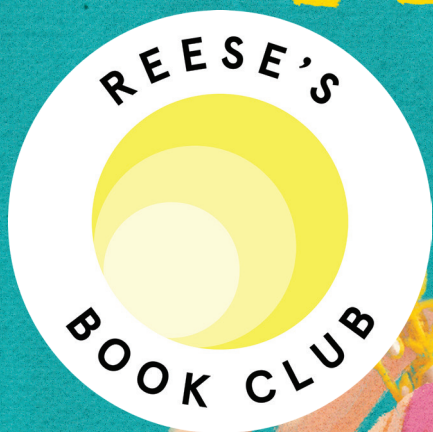


THE HEIR APPARENT



**Reading
Group
Guide**

A Novel

**REBECCA
ARMITAGE**



DEAR READER,

In 2018, I was working as a television producer, compiling videos of wedding preparations for Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, when an odd thought struck me. *Is he upset about something?* I wondered. Like his mother, Prince Harry has never had a very good poker face. It was clear that Harry was utterly thrilled to be marrying Meghan, but I couldn't shake the sense that he was also carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

That idle thought planted the seed for the novel you are now holding in your hands. *The Heir Apparent* asks the question - what happens if you're born royal, but you're not sure you want it? We live in a society that reveres princesses as the ultimate version of femininity, but in this book you will meet Lexi, whose status as blood princess of the British crown sends her scrambling for the exits. Just as she settles into the quiet Australian life she worked so hard to build for herself, tragedy forces her home - as the new heir to the throne.

Royal stories are sometimes dismissed as frivolous, but they can invite conversations about longstanding power structures, sibling rivalry, fidelity, and families. In *The Heir Apparent*, I wanted to play with the fantasy of royal life (Tiaras and gowns! Shooting weekends! Dashing aristocratic suitors!) but I also wanted to examine the purpose of monarchy in the modern world. If their official government role is now purely symbolic, why are we still so interested in royal families? Should they atone for their historic role in slavery and colonialism? If monarchy is built on tradition, does that exclude anyone who exists outside convention?

As a journalist, I have covered everything from Harry and Meghan's move to California, to the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of King Charles III. My work has helped me to build the fictional world in which *The Heir Apparent* takes place. The House of Villiers may be glamorous, but behind palace walls lives a family riven by jealousy and secrets. Lexi must decide whether she is the one to clean house and lead a modern monarchy into the future, or if she will follow her heart all the way back to Tasmania.

Thank you for reading *The Heir Apparent*. I wrote it over a delirious six month-period sitting by the fire in my little house in Tasmania, never thinking it would find its way into the world. But here it is, in your hands, and I hope it transports you somewhere else for a few hours.

**LOVE,
REBECCA XX**

OSD 12/2

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Book Club

Discussion Questions

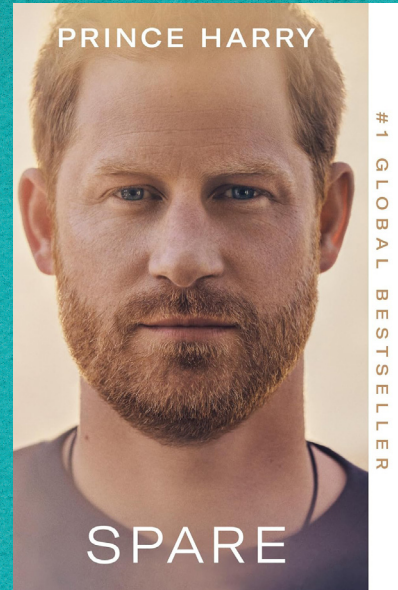
Please note the following questions may contain spoilers to the plot. We recommend you read only after you've finished the book.

1. When Lexi flies to London following the deaths of her father and brother, we see her transformation from private citizen to public royal unfolding en route: wardrobe, hair, and manicure all remade before landing. What is that meant to signify and foreshadow? What does it tell you about royal life and obligations, and do you feel those obligations are still relevant or necessary today?
2. On the night Lexi arrives in London, what first impressions did you gather from her reunion with Amira? What does their conversation reveal about their friendship and Amira's role in the royal family?
3. As the palace discusses the plans for the funeral, Lexi notes how even small details—the procession order, the choice of flowers—can have cascading effects. Considering the movements of the royal family members so far, what are some details that stood out to you, and did they yield large consequences?
4. How does Queen Eleanor balance her familial and royal responsibilities, being Lexi's grandmother as well as the Queen of England? Do you feel she gives each role equal weight?
5. Lexi feels betrayed when she learns that Louis was given their mother's engagement ring. In their argument—unbeknownst to them, their last meaningful time together before Louis's death—did you sympathize with one or both of them?
6. How would you describe Lexi's resolve and conflicting emotions during the trip to the Highlands?
7. Did Lexi change during the year of weighing her options and fending off Uncle Richard's attempts to seize power? How so?
8. What was your reaction upon learning the truth about Lexi's mother's death? How do Lexi's recurring dreams set up this revelation?
9. If Louis and Kris had survived, with Louis eventually crowned King, do you think they would have been able to have a public life together?
10. Some of the characters aren't what they initially seem, or change over the course of the novel. Can you think of a character who might fit either description? Which character wound up surprising you the most?
11. After this glimpse behind fictional palace gates, was there anything about royal life that might appeal to you, might make you understand if Lexi had made a different decision?
12. Who were your favorite characters?

Royal Media Recommendations:



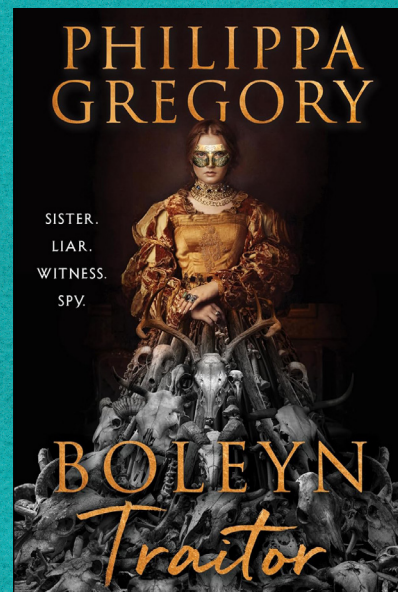
A movie by the same creator as *The Crown*, starring Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth the week after Diana died. If you liked the TV show, you'll love this. It has all the strongest elements of the show and a standout performance from Helen Mirren.



One of the most fascinating Royal texts ever written. It's unruly and contradictory and emotional, but is the most insight we will probably ever get into the lives of modern royalty.

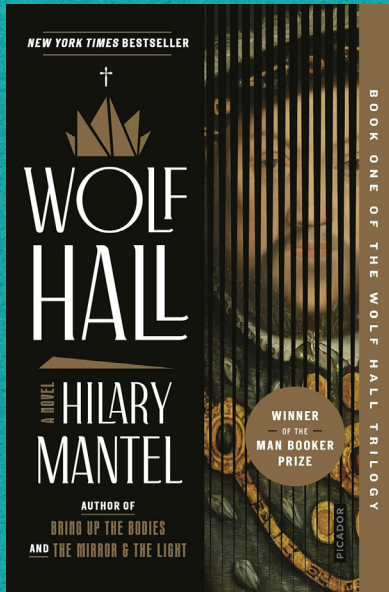


Romantic and sexy and so fun!

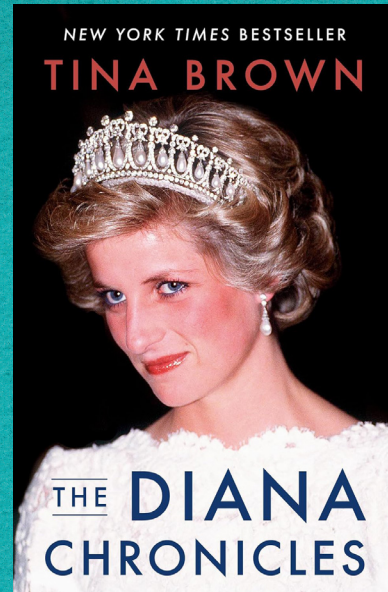


It's amazing how this historical fiction book set in the 17th century feels so alive and fresh. Jane Boleyn is also a poorly understood and maligned royal woman who deserves this nuanced and tender portrayal.

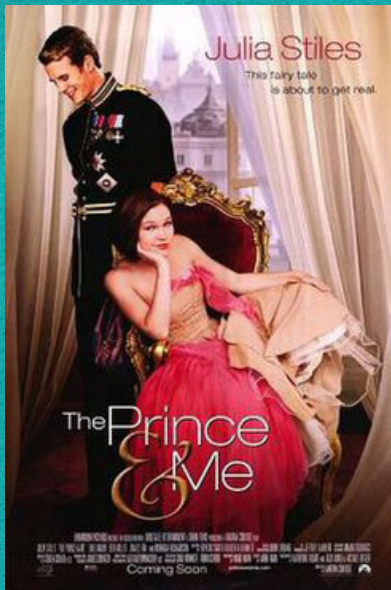
Royal Media Recommendations:



This 2013 essay caused a huge stir at the time because some things she wrote about Princess Kate were deliberately misinterpreted by the government. But if you read it in its entirety, you can't help but appreciate its genius. My all time favourite piece of royal writing.



No one does it better than Tina. She was the first reporter in the 1980s to report that Charles and Diana's marriage was in trouble, and everyone criticised her, but she was right. This book about Diana's life is so gripping, you forgot that it's non fiction.



I will watch every royal themed rom com ever made, but this one from 2004 starring Julia Stiles is my favourite. It's glorious millennial nostalgia, and I love that the main character is a strong, smart woman who has no great interest in being a princess. This is also based on the real life love story between Tasmanian-born Mary Donaldson and Crown Prince Frederick - who are now the king and queen of Denmark.