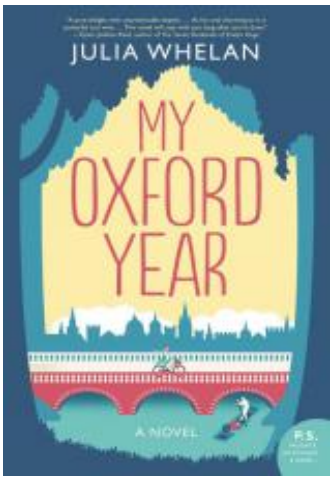
My Oxford Year

by Julia Whelan



About the Book

Set amidst the breathtaking beauty of Oxford, this sparkling debut novel tells the unforgettable story of a determined young woman eager to make her mark in the world and the handsome man who introduces her to an incredible love that will irrevocably alter her future --- perfect for fans of Jojo Moyes and Nicholas Sparks.

American Ella Durran has had the same plan for her life since she was 13: Study at Oxford. At 24, she?s finally made it to England on a Rhodes Scholarship when she?s offered an unbelievable position in a rising political star?s presidential campaign. With the promise that she?ll work remotely and return to DC at the end of her Oxford year, she?s free to enjoy her Once in a Lifetime Experience. That is, until a smart-mouthed local who is too quick with his tongue and his car ruins her shirt and her first day.

When Ella discovers that her English literature course will be taught by none other than that same local, Jamie Davenport, she thinks for the first time that Oxford might not be all she?s envisioned. But a late-night drink reveals a connection she wasn?t anticipating finding, and what begins as a casual fling soon develops into something much more when Ella learns Jamie has a life-changing secret.

Immediately, Ella is faced with a seemingly impossible decision: turn her back on the man she?s falling in love with to follow her political dreams or be there for him during a trial neither are truly prepared for. As the end of her year in Oxford rapidly approaches, Ella must decide if the dreams she?s always wanted are the same ones she?s now yearning for.

Discussion Guide

1. Ella has dreamed of being at Oxford since she was 13. Is there a place you?ve always dreamed of going? Where would it be and why? Have you made it? If you have, would you go back?

2. One of Ella?s education proposals is that the arts are essential to an education that creates independent thinkers. Do you agree? Why or why not? Is this something you think should be implemented in your local education system?

3. Are there characters you instantly rooted for? Characters you disliked? Did your opinion of any characters change as the story went on?

4. When Ella and Jamie first get together, it?s supposed to have ?no strings.? Can this type of relationship work? Generally speaking, do you think men and women want the same thing from casual relationships? Was Ella misleading Jamie at the beginning when she claimed she didn?t want a relationship?

5. When Jamie comes clean about his illness, he admits that he believed he deserved Ella, that she was his ?last hurrah.? Do you believe him? Or do you think he thought there was more there? Should he have told her the truth from the beginning?

6. When Ella first finds out Jamie is ill, her immediate reaction is to feel ?trapped.? While we come to understand that this feeling was triggered by her relationship with her mother after her father?s death, do you understand why she felt that way? How do you think you would have reacted in this situation?

7. What do you think about Antonia and William?s relationship? Do you believe they love each other the same amount? Is one person stronger than the other?

8. The mention of Tennyson?s famous line, ?Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all? catalyzes a turning point in Ella?s trajectory with Jamie. Do you agree with Tennyson? Have you experienced this difficult lesson yourself?

9. Poetry is an important part of Ella and Jamie?s relationship, as well as being critically important to the book itself. Is poetry still relevant or interesting to contemporary thinking? Have you ever written a poem as an adult? Why?

10. Jamie has a philosophy about his ?Oxenford,? the place where a person is ready to ?cross over.? Do you agree with him?

11. In your opinion, did Ella make the right decision to stay in the U.K. with Jamie? Would you have made the same decision in her place? At her age? At your age now?

12. If you could choose, would you rather die suddenly or have time to say goodbye? Do you wish the same for the people you love? Specifically, your partner? Your parents? Are the answers different?

Author Bio

Julia Whelan is a screenwriter, life-long actor and award-winning audiobook narrator. She graduated with a degree in English and Creative Writing from Middlebury College and Oxford University. While in England, her flirtation with tea

blossomed into a full-blown love affair, culminating in her eventual certification as a tea master. When not writing her own books, you can find her reading other people's out loud into a microphone.

Critical Praise

?With MY OXFORD YEAR, Julia Whelan has crafted a breathtakingly perfect picture of Oxford?a read bursting with warmth, mirth, and heart. A powerfully heartbreaking and life-affirming tribute to love and to choice --- to choosing love and an open-hearted approach to the world.?

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