

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

THE DAUGHTER OF TIME

by Josephine Tey

- The deaths of the Princes in the Tower may be the ultimate “cold case file.” Inspector Grant sets out to disregard popularly accepted versions of the story and start from ‘scratch,’ a sort of ‘just the facts, ma’am’ approach. How do you think the mid-20th century Grant’s investigation resembles or differs from the approach a 21st-century detective—fictional or otherwise— might take to a “cold” homicide case?
- Grant infers a great deal from his first sight of Richard’s portrait: “Someone used to great responsibility...too conscientious...the look one sees on the face of a crippled child,” and so forth. In light of the initial, subjective impressions he forms from looking at the portrait, how well do you think Grant maintains an investigator’s objectivity in going about his investigation of Richard’s guilt or innocence?
- Grant makes some assertions about female psychology that would seem stereotypical today: “Mary Stuart was six feet tall. Nearly all out-size women are sexually cold. Ask any doctor.” How fully realized or stereotypical are the book’s contemporary female characters: The Midget, The Amazon, Mrs. Tinker, Matron, and Marta? Do you think the portrayals of female characters “date” the book?
- Tey presents a large volume of historical and documentary evidence to the reader via Grant’s and Carradine’s discussions about their investigations. How well do you think she strikes the balance between, on the one hand, making her case about Richard’s role in the deaths of the Princes and, on the other, entertaining the reader with the story of solving the mystery? What are some of the ways she does this?
- Many people who have never read a scholarly work about Richard III and the fate of the Princes are familiar with the controversy from reading *The Daughter of Time*, which is even cited by professional historians for the thorough but concise case it presents. Did you find this book primarily a “good read” in the murder mystery tradition, or more of a history book?
- A contemporary detective might look for DNA evidence—unknown in either Richard’s or Grant’s time—in connection with the skeletons found in the Tower. Based on the information presented in this book, what unanswered questions about the fate of the Princes do you think DNA evidence might and might not resolve?
- What do we learn about Grant as a character from his reactions in the opening chapter to the various books his friends have brought by, and to the historical figures he discusses with his friend Marta?
- By the end of the book, Grant and Carradine come to a particular set of conclusions. Do you think those conclusions are justified based on the evidence that’s been presented to them—and to readers—in the course of the book?



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- From a historian's perspective, do you think Tey has "played fair" with the historical information?
- How well developed as literary characters were the key historical figures in the story—Richard himself, his brothers Edward IV and Clarence, Elizabeth Woodville, Thomas More, etc.—in comparison with Tey's contemporary characters such as Grant and Carradine?
- Given that she was dealing with historical events and documents rather than a purely fictional murder plot, how good a job do you think Tey did in this novel with the issues of pacing and suspense that are typically central to our enjoyment of a classic murder mystery?