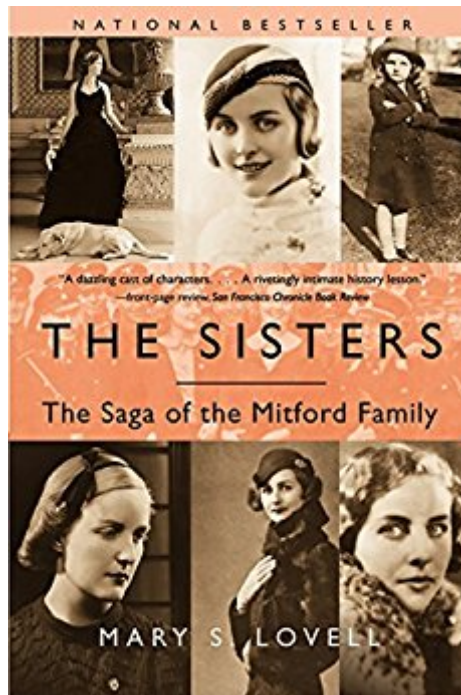




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The Sisters: The Saga Of The Mitford Family



Synopsis

"Fascinating, the way all great family stories are fascinating." —Robert Gottlieb, New York Times Book Review
This is the story of a close, loving family splintered by the violent ideologies of Europe between the world wars. Jessica was a Communist; Debo became the Duchess of Devonshire; Nancy was one of the best-selling novelists of her day; beautiful Diana married the Fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley; and Unity, a close friend of Hitler, shot herself in the head when England and Germany declared war. The Mitfords had style and presence and were mercilessly gifted. Above all, they were funny — hilariously and mercilessly so. In this wise, evenhanded, and generous book, Mary Lovell captures the vitality and drama of a family that took the twentieth century by storm and became, in some respects, its victims.

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Customer Reviews

Nine personalities have their say in this biography. Nine basically decent people, though a couple went down paths we can only find reprehensible now. This is an even-handed biography, and it focuses on the personal rather than the bigger political scene. However I may think Unity had rocks

in her head for adoring Hitler, Mary Lovell reminds me that fascism had a lot of fans at the time and could be mistaken for nationalism or simply anti-communism (which was much mistrusted by the Mitfords' genteel class). This isn't an excuse, it is a reason. You can't hope to understand someone until you explore why they may have done something. Unfortunately for the Mitford girls, their father refused to educate them further than a finishing school, though a couple of them begged. To be energetic, intelligent and bored can make for some interesting choices, which certainly makes for interesting reading. The mores of the time are shown by the story of Decca's dancing classes. She was 9 years old: "In the summer of 1926 to Decca's delight - she was always trying to get away from home - she was allowed to join dancing classes held in the homes of neighbours.... Decca, dressed in organza party frock and cashmere shawl, was taken to classes by Nanny every Wednesday. This pleasant occupation came to an abrupt end when she took the opportunity between dances to tell some of her contemporaries how babies were conceived and born. 'The telling was a great success,' she recalled. 'particularly as I couldn't help making up a few embellishments as I went along.' A week or so later, Syndey [Decca's Mother] sent for her, having received complaints from parents that their children were disturbed by what Decca had told them..... Decca wrote... 'The enormity of my ill-advised act... was such that years later, when I was a debutante of seventeen, I learned from an older cousin that two young men of the neighbourhood were still forbidden to associate with me.' "And that was just the start of the trouble the unrepentant Decca delighted in. But for all that the sisters occasionally looked for trouble, they also sometimes seemed to just drift into controversy. Their social class gave them wide access to movers and shakers, their beauty insured that they were always news. The last Mitford sister alive is the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, best known as the chatelaine of Chatsworth, one of the most beautiful manor houses in England. One of the last stories in the book is how she and her husband saved Chatsworth as a family estate, when so many big houses were lost to estate and wartime taxes. I don't read a lot of biographies, but I'm glad I picked this up. Very interesting reading of an era soon to become ancient history. Happy Reader

An interesting book especially for British readers who know better the inside of English history. These girls were very talented and it is very interesting knowing how their lives developed and which role they had in the everyday history of England. Beside the above it is nice to follow the developments of an English aristocratic family in those days prewar. I enjoyed the book. It was something different though the writing style is a bit boring, but the lives of these girls was certainly not boring. I recommend it to all readers interested in history.

The book is well written, and is a decent companion to the *Letters Between Six Sisters* edited by Charlotte Mosley. It isn't a terribly detailed history, however and not equally balanced as far as information about each sister. Jessica (Decca) and Diana, whom the author interviewed and, in the case of the latter also met, are given a lot more space than the others. She covers Unity's "Hitler Years" of course, but otherwise we learn very little that is new about Unity. Likewise, Deborah (Debo) and Pam get scanty coverage, and even Nancy is regulated almost to the background. Lovell also occasionally doesn't follow up on information that she presents - for example, she makes a point of saying the Diana's husband, Oswald Mosley, lost a huge amount of money on a radio venture, and recounts his failure to reenter politics after the war; she also describes, though, the Mosleys moving from one lovely home to another, redecorating "with Diana's usual flair..." but doesn't explain where the money came from to support this lifestyle. Overall, however, the book is a good general reference and sources are well documented.

I did not think I'd like this type of biographic literature, but it was fantabulous. I enjoyed every paragraph. There are many pictures in the front of the book. While reading and after reading I perused them. It was rather onerous going back and forth like that on the kindle. I guess it would have been better (for me anyway) if they had been tucked into the book itself in the appropriate time areas talked about.

Although I knew a little bit about the Mitford sisters--Daphne Guinness (that Guinness) being the granddaughter of Diana--I had no idea how involved they were with the Third Reich. Unity, another Mitford sister, actually crushed on Adolf Hitler, much the way a teenager would on Justin Bieber. She stalked him--and he gave her a golden swastika pin as a gift. As jewelry, that she treasured and wore often. There is nothing more to say about that. History tells us what we need to know. I do appreciate that Mary Lovell does not make judgments about the family. She allows their story to unfold without a lot of editorializing. The four stars are for the extraordinary detail the author has taken with the family's life.

This book caught one up in the lives of the Mitford sisters and their unusual political differences. Also some of their relationships with Hitler before world war 11.

I have always been fascinated by the Mitford family and have read several books by Jessica

Mitford, whose writing I very much admire. This is one way out-there family, and The Sisters is the best book yet on the subject. It contains photos and great information not included in previous biographies.

Engaging all the way through. Even more intriguing at this point given what is going on politically across the globe.

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