



# Solomon's Crown

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Natasha Siegel tells readers from the start that “This is not a historically accurate novel.” Instead, she has chosen to reimagine history through a more optimistic lens, to create a version of it that is less tragic. How did this blurred boundary between fact and fiction affect your reading of *Solomon's Crown*?
2. “I wondered if any of us would find something worthy above us, some escape from our cages,” remarks Richard. How do the constraints, or “cages,” of one’s position and birthright define the various characters in the novel—Richard, Philip, Isabella, Geoffrey, Henry, John? How do they deal with the pressures and expectations foisted upon them?
3. How do Richard and Philip change during their time with each other? Do the lessons they learn from each other continue to be guiding forces in their lives?
4. “Isabella made me Aeneas, even if only for that night: a wanderer tossed in the tempest, escaping the fickle hand of fate.” How does Philip’s predicament mirror that of Aeneas? What is his “exile” and his “tempest” in this case, and does he ever escape “the fickle hand of fate”?
5. What parallels do you see between the characters and conflicts of this novel and those of today? What pieces of Richard and Philip’s story can be universalized?
6. Which is more important: love or duty? How do Richard’s and Philip’s sense of duty and ambition get in the way of their love? How does their love usurp their sense of duty? Is love worth pursuing if you know it will lead to heartbreak?
7. “Our family trees are as tangled and thorny as a briar patch. . . . It is impossible to unpick one thread without the entire thing coming apart.” Philip remarks that he can pick at those threads and cause the “tapestry” to unravel. How does he do so? What are some of his most cunning political moves?
8. Discuss the women of *Solomon's Crown*—Isabella and Eleanor of Aquitaine. What roles do they play in the story? How do they exercise their power?
9. What is the significance of the titular Solomon’s crown? Why do you think Natasha Siegel chose this as her title?
10. Which of these characters is the most flawed? What is their hubris?
11. How do the section titles mirror the events of the book? How do ideas about courtly love and chivalry fit into *Solomon's Crown*?
12. “The elm at Gisors straddled the border between my territory and Henry’s. To the north, there was Normandy, and south, there was Paris. At the center of it all, a tree had teetered on its hill for centuries, and it seemed likely to do so for centuries more.” Discuss the implications of chopping down the elm tree. What do you think the future holds for Richard and Philip? Do they really get a happy-ever-after?
13. What makes a great king? How would you have dealt with the complicated political situation that Richard and Philip both find themselves in?
14. You’re casting for an adaptation of *Solomon's Crown*. Who’s your perfect Richard? Your perfect Philip?