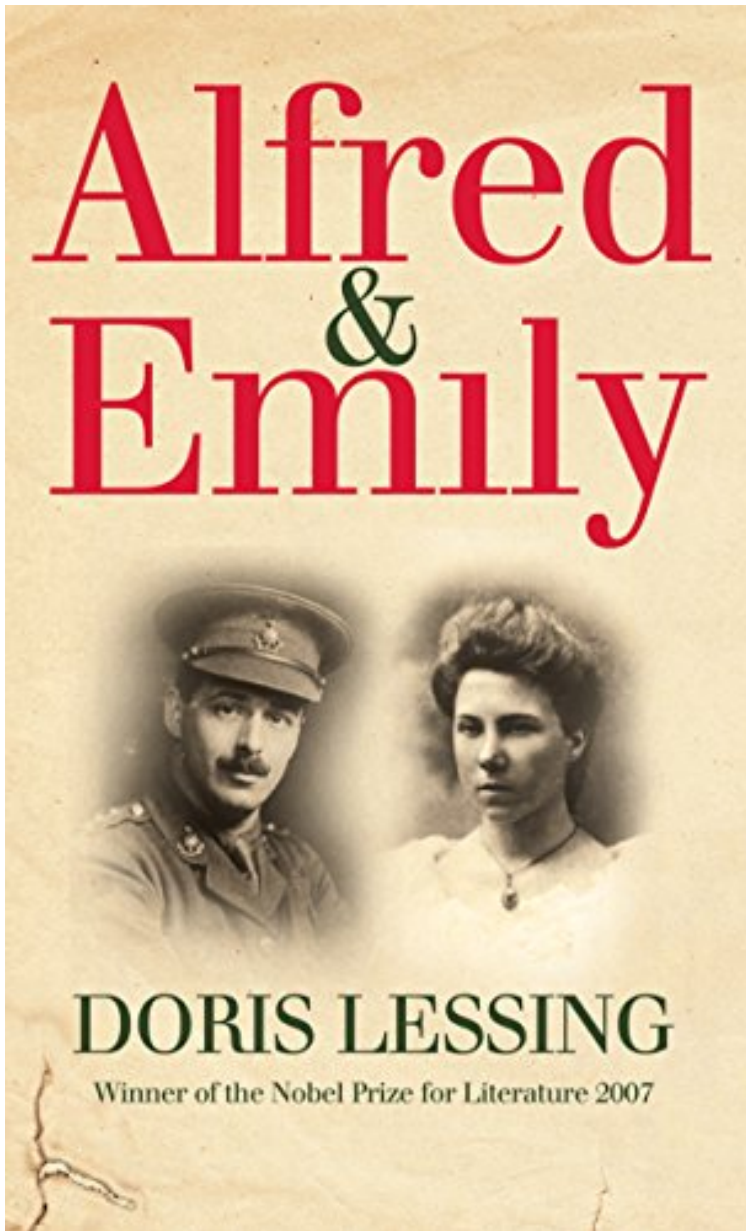


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# Alfred and Emily



*Par Doris Lessing*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurDoris Lessings first book after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature revisits her childhood in Southern Africa and the lives, both fictional and factual, that her parents led.I think my father's rage at the trenches took me over, when I was very young, and has never left me. Do children feel their parents' emotions? Yes, we do, and it is a legacy I could have done without. What is the use of it? It is as if that old war is in my own memory, my own consciousness.In this extraordinary book, Doris Lessing explores the lives of her parents, both of them irrevocably damaged by the Great War. Her father wanted the

simple life of an English farmer, but shrapnel almost killed him in the trenches, and thereafter he had to wear a wooden leg. Her mother Emily's great love was a doctor who drowned in the Channel, and she spent the war nursing the wounded in the Royal Free Hospital. In the first half of this book, Lessing imagines the lives her parents might have made for themselves had there been no war, a story that has them meeting at a village cricket match as children but leading separate lives. This is followed by a piercing examination of their lives as they actually came to be in the shadow of that war, their move to Rhodesia, a damaged couple hulking over Lessing's childhood in a strange land. Here I still am, says Doris Lessing, trying to get out from under that monstrous legacy, trying to get free. From Publishers Weekly

The 2007 Nobel Prize in literature was a bloody disaster for Lessing, she recently told the BBC. This curious work half fiction, half memoir, hampered by slapdash prose and an unfocused organization may be the result of that unsettling time, when she said she didn't have the energy to write a full novel. The opening novella (the longer of the two pieces) is what might have become of her parents, Alfred Tayler and Emily McVeagh, if they had never married. The sluggish account of their parallel lives is notable mainly for Lessing's commentary on the changing economic, social and cultural mores in England before and after WWI. The second section is a rambling series of recollections that describe the family's failed farm in Southern Rhodesia. Lessing describes her mother's dominating personality, attributing her mother's smothering attention to her frustration at having given up a successful wartime nursing career and a vital social life to raise a family. Lessing's longtime readers will find little new in her autobiographical disclosures, and new readers will look in vain for the talent that won the Nobel. 11 bw photos. (Aug.) "Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved." "Revue de presse An intriguing work . . . [that] shimmers with precisely remembered details. (Michiko Kakutani, New York Times) An odd and powerful excursion into lost time. . . . a powerful reminder not only of Lessing's past but also of how each of us can return to our own and come back with something precious. (San Francisco Chronicle Book ) Alfred and Emily reveals why Lessing deserved literature's highest honor. There is a remarkable level of courage, honesty, and wisdom in Alfred and Emily. . . . Lessing, nearing 90, continues to surprise. (USA Today) A stirring exploration . . . gently yet deeply moving (Minneapolis Star Tribune) She has never displayed her potent imagination to better effect, or her gift for probing realism . . . a profoundly moving memoir and portrait of a marriage. (Wall Street Journal) A clever, moving coupling of fiction and nonfiction. ALFRED EMILY is... a testament to [Lessing's] ongoing literary vitality. (Washington Post Book World) Lessing's taste for discomfiting truths is as evident as ever as bracing and engaging as anything she has written. (Kirkus ) Laced with the subtlest of observations and the wryest of wit... This unusual marriage of fiction and memoir (and family photographs) results in a book at once spellbinding, rueful, and tragic. (Booklist (starred review)) A truly intriguing piece of work... the book is also an interesting glimpse of an empire and an era. (Christian Science Monitor)