



[Elizabeth & Elizabeth]

By Sue Williams

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Genre and Subject

Female friendship -- Fiction

Australia -- History -- 19th century -- Fiction

Australia -- Social conditions -- 19th century -- Fiction

Historical fiction

Biographical fiction

Synopsis

There was a short time in Australia's European history when two women wielded extraordinary power and influence behind the scenes of the fledgling colony. One was Elizabeth Macquarie, the wife of the new governor Lachlan Macquarie, nudging him towards social reform and magnificent buildings and town planning. The other was Elizabeth Macarthur, credited with creating Australia's wool industry and married to John Macarthur, a dangerous enemy of the establishment. These women came from strikingly different backgrounds with husbands who held sharply conflicting views. They should have been bitter foes. Elizabeth & Elizabeth is about two courageous women thrown together in impossible times. Borne out of an overriding admiration for the women of early colonial Australian history, Sue Williams has written a novel of enduring fascination.

Author Biography

Sue Williams is a bestselling author and award-winning journalist, working in newspapers, magazines and TV in Australia, the UK and New Zealand. Born in England, but settling in Australia in 1989, she's also a travel writer and university lecturer. She lives in Sydney's Kings Cross with her partner, writer Jimmy Thomson.

Her books include Getting There: Journeys of an accidental adventurer; the story of her travels around isolated Australia, Welcome to the Outback; and a series of other books about the outback, Women in the Outback, Outback Spirit and Outback Heroines. She's also written biographies of Father Chris Riley, Mean Streets, Kind Hearts; Father Bob Maguire, Father Bob: The larrikin priest; navy diver Paul de Gelder, No Time For Fear; Fred Brophy, The Last Showman; and Australia's youngest Everest climber Alyssa Azar, The Girl Who Climbed Everest.

Sue's true-crime book And Then The Darkness: The disappearance of Peter Falconio and the trials of Joanne Lees was shortlisted for the international 2006 Gold Dagger Award for the world's best crime non-fiction. Her first children's book was Everest Dreaming.

Elizabeth & Elizabeth is her first novel, borne out of a love of early colonial Australian history - pivotal in the development of the country - and an overriding admiration for women of that era making their own way in life. With both Elizabeth Macquarie and Elizabeth Macarthur having a huge impact on the fledgling nation, despite all the odds, Elizabeth & Elizabeth is the result of an enduring fascination with what might have been.

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?

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

- *Dressmakers of Yarrandarrah Prison* by Meredith Jaffe
- *A room made of leaves* by Kate Grenville