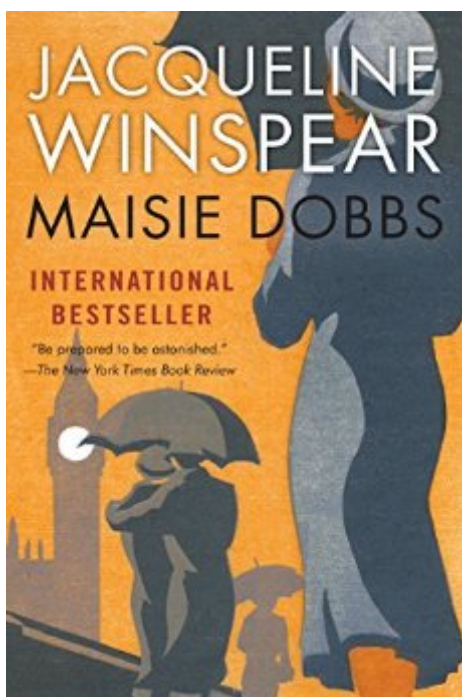


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Maisie Dobbs (Maisie Dobbs Mysteries Series Book 1)



Synopsis

10th Anniversary Edition with a special Afterword by the author Maisie Dobbs got her start as a maid in an aristocratic London household when she was thirteen. Her employer, suffragette Lady Rowan Compton, soon became her patron, taking the remarkably bright youngster under her wing. Lady Rowan's friend, Maurice Blanche, often retained as an investigator by the European elite, recognized Maisie's intuitive gifts and helped her earn admission to the prestigious Girton College in Cambridge, where Maisie planned to complete her education. The outbreak of war changed everything. Maisie trained as a nurse, then left for France to serve at the Front, where she found "and lost" an important part of herself. Ten years after the Armistice, in the spring of 1929, Maisie sets out on her own as a private investigator, one who has learned that coincidences are meaningful, and truth elusive. Her very first case involves suspected infidelity but reveals something very different. In the aftermath of the Great War, a former officer has founded a working farm known as The Retreat, that acts as a convalescent refuge for ex-soldiers too shattered to resume normal life. When Fate brings Maisie a second case involving The Retreat, she must finally confront the ghost that has haunted her for over a decade. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

While "Maisie Dobbs" has been categorized as a novel/mystery, the book actually reads more like a novel (even though there is a mystery at hand, and our heroine is a detective) than it does a 'straight' mystery novel. But this did not stop me from enjoying the book at all. Once Maisie Dobbs was a domestic servant with little expectation of anything else aside from rising within the ranks. However, thanks to the sponsorship of her employer, Lady Rowan Compton, who quickly realised that there was something really special about the thirteen year old, Maisie was given an education. Now, Maisie is a young woman and eager to make her mark; and thanks to the tutorship of Lady Rowan's good friend, Maurice Blanche (a renowned detective himself), Maisie is ready to embark on her first case. Unfortunately, it looks as if her first case is going to be a case of marital infidelity: Mr. Davenham suspects that his much younger wife, Celia, is having an affair; and he wants Maisie to either confirm his worst fears or else refute them. Little does Mr. Davenham realise, however, that Maisie is no ordinary detective. A highly intuitive and empathic young woman, Maisie senses Mr. Davenham's anguish over his wife's alleged infidelity and is resolved to help the Davenhams repair their strained marital bond. Her investigation however leads her to a graveyard, and to a grave marked only with a simple tombstone and a name -- Vincent. A casual search turns up other graves -- all memorialized with tombstones and first names only. Something about the whole thing awakens Maisie's misgivings, and trusting her instincts she decides to widen her investigation, never dreaming just how much this investigation will affect her...

Never much of a mystery reader, in the last number of years I have been introduced to two wonderful female detectives of sorts. One was Fremont Jones, a private detective based in San Francisco at the turn of the century and the heroine of a series written by Dianne Day. The other was Mma Ramotswe from the Alexander McCall Smith mystery series set in Botswana, Africa. While I enjoyed the mystery angles of both series, it was the women and their personalities, the geographical areas where they lived and the historical times which intrigued me so greatly. And as much as I loved these books, I remember thinking that I most likely would never find another female character from this genre who would appeal to me in quite the same way. But then I didn't know that very shortly I would meet up with the most intriguing character of all, one Maisie Dobbs from the book with the same title by Jacqueline Winspear. And as I said in the title of this review, I just know this is the beginning of a wonderful friendship. We first meet Maisie Dobbs in 1929 when she is moving into her first office in London. A private detective, Maisie has been tutored and apprenticed by a Dr. Maurice Blanche who is highly regarded in London's social circles. Her first case seems

rather ordinary when a man suspects his wife of cheating on him. Following the woman in question, Maisie finds a lady mourning a childhood friend killed during W.W.I. But more than that Maisie also uncovers a rather sinister plot involving a farmhouse used as a retreat for men unable to rejoin society. Called the Retreat it holds the answer to why certain war heroes met untimely deaths while living at the Retreat.

Fans of Maisie Dobbs will delight in this addition to the series, and those who are new to her have a treat in store. All these mysteries take place in the aftermath of World War I, this one occurring between September and October, 1930. Maisie is a survivor, having enlisted, at seventeen, in the nursing corps, where she served in France in the final, horrific days of the war. A terrible attack, which killed many of the doctors, nurses, and soldiers where she was working, has left her suffering nightmares more than ten years later. Now working as a psychologist/investigator in London, Maisie stays busy to avoid dealing with her demons. Three mysteries unfold simultaneously. Avril Jarvis, age 13, is arrested for the murder of her "uncle" when she is found with a knife in her hand and blood on her clothes. Penniless, she has no counsel until Maisie takes a case involving Sir Cecil Lawton, whom she persuades to represent Avril as part of her fee. Sir Cecil's son Ralph disappeared during the war in France, and his wife, believing him still alive, has exacted a deathbed promise that Sir Cecil will search for him. In addition, one of Maisie's friends from the Ambulance Corps, now married to a wealthy author in France, has begged her to try to find where the third of her brothers died and was buried in France. The horrors of World War I pervade the novel, and when Maisie goes to France, these horrors come alive, for both the reader and for Maisie, as she learns she must "slay her dragons" at last.

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