



Readers' Guide



The Mirror & the Light Hilary Mantel

4th Estate

Other novels by Hilary Mantel

Every Day is Mother's Day (1985)

Eight Months on Ghazzah Street (1988)

A Place of Greater Safety (1992)

The Giant, O'Brien (1998)

Beyond Black (2005)

Wolf Hall (2009)

Bring Up the Bodies (2012)

thebookerprizes.com

About the author

Hilary Mantel was born in Glossop, UK in July 1952. She is the author of 15 books, including *A Place of Greater Safety*, *Beyond Black*, the memoir *Giving Up the Ghost* and the short-story collection *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*. Her two most recent novels, *Wolf Hall* and its sequel *Bring Up the Bodies*, have both been awarded the Man Booker Prize. She lives in Budleigh Salterton in the UK.

About the book

England, May 1536. Anne Boleyn is dead, decapitated in the space of a heartbeat by a hired French executioner. As her remains are bundled into oblivion, Thomas Cromwell breakfasts with the victors. The blacksmith's son from Putney emerges from the spring's bloodbath to continue his climb to power and wealth, while his formidable master, Henry VIII, settles to short-lived happiness with his third queen, Jane Seymour.

With *The Mirror & the Light*, Hilary Mantel brings to a triumphant close the trilogy she began with *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*. She traces the final years of Thomas Cromwell, offering a defining portrait of predator and prey, of a ferocious contest between present and past, between royal will and a common man's vision: of a modern nation making itself through conflict, passion and courage.

What the judges thought

'*The Mirror and the Light* completes a tragic arc in which Thomas Cromwell is finally brought down by the police state he designed. Mantel's masterful exhibition of sly dialogue and exquisite description brings the Tudor world alive.'

Discussion points

The Mirror & the Light concludes a series that has been hailed as one of the greatest literary works ever written. Do you agree?

What role do mirrors play in the novel?

How does Cromwell develop as a character throughout the trilogy? Do you see any difference between him in *The Mirror & the Light* and *Wolf Hall*?

Do you find Cromwell to be a relatable character?

How does the author explore the themes of place, home and belonging in *The Mirror & the Light*?

Themed reading

Thomas Cromwell: A Life by Diarmaid MacCulloch

Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell

Six Tudor Queens by Alison Weir

Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/mar/01/the-mirror-and-the-light-hilary-mantel-review-thomas-cromwell>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/04/hilary-mantel-thomas-cromwell-mirror-light/606802/>

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-dead-against-the-living-on-hilary-mantels-the-mirror-the-light/>

<https://www.vox.com/culture/2020/3/16/21176984/mirror-and-the-light-review-hilary-mantel-wolf-hall-thomas-cromwell>

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