

READING GROUP GUIDE

Victoria

Daisy Goodwin

Drawing on Queen Victoria's diaries, which she first started reading when she was a student at Cambridge University, Daisy Goodwin—creator and writer of the new PBS/Masterpiece drama *Victoria* and author of the bestselling novels *The American Heiress* and *The Fortune Hunter*—brings the young nineteenth-century monarch, who would go on to reign for 63 years, richly to life in this magnificent novel.

Early one morning, less than a month after her eighteenth birthday, Alexandrina Victoria is roused from bed with the news that her uncle William IV has died and she is now Queen of England. The men who run the country have doubts about whether this sheltered young woman, who stands less than five feet tall, can rule the greatest nation in the world.

Despite her age, however, the young queen is no puppet. She has very definite ideas about the kind of queen she wants to be, and the first thing is to choose her name.

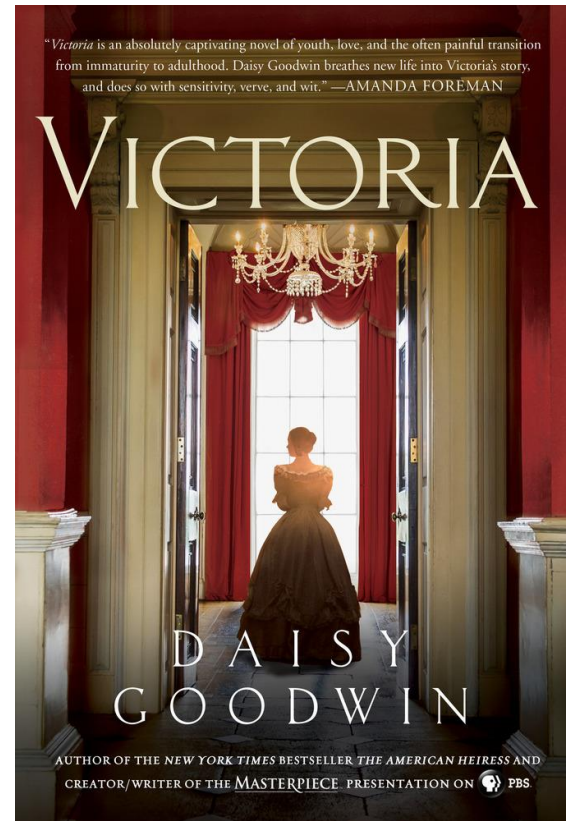
"I do not like the name Alexandrina," she proclaims. "From now on I wish to be known only by my second name, Victoria."

Next, people say she must choose a husband. Everyone keeps telling her she's destined to marry her first cousin, Prince Albert, but Victoria found him dull and priggish when they met three years ago. She is quite happy being queen with the help of her prime minister, Lord Melbourne, who may be old enough to be her father but is the first person to take her seriously.

On June 19th, 1837, she was a teenager. On June 20th, 1837, she was a queen. Daisy Goodwin's impeccably researched and vividly imagined new book brings readers Queen Victoria as they have never seen her before.

Discussion Questions

1. Daisy Goodwin was inspired to tell this story by Queen Victoria's diaries. "How handsome Albert looks in his white cashmere breeches," the young queen wrote in 1839. Daisy suddenly found herself imagining what it would be like if her own teenage daughter became the most powerful woman in the world overnight. How does Victoria handle her rise to power at the age of eighteen? How do you think you might have handled it?
2. In what ways does Victoria come across as a "typical" teenager and/or as a powerful sovereign?



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3. How does Victoria's sheltered upbringing at Kensington Palace influence her ultimate ability to rule her country?
4. Why do you think one of the young queen's first acts is to reject her given name of Alexandrina in favor of Victoria?
5. In what ways does Victoria's relationship with her mother influence her decisions as queen? How does that relationship change in the course of the novel?
6. Where do you think Victoria gets the strength to stand up against her family and others who try to dictate her role as queen?
7. Why was Victoria so vengeful toward Lady Flora?
8. What are the biggest challenges that Victoria faces? How might you have dealt with those situations?
9. How do you feel about Lord Melbourne? What might Victoria's life have been like if she had chosen him over Albert?
10. What did you think of Albert when he first appeared in the story? How do you view Victoria's prediction that theirs "will be a marriage of inconvenience"?
11. Victoria thinks Lord M must be teasing when he says that some Chartists believe that women should have the vote. There are also a number of references to "bonnets," or women, whose significance is clearly different from men's. How do you see the role of women in general – and Queen Victoria in particular – in the course of the novel?
12. How has courting changed for the current heirs to the English throne compared to Queen Victoria?
13. Are there any modern-day world leaders you would compare to the young Victoria?
14. What do you see as the most and least enviable aspects of Queen Victoria's life?
15. What was the most interesting thing about Victoria that you learned while reading this novel? Did you feel the same way about her at the beginning and end of the book?

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