



# PRISONERS

in the

# PALACE

*How Victoria became Queen with the Help of Her Maid,  
a Reporter, and a Scoundrel*

BY MICHAELA MACCOLL



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

**1.** In Victorian times, someone's clothes could tell you a lot about their social status. During the course of *Prisoners in the Palace*, Liza's clothes tell us not only about her changing social status, but also her state of mind. What does it mean when Liza borrows the Princess's ball gown? Or when Liza puts on her mourning dress in the final scene? How do we judge people by their clothes in modern times?

**2.** When Liza first sees Kensington Palace, she is dismayed. How did Kensington Palace, and Victoria's life, differ from what you expected? What do you think will change when she becomes Queen?

**3.** "Don't be familiar with the servants," the Baroness Lehzen warns Victoria. Why can't the Princess make friends with servants? What happens when she does?

**4.** Liza feels connected to disgraced maid Annie Mason. What does Liza do to put herself on a different path than Annie?

**5.** Will Fulton, newspaper man, is quickly attracted to Liza. She likes him from the beginning too. Why does Liza resist his charms for so long?

**6.** Annie Mason, Princess Victoria and Queen Adelaide have well-defined roles in society that determine how they behave. Discuss ways they broke free of these roles and followed their own minds.

**7.** Inside Boy lives between the walls of Kensington Palace and has no established place in society. Liza envies him his freedom, but he tells her not to romanticize his life. Which character in *Prisoners in the Palace* has the most freedom to determine his or her own destiny?

**8.** Soon after the events in *Prisoners in the Palace*, Victoria

and Albert marry. Their match was considered one of the great romances of the 19th century. What qualities did the prince have that captured the heart of the future queen?

**9.** When Prince Albert dies at age 42, Victoria becomes a tragic widow who wears mourning clothes for fifty years. How is this widowhood foreshadowed in Victoria's childhood?

**10.** Victoria's relationship with her mother is complicated. How was the Duchess' treatment of Victoria self-serving, and how was it well-meaning? What are the consequences of how Victoria treats her at the end of the novel?

**11.** Sir John is the villain of the story, but there are two sides to every story. Put yourself in his shoes, how would you justify his actions and behavior?

**12.** At the start of *Prisoners in the Palace*, Liza is looking for someone to save her. How does she change over the course of the story?

**13.** At the end of the novel, Victoria is told that she is the Queen of England. How will tremendous power and wealth change her life? What would you do if you were in Queen Victoria's place?

**14.** At the end of the novel, Liza has made some important decisions, but we don't know exactly what she is going to do next. What do you think she does when she walks away from Kensington Palace?



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