



The Postcard

Leah Fleming

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2002, Australia

On his death bed, Melissa Boyd's father confesses a secret so devastating that Melissa, armed with only a few tattered keepsakes, including an old postcard addressed to someone called Desmond, embarks on a journey that will take her across oceans and into the past ...

1930s, London

Caroline has led a privileged life, supported by her Aunt Phoebe. But when her impulsive elopement to Cairo quickly turns sour, she finds herself alone with a newborn son. Then war breaks out and Caroline feels compelled to play her part. Leaving her son, Desmond, with Phoebe, she begins a dangerous existence on the front lines. But when Caroline finally returns, Desmond has disappeared.

From the wild moors of Scotland and wartime London to exotic Egypt and the Australian frontier, Leah Fleming weaves an epic tale of love, loss and the ties that bind families together.

The Postcard Details

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From Reader Review The Postcard for online ebook

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

In an interview the author the Postcard, Leah Fleming, explains that the inspiration for writing this book came from considering how a lost postcard can have the power to significantly change the course of our lives. For Melissa Boardman, upon the death of her estranged Father, she is given a postcard along with a few keepsakes that will help unlock the truth to her Father's family history. It is a history that her Father found painful and locked away for many years, only asking his daughter to discover the truth on his deathbed. The postcard will take Melissa on a journey into the past and far from her South Australian home to the other side of the world. Running concurrently with Melissa's story is that of Caroline, a young woman in the 1930's who comes from a privileged background, falls in love and elopes in Cairo only to cruelly discover that her husband is not who she thinks he is. Sadly, Caroline is left all alone with an infant son to care for, she returns to England as the war begins. Caroline decides to risk all including her son to fight on the front as a female resistance agent. It is a dangerous decision that will almost cost her life and everything she holds dear. The Postcard cleverly intertwines an epic family drama of secrets, love and loss across continents and eras.

This is a powerful novel that immediately had an emotional impact on me when I learnt through the dedication inside the cover that the book's story and characters are inspired by the European Resistance movement trained in Beaulieu, one of the locations of the story. The Postcard is an engrossing read, there was never a point where I felt my interest in the book was waning. The narrative moves nicely along, as the reader is transported to various locations and points in time, while also checking back with the present day character, Melissa, who essentially drives the story forward with her focus on the postcard mystery. There are sad and harrowing moments in this book that will definitely stay with me, particularly the parts where Caroline finds herself in a concentration camp. The cast of characters in this book are well composed, it was interesting to see how the stories of the three generations of women converge in a nicely tied up ending. As a new reader to Leah Fleming, I found this book a compelling read and I look forward to discovering her previous titles.

Julie says

An outstanding historical novel that will linger in the mind long after the last page is turned, The Postcard is award-winning author Leah Fleming's best book yet.

Orphaned Callie might never have known her parents, but she has certainly never wanted for affection or love. Having had an idyllic childhood in Scotland surrounded by loving family and friends, spirited Callie has grown from a mischievous child into a beautiful young woman with the world at her feet. Despite her glamorous Aunt Phoebe urging caution and telling her to think twice before plunging headlong into anything, Callie is determined to make the most out of life. When she finds herself falling head over heels in love with charming Welshman Toby, Callie impulsively decides to follow her heart and elope to Egypt with a man whose handsome face hides a plethora of secrets that could immerse his new bride into a maelstrom of jeopardy and danger.

Phoebe is shocked when she finds out that her niece has left everything that was familiar to her behind for a life in Egypt with a man who shouldn't be trusted. The former Gaiety Girl is no stranger to falling in love,

having had her heart shattered by the death of her beloved fiance during the First World War, but she cannot shake off this feeling that Toby is not the man for Callie. Phoebe has always done her utmost to ensure that Callie does not make the same mistakes she made when she was her age, but with her niece on the other side of the world, how is she going to stop her from ruining her life?

Callie had soon found herself regretting her marriage to Toby. Her charming husband turned out to be a selfish and unfeeling liar who cared for nobody but himself. A chance encounter with an old friend brings some much-needed happiness into Callie's dismal life and, realising that she can no longer continue living with a man she despises with all of her heart, she packs her bags and departs Egypt, ready to make a fresh start for herself and her beautiful baby boy, Desmond. With the world about to go to war once again, Callie quickly realises that she must put her happiness aside and do her duty for her country. Although leaving Desmond behind is heart-wrenching, Callie cannot stand by and do nothing, so she leaves her baby with Aunt Phoebe and volunteers as a secret agent, unaware of the horrors she is about to face...

In 2002, Melissa Boardman is stunned when her estranged father Lew asks her on his deathbed to get to the bottom of the mystery that has haunted him for his entire life. Lew has always known that he was adopted, but he has got no recollection of his life before coming to Australia after the war. Armed with just a postcard, Melissa finds herself delving into the secrets of her father's past. Her search for the truth compels her to untangle a complicated web of lies, passion and deceit, but will she find the answers she has been seeking?

The Postcard is a richly woven tapestry of old ghosts, illicit passions, dangerous secrets and devastating truths that will hold readers in thrall from start to finish. A captivating tale that spans decades and continents, this enthralling historical novel skillfully interweaves the past and the present and will leave readers on the edge of their seats eager to find out what happens next.

Leah Fleming's gift for characterization is extraordinary. Her characters are believable, multi-layered and flawed, and although we might not always agree with their actions or with the paths they choose to take, they become so real that it's hard to say goodbye to them once the conclusion is reached.

An absolute gem of a novel that will keep readers turning the pages late into the night, The Postcard is the triumphant new novel from Leah Fleming!

This review was originally published on Single Titles

Lynda says

This book was not my cup of tea...the women in the tale did not pull at my heart strings.
The men were killed off...

The son - boy child did not remember his mother? come on!

Too many things fitted in too neat....All from a postcard?

To span four generations and two wars in a story must be hard to write, but make people

feel they are real people ..not cardboard chess pieces to the reader.

Janine says

An enjoyable read especially the historical part. I didn't feel that Melissa was fleshed out enough.

Megan Readinginthesunshine says

I am a fan of Leah and her novels so I was very much looking forward to reading The Postcard.

In 2002 in Australia, Melissa discovers a postcard addressed to 'Desmond' among her late fathers things, and determined to discover the identity of Desmond and his relationship to her father, she embarks on a journey of discovery....

I thoroughly enjoyed this! Leah Fleming is a very talented storyteller and like many others I was instantly drawn into the story from the very first page.

I particularly love how Leah manages to cleverly weave the past and the present together with particular threads and themes – oh it was just enthralling, involving and I did not want it to end! I was hooked reading about the past and what had happened with Caroline, I was gripped by her situation and I constantly wanted to read on to discover more about her journey. It is a truly emotional journey and I'm very keen not to give anything away but I really felt for the characters.

I really liked Melissa as a character, I liked her determination to find out about Desmond and the past and I was cheering her on because I really wanted her to find out what had happened in the past. The Postcard covers such a selection of locations, such as Egypt, Australia and Scotland, and the descriptions are so vivid.

The Postcard is an emotional, compelling story that will capture your attention from the very first page, and it is a book that I recommend with all my heart.

Veronica says

I was looking forward to reading this book but didn't finish it. I found the story too disjointed and just could not get into it. It started off well but I felt that the author did not intertwine the past and present very well and hence the story did not unfold smoothly. I ended up losing interest.

Jill says

Leah Flemming has written several novels among them *The Captain's Daughter* and *The Girl Under the Olive Tree*. *The Postcard* is her latest work.

Set in present day, South Australia and London, UK, the reader is quickly transported back in time to 1923 and post WWI Britain. There we meet Caroline (Callie) Seton-Ross and her Aunt Phee at Dalradnor, their home in the wild moors of Scotland.

Dalradnor is where Callie starts her fascinating and sometimes frightening journey through a life of not only privilege, but impoverishment and suffering. Through it all, however, one thing keeps Callie going, the thought of her son, Desmond.

There are several wonderful sub-plots to this fascinating story all woven into the main plot with the skill of an accomplished writer. The reader can look forward to a fascinating and enjoyable read travelling page by page through both countries and time, not to mention the mystery behind "the postcard"!

Shaz Goodwin says

I really enjoyed reading *The Postcard*. I found it easy to become emotionally involved with all three women. Phoebe and Caroline led heart-breaking but very interesting lives.

Phoebe, her career as a Gaiety Girl which later leads to film and the strong bond she has with her friends; Caroline growing up, her choices in love, the poignant scenes as a secret agent and her later life too. Mel's life in the UK as a student of The Royal Academy of Music and tracing the family tree also hooked me in.

The format of the story made it easy to keep track of our characters and I enjoyed how characters from one timeline had information to share for a later generation.

I also enjoyed the pace of the story.

The settings of the estate in Scotland, London during all three generations, Cairo, Belgium and Australia gives variety and leaves no time to be bored.

A few scenes had me in tears – Desmond's abuse in Australia, Caroline as a secret agent and Mel singing in the church spring to mind.

Leah Fleming tackles emotional topics such as alcoholism and PTSD with realism.

The Postcard tells the story of three generations of women, two caught up in the world around them with the social expectations of their time and the world events that happened. It tells of the lies they had to tell to protect themselves and those lies uncovered to bring the story full circle for the third generation to become whole.

I would like to thank Ruth Killick Publicity for providing a print copy in exchange for an honest review.

Debbie Robson says

This is a funny sort of review. I've actually only read 133 pages of *The Postcard* and skimmed the rest. It's strange how books find you. I bought it for the train last week mainly because it was about 1930s London and 2002 Australia. I thought, at first, that Leah Fleming was an Australian Woman Writer but no, she isn't. It wasn't until I got home that I discovered the reference to Beaulieu Abbey that really intrigued me and after being naughty and checking the acknowledgements I quickly realised what Fleming had taken on. I decided to actually write this review and award three stars because of the subject matter that Fleming has tackled and also because I don't normally read popular fiction and I'm still not sure if my criticisms are because of that fact or because of the construction of the books. For me Fleming did Scotland and Callie's childhood really well. The trouble with the narrative begins when Callie grows up and her experiences are sandwiched between Phoebe's. Somehow this seems to lessen the high points in the story especially what happens to Callie during the war. I personally think we should have had more of Melissa and less of Phoebe. Would love to hear what other readers think!

Maggie Kiely says

This is my first read by this author and was recommended. It was ok but I felt the characters lacked any depth and felt the character of Caroline was particularly shallow. I did not find them all that interesting. A lot of the book was dedicated to the lives of Phoebe and Caroline (perhaps a bit too much) and not enough with the character of Melissa. It just seemed unreal in places and I will not be rushing out to get another novel by this writer.

Angelique Simonsen says

a good book reminding one how sometimes you can be too late to fix mistakes o

Julia says

The Postcard by Leah Fleming is another masterpiece from a wonderful story-teller. It is an epic tale spanning almost a century. *The Postcard* deals with love and loss, war and peace, and over it all is the love of mothers.

The action is set over several countries - Scotland, England, Egypt, Germany, Australia to name but a few. Within *The Postcard* fact meets fiction and is woven into a fabulous novel.

The novel is told in the third person from several viewpoints. The reader really gets to know the characters who are all realistically drawn. Leah Fleming really has a great talent for creating characters that come alive and live inside the reader's head.

There are several themes in *The Postcard* but the main one is love. Love will motivate people to do all sorts of things. A mother's love within the story instinctively reaches out to do what is best for her child, no matter what the personal sacrificial cost to the mother. However children do not always recognise this sacrifice. Leah Fleming deals with the theme of unmarried mothers. At the beginning of the twentieth century

unmarried mothers and their children were seen as outcasts in society. It was not until much later in the century that this stigma was thankfully removed. Consequently unmarried mothers would go to extraordinary lengths to protect their children from being labelled. Mothers put their needs second to that of their children. Within the story the reader 'lives' through the first and second world wars. One 'sees' life in both the trenches and the concentration camp. Sheer iron will was needed to survive. The result from both wars was often PTSD, as the horrors that were seen cannot be unseen. The scars of war are not always visible ones. No one lives through war unscathed.

There is the theme of anger within the novel. The abuses done to women and children in the concentration camps can stir up anger in the survivors. However anger and hate can destroy. "To live with hatred is to burn ourselves out from the inside." Some-how survivors have to let go of this anger to move forwards. It is not to diminish the horrors, but characters cannot flourish if anger grips their hearts.

Within The Postcard Leah Fleming explores the tough subjects of alcoholism and domestic abuse. Both are sensitively tackled. War and experiences can change people and sometimes the only way to cope is to hit the bottle. However escaping into alcohol can have disastrous consequences for those around the person. The Postcard is a mystery tale - a mystery that spans the whole novel. The novel opens in 2002 with this mystery and then reverts back about ninety years before moving forwards. The end of the novel answers all the reader's questions.

I absolutely loved The Postcard. Leah Fleming is one of my favourite authors. I know that whatever I pick up by her will be a magnificent story.

If you have never read a novel by Leah Fleming, you are missing out. Choose any one of her novels and you will be in for an absolute treat.

Nina Draganova says

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DKM says

This book began with great promise, but it fizzled. Maybe I am the problem and having read so much makes everything seem cliched and predictable. It's difficult these days to find a truly well-written, intelligent, original story.

Rachel says

The Postcard seemed designed exactly to appeal to me with everything I love: family secrets, inter-generational stories, wartime romance, international travel, and a nonlinear story structure. The FANY!

Female SOE agents! Lena Ashwell's concert parties! Even the Scottish Women's Hospitals got a name check. But I was so let down by the writing. I felt like I was reading someone's first draft (not helped by the numerous typos throughout). The prose was clunky with no style or rhythm. I found the leaps in POV and perspective jarring. The narrative would go from a sweeping style covering a dozen years in one paragraph to describing the minutiae of everyday life in the next with no cues to the reader, which I found disorientating. A lot of the characterization was clumsily done; self-revelations told as internal dialogue with little to no build up. The historical details were obviously well-researched but inserted so artlessly I couldn't enjoy them. And the love scenes were literally cringe worthy. It took me about 150 pages until I could ignore the style enough to read without constantly rolling my eyes. I found myself skimming over huge chunks just to get to the end, which I did (I give up on books very easily if I'm not enjoying them but I still found the story intriguing enough to want to know what happened), but I'm not sure it was worth it. I was really hoping to find another historical fiction author to enjoy, so I'm hugely disappointed.
