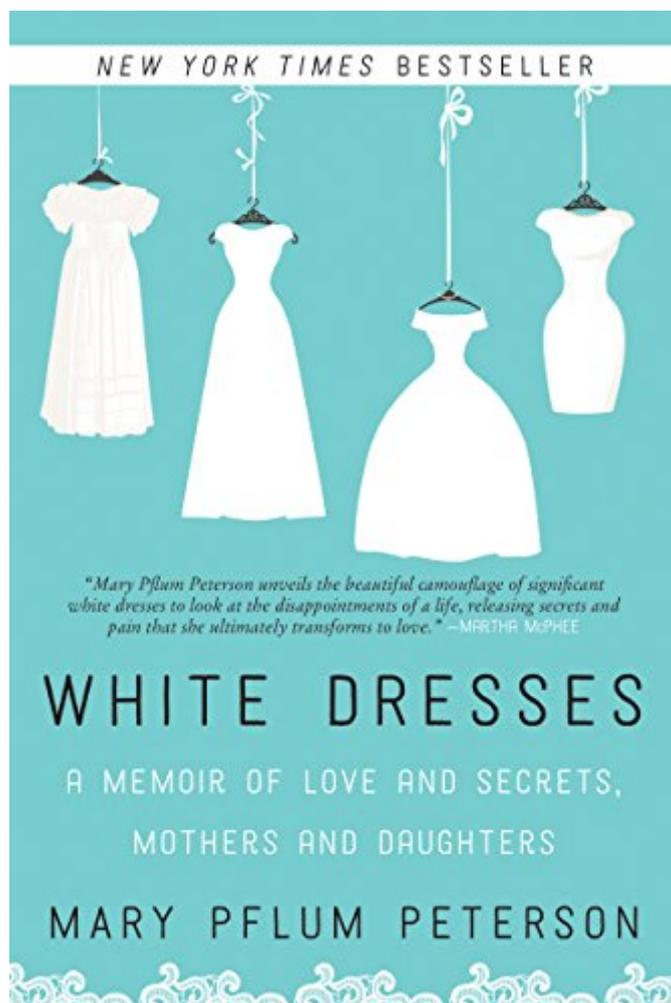


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# White Dresses: A Memoir Of Love And Secrets, Mothers And Daughters



## Synopsis

In this riveting, poignant memoir of three generations of women and the white dresses that adorned them, television producer Mary Pflum Peterson recounts a journey through loss and redemption, and her battle to rescue her mother, a former nun, from compulsive hoarding. As a successful television journalist at Good Morning America, Mary Pflum is known as a polished and highly organized producer. It's a persona at odds with her tortured childhood, where she watched her emotionally vulnerable mother fill their house with teetering piles of assorted treasures. But one thing has always united mother and daughter—their love of white dresses. From the dress worn by Mary's mother when she became a nun and married Jesus, to the wedding gown she donned years later, to the special nightshirts she gifted Mary after the birth of her children, to graduation dresses and christening gowns, these white dresses embodied hope and new beginnings. After her mother's sudden death in 2010, Mary digs deep to understand the events that led to Anne's unraveling. At twenty-one, Anne entered a convent, committed to a life of prayer and helping others. But lengthy periods of enforced fasting, isolation from her beloved students, and constant humiliation eventually drove her to flee the convent almost a decade later. Hoping to find new purpose as a wife and mother, Anne instead married an abusive, closeted gay man—their eventual divorce another sign of her failure. Anne retreats into chaos. By the time Mary is ten, their house is cluttered with broken appliances and stacks of unopened mail. Anne promises but fails to clean up for Mary's high school graduation party, where Mary is being honored as her school's valedictorian, causing her perfectionist daughter's fear and shame to grow in tandem with the heaps upon heaps of junk. In spite of everything, their bond endures. Through the white dresses, pivotal events in their lives are celebrated, even as Mary tries in vain to save Anne from herself. Unflinchingly honest, insightful, and compelling, *White Dresses* is a beautiful, powerful story and a reminder of the unbreakable bonds between mothers and daughters.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads. This book was an interesting journey of 3 connected lives chronologically detailed; Mary's grandmother, Mary's mother and Mary herself. I liked how the author, Mary, started each chapter with a glimpse as to what is to come within that time period by providing a written letter type of dialogue. These ladies have gone through things in their lives that I can only imagine what it was like. This is the first time I have read a memoir and I liked how the book flowed. I felt like I was actually walking along as a spectator throughout time as I read on in this book. It's interesting to see how people are who they are from their experiences. I was a bit skeptical about the whole "white is pure" thing. Still am, but I understand how she got to feel this way. It makes me sad. Overall, the book was a good read and I would recommend it.

I was riveted to this story of heartbreak and mental illness. Perhaps that should make me feel guilty, but Mary Pflum Peterson weaves a narrative that is so compelling I hated to put it down. Despite its troubling subject, the memoir is never far from hope and redemption. Her mother's story begins decades ago, when every Catholic family wanted at least one daughter to become a nun. But, how does a highly intelligent and sensitive young woman, like Pflum's mother, make peace with her family's desire and her own heart's desire? There was a mental and emotional toll. This is what catches and holds the reader. By using her mother's love of white dresses as a frame, Pflum beautifully unveils a lifetime of challenges that led her mother to become a hoarder. What fascinated me is how much grace and love her mother showed to those she held dear, despite a life that would have driven a lesser woman to only bitterness and hate. This book was engaging to the end; ultimately, it is a beautiful testament to the love and devotion of mother and daughter.

The BEST memoir I have read in years! *White Dresses* is a moving memoir detailing the tangled lives of a mother, daughter and those from generations past. The author, Mary Pflum Peterson's voice is compassionate and honorable of her beloved late mother. As the book unfolds, the harrowing grips of her mother's emerging mental illness leaves Pflum Peterson struggling to understand and save her. I applaud the author for her resilient strength. She perseveres as a highly accomplished woman sharing her story, not only in honor of her mother, but I suspect to finally come to terms with the past and heal generations to come. My top book recommendation to family, friends and those struggling to understand the ravaging effects of mental illness!!!!

I am a hoarder, the child of hoarders, and this spoke to me as nothing else has. This may provide the impetus to turn things around if anything can. It's a gripping read.

I loved this book on so many levels. First of all, it's a compelling story of several generations of women all connected by the white dresses from all the significant life events they experienced. It took me back to all the white dresses in my life and what they meant to me at the time. For example, I hadn't thought about the white dress I made for my high school graduation in years. There was so much drama around that dress which reflected what was happening with my life at the time. Mary's story made me realize in a unique way how far I've come since that difficult time. Second, it's an open honest look into the challenges that each generation faced told in such a relatable way that you can't help but feel connected. I saw snippets of my own life reflected in so many of Mary's family especially in the stories of her mother growing up as the oldest child. I admire the bravery of sharing the details of her mother's hoarding, something my own family has had to deal with. I greatly admire the courage it took to reveal the impact on her and her family. It's a fascinating read for women in general even if they personally have not experienced some of the problems that Mary's family dealt with through the generations. I have recommended it to my friends who just want to read an inspiring story about the deep connections between mothers and daughters.

I was very excited about this book after reading the reviews. In the beginning I was a little confused - the author focuses on her mother and grandmother - but the wording was a little weird at times. BUT once I got past the first couple of chapters and realized that this book was going to be a very detailed insight into the mind of the author's mother, I settled in and became lost in the story. It is very easy to empathize for the author - and she draws a clear picture of what life with her mother

was like - in such a way that you can really find yourself understanding BOTH sides of the story - which can be hard to do. There was a point about half way through where things got a bit bland, but I am glad I finished it because it was a great, great read.

Revelatory about Catholicism and convents, Midwestern values, and illness of hoarding. But much too long, too many details about author, and self-referential to extreme. Many subjects must have been appalled to find themselves so revealed.

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