

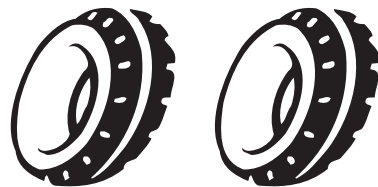
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Mirror & the Light

by Hilary Mantel

BOOK GROUP

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Hilary Mantel is the bestselling author of many novels including *Wolf Hall*, which won the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction. *Bring Up the Bodies*, Book Two of the Wolf Hall Trilogy, was also awarded the Man Booker Prize and the Costa Book Award. She is also the author of *A Change of Climate*, *A Place of Greater Safety*, *Eight Months on Ghazal Street*, *An Experiment in Love*, *The Giant*, *O'Brien*, *Fludd*, *Beyond Black*, *Every Day Is Mother's Day*, and *Vacant Possession*. She has also written a memoir, *Giving Up the Ghost*. Mantel was the winner of the Hawthornden Prize, and her reviews and essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, and the *London Review of Books*. She lives in England with her husband.

BOOK SUMMARY

The Mirror & the Light is a novel written by the English author Hilary Mantel. This book is historical fiction. Following *Bring Up the Bodies* in 2012 and *Wolf Hall* in 2009, it is the last portion in her set of three diagramming the ascent and fall of Thomas Cromwell, serve in the court of King Henry VIII, covering the most recent four years of his life, from 1536 until his passing by execution in 1540.

Thomas Cromwell was an English legal advisor who was Henry VIII's central priest for a very long time. Organizing such things as the revocation of Henry's union with Catherine of Aragon and the making of the Church of England which brought predominantly to empower Henry to wed Anne Boleyn. This was after bombed endeavors to acquire endorsement for the association from the Pope. He followed a ton of Henry's requests, yet he additionally had severe a ton of ties and was executed on the King's requests in 1540.

The book starts in 1536 with the execution of Anne Boleyn. A French professional killer wipes out Anne Boleyn. Her significant other, King Henry weds a third spouse, Jane Seymour, who individuals accept that she will bring forth the hotly anticipated beneficiary. Thomas Cromwell got into the Privy Council. He has been extremely amazing. Henry has no regard for his most recent spouse. Thomas has brought up in an unassuming foundation, however, of late, he has gotten flushed with power.

At the point when Jane Seymour passes on conceiving an offspring, Thomas believes that he is all around situated to settle on who will be hitched by the King. To put it plainly, he accepts that he will assume an essential part in picking the following sovereign. Therefore, he sends craftsmen across Europe to take pictures of possible ladies to King. In any case, Henry dismisses the majority of them after consideration.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Thomas Cromwell is now in his fifties, 'the same small quick eyes, the same thickset imperturbable body; the same schedules.' But to what extent is he a different man to the one we know from *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*? How has his character developed?
2. Discuss Hilary Mantel's use of the present tense in *The Mirror & the Light*. She allows us to follow her characters in real time as they make decisions the consequences of which they cannot be sure. Does this change how we think of history?
3. What echoes are there in *The Mirror & the Light* of contemporary politics and Britain's relationship with Europe? To what extent is Thomas Cromwell a thoroughly European character?
4. The burden of kingship, Henry says, no man can imagine it. All my life, to be a prince: to be observed to be a prince; all eyes to be set on me; to be an exemplar of virtue... to unmake myself as a man in order to make myself as a king.' What picture does Hilary Mantel paint of Henry VIII, as a man and as a king? Consider the trajectory of his relationship with Thomas Cromwell.
5. Consider Cromwell as a father and as a son. And the paternal relationships he develops.
6. *The Mirror & the Light*'s cast of characters includes those who have died in the course of the previous two novels. Consider the role of ghosts in the novel.
7. Discuss the relationship of men and women. Do the female characters have power? How familiar are the gender inequalities to the world we live in now?
8. From the descriptions of Henry's leg wound, to the river Thames which flows through the story, *The Mirror & the Light* is carefully and vividly drawn. Consider the use of texture and physicality in the novel. How successfully does Hilary Mantel paint a picture of 1540s London?
9. Is Thomas Cromwell's downfall inevitable? When and how does he become conscious of the fate that awaits him? How does Cromwell react to his own death?

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