



Dressed by Iris

By Mary-Anne O'Connor

First published in 2022

Genre and Subject

Historical Fiction

Australian Fiction

Synopsis

1930: Seventeen-year-old Iris Mitchell dreams of designing clothes, but there's little spare cash for fashion in their shanty-town home. The gift of a single purple ribbon from would-be boyfriend John Tucker, however, creates an unexpected opportunity ... and when Iris's brother Jim joins the Sydney Harbour Bridge construction, the large, dirt-poor but loving Mitchell family can move to the city. Iris will be torn away from John, but he's Protestant and she's Catholic, taboo in their world, so perhaps it wasn't meant to be ...

1932: By day, Iris scrubs the floors at Caron's, an upmarket department store. By night, she designs and sews in her family's tiny, crowded house. Friendship with gorgeous, livewire Natasha, one of Caron's models, allows Iris to show her skills, but will her talent be acknowledged ... or exploited?

When John reappears, passions are reignited, and Iris must face not only their religious divide, but the apparent impossibility of having both marriage and a career. Meanwhile, the Mitchells must navigate life in a city riven by corruption, dirty politics and gambling. Will their faith, determination and deep family bond save them when tragedy and adversity strike? In 1930s Sydney, the stakes have never been higher ...

Author Biography

Mary-Anne O'Connor has a combined arts education degree with specialities in environment, music and literature. After a successful copywriting and marketing career she now focuses on writing fiction and non-fiction as well as public speaking.

Mary-Anne lives in a house overlooking her beloved bushland in northern Sydney with her husband Anthony, their two sons Jimmy and Jack, and their very spoilt dog Saxon.

If you liked this book, you may also like...

- *The milliner of Bendigo by Darry Fraser*
- *The disappearance of Astrid Bricard by Natasha Lester*
- *The sugar palace by Fiona McIntosh*

Discussion Starters

1. What was your favourite part of the book?
2. What was your least favourite?
3. Did you race to the end, or was it more of a slow burn?
4. What did you think of the writing? What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
5. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
6. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities.
 - Why do characters do what they do?
 - Are their actions justified?
 - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
 - How has the past shaped their lives?
 - Do you admire or disapprove of them?
 - Do they remind you of people you know?
7. Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?
8. What surprised you most about the book?
9. How did your opinion of the book change as you read it?
10. Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years?
11. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books by the same author? If so how does this book compare. If not, does this book inspire you to read others? How does the book's title work in relation to the book's contents? If you could give the book a new title, what would it be?
12. Is this book overrated or underrated?
13. Did this book remind you of any other books?
14. Would you ever consider re-reading it? Why or why not?
15. Are there lingering questions from the book you're still thinking about?
16. Did the book strike you as original?
17. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

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