



A Pearl for My Mistress

Annabel Fielding

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A story of class, scandal and forbidden passions in the shadow of war. Perfect for fans of Iona Grey, Gill Paul and *Downton Abbey*.

England, 1934. Hester Blake, an ambitious girl from an industrial Northern town, finds a job as a lady's maid in a small aristocratic household.

Despite their impressive title and glorious past, the Fitzmartins are crumbling under the pressures of the new century. And in the cold isolation of these new surroundings, Hester ends up hopelessly besotted with her young mistress, Lady Lucy.

Accompanying Lucy on her London Season, Hester is plunged into a heady and decadent world. But hushed whispers of another war swirl beneath the capital... and soon, Hester finds herself the keeper of some of society's most dangerous secrets...

A Pearl for My Mistress Details

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Author : Annabel Fielding

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From Reader Review A Pearl for My Mistress for online ebook

Yvonne says

Review is 4.5*

I found this book very interesting on many levels. It begins as Hester Blake makes her way to Hebden Hall to work as a lady's maid to Lady Lucy Fitzmartin, the daughter of the estate owners. This is set in the era of The Wall Street Crash, it's affects are felt globally and because of this, many large estates have reduced staff and sell off outlying estate lands. The employment of Hester therefore is unusual, but it is a way of Lucy's parents to trying to keep her on track. Lucy supplements her allowance by writing for periodicals of the time and has a slightly different outlook on life compared to her parents. Hester has a love of books, so there is a natural starting point for a friendship between Hester and Lucy. As their friendship grows so then do their feelings for each other.

Set in the 1930's in Hebden Hall, London and then Melton Mowbray. An era of The British Union of Fascists, or Blackshirts, with their leader Oswald Mosley and his marches and rallies are in the news. There are divided opinions for his movement and there are often public clashes, during this time the difference of viewpoint is shared between the Lucy and Hester. The story also encompasses several other elements, apart from the political aspects and the romantic side. The difference between class and social structure is addressed, a comparison is drawn via the two women, Lucy and Hester, the differences between upstairs and downstairs, as well as Lucy's opinion of Hester .

I thought the story was enjoyable, but for me it was the historical side I enjoyed more than the romantic side, the romance was good and well written. I thought the characters of Hester and Lucy were very well-developed, the author managed to portray the condescending attitude that Lucy has towards Hester extremely well, it was a good way of showing the differences between class at the time. Other characters were memorable and had a good range of traits to make them distinctive and identifiable.

This is a book I would recommend to readers of Historical Fiction and Romantic Fiction genres. It was a very enjoyable, well researched and well written read.

I would like to thank HQ Digital UK and NetGalley for my copy of this book and also to Annabel Fielding for bringing it to my attention. My opinion given here is my own, it is honest and unbiased.

booksofallkinds says

A PEARL FOR MY MISTRESS is a historical story, a romance, and a tale of intrigue all rolled up together in one complete package, with characters that will get under your skin.

It's 1934 in England and Hester Blake has found herself in the employ of the Fitzmartins of the esteemed Hebden Hall. But as times are tough, it is not long before Hester realises how much the great family is struggling as most of the house remains shut up, and parcels of land are sold off to the highest bidder. But none of that matters as Hester falls for her precious charge, Lady Lucy, who will lead her into a new world that will change so much for her ...

This richly detailed and researched historical story covers many important topics from that time - class

divide, fascism, the imminent war, the treatment of women - in such an effortless way that it never feels like it is too much information, but just an underlying layer of the plot itself. The characters, while not always likeable, are realistic of that time and bring a real level of truth to the narrative that shines through on every page. The story is steadily-paced as we get to know the ins and outs of Hester and Lucy's personalities and the settings come alive throughout.

If you are looking for a historical novel with a spark of something different then *A PEARL FOR MY MISTRESS* by Annabel Fielding is definitely for you.

*I voluntarily reviewed this book from the author

Cathy says

Find all my book reviews, plus fascinating author interviews, exclusive guest posts and book extracts, on my blog: <https://whatcathyreadnext.wordpress.com/>

A Pearl for my Mistress is the story of the intense relationship between two women from very different social backgrounds – Lady Lucy Fitzmartin and Hester Blake, her lady's maid. However, the book also immerses the reader in the turbulent political situation of the 1930s, with the rise of pro-Fascist organisations like that led by Sir Oswald Mosley and other pro-German movements.

Lady Lucy's life is one of relative privilege but constrained by the social norms of the day and the limitations on her freedom imposed by her parents. She desperately wants to break free of these confines, exert her independence and make a name for herself. Misguided sympathy for the aims of Mosley's movement and her talent for writing, provide her with the possibility of achieving her ambitions. Lucy has also become adept at listening from the shadows, picking up nuggets of conversation and information. As the story unfolds, the reader sees that her desperation for freedom makes her ripe for manipulation by others who have few qualms about how to achieve their aims. Having started down a path, Lucy finds herself having to face hard and unwelcome moral choices. Indeed, one of the many interesting themes the book explores is what people will do and who and what they will betray in order to protect themselves.

Although Hester does not share her mistress's political views, her loyalty and love for Lady Lucy find her conflicted, especially when events threaten to come close to home. Having been central to the book initially as her relationship with Lady Lucy develops, Hester does recede into the background in the latter part of the book.

A theme of the book I found really interesting was its exploration of the power of words to inspire, persuade and, yes, even manipulate.

'Words had colours, even textures, and she could faintly sense it, rolling them around in her thoughts. Some words were soft and languid, like silk. Some clinked, like iron. Some were fresh and crisp, like green apples. It was a trick of which words to use to invoke, for example, elegance and dream, or fire and iron.'

In fact, stories and writing play an important part in the development of the relationship between Lucy and Hester. Having had to keep her writing secret, Lucy finally has someone she can share it with. Lucy's stories are her gift to Hester and Hester's appreciation of them is her gift to Lucy.

‘The tale caught her in its grip, like a pot of honey could catch a careless fly. The longer she read, the more she was beguiled by the sweetness of the passages, the lushness of the sentences, the tribulations of the plot. It was as if the mere lines in front of her eyes, black ink on white paper, were transfiguring into something else.’

Later, Lucy’s writing ability becomes a possible route to independence for her but also a valuable asset for those seeking to advance the aims of the National Socialist government in Germany. So, she learns, is her position in society and her ear for gossip and information. The cold, hard truth of the art (science?) of manipulating people in positions of influence is revealed.

“‘What can we give him that he craves? A sense of belonging? A sense of rebellion? A sense of doing justice? A dream of glory? A dream of peace? Protection of his commercial interests on the Continent? It’s important to unearth these needs, these reasons. Then you can do anything.’”

The author creates a really believable picture of the period which is clearly based on considerable research. There are walk-on parts for many of the key personalities of the period: politicians, the nobility, society hostesses and diplomats. I found the political machinations behind the scenes and some of the views expressed by those in the pro-Fascist movements positively chilling and, at times, worryingly reminiscent of contemporary debates around discrimination, migration and ‘fake news’.

I really enjoyed A Pearl for my Mistress and thought it a compelling and accomplished debut by a clearly talented author. I received a review copy courtesy of the author and publishers, HQ Digital, in return for an honest and unbiased review.

?Dani? ?Touch My Spine Book Reviews? says

I give this book 5 out of 5 historical romance stars! I just loved this book! I was so hesitant about reading this when the author asked if I would be a host for her blog tour. I haven’t read a historical book in awhile and wasn’t sure how I would feel about it. Thank heavens, I said yes to this author! A Pearl for my Mistress was filled with forbidden love, was well written and great history!

This book had me up late turning pages to see how the character’s fate would lead. I loved Hester and Lucy. With having two completely different backgrounds, it was beautiful to see how their romance took off and how their hearts intertwined. I highly recommend this book!

www.touchmyspinebookreviews.com

Shell Baker says

This is the first book that I have by Annabel Fielding and certainly won’t be my last. The author takes us back to 1934 where we meet Hester Blake. This isn’t my normal everyday read but with that gorgeous cover I thought I would give it a whirl. And to my surprise I really enjoyed it.

I actually read this book in two sittings, and it is more of a slow burner compared to the books I normally

read. The author has clearly done her research and with her stunning descriptions I felt right like I was in the story. Hester finds herself a job as a lady's maid and falls for her young mistress Lady Lucy. The story not only focuses on a lesbian love affair but also on the fascist movement.

A Pearl for My Mistress is beautifully written and is full of mystery and secrets that will keep you turning the pages until the very end. I loved the historical setting which made the story something special.

This is a must read for fans of Downton Abbey which I highly recommend giving it 4 stars.

Massive thank you to Annabel for inviting me along to take part in Blog Tour.

Christabel says

This is a captivating, stylishly old-fashioned historical novel about the polite society, dangerous affairs (including lesbian affairs), political intrigue and espionage in London in the 1930s. (my favourite time! My favourite gowns! I mean - there are really not many good novels about this time, so I welcomed this one with all my heart)

There will be a lot of accurate historical detail. Also featuring: foxtrots at dancing halls, hunting at Melton Mowbray, breakfasts at posh hotels, political articles in favour of Oswald Mosley and, most important, there's Lady Emerald Cunard introducing one to a dazzling German baron making his archaeology studies funded by German government. Yup, I totally mean it's 1930's and Herr Eugen von Whatshisname is staying in London on pretense of doing his archaeology research.

Zoe says

Insightful, exceptionally researched, and richly descriptive!

A Pearl for My Mistress takes us back to the 1930s, the interwar period, and gives an in-depth look into the formation of the British far-right movement and Germany's influence and infiltration of British politics and high society.

The prose is fervent and captivating. The main characters include the scarred, loyal, enamored Hester and the bold, independent, resourceful Lucy. And the plot unfolds chronologically with a nice mix of historical events, intriguing fiction, social strife, forbidden love, political manipulation, and heartfelt emotion that keeps the story flowing from start to finish.

A Pearl for My Mistress is a well written, fascinating novel that highlights Fielding's incredible knowledge and enormous passion for a period of time that is often forgotten and overlooked.

Thank you to Annabel Fielding & HQ Digital for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

All my reviews can be found on my blog at <https://whatsbetterthanbooks.com>

Floryie says

I have always loved fiction set during the Regency times. They have always been romances. When this book was brought to my attention, I thought I would read it because I was curious how I would respond to a book set in the cusp of the after-lavish lives of the higher society.

When I started reading the book, I felt it was a read about the forbidden love affair between a maid and her mistress. But as I continued, I realised there were so much more hidden between the pages. The story is set in times where war, within and without was imminent and the general public was hungry - for work and better lives and divided in their views. Hester joins as Lady Lucy's maid and gets to know her mistress better in personal and worldly lives.

The world is painstakingly described in broad strokes. Though I wasn't much familiar with the time period, I was able to get the tenseness of the situation, the reality of the public and the high handedness of the higher society from the story. Maybe this is why the pace felt a bit slow for me. It meandered between the chapters and it portrayed how the scenes flowed with the characters' actions.

The book showcases the issues of class and social caste and race distinction. The author has well developed characters with Lucy being the most intricate of them all. She changes hue as the story progresses and the political scene comes into play. The way she manipulates Hester through her emotions shows the unfathomable divide between master and servant. I enjoyed the richness of the history as much as the political mapping.

I enjoyed the book with the precise writing and the intrigue involving politics. The romance was well done but it was only a branch of the main plot. The ending had me upset for a bit but then smoothed out with Abby's reaction. All in all, it was a well spent few hours reading the tale.

I received an ARC for reviewing purposes. This doesn't impact my review in any way.

My one line review : A historical fiction delineating class distinction and racial differences.

My rating : 4.5/5

My reread factor : 3.5/5

Yesha says

*** Note: I received review copy of the book from the author via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review. I am glad I got a chance to read this book. ***

A Pearl For My Mistress was a historical romance with political movements and life of upper class ladies and their involvement in it. It was all about gossips, scandal, political ploy, and forbidden relationship. Book was set in 1930s era of London and Nothumberland narrated alternatively by main characters Lucy, Hester and her sister Sophie.

Characters

Lady Lucy– she was a weak caged bird with strong, ambitious demeanor desperate to spread her wings and

write a name in history. Dark childhood event tainted her soul with lifelong fear of nonexistence and hunger for power and position. She was interesting character to follow in the book. I liked her in the beginning and even felt empathetic for her but in later part of the story she turned totally different and opposite than I thought.

Hester– She was sensible, caring, and loyal Lady's maid. She was total opposite of Lady Lucy, never interested in politics and gossips. I liked her for sticking to her morals in all situation. I liked her love and concern regarding Sophie safety, but at the same time it felt like she was missing her point on ambitions and dream. It took me long to understand this character, first I felt like she was over caring and panicky but later I understood her concerns and at the end I like Hester.

Sophie had quite a role in the book as Hester's sister and also gave background on struggle of living in East end of London.

What I liked-

Writing was amazing and very different. It gave the feel of classic books. Sentences and usage of words were so royal. I was lost in golden writing like Hester in this book.

First half of the book was brilliant. I enjoyed reading picturesque description of Hebden Hall and lavish hotels, ball dance and dresses. This part was all about Lucy's childhood and her life in Henden Hall which was touching heartfelt story, Hester's history and her growing relationship with Lucy. It was most important part in book to know about Lucy and Hester and as story progressed the understanding about this character was getting clearer.

Another thing I loved in first half was Hester's love for reading and books and Lucy's passion of writing articles. The poetic phrases during the conversations was beautifully narrated.

Second half of the book was little difficult for me to process. Whole political thing was new to me. I didn't know about all the facts during this era mentioned in this part of the book. It was heavy with Hunger march, Cinema disaster and Blackshirt rallies, and fascism. I almost googled everything to know it better. So, book was slow for me and all conspiracy and plotting made it even harder to understand this aspect. But I got the basic picture of all these thing by the end of the book.

It was focused more on Lucy's involvement in political affairs and less on her relationship with Hester. Their clashing view and sinking boat of relationship made the book spicy and dramatic.

Climax was surprising and like the way book ended. Still I wanted to know more about later part of the story specifically about Lucy.

I liked all to reads about maid's life in 1930s in this book. Reference books author mentioned in author's note at the end sounds interesting and I'm going to look at it later and might read this book again to get clearer picture. It also showed how well researched this story was.

why not 5 stars-

Little slow and as I was not aware of historical facts it was hard to understand for me. But it was just me not book.

As I said with little more knowledge on this political history would made it easier to understand.

Overall, book was different and interesting right from writing to concept. those who love to read historical romance and political things would love this book.

Suzanne Leopold says

Hester Blake takes a job as a lady's maid for Lucy Fitzmartin in England. The year is 1934 and the climate is unsettled with drastic political challenges. Hester is from a small town and hopes that this job will provide her with a steady income. She is also searching for new friends and the potential to see new places. Her employer is unmarried and is considered reckless by her aristocratic family. She has very strong opinions of the political landscape and is a secret member of the British Union of Fascists. She also writes for the local papers and hopes to establish some freedom from her parents.

Hester and Lucy develop a close friendship due to similar interests and soon make the progression to being lovers. Their relationship is kept a secret to avoid a scandal for Lucy and her family. As Lucy becomes more entrenched in politics, her extreme views put a strain on their relationship. Their divergent ideals along with the complexities of their employee/lover relationship creates more havoc.

In her debut novel, Annabel Fielding has written a compelling work of historical fiction. She weaves together a nice blend of scandal, class distinction, love, and politics.

Marie Andrews says

Book Review also posted on my blog here: <https://lotsoflivres.com/2017/09/25/a...>

This book. Wow. What can I say? I love historical fiction, especially books which are set in the 1930s/WW2 period, so I had very high expectations, and I was not disappointed!

From the cover and title, I assumed it was a book based heavily on romance, and whilst there is romance (F/F relationship as well – YAY for diverse historical fiction!), *A Pearl For My Mistress* is so much more than that! At just under 400 pages, so much mystery, secrets and adventure is packed into this book. I got around half way through reading this novel and was astounded that so much had already happened and was wondering what could possibly happen next, but my gosh, it only gets better!

Yet even with so much depth and events packed into this book, it never becomes overwhelming to read or unrealistic in what was happening – especially as it's based on what happened in the 1930s in Britain (there is a list of reading recommendations at the back by Annabel so I will definitely get round to a few if I can). Both plot wise, but also the setting, context etc, are so well described, and it's clear a lot of research has been done before writing this book. This made *A Pearl For My Mistress* read incredibly well and flow nicely – all whilst being easy to imagine what was happening, which can sometimes be hard to achieve in historical fiction. The writing was beautiful and really did the story justice.

In terms of characters, *A Pearl For My Mistress*, follows Lady Lucy Fitzmartin and her newly appointed maid, Hester Blake. Throughout the novel, we got to know both characters better and see their development, not only in terms of their relationship, but also in terms of their personalities, personal history and desire for the future. The portrayal of the difference of class between Lucy and Hester was also accurately shown and

again, reiterated the research that has been done for this novel. All the relationships seem genuine and develop over time (no insta-love thankfully!) and don't always go in the way you expect them to!

I honestly can't put into words how much I enjoyed reading this book! It's one of my favourite books this year and a now go-to historical fiction recommendation! So much happens, and it is so well researched, without being overwhelming or complicated to read, I'm astounded! If you love historical fiction, want to read more diverse relationships, or just fancy reading something a little bit different and full of secrets and mystery, this book is for you! I can't wait to see what Annabel writes next and I can guarantee I'll be one of the first to read it as soon as it is released!

Michelle Ryles says

I do love historical fiction and found it rather unusual that this book was set in 1934; it's neither the roaring twenties nor wartime England, so I wondered what Annabel Fielding had found to write about. Set 5 years before war breaks out in Europe, we are plunged into an England filled with secrets, lies and espionage.

This really is a tale of two characters; hardworking and honest, Hester who wears her heart on her sleeve and cold Lady Lucy whose heart is as cold as her hands. Oh, behind closed doors she can show affection when she feels like it, but underneath I found her cold, manipulative and sneaky.

Annabel Fielding totally and effortlessly immersed the reader in the 1930's era. Hebden Hall in Northumberland is struggling to keep its majestic head above water and the servants find themselves one of the luxuries the family can't afford. I felt sometimes that Lucy probably used this to her advantage: Hester needed to keep her job so she would do anything to keep Lucy happy. Not that Hester was forced into doing anything she didn't want to do, I just felt that she was played. Sorry, Lucy! Whether I was right or wrong in my early opinion of Lady Lucy, you'll just have to read the book to find out!

I find it so interesting to read historical fiction and experience the thoughts and feelings of another era. In this day and age, we can't imagine that a mixed race or same sex couple, for example, would ever have to hide their relationship. It's so good to see how far we have come over the years, albeit at a snail's pace, at improving understanding and acceptance.

I chose to read an ARC and this is my honest and unbiased opinion.

Crystal King says

A gorgeous, elegant and well-researched book, I really enjoyed everything about A Pearl for My Mistress. I loved the romance between Lucy and her maid, Hester. I loved the vibrant and intriguing world in which the book was set--pre-world War II London. This book has it all, intrigue, romance, decadence, and characters that will sit with you for weeks, months...maybe years to come. I can't wait to see what Fielding will come up with next!

Katiria says

*** DNF this as of right now, I might go back to it or not. I really wanted to love this book so much because it has everything I love. But I just think this is all on me and that this book really isn't for me. But don't let my DNF discourage you please do check this book out because you might love it! ***

Kathy - Books & Munches says

For someone who's never really been interested in history and anything linked to it, it's a big deal to say you've liked a historical fiction novel. Meaning my whole review is a big deal!

Hester and Lucy are portrayed beautifully. You can follow their train of thought perfectly throughout every chapter. I honestly lost myself completely in their love affair, not to mention all the intrigue and tension the historical setting added to their relationship.

Even though I do think it typical for that time, Lucy's treatment of Hester rubbed me the wrong way at times. Especially the moments she pretty much states Hester is unknowing of everything going on in the world, that she doesn't understand the views Lucy herself has. If only there was enough room to talk freely of subjects such as the ongoing tensions between Britain and Germany.

Hester, on the other hand, doesn't really try to understand Lucy's motives and reasoning either. This also frustrated me.

So, safe to say it's just me being me, making a big deal out of something that's supposedly ordinary during that period.

There was a way to atone for being a failure, and that was to become a perfection. After all, diamonds could be cut and polished. Why not people?

Let me shock you and myself by saying that I didn't mind all the historical events and facts mentioned in *A Pearl for my Mistress*! Yes, at times it felt a bit as an overload, and I realize that's purely me, but all in all? It didn't bother me one bit!

I'm not going to say that I started liking history all of a sudden.

I am going to say, however, that I was very pleasantly surprised with this side of the novel! It's a huge part of it and if I hadn't liked it, hadn't given it a proper chance, I probably wouldn't have finished. But I did and I loved it.

Later, when she will be walking through the bare gardens of the hunting lodge, it will bloom into an idea. Then, an idea could be woven into a plan.

Even though I like the characters and I love Fielding's elaborate and, at times, poetic style of writing, the extreme slow pace of the novel annoyed me at times. I don't mind slow-paced books at all, but this one was just a tad too slow for my liking.

I felt myself reading slower and slower when there wasn't really any progress in the story, but as soon as

something happened, I literally flew through the pages again. Then that started decreasing again, slower and slower, before picking up once more.

I liked the change in pace, but sometimes it was just too slow and it made me enjoy the novel less.

I loved Annabel Fielding's writing in *A Pearl for my Mistress* and I loved the characters - *even when they were frustrating me a little, tiny bit* - but the snail-like pace made me like this novel a little less. For this, I'm giving *A Pearl for my Mistress* 4 / 5!

Kathy

I received this eBook through NetGalley in exchange for an honest opinion. I'm not being compensated in any way.
