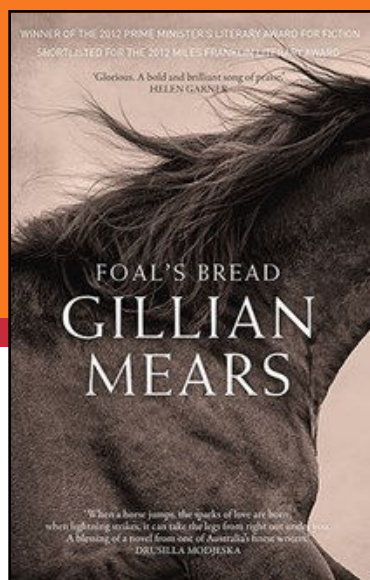


Foals Bread

By Gillian Mears

First published in 2011



Genre and Subject

Historical Fiction

Families

Australian

Synopsis

Set in hardscrabble farming country and around the country show high-jumping circuit that prevailed in rural New South Wales prior to the Second World War, *Foal's Bread* tells the story of two generations of the Nancarrow family and their fortunes as dictated by the vicissitudes of the land.

It is a love story of impossible beauty and sadness, a chronicle of dreams 'turned inside out', and miracles that never last, framed against a world both tender and unspeakably hard. Written in luminous prose and with an aching affinity for the landscape the book describes, *Foal's Bread* is the work of a born writer at the height of her considerable powers. It is a stunning work of remarkable originality and power, one that confirms Gillian Mears' reputation as one of our most exciting and acclaimed writers.

Author Biography

Mears was raised in Grafton, New South Wales where she was school dux of Grafton High School.

She moved to Sydney to study at university, beginning a degree in archaeology at the University of Sydney having been inspired to pursue a career in archaeology after reading *Gods, Graves and Scholars* by C. W. Ceram. At the age of 18, she withdrew from the course, and instead completed a degree in communications at University of Technology, Sydney.

She lived then near Grafton, New South Wales. She died in May 2016 after living with multiple sclerosis for seventeen years.

Discussion Starters

- Why do you think Gillian Mears chose *Foal's Bread* as the title of this book? What does the foal's bread symbolise?
- Some of the characters in the novel could have been unsympathetic, but they still evoke empathy in the reader. How does Mears achieve this?
- Discuss the concept and function of 'luck' in *Foal's Bread*.
- In her review for Bookseller & Publisher, Heather Dyer says, 'Mears rarely takes the obvious route as she explores emotions of love, jealousy, frustration and disappointment'. Discuss how these emotions are presented and explored in *Foal's Bread*.
- What techniques does Mears employ to convey the sense that the novel is set in the past, in the period between the wars?
- The horses in *Foal's Bread* are beautifully drawn. Do you feel that they are characters in themselves? Why or why not?
- *Foal's Bread* tells the story of many 'dreams turned inside out', but could you call it a bleak book? How does the Coda contribute to your perceptions of the novel?
- 'To look into a horse's eye is to see a reflection of yourself that you might've forgotten.' Discuss the relationship between humans and horses in the book and what it reflects of the often conflicted nature of human– animal relationships today.
- Consider the relationship of Noah and Rowley in the novel. Could you call *Foal's Bread* a love story?

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- *Limberlost* by Robbie Arnott
- *Bodies of Light* by Jennifer Down

Author biography from Wikipedia

Discussion starters from the publisher

Read-a-likes from Good reads