



Girl on the Golden Coin

Marci Jefferson

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READING GROUP GUIDE

About the book:

In 1660, the Restoration of Stuart Monarchy in England returns Frances Stuart and her family to favor. Frances discards threadbare gowns and goes to gilded Fontainebleau Palace, where she soon catches the Sun King's eye. But Frances is no ordinary court beauty—she has Stuart secrets to keep and her family to protect. King Louis XIV turns vengeful when she rejects his offer to become his Official Mistress. He sends her to England with orders to seduce King Charles II and help him form an alliance with England. The Queen Mother likewise orders Frances to become her son's mistress, in the interest of luring him away from the Protestant mistress he currently keeps.

Armed in pearls and silk, Frances maneuvers the political turbulence of Whitehall Palace, but still can't afford to stir a scandal, determined to keep her family from shame. Her tactic to inspire King Charles to greatness captivates him and the two embark on a tenuous relationship. Frances survives the Great Fire, the Great Plague, and the debauchery of the Restoration Court, yet loses her heart to the very king she must control. A startling discovery will leave her with no other choice but to break his heart, while the fate of England hangs in the balance.

In the tradition of Philippa Gregory, debut author Marci Jefferson brings to life a captivating woman whose beauty, compassion, and intellect impacted a king and a nation, in *Girl on the Golden Coin*.

Discussion Questions

1. What did Frances mean when she tells James she "tried to stop a war for love and in spite of love?" Why did Frances place honor over love for so long?
2. Would you have agreed to become mistress to Louis XIV, Charles II, or James II? Why or why not?



3. What misguided notions does the young Frances have about marriage in chapter one that cause Buckingham to laugh at her? Do her views on marriage change?
4. How do the different women in the novel embrace or suppress their own personal liberty? What are the consequences? Which do you most identify with?
5. Do you think Louis XIV really loves Frances, or does he plan to use her as a liaison to Charles II all along?
6. Discuss the symbolic changes in Frances's black cloaks, boots, and shoes throughout the novel. Does Frances's character change as she grows more accustomed to wearing men's clothing?
7. Discuss how different birds in the novel symbolize the phases of Frances's life. Considering the first paragraph of the author's note, why is it significant that Frances carried a bald eagle feather into King James's Privy Council deposition?
8. What is Frances thinking about when she asks Richmond whether it is possible to tear the British flag apart? Was Charles II's willingness to do so symbolic?
9. Charles I's beheading threw the Divine Right of Kings into question, and allusions to his tragedy inhabit the novel. Why does Charles II need to give the impression that he is "merry"? How do Prudence and Mary's arguments symbolize England's problems?
10. Upon careful reading, who actually prompts the argument over the *calèche*? Does this make Charles II seem easy to manipulate? Frances thinks Louis XIV, the Queen Mother, and Buckingham are wrong to believe she can control Charles II. Were they?
11. Discuss when and why Frances's handling of truth evolves as she gains influence. Who does it hurt when her lies catch up with her?
12. Discuss the novel's themes of freedom, choice, and personal liberty. Why is it ironic that Frances suppresses Prudence and gets irritated with Cornbury? How is Prudence a mirror to Frances in different stages of the book?

Want to learn more about Marci Jefferson?

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