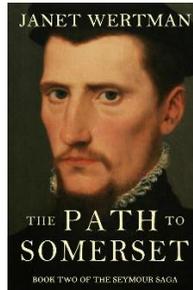


## The Path to Somerset, by Janet Wertman

*After the tragic romance of Jane the Quene, the second book in The Seymour Saga trilogy, The Path to Somerset, takes a dark turn through an era in which King Henry VIII descends into cynicism, suspicion and fits of madness – and in which mistakes mean death.*



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the author chose “The Path to Somerset” as the title?
2. How does the opening set the stage for the entire book?
3. How does religion inform the book’s characters and events?
4. The three main characters - Edward, Gardiner, and Henry – are quite similar but quite different. Who did you feel most sorry for/who deserved his fate? Why?
5. Talk about the differences between Henry’s wives. Any commonalities? Why the variety?
6. Talk about Edward’s family dynamics. How did his father play a role in his life? His brother Tom? How did his warm relationship with Anne save him?
7. In addition to family dynamics, Edward had Cromwell as his “mentor”; Gardiner had Norfolk. How would you characterize those relationships (e.g. extended family? powerful v. less powerful? true mentor/mentee?)
8. How did the alternating point of view between Edward and Gardiner help shape your impressions of Henry?
9. Henry was a very complex character: religious but broke with the church, sensitive but executed wives, loving to his children but breaking off at a moment’s notice. What do you think caused him (and them) to behave like that? What are the compensatory factors that may have been affecting Henry's behavior? (e.g., constant pain, loss of his “touchstones”, the enormous responsibilities he had as king and leader of a religion, need for an heir, etc.)

10. Despite his cruelty, did you feel compassion for Henry? Are there any examples of abhorant behavior that were particularly egregious? Any examples of kind and/or loving/sentimental behavior?

11. What were Edward's feelings towards Henry and how did they change over the course of the book? Given the radical shifts, how would you "rate" Henry as a leader? A man?

12. What are Edward's motives and values? In what ways does his integrity (consistent with that of the day) keep him safe?

13. Redemption and punishment were major themes in Jane – how do they show here in the context of power?

14. Another theme was the "use/abuse" of power. What are the conditions that permitted this to occur? Were these common across all Europe or particular to England (e.g., "false faces", advisors who "bleated like sheep", the role of the common person, etc.).

15. Why do you think the author painted Kitty Howard so dispassionately?

16. Talk about Edward's relationship with his nephew, Jane's son.

17. Some people have drawn a parallel to The Godfather, the idea that the plots at the Tudor court were "just business." Do you see that? What does that do to the personal alliances that are made and broken?

18. Edward and Gardiner had very different battle strategies – you see Edward saying to Tom "don't engage unless you know you'll win" vs Gardiner taking pot shots at anything that moves. Which was the better approach given who Henry turned out to be? And do you think it foreshadows Edward's later battle with Tom?

19. Knowing history, does this book help you imagine how the rest of the Tudor era unfolded?