



The Daring Ladies of Lowell

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From the New York Times bestselling author of *The Dressmaker* comes a moving historical novel about a bold young woman drawn to the looms of Lowell, Massachusetts--and to the one man with whom she has no business falling in love.

Eager to escape life on her family's farm, Alice Barrow moves to Lowell in 1832 and throws herself into the hard work demanded of "the mill girls." In spite of the long hours, she discovers a vibrant new life and a true friend—a saucy, strong-willed girl name Lovey Cornell.

But conditions at the factory become increasingly dangerous, and Alice finds the courage to represent the workers and their grievances. Although mill owner, Hiram Fiske, pays no heed, Alice attracts the attention of his eldest son, the handsome and reserved Samuel Fiske. Their mutual attraction is intense, tempting Alice to dream of a different future for herself.

This dream is shattered when Lovey is found strangled to death. A sensational trial follows, bringing all the unrest that's brewing to the surface. Alice finds herself torn between her commitment to the girls in the mill and her blossoming relationship with Samuel. Based on the actual murder of a mill girl and the subsequent trial in 1833, *The Daring Ladies of Lowell* brilliantly captures a transitional moment in America's history while also exploring the complex nature of love, loyalty, and the enduring power of friendship.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Daring Ladies of Lowell Details

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From Reader Review The Daring Ladies of Lowell for online ebook

Julie says

The Daring Ladies of Lowell by Kate Alcott is a Doubleday/ Random House publication set for release in February 2014. I received a copy of this book from the publisher and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Alice Barrow wished to become an independent woman. She leaves her family's farm against the wishes of her father , in 1832 and begins work in the textile industry. Being a "mill girl" proves much more difficult than Alice had anticipated. However, she does make friends with the other girls, especially a girl names Lovey.

Lovey was a nonconformist, funny, daring, and an all around great friend to have. The girls, especially Alice speak out against the terrible conditions in the factory. This gets Alice noticed by the Fiske family, owners of the mill. Samuel Fiske in particular takes a liking to Alice when she shows him the true nature of his family. But a terrible tragedy occurs that brings down the reputation of Alice's friend and puts a barrier between her and Samuel and their budding romance.

This book is multi-layered. There are elements of a strong friendship, a strong willed Alice who gained much from her experience with the ladies of Lowell. There are the historical aspects that call attention to the treatment of workers, especially women and the attitudes of the upper classes that certainly felt these women were nothing more than slaves and balked at making the work conditions more humane. The attitudes of men toward any woman that got pregnant without benefit of marriage was also horrifying. The rules regarding women who were allowed to work in the mill and many other historical details kept me in enraged at the treatment these women endured.

This was also a courtroom drama when a man is accused of murder and Alice must testify.

There is also a romance between Samuel and Alice. This romance goes against the Fiske family's standards, but it's Alice's standards that are much higher.

This novel was inspiring and thought provoking. It took a lot of spine for Alice to make a stand against injustice. She made sacrifices for her co-workers and for her good friend Lovey. I wonder if there are many people today who would put their jobs and relationships on the line the way Alice did.

Over this one gets an A+

Sharon Huether says

I won this free book through Goodreads-first-reads. The author made this story so alive with the dialogue between the mill girls and all the characters in the story. Friends are forever; that's what the author brought out. I felt I was in their presence. The girls that worked in the mill had to fight for reform, health and safety too. This book is movie material. I love the story.

Ângela says

“Children should have some warning, some way of knowing it was dangerous to look out at the world with unguarded pleasure. But who would want to tell them, to deprive them of those few moments of blissful ignorance that would have to last a lifetime?”

One of the reasons that led me to read this book was:

“Alice is cast in the mold of a character created by an earlier Alcott, the passionate and spunky Jo March. A refreshingly old-fashioned heroine” by The New York Times.

Although the main character (Alice) is quite brave and revolutionary like Jo, I find this comparison a bit forced, even out of context.

The other reason was that this history is based on truthful facts, having as main theme the conditions of “**the mill girls**” - cotton factory workers.

This part was well achieved, the author is able to transport us to a time when deep changes were occurring in the organization of the factory workers, through the creation of strikes with the intention of improving their working conditions.

Overall, it was not an amazing book, but was able to touch some important and nowadays issues such as labour conditions, fair wages to both genders and a righteous working schedule.

Pamela says

First and foremost, thank you Sharon H. for the recommendation. “The Daring Ladies of Lowell” was a surprisingly engaging read - an equitable blend of historical relevance, characterization, mystery, and romance. Not overly studious but yet not trite and sappy.

I do want to point out, Alcott took extensive creative liberties with time-stamps and factual events. However, it didn't detract from conveying the poor working conditions and dangers common to mid-nineteenth century “mill-girls” and the less than desirable education, employment, and social opportunities afforded women in general.

Besides, it's a work of fiction. Not everything need be true to the nth degree for a story to merit gratification and worth; it just need be plausible within genre and sub-genre parameters. And if it's entertaining and engaging, all the more gratifying.

The Daring Ladies of Lowell: an engaging soft and simply told historical nuanced novel - four gratifying stars.

Dulce says

A história baseada em factos reais está muito boa, o romance achei fraquinho, e sendo ficcionado acho que a

autora o poderia ter desenvolvido mais, soube-me a pouco.

Susan says

The Daring Ladies of Lowell was a great read that brings attention to the working conditions of the mill girls of Lowell. Taking some historical details and making a fictional story featuring characters that the reader comes to care about really makes these horrific conditions more real. Alice moves to Lowell to become a mill girl in an attempt to escape farm life and finds a true friend in Lovey, another mill girl who happens to be a bit wild and unpredictable. This friendship allows Alice to really grow, and she even develops a friendship with her boss's son. When Lovey is murdered, the community becomes divided as the conditions of the workers becomes a cause of debate. Alcott does a great job at showing both sides of the conflict and really makes the reader care about these characters. Overall The Daring Ladies of Lowell proved to be a great read, and I look forward to reading more from this author.

Received a copy of The Daring Ladies of Lowell through Goodreads.

Sónia says

Do ponto de vista histórico, o livro está bastante bem conseguido. Depois de ler a nota final da autora percebi melhor o porquê. Além de todo o contexto histórico bem desenvolvido, Kate Alcott teve o cuidado de usar testemunhos reais no que concerne a determinado pormenor.

A meu ver, a obra falha quando a autora secundariza a figura principal. **Lovey, verídica, grande defensora dos direitos dos trabalhadores, é atirada para segundo plano.** Atabalhoadamente, a autora dá ênfase à sua história através de uma personagem fictícia, Alice. E, no fim do livro, dá louvores a Lovey. Parece confuso? Pois... Errou, a meu ver... Quis misturar factos e uma época histórica riquíssimos com um romance próprio dessa altura e falhou no último pormenor, que é bastante insípido. Não se pode ter tudo...

Erin says

This storyline sounded so interesting as it promised to examine the working conditions of female employees in a Boston area cotton mill and the real life historical account of the murder of one of those women. However, the author then decides to concentrate on a "other side of the tracks romance" between one of the mill workers and the heir to the cotton mill business. I hate that type of masquerade!

Sarah-Hope says

My love for historical fiction focused on the labor movement began with Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven*. Since reading that novel (almost twenty-five years ago now!), my bookstore radar has led me to other novels treating similar themes. The newest such novel I've encountered is Kate Alcott's *The Daring Ladies of Lowell*, and it's a lovely addition to the genre.

You may or may not be familiar with the Lowell textile mills. As a quilter with a love of reproduction textiles (fabrics based on swatches from different historical periods), I know about the Lowell girls and the textiles they produced. Henry Cabot Lowell was a U.S. "entrepreneur" who visited British textile mills, memorized their layouts and the construction of their machinery, then returned to the U.S. with a head full of trade secrets and went into business for himself. The first U.S. textile mill was built in 1823 and more followed quickly, with most of them located alongside New England rivers that provided the power that ran machinery.

Early on, these Mills began hiring female employees. They became an important source of employment for young women who wanted to leave the demands of farm life and who dreamed of a more independence than had heretofore been possible. Still, the opportunities the mills provided came at a price—the labor was demanding, with thirteen-hour work days, dangerous equipment, and pay that was half what the men working for the mills earned. Mill girls lived in dormitories and had their behavior closely monitored by employers who worried about the public reputations of "their" girls. Any perceived "loose" behavior was grounds for immediate firing.

The Daring Ladies of Lowell is set in such a mill and one of its main plot lines focuses on the murder of a mill girl that's incompletely documented press reports from the time. Alcott has used the historical information available, filling out the story with her own imagination. This is a work of fiction, but it reads true.

Two other key plot lines focus on the burgeoning labor movement and a problematic romance between a son of the mill owner and one of the mill girls. These different themes are interwoven effectively. Much to my relief, this novel never degenerated into romance, which I feared it might. Not that I have anything against romance—but I do object to the way it often operates in *deus ex machina* fashion to deliver individual women from the injustices of their time, while glossing over the lives of the many other women in similar straits, who don't catch the eye of the wealthy landowner or the earl or the industrial baron or whomever.

This novel makes for engaging reading as we share the lives of these young women and watch their autonomy and courage increase as they're granted the opportunity to be self-supporting. It's worth reading both for historical context and narrative. It won't teach you as much as a larger non-fiction work on the same topic and, despite the author's best efforts, may minimize some of the challenges the mill girls faced, but it brings the era to life in a way that will move you to further reading, both fiction and non-fiction.

Christa says

I don't like reviewing books poorly--it makes me feel a little guilty, since anyone writing and publishing a book is a huge accomplishment. And since I only rate and review books I actually finish, they aren't a whole lot of one-stars in my collection. If I make it all the way through, it has to be at least okay, right?

This book just really didn't do it for me. I was looking forward to it, too, because the synopsis seemed right up my alley--a murder of a "loose" mill girl rocks the small, 1800s-factory town, leaving her friend and coworker left to put together the pieces.

It's hard to describe what rubbed me the wrong way about this book. Basically, I felt like I was watching a weird hybrid Lifetime movie, but for middle schoolers. The romance was heavy-handed, and definitely lacking any subtlety, yet it didn't really feel like an adult romance--it kind of felt like it was written for young

girls who'd eat this kind of thing up. (Perhaps I'm the wrong audience for this?) I found the main character a bit insufferable for her perfection, and the other characters--with the exception maybe of Lovey--weren't really fleshed out enough to stand on their own.

The book gets an A-plus for the setting, but it really was a struggle to get through. Unfortunately, I really can't recommend this one!

Diane Barnes says

The setting of this book was 1832. Pretty sure tractors and wristwatches were not around at that time. If you're going to attempt historical fiction, do some research.

Ann Woodbury Moore says

I enjoyed Alcott's first novel, "The Dressmaker," about the Titanic, although parts were exaggerated or unbelievable. Her second story, "The Daring Ladies of Lowell," is set in 1832-1833 in Lowell, Massachusetts, and features young, hopeful, naive Alice Barrow. Alice joins many other women in their 20's and 30's who labor in the cotton mills, desiring freedom from overbearing families and tedious farm chores. She appreciates the independence and income she receives, along with friendships and educational opportunities; but she quickly recognizes the health hazards, long days, and other challenges of factory work. In a totally unrealistic turn of events, Alice meets and falls in love with Samuel Fiske, the son of the factory owner; when her co-worker Lovey is murdered, their relationship is put to the test. I found Alice's interactions with Samuel and his family, and that of the various Fisks with each other, poorly written; the Fisks were not well-developed as characters and could have been a novel in and of themselves. I was also annoyed at Alcott's lack of research. She makes too many sloppy mistakes that raise red flags and are easily identified online. For instance, Alice has a worn copy of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetry that belonged to her mother; but Browning's first volume of verse wasn't published until 1838, and "Sonnets From the Portuguese" (which is quoted several times) didn't appear until 1845. Also, the waltz was first exhibited in the U.S. in 1834, so the romantic scene where Alice and Samuel dance to a piano version is totally incorrect. Overall, I felt the book was trite and superficial and didn't live up to its immense potential.

Mafi says

Podia ser tão melhor... fiquei desiludida.

(...)

Quando li que era baseado em acontecimentos reais e em pessoas que aconteceram mesmo, pensava que a protagonista do livro (Alice Barrow) seria então a tal figura que existiu. A verdade é que não, a personagem que não é fisionada é a Lovey, outra personagem que aparece bastante no livro mas não é a figura principal. Ora fiquei um pouco confusa com isto, porque assim a Lovey é que devia ter sido a protagonista porque chega a uma parte em que o livro é só sobre ela e a nota da autora é totalmente dedicada a ela. A autora

preferiu contar a historia da Sarah Conell (figura em que se baseou para escrever a Lovey) mas do ponto de vista de outra pessoa, neste caso do da Alice. Na verdade para mim o livro tem duas protagonistas, a Alice e a Lovey que é uma personagem ausente mas que acaba por ter todo o destaque a partir da metade do livro.

<http://algodaodoceparaocerebro.blogspot.com.br/2011/08/um-livro-que-nao-queria.html>

Maria João says

Adorei. Sem dúvida que terá de vir para a minha estante, provavelmente na próxima feira do livro.

Sim temos romance e alguma lamechice, mas temos muito mais. Temos a descrição de uma época de que pouco se fala, acerca de algo que se fala ainda menos.

Numa escrita corrida sem falsos moralismos a autora consegue nos levar no tempo.

Mal posso esperar por outros desta autora

Muito obrigada pelo empréstimo Verinha

Pam says

I was really hoping for more with this book. I enjoyed the beginning, and looked forward to getting to know the characters better throughout the book, but by the late middle, I was bored. Some of the descriptions of life in the 1830's were very well done, but I also wished that the HISTORICAL part of "historical fiction" was emphasized more, in terms of the characters in the book (the author admits that most of them were made up!)...quite a few scenarios seemed far fetched in this book to say the least, I really don't believe many of the situations would've actually occurred during that time period. The writing style ending up disappointing me as well, too many platitudes that seemed unrealistic - I don't think people really speak or think in platitudes. The end was unclear and unsatisfactory as well. I ended up skimming the last quarter of the book. I am glad I read it, but I wouldn't recommend it.
