

## Henry Holt Books for Young Readers

### Discussion Guide

The Queen's Daughter  
by Susan Coventry

**Grade Level:**  
Grades 7 & up



#### Introduction:

Joan's mother is Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, the most beautiful woman in the world. Her father is Henry II, the king of England and a renowned military leader. She loves them both—so what is she to do when she's forced to choose between them? As her parents' arguments grow ever more vicious, Joan begins to feel like a political pawn.

As Joan grows up, she begins to understand that her parents' worldview is warped by their political ambitions, and hers, in turn, has been warped by theirs. Is it too late to figure out whom to trust? And, more importantly, whom to love?

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#### Discussion Questions:

1. *The Queen's Daughter* opens with a prologue telling the legend of Melusine. Do a little of your own research about the legend. Is this a fitting way to start this story off? Why or why not?
2. Consider the quotation: "Queen Eleanor had said men needed swords to fight, but women had better weapons." (pg. 84) Both Joan's parents are powerful in their own right. As King of England and a renowned military leader, Henry's powers are obvious. What does Eleanor use as her weapons? Is she as successful in her battles as Henry is?
3. Joan's youngest brother John is referred to as John Lackland; conflict erupts when their father tries to give some of his eldest son's land to John so he may wed. Why does the king's eldest son take such offence to having his land's taken from him? Create a map designating each of the four son's land ownership. Can you draw conclusions about their power from this map?
4. Eleanor's first marriage was annulled for failing to produce any heirs. In her marriage to Henry they have more sons than they have land. In what ways are heirs both a necessity and a hindrance for a royal family?
5. When discussing her future marriage to King William, Joan comments to her mother that she "feels like a chess piece." Eleanor responds by saying "That is what princesses are." (pg.99) Does Joan's marriage to William strengthen her position in any way or is she still merely a chess piece?
6. "The only thing Mama had failed to explain was why any women would want to be queen." Explain this statement that Joan makes on page 102. Why do you think any

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women would have wanted to be queen during this time? What were some of the advantages and some of the disadvantages?

7. Joan has been used as a pawn in many ways by the people in her life. Do you feel there have been any who hold Joan's true interests at heart? Why or why not?
8. When Joan accompanies Richard on the crusade Eleanor tells her daughter to "support Richard. Even when you know he is wrong." Is Joan successful in keeping her promise to her mother? Find examples in the text where Joan struggles with this promise. Think of your own family, would you be able to keep such a promise if you didn't agree with your loved ones actions?
9. Examine some of the male relationships in Joan's life: her father, her four brothers, her husband William, Count Raymond, for example. How are these relationships alike and how do they differ?
10. *The Queen's Daughter* is a work of historical fiction based on actual facts and places. Do a little of your own research into some of the books main characters and events: Joan, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry II, King Richard, Prince John, the crusades etc.. What do you find? How did Coventry fictionalize the story?



### About the Author

Susan Coventry is a physician living in Kentucky with her husband and two children. *The Queen's Daughter*, her debut novel, is the product of her addiction to historical fiction, her fascination with the Middle Ages, and her urge to do something creative.

*For more information on Susan Coventry:*

**Web sites:**

[www.mackids.com](http://www.mackids.com)

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her books.

<http://www.susancoventry.com/>

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