



1. Jeffrey was a normal size at birth then failed to grow. In an era marked by witch burnings and fear of dark magic, or the evil eye, many believed that a “freak” like Jeffrey was marked by the devil or his deformity caused by some wicked act by his mother. How would such superstition shape Jeffrey’s early life in the shambles? How would fear affect his relationship with his mother? His father? His siblings? His neighbors? How do you think it made Jeffrey feel about himself? Has our instinctive reaction to people with visible differences changed since then?
2. It was a father’s duty to apprentice his son to a master who would train him and thus ensure the lad could support himself. How do you feel about John Hudson’s decision to place Jeffrey in service to the duke of Buckingham—the most powerful man in England save the king, and the most widely hated? Was John Hudson fulfilling his duty? Did he secure the best future possible for his son? What changes do you think would have been most difficult for Jeffrey to adapt to in his new life?
3. Discuss what English Catholics must have felt at the time of the marriage then later, as it became evident the penal laws would not be relaxed. If you had lived during this time of religious turmoil, would you have been like Samuel, and remained faithful to your religion even if it endangered your life? Or would you have adapted to survive? How do religious conflicts force people to make similar decisions in the modern world?
4. A princess arrives in her husband’s land as a stranger, and is expected to become bonded to a country not her own, speak a different language and honor foreign customs, even altering her faith. Where do you think her loyalties should lie?

## *Discussion Questions*



5. King Charles's fool, Archie Armstrong, warns Jeffrey that it is possible for a king to love his queen too well. Political policy influenced by headstrong French Catholic Henrietta Maria definitely affected the move toward civil war. History is filled with powerful men who indulged in sexual escapades, had scores of mistresses, and whose wives were given scant importance. But Charles was a wonderful family man, so devoted to his wife that some of his political decisions were colored by her influence. Do you think Archie was right in his opinion? To whom does a king owe most allegiance? His wife? His faith? His kingdom?
6. What do you think drove Henrietta Maria to collect her "Menagerie of Freaks and Curiosities of Nature"? Do you think she really loved Jeffrey? Why do you think she was so enamored of performing in the elaborate masques her Puritan subjects loathed? Do you think she should have altered her behavior to suit her subjects' wishes?
7. Confronted with Dulcinea's choice of a nobleman for a lover or the virtuous love of a man like Will Evans, which would you choose? Why?
8. Buckingham uses Jeffrey's great love for Samuel, to coerce Jeffrey into endangering the queen. As Jeffrey comes to love the queen, he must face up to what he has done and try to make amends. Is there someone you would protect at any cost? Have you ever done something you have regretted? How did you reconcile it with your conscience?