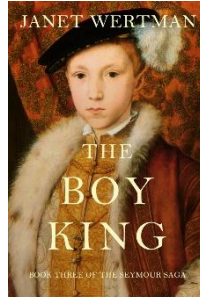


The Boy King, by Janet Wertman

His mother, Jane Seymour, died at his birth; now his father, King Henry VIII, has died as well. Nine-year-old Edward Tudor ascends to the throne of England and quickly learns that he cannot trust anyone, even himself...



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the opening set the stage for the entire book? How do you see the different elements (the midnight ride, the immediate change in how people treated the boy king...) play out?
2. What feelings did the book evoke for you?
3. What are Edward's motives and values? In what ways does his age work against those values? In what way does it further them?
4. Did you find the two main characters – Edward and Mary – quite different or surprisingly similar (or both)?
5. How did the alternating point of view between Edward and Mary help shape your impressions of the religion of the time?
6. What did you make of the Seymour brothers and their dynamics? How did Tom's jealousy doom Somerset's protectorate?
7. Did the story change your conceptions or assumptions about anyone?
8. When did you start to notice John Dudley's ambition? When did Edward?
9. Given that Mary's entire identity was bound up with her Catholicism, how realistic was it for Edward to think he might convert her?
10. Mary kept bringing up Edward's age and Inexperience to defend herself against the pressure to abandon her religion. Did that work more for her or against her?

11. After much debate, Mary decided to remain in England. Although she would indeed come to the throne, do you think she might have been happier if she had left?
12. Edward felt like the Tudor equivalent of a talking stick, but it has always been true that whoever had the king's ear held the power. How do his own feelings of powerlessness color that dynamic?
13. Several things happened to erode Edward's trust in Somerset – the failure of the war in Scotland, the enclosures and resulting rebellions, the gentler religious policy. Which was the most important factor in Edward's disillusionment?
14. Edward discovers that his uncle Somerset was executed on false pretenses, knows in his gut that Dudley was behind it, but lets it go. Did you want him to seek revenge?
15. How different would the story have been if Somerset had understood how to treat Edward? And how in the world could Somerset – who had an excellent relationship with his ten children – have made such a stupid mistake?
16. Did Dudley really give Edward freedom or did he only infantilize him more by giving him a role to playact?
17. If you read *Jane the Quene*, how did it prepare you for Edward's story?
18. If you read *The Path to Somerset*, how did it prepare you for Somerset's fate?
19. Redemption and punishment were major themes in *Jane the Quene* and *The Path to Somerset* – how do they show here in the context of betrayal?
20. What do you think Edward would have been like if he had lived? (And does the incident with the bird play into your speculation?)
21. If you got the chance to ask the author of this book one question, what would it be?
23. Knowing history, does this book help you imagine how the rest of the Tudor era unfolded?