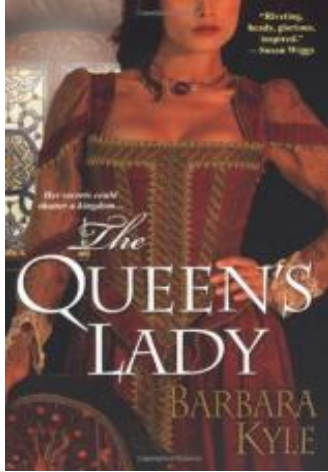


The Queen's Lady

by Barbara Kyle



About the Book

London, 1527. Marry or serve: for Honor Larke, the choice is clear. Unwilling to perish of boredom as an obedient wife, she leaves the home of her ward, the brilliant Sir Thomas More, to attend Her Majesty, Queen Catherine of Aragon. But life at Henry VIII's court holds more than artifice for an intelligent observer, and Honor knows how to watch --- and when to act...

Angered by the humiliation heaped upon her mistress as Henry cavorts with Anne Boleyn and presses Rome for a divorce, Honor volunteers to carry letters to the Queen's allies. It's a risky game, but Honor is sure she's playing it well --- until she's proven wrong. Richard Thornleigh may cut a dashing figure at court, but Honor isn't taken in by his reckless charm. Only later does Honor realize that Richard has awakened something within her --- and that he, too, has something to hide...

For the King's actions are merely one knot in a twisted web that stretches across Europe, ensnaring everyone from the lowliest of peasants to the most powerful of nobles. Swept away in a tide of intrigue and danger, the Queen's lady is about to learn everything: about pride, passion, greed --- and the conscience of the king...

Discussion Guide

1. When Honor Larke sees her childhood friend, Ralph Pepperton, burned at the stake as a heretic, it affects her so deeply it changes her life, instilling a hatred of tyrannical authority that leads her to take very risky actions. If you witnessed such a horrific death of a friend, do you think you would respond as Honor did?

2. Queen Catherine fights tenaciously against letting King Henry divorce her. In fury he sends her to live in virtual penury, forbidden even to see her beloved daughter. Some call Catherine foolishly obstinate, since by accepting the divorce she could have continued to live with her daughter in luxury. Some call her brave and resolute. What are your

views on the Queen's long battle to preserve her marriage? Was she justified or deluded

3. Honor's world is shaken to the core when she learns from Sir Thomas More that it was he who sent Ralph to burn at the stake. More insists it was necessary to preserve religious orthodoxy and, indeed, law and order. What is your opinion of More's worldview and his actions?

4. Honor admires and respects her mistress, Queen Catherine, but her desire to save people hunted by Sir Thomas More under the heresy laws drives her to betray the Queen. She does so by giving the Emperor's letter to Cromwell to hasten the royal divorce in the hope of ushering in a reformed church. Was Honor justified in betraying the Queen? If so, why? If not, why not?

5. Exasperated by Honor's reckless missions to rescue people hunted for heresy, Richard Thornleigh tells her that she can't save the whole world. She replies that she can save enough to make a difference. Do you feel she was right to commit herself, and risk death, to fight for her cause?

6. Richard Thornleigh's first marriage is a failure that ends in tragedy. How did you feel about the way Thornleigh fled his pitiable wife and her deep depressions? Was he shirking his responsibilities, or doing what anyone would in his circumstances?

7. What was your response to Honor's decision to stay hidden in the ship's hold, suffering pain and misery and almost death, in order to protect Edward Sydenham and let him escape.

8. Friendship and betrayal are key themes in **The Queen's Lady** and the loyalty of many is tested: Honor's loyalty to Queen Catherine, Sir Thomas More's friendship with King Henry, Honor's bond with More, and even Richard Thornleigh's love for Honor. How do you feel about the choices these characters make to either preserve or destroy the bonds between them?

9. Once happily married to Richard Thornleigh, Honor has the chance to live quietly and abandon her effort to save lives by challenging the heresy laws. Instead, she continues to publish pamphlets anonymously in her battle with Sir Thomas More. Thornleigh accuses her of waging a vendetta against More and demands that she choose between their marriage and her 'cause.' Was he justified in making this ultimatum?

10. Honor later decides to go against Thornleigh's wishes by accepting Cromwell's commission to bring Brother Frish home to England. This brings on the terrible crisis of Frish being captured and burned, and Honor herself becoming a hunted fugitive. Should she have known better than to trust Cromwell, or was she right to try at all costs?

11. Settled in Basle with Erasmus, still grieving for Thornleigh, Honor decides to return to England to try to save the life of Sir Thomas More imprisoned by the vengeful King. In doing so she hazards everything - leaving behind her baby and risking her own life. What are your views about Honor's momentous decision? Did she make the right choice?

12. The foreigner's book with the speedwell flower is a constant 'holy grail' that Honor searches for through three decades. Why does finding the book mean so much to her? When she finally finds it, how does it change her?

13. Religious intolerance is a key theme in **The Queen's Lady**, showing the brutal excesses of both Catholics in

England and Protestants in Munster, Germany. What parallels can we draw about religious extremism in our own time?

Author Bio

Barbara Kyle, a classically trained actor, enjoyed a successful career in Canadian television and theater before turning her hand to writing fiction. She and her husband live in Ontario, where she teaches popular writing seminars and workshops.

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