

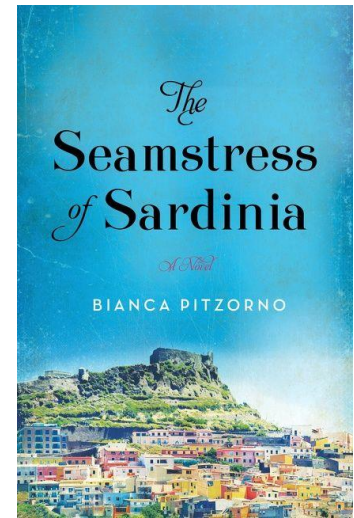
The Seamstress of Sardinia

Harper Perennial

By Bianca Pitzorno
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Introduction

In 1900 Sardinia, a young woman's remarkable talent with a needle earns her a position as a seamstress with a wealthy family. Inside this privileged world far different from her own humble beginnings, the skilled sewer quietly takes measurements, sketches designs, mends hems—and in the silence, hears whispered secrets and stories of all those around her.



Through the watchful young seamstress's eyes, this small Italian city and its residents emerge in all their vitality, vanity, and fragility—flawed yet congenial people who are not quite what they pretend to be. There is the Marchesa Esther, who rides horses and studies mechanics and ancient Greek; Miss Lily Rose, a spirited American journalist who commissions a special corset—with pockets to hide more than just her flaws; the Provera sisters with their expensive Parisian fashions that belie their financial hardships; and Assuntina, the wild child. There are men, young, old, and in between; love affairs and broken hearts; and even a murder (or was it suicide?). And at the center, watching and waiting is the seamstress herself, an intelligent, ambitious girl with a tender heart and her own impossible dream.

An irresistible literary confection rich in atmosphere and period detail and packed with compelling characters. *The Seamstress of Sardinia* transports us to a long-ago world not so removed from our own—to a society rigidly divided by wealth and shaped by passion, hope, ambition, and love—the elemental forces that drive human lives.

Questions for Discussion

1. In *The Seamstress of Sardinia*, the wealthy men have power over women. Or do they? In what way does our heroine turn that truism on its head?
2. Discuss the ways in which our heroine uses her “lesser” class to infiltrate the lives of other residents more seemingly fortunate than she?
3. Which of the characters “serviced” by the seamstress is your favorite? Why?
4. Would you describe the heroine as naïve? Savvy? Frightened? Or something else? Discuss.
5. While there is a bit of frothiness in this book—the discussions of clothes are delicious!—there are also more serious themes. What are those themes and how do you relate to them?