



Foal's bread

By Gillian Mears

First published in 2011

Genre & subject

Historical fiction

Australian fiction

Families

Synopsis

Set in hardscrabble farming country and around the country show high-jumping circuit that prevailed in rural New South Wales prior to the Second World War, *Foal's Bread* tells the story of two generations of the Nancarrow family and their fortunes as dictated by the vicissitudes of the land.

It is a love story of impossible beauty and sadness, a chronicle of dreams 'turned inside out', and miracles that never last, framed against a world both tender and unspeakably hard. Written in luminous prose and with an aching affinity for the landscape the book describes, *Foal's Bread* is the work of a born writer at the height of her considerable powers. It is a stunning work of remarkable originality and power, one that confirms Gillian Mears' reputation as one of our most exciting and acclaimed writers.

Author biography

Mears was raised in Grafton, New South Wales where she was school dux of Grafton High School.

She moved to Sydney to study at university, beginning a degree in archaeology at the University of Sydney having been inspired to pursue a career in archaeology after reading *Gods, Graves and Scholars* by C. W. Ceram. At the age of 18, she withdrew from the course, and instead completed a degree in communications at University of Technology, Sydney.

She lived then near Grafton, New South Wales. She died in May 2016 after living with multiple sclerosis for seventeen years.

Discussion starters

- How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"?
- Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities.
- Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book?
- Discuss the plot, is it engaging—do you find the story interesting?
- Talk about the book's structure. Why might the author have chosen to tell the story the way he or she did?
- What difference does the structure make in the way you read or understand the book?

- What main ideas—themes—does the author explore?
- Does the author use symbols to reinforce the main ideas?
- What passages strike you as insightful, even profound?
- Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?
- If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask?
- Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?

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