



Discussion Questions: *License to Quill*

“Words, Words, Words” Book Club—November 2020

1. What are your first impressions of the novel?
2. Who was your favorite character and why?
3. William Shakespeare and, to a lesser extent, Christopher Marlowe as well are figures that have been portrayed over and over again in popular culture. What about this novel’s characterizations of them surprised you?
4. The author gave the “Dark Lady” of Shakespeare’s sonnets an intricate backstory. Did the character of Bianca, her relationships and her storyline, work for you?
5. Many works of historical fiction are more enjoyable the more the reader knows about the history in question. Was this the case for *License to Quill*? Are you inspired to delve deeper into any aspects of this period in history?
6. Author Jacopo della Quercia did extensive research of the historical and science fiction elements of the story—even including footnotes and a lengthy related reading list. Were there instances that you were surprised to discover were based in historical fact?
7. Why do you think the author chose to involve the “Cunning Folk”? What does this element add (or take away from) the central, factually accurate, conflict of the novel?
8. Shakespeare’s plays are often used to make a pointed political statement or sway public opinion—a feat the conspirators hope *Macbeth* will accomplish. Is this a useful practice? Are there modern examples you can recall?
9. Though billed as a “spy thriller,” this novel contains elements of historical and science fiction, romance, fantasy, and mystery. Which genres resonated with you? Are there any that the novel have done without?
10. Were there any passages that stuck out to you?