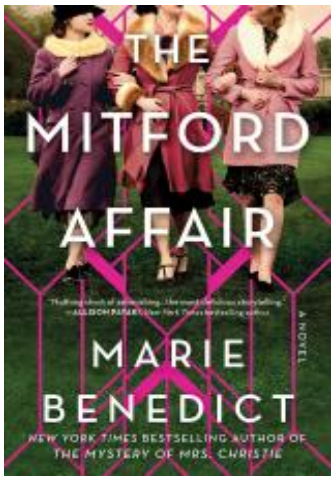
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The Mitford Affair

by Marie Benedict



About the Book

From *New York Times* bestselling author Marie Benedict comes an explosive novel of history's most notorious sisters, one of whom will have to choose: her country or her sisters?

Between the World Wars, the six Mitford sisters --- each more beautiful, brilliant and eccentric than the next --- dominate the English scenes. Though they've weathered scandals before, the family falls into disarray when Diana divorces her wealthy husband to marry a fascist leader and Unity follows her sister's lead all the way to Munich, inciting rumors that she's become Hitler's mistress.

As the Nazis rise in power, novelist Nancy Mitford grows suspicious of her sisters' constant visits to Germany and the high-ranking fascist company they keep. When she overhears alarming conversations and uncovers disquieting documents, Nancy must make excruciating choices as Great Britain goes to war with Germany.

Probing the torrid political climate in the lead-up to WWII and the ways that seemingly sensible people can be sucked into radical action, THE MITFORD AFFAIR follows Nancy's valiant efforts to stop the Nazis from taking over Great Britain, choosing between loyalty to her country and allegiance to her family, and forcing her to learn exactly how personal is the political.

Discussion Guide

1. Before reading THE MITFORD AFFAIR, were you familiar with the famous (or infamous, depending on your perspective) Mitford sisters? If so, how has your understanding of these eccentric, beautiful, aristocratic sisters changed, if at all?

2. Nancy is concerned that Diana is considering divorce, particularly because her new partner will not be leaving his own

marriage. Why is Nancy so concerned? What is behind Diana?s decision?

3. Unity thinks that the only thing that distinguishes her from her sisters is her awkwardness. What are her strengths? Why don?t others notice them?

4. Nicknames abound among the Mitford sisters. What purposes do these names serve?

5. What was the appeal of fascist rhetoric for people in Britain and people like Diana and Unity in particular? What promises did the BUF make? Had they attained power, would they have been able to keep those promises?

6. Diana and Unity are reprimanded for attending the Nuremberg rally wearing bright lipstick. How were German beauty standards shaped by fascist ideas? What social issues are reflected in our modern beauty trends?

7. How do Nancy?s concerns about privacy, reputation and loyalty affect her conversations with her sisters? What finally goads her into taking a more active role against their dangerous beliefs?

8. While waiting to hear if she?ll see Hitler during her time in Berlin, Diana has a moment of self-reflection and doubt that startles her. How do you think the events of the book would be different if she questioned herself more?

9. On a couple of occasions, as she tries to make sense of her sister?s decisions against the complicated, incendiary developments happening across Europe, Nancy observes that political decisions are often based on personal motivations. What do you think this means in the context of Diana and Unity? Do you think that observation applies in modern times?

10. Though Nancy is clever enough to understand the danger of the radio station documents, her loyalty to Diana wins out for a long time. How does that compare to Diana?s treatment of Unity?

11. Nancy asks herself, ?Does [a single motivation] matter as long as we think we are acting on the side of right and truth? Or must we be on the actual side of right?? How would you answer those questions?

12. In the final chapter, Nancy suggests that she may have misapprehended her sisters? actions and the reasons underpinning them. Did this make you reassess the chapters attributed to Diana and Unity throughout the book? Is it possible that those accounts do not reflect what actually transpired (in the fictional world of THE MITFORD AFFAIR) but rather they reflect Nancy?s presumptions and projections about her sisters? activities based on her own, very personal beliefs?

Author Bio

Marie Benedict is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of DAUGHTER OF EGYPT, THE QUEENS OF CRIME, THE MITFORD AFFAIR, HER HIDDEN GENIUS, THE MYSTERY OF MRS. CHRISTIE, THE ONLY WOMAN IN THE ROOM, LADY CLEMENTINE, CARNEGIE'S MAID, THE OTHER EINSTEIN. She also has coauthored with Victoria Christopher Murray the *New York Times* bestselling THE PERSONAL LIBRARIAN, a ?Good Morning America? Book Club pick; THE FIRST LADIES, Target?s 2023 Book of the Year; and A PAIR OF ACES. All

have been translated into multiple languages, and many have been selected for the Barnes & Noble Book Club, the Target Book Club, the Costco Book Club, the Indie Next List and the LibraryReads List. She lives in Pittsburgh with her family.

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