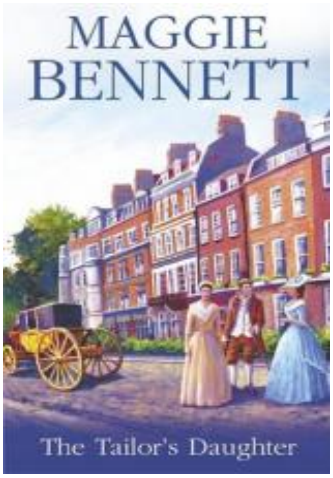
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The Tailor's Daughter: A Novel

by Janice Graham



About the Book

Growing up in Victorian London, where her father owns a tailoring shop on fashionable Savile Row, Veda Grenfell and her family have always assumed her loveliness and sense of style would lead to a suitable match. But when a fever leaves her deaf at the age of sixteen, Veda's life takes an unconventional turn, and she reinvents herself as a tailor to London's smart young set. Veda's spirit attracts unexpected suitors, including a young viscount--until passion turns to betrayal and she embarks on a treacherous journey into a world of deception and murder. Gorgeously written and richly detailed, this is an irresistibly compelling portrait of a resourceful young woman determined to triumph over all odds.

Discussion Guide

1. Veda states that ?the absence of one sense does not imply an absence of sense in general.? Did this book give you a new perspective on the challenges faced by the deaf? Have you ever known anyone who has suffered the loss of their hearing?

2. Although Veda prefers designing men?s clothing, she makes it clear that she does not sympathize with those ?women in drab tweeds and spectacles who smoke and live in chambers like a man.? Why doesn?t she? And does this make Veda hypocritical? Discuss the double standards imposed upon Victorian women who strove to pursue careers in fields dominated by men.

3. Do you think Veda was a ?woman ahead of her time?? What aspects of her character could be considered timeless?

4. Veda?s written correspondence appears throughout the pages of **The Tailor?s Daughter**. Did the inclusion of her letters help you to know her better? Talk about this aspect of the novel?s narrative structure.

5. How might you describe Veda?s sudden change in attitude toward Balducci? Was her refusal to marry him based

solely on his dishonesty, or had Veda discovered something dark and disturbing in herself? Discuss Veda?s compassion for Arabella in light of this self-knowledge.

6. Some of the exchanges between Veda and Mr. Nicholls and Veda and Harry are particularly delicate and refined. Which scenes do you think best portray Victorian sensibility? What did you learn about Victorian manners or attitudes in **The Tailor?s Daughter**?

7. Harry was born into privilege and yet he finds he is limited by his class. Do you think he is the ?decorous capital on the column of industry, a pretty thing, all pomp and show, deprived of any real function,? as he is wont to describe himself? Why or why not? Talk about the notions of privilege and wealth in Victorian society. How did one?s class either foster or hinder one?s prosp-ects? How different is the world today?

8. Although Veda recognizes Arabella as her arch- rival, resentment and jealousy give way to more complex feelings. What does this reveal about Veda?s character and her own needs? What kind of role does each woman play for the other?

9. Veda states, ?I sat by the window with the warm July sun filtering through thick leaded panes, whipping thousands of fine stitches into the silk lining of the satin bodice as if it were a suit of armor, with the belief that I could render her invulnerable to his evil by the sheer perfection of my skills.? How is this image symbolic of women?s powerlessness in a rigidly patriarchal society?

10. What do you think of Veda?s decision not to reveal what she knows about Arabella and the Earl? Would you make the same choice? Why?

11. The Tailor?s Daughter is a novel about truth and beauty, art and artifice. It is also about family??in all its glory and scandal. How important is the notion of family to each of the main characters? Which relationships are the most ?real? to you in this book? Have you ever experienced a particularly difficult conflict between personal fulfillment and family obligations?

Author Bio

Janice Graham began her career as a screenwriter in Los Angeles. Her first novel, **Firebird**, became a *New York Times* bestseller and was translated into eighteen languages. Visit her Web site at www.janicegraham.com.

Critical Praise

?A great pleasure . . . a rich dance of a novel with every ingredient of the popular romance: near-death illness, adoring older suitor, wonderful clothes, great romantic love, hope, despair, and disgrace . . . and a happy ending.?

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