

Lovereadng Reader reviews of In Love and War by Alex Preston

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereadng members.

Jane Brown

A fascinating debut book by Alex Preston set in 1930s Florence a this was a great account of fascism, love and war.

This was a great book that was sent to me by Lovereadng and Faber & Faber. This is a beautifully written debut novel set in 1930's in Mussolini's Italy. This was a part of history that I had not read about and found the storyline fascinating from start to finish.

There is so much in this novel: assassination plots, art and letter, spies, espionage and love.

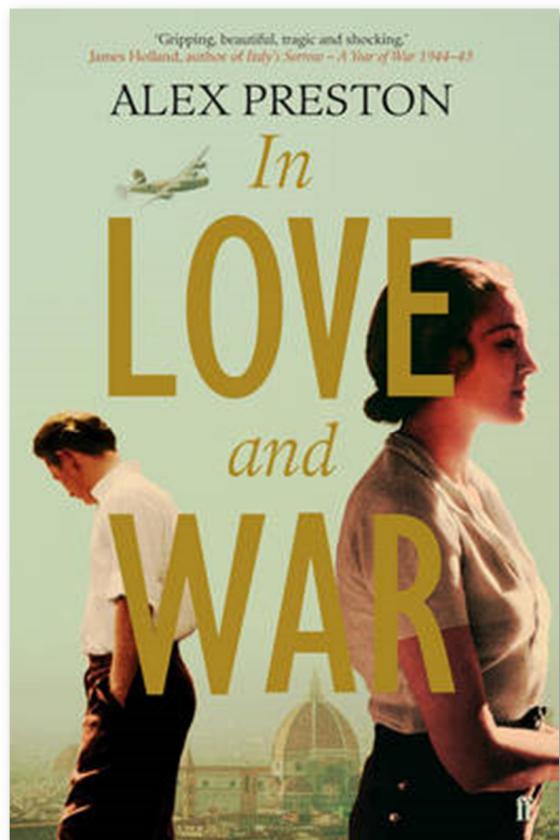
The author created believable characters – the main character Esmond Lowndes is on a plane to Florence being waved off by his parents, both members of the Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists.

Lowndes is in disgrace after his parent's discovery of a homosexual affair at Cambridge is being sent to Italy to promote fascism. He becomes cynical about the whole regime. The story continues with Esmond and his relationship with antifascists.

The author recounts the whole aspect of fascism and is well accounted.

This takes the reader to a part of history that for me I was not familiar with and this has encouraged me to read into this subject further.

I am looking forward to reading more books by this author.



Evelyn Love-Gajardo

When I started this book, I wasn't sure if I was going to like it, but I am so glad I persevered with it. The story is set in Florence between 1937 and 1944, and tells the story of Esmond Lowndes, who is sent there by his father, a supporter of Oswald Mosley, to set up a radio station to promote links with the Italian Fascist movement. The book vividly conveys the time in which it's set and introduces a fascinating cast of characters, some fictional and others who actually existed, who will go on to have greater significance as the story progresses.

Gradually, and for a number of reasons, Esmond loses his belief in Fascism and when war breaks out, becomes involved with the Resistance movement. At the start of the book he is a fairly selfish and privileged young man, but his character develops and by the end of the book he is a hero.

*The story has everything- love, sex, adventure, art - **and by the end I wanted to jump on a plane and go back to Florence, so well does the author describe this beautiful city.** I knew very little about what happened in Florence during the war, and learned a lot from the book. It would make a great film!*

Michelle Hodson

This book was set in a time and place which I knew virtually nothing of and I struggled initially. Some of the topics covered early on I found difficult to cope with. The homosexual affair and 'menage a trois', were fine but the acceptance of paedophilia was tough. I guess the author was trying to convey the type of Brit living in Florence before the outbreak of War and the hedonistic lifestyle and that did come across.

***The characters were wonderfully drawn and I was totally immersed in the life of Esmond and Eva.** The brutality of the Fascists, beauty of Florence and bravery of the Resistance was expertly conveyed. I was rooting for them to the end and thoroughly enjoyed the novel.*

Cathy Petersen

The young son of a right wing English politician struggles to find his own path in Florence in the early years of the Second World War.

I didn't like this as much as I thought I would probably because despite of some very good writing this simply doesn't pack the punch the write up suggests. There are moments of tension, but all the real action seems to have been saved for the end. The bulk of the novel, apart from a few moments here and there, feels like it simply meanders through the early war years with little really happening and even Esmonds change of allegiance feels like a damp squib. The use of letters and cables was interesting but ultimately slowed the pace and interrupted the storytelling. As a gentle read this works and Preston has got a good feel for Florence and Italy at the time, but a thrilling tale it is not.

Stephanie Blakey

***This is an amazing book and unlike anything I've ever read before.** I learnt a huge amount about the role Italy played in the Second World War, something you wouldn't normally think about. It is harrowing in parts but in context - that's how wartime was. I soaked up the descriptive and atmospheric detail of Florence and found myself falling in step with the main character Esmond's heroic and at times tragic journey all the way along. **I was moved to tears and both the story and characters stayed with me once the book was finished.** A great and informative read.*

Glenda Worth

Book based on a gay man who is sent to promote fascism during the years of Mussolini's reign over Italy after his father found out about his homosexual tendencies.

*Based on man sent to Italy in disgrace after a gay affair in UK. His father sends him to set up a radio station to promote fascism and follows his life as he questions fascism and his sexuality. The story weaves around the anti fascists and their efforts to fight for what they believe in. **The author puts forward a strong character in Esmond who falls for a fellow antifascist during their fight for justice.***

Helen Lowry

A story of love, passion, and history set in Florence before and during the second world war.

A novel filled with passion, emotion and history. Esmond is banished to Italy by

his father to escape the shame of an affair at university. He goes to Florence to set up a radio station to unite the Fascists of Europe, especially with war seemingly unavoidable.

Florence becomes the making of him; he meets a diverse, intellectual set of individuals, falls in love and joins the resistance and all that that entails.

I found the writing easy to read, I wasn't too keen on the correspondence chapter, but it did show elements of his character and his family background, including the ties with Oswald Mosley.

I must admit I didn't like the torture scenes but apart from that the descriptions were vivid enough to imagine yourself there.

The ending is not a happy one, but inevitable. However, the book did give me a delightful history lesson of a country and period I didn't know very much about.

A good read that I thoroughly recommend.

Neil Williams

A fine finale in a rather awkward book.

I found this book hard going for the first 2/3rds and engaging for the final third. I almost gave up on it.

The story of Esmonds romantic life and the detail it went in to made everything very flabby, and difficult to find anything in the main character to like. As the plot developed into war time and the the relationships had relevance the characters became far more engaging, although at times ironically I felt that this part of the story sometimes lacked the detail I would have liked.

A strangely unbalanced novel although the concluding chapters were very enjoyable.