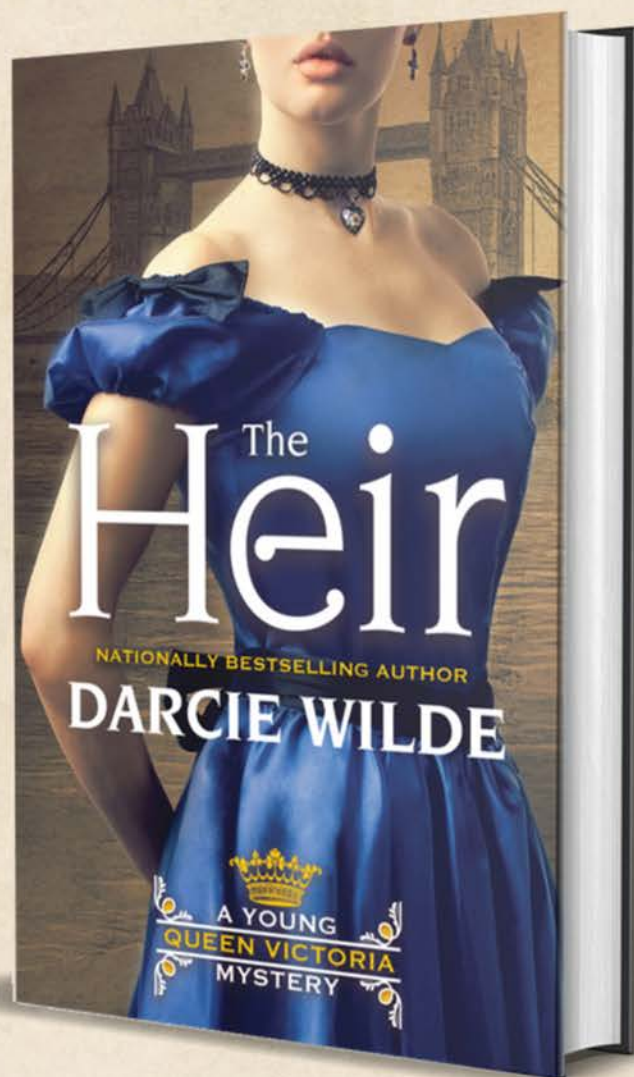


# *The Heir* by Darcie Wilde

## Book Club Kit





## INTERVIEW WITH DARCIE WILDE, AUTHOR OF *THE HEIR*

What inspired you to write a mystery featuring the young Queen Victoria as an amateur sleuth?

The idea actually originated in a conversation with my editor, the fabulous Wendy McCurdy. We were brainstorming about a possible new series. My writing features strong women, frequently in difficult circumstances. Wendy, knowing how much readers love royals, brought up the possibility of something centered around the young Victoria, and I was all in! I'd already researched Victoria's childhood for a separate project, and I saw there were multiple through lines in the history that would make excellent backgrounds for a mystery.

Your other series, the Useful Women Mysteries, are set in the Regency Era. What prompted you to write a series set in the Victorian Era? What were some of the challenges to writing a series set in a different time period after writing about the Regency Era for so long?

For me, this isn't a challenge, it's the best part of my job. A big part of why I write historical mysteries is because I love the research. I get to dive into new books, new places, "meet" new people, hear new ideas, and in general gather up a whole new bunch of crayons to color with. Writing about Victoria right before she came to the throne gave me a chance to dive into an overlooked era in British history. The nine years that King William IV (He was one of Victoria's uncles, and the one she inherited the throne from) wore the crown doesn't even get its own name, but it was a time of great social change, political tension, and more scandal than today's royals could possibly manage. All of this was fascinating to me, so my problem was what it always is—that I eventually have to stop researching and actually write the book.

Can you tell us a bit about your research process on Queen Victoria?

The good news for someone writing about Victoria is there is *so much* material available. The bad news for someone writing about Victoria is there is *so much* material available. In general, when I'm researching a historical person, I'll look for a good, general biography, and then I'll look at the sources that author used, read a couple of those, look at the sources they used...and so on. For Victoria, because I was focused on her childhood, I started with Kate William's excellent *Becoming Queen Victoria*, which took me to *A Royal Conflict* by Kate Hudson, which is about Sir John Conroy and his role in Victoria's upbringing, which in turn took me to *Queen Victoria's Mother* by Dulcie M. Ashdown. I also read Victoria's journals, which are available online, and those were invaluable.

## INTERVIEW, CONT'D


How do you balance historical accuracy with the requirements of a compelling mystery plot?

That's always a tricky question. Fortunately, Victoria grew up mainly in Kensington Palace, and a palace always lends itself to a mystery plot. There are so many people living in one building, and they have so many competing priorities and motivations and secrets. Add that to the fact that because Kensington and its grounds are so sprawling, there are dozens of places where things can happen out of sight, and you've already got a world of exciting possibilities for mystery and mayhem...

This story contains multiple perspectives, often switching between Victoria and Jane, and other characters like Lehzen. How do you balance writing from multiple perspectives?

When you're writing about a well-known figure, with a well-known history, like Victoria, it's important to give them a strong supporting cast. The alternate perspectives (I hope!) not only provide additional mystery elements but also help put Victoria herself into perspective as a young woman navigating very unusual circumstances. But I do try to let the story itself guide me in terms of working which perspective will provide the best view of any given moment.

What is next for the young Queen Victoria?

Oh, tensions are very much on the rise in Kensington Palace. The clock is ticking in terms of Victoria coming of age, so the people who want/need to control her are getting increasingly desperate. Also, she is about to be introduced to Prince Albert, the love of his life. His arrival will change the dynamics inside the palace and between those who have been her friends, and that tension is definitely going to turn into more trouble for all concerned... 





## THE HEIR BY DARCI WILDE DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Victoria is a popular (and famous!) historical figure. She's been portrayed in many different films and books. Do you have a favorite version of Victoria? How does Princess Victoria in *The Heir* differ from other Victoria's you've read (or seen)? How is she similar?
2. Victoria is one of the most well-known British monarchs, and many people think they know her story. Has your perception of Victoria as a person and a queen changed after reading *The Heir*?
3. One of the major themes of *The Heir* is isolation. How does Jane and Victoria's sense of isolation affect their characters and actions?
4. What gives Victoria the strength to resist Sir John's (and her mother's!) attempts to break her spirit?
5. Jane Conroy has the choice to help Victoria or help her father. Why does she make the choice she does?
6. Another major throughline in *The Heir* is the difference between power and control. How do Victoria and Jane navigate this dichotomy? Sir John and the Duchess Lehzen?
7. Why does the Duchess preserve her relationship with Sir John?
8. What drives Sir John? Is it only a quest for power, or is there something else underneath?
9. Through *The Heir*, small decisions are seen to have large consequences. Jane makes several decisions that will affect her entire family, and, in some cases, the entire kingdom. What is an example of a decision you agree with? One you disagree with?
10. Does reading about Victoria's experiences with her family change your perspective on the troubles inside the current royal family? Why or why not?

# Other Books by Darcie Wilde

## The Rosalind Thorne Mysteries



AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW  
ISBN: 9781496720894



A LADY COMPROMISED  
ISBN: 9781496720870



A COUNTERFEIT SUITOR  
ISBN: 9781496720887

## The Useful Woman Mysteries



THE SECRET OF THE LOST PEARLS  
ISBN: 9781496738011



THE SECRET OF THE LADY'S MAID  
ISBN: 9781496738035



THE MATTER OF THE SECRET BRIDE  
ISBN: 9781496750631

## About the Author

**Darcie Wilde** is the award-winning author of stylishly adventurous historical mysteries and romances, including the Rosalind Thorne Mysteries, a Regency-set series inspired by the novels of Jane Austen, as well as the Regency Makeover Trilogy. She has also written, under the name Sarah Zettel, Locus Philip K. Dick Award-winning novels, including *Fool's War*, a *New York Times* Notable Books of the Year selection. She lives in Michigan and can be found online at [DarcieWildeRomance.com](http://DarcieWildeRomance.com).