

Book Club Questions for *Boleyn Traitor*

1. What was your final impression of Jane? Why do you think Philippa Gregory chose to tell her story?
2. Thomas Cromwell tells Jane that if she had been a man, he would have made her 'a great diplomat, an ambassador'. What does Cromwell make Jane into instead? Does her gender work to her advantage in the role she plays for him?
3. How do you feel about George? When he casts himself as traitor to protect Princess Elizabeth, Jane considers it 'his final rejection of me. He has chosen to die so that his niece may keep the title of princess.' Why does Jane see this as rejection? Do you believe George did the right thing?
4. How different might England's history have been if George had allowed his niece, Princess Elizabeth, to be thought of as a bastard?
5. Despite years of marriage, Jane never becomes pregnant. Is her career as a courtier dependent on her lack of children, even as she serves queens whose lives and fortunes are entirely dependent on their ability to conceive?
6. How does Anne of Cleves compare to the queens who came before her? Was Anne a successful wife – and why, or why not?
7. When Cromwell is arrested, Jane thinks '... he taught me all about treachery; it will come as no surprise to him when he learns I have let him go to the scaffold without a word in his defence.' Do you think she regrets not saying anything in her mentor's defence? Would he have expected her to?
8. Jane makes a fateful decision to return to court to be Katheryn Howard's lady in waiting instead of staying with Anne of Cleves. Why? Is this a mistake? Would you have welcomed a peaceful retirement if you'd been in her shoes?
9. Witnessing Katheryn Howard's affair with Thomas Culpepper, Jane says 'I believe in something that rings true; I believe in the redeeming power of love.' Does this seem like a departure from Jane's careful and calculating worldview? Did this belief in true love lead to their downfall?
10. When Jane has been imprisoned, she allows people to think that she has lost her mind in the hopes it might save her from execution. Is Jane only acting, or has she truly been pushed to the limits of her sanity?
11. Jane tells the reader: 'We are ruled by a madman, and we are all so bereft of our wits that, having started by obeying him, we have gone on to do what he wants before he even asks for it, and now we are all as mad as him.' Were Jane and her fellow courtiers truly powerless to resist King Henry's madness? Is Jane right that 'All that is needed to defeat a tyrant is the courage to say no'?
12. Philippa Gregory has reflected, 'I live in a world which feels more extreme and more dangerous than that of my childhood. I am aware of how easily power can shift.' How do you think this thinking informs her historian's vision of Jane's world? Are there parallels between the instability and dangers of Jane's era and our own?

