and part Bible and all nonsense" (page 239). Is he right, or are she and Jacquetta really able to perform magic? With the penalty for witchcraft being death, why do they take the risk? What unintended consequences are there of some of their actions?
8. In what ways are women especially vulnerable during this tumultuous time? What power do women have? How do Elizabeth, Jacquetta, Cecily, and other female characters in the novel use their intelligence and influence?
9. Elizabeth is aware of and even tolerates the king's adultery. Why then does she take exception to his association with Elizabeth Shore? Why does Edward's former mistress later come to the queen's aid while she is in living in sanctuary?
10. When the younger Elizabeth pleads with her mother to come to an agreement with Duke Richard, why does she refuse to even consider the idea? How does the relationship between mother and daughter change while they are in sanctuary for the second time?
11. "Despite my own caution, despite my own fears, I start to hope," muses Elizabeth. "I start to think that if King Richard marries Elizabeth and makes her his queen I will be welcomed at court again, I will take up my place as My Lady, the Queen's Mother" (page 392). After all the bloodshed, why is she willing to risk putting her daughter on the throne?

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12. The fate of the two princes in the Tower is a mystery historians have been trying to solve for centuries. What is your opinion of the way Philippa Gregory presents this aspect of the story? Richard, Duke of Gloucester, is suspected of being responsible for their deaths. Why is Elizabeth inclined to believe him when he says he did not order her sons to be killed?
  
13. Elizabeth paid a high price for the throne, losing her father, brothers, and two of her sons. What, if anything, do you think she would do differently if given the chance? What would you have done in her situation?
  
14. When Edward is overthrown and flees to France, Elizabeth says, "It is as he warned me: he could not spread out the wealth quickly enough, fairly enough, to enough people" (page 130). What does *The White Queen* reveal about human nature?
  
15. How does *The White Queen* compare to other works of historical fiction you have read, including books by Philippa Gregory? The novel has somewhat of a cliffhanger ending. Are you interested in reading the next book in the series? Why or why not?