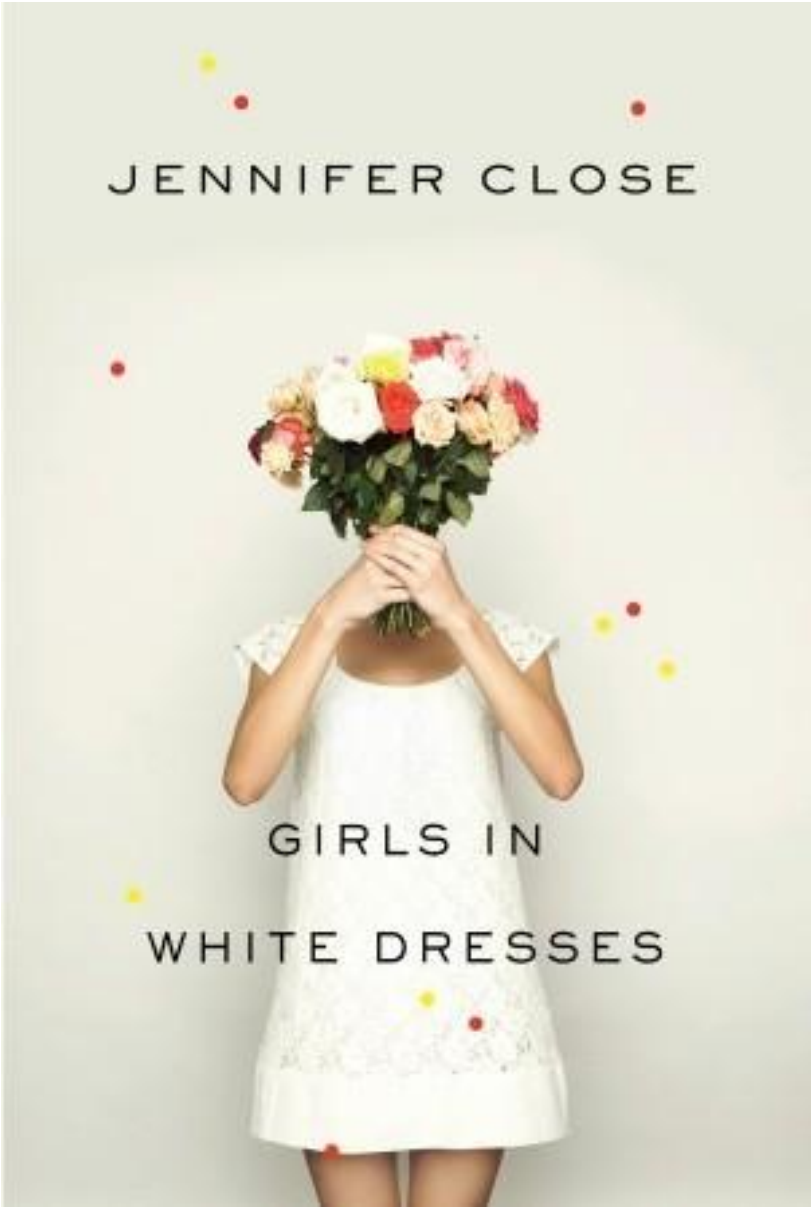


About the book



Author Jennifer Close's Girls in White Dresses is the story of three New York City girlfriends trapped in a seemingly never-ending loop of bridal showers and weddings as nearly all their friends take the plunge. At the same time, each woman is also forced to deal with a myriad of personal troubles. Isabella, who works for a mailing-list company, struggles with the stress of a busy workday and an overly demanding boss. Mary, who is a lawyer, has to try to juggle her kids, her job, and her needy husband. Lauren, who is a waitress, is determined not to fall in love with a bartender--even though he's both handsome and talented.

-Books & Authors

About the Author



Jennifer Close was born and raised on the North Shore of Chicago. She is a graduate of Boston College and received her MFA in Fiction Writing from The New School in 2005. She worked in New York in magazines for many years and then in Washington, D.C., as a

bookseller. *Girls in White Dresses* is her first book. (*From the publisher.*)

Writings

- [*The Smart One*](#), coming 2013

Reviews

Library Journal

Isabella, Mary, and Lauren are three friends in New York City navigating relationships, careers, early adulthood, and other people's weddings. Lauren is a real-estate agent who meets a man who could be Mr. Right--or a sociopath. Isabella is an assistant at a publishing house who suffers through a bad relationship, then meets a man who seems perfect until he asks her to move to Boston with him. Mary is a serious lawyer, married with two kids, whose husband is a perennial mama's boy incapable of grocery shopping on his own. Mixed in with the trials and tribulations of the protagonists are humorous vignettes from the lives of

some of their other friends and acquaintances-many of whom are on their way to the altar or trying to find a way to get there. VERDICT This series of linked short stories is reminiscent of Melissa Bank's *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing*. It is modern and funny, with original, wry observations. Close's debut novel will appeal to both fans of contemporary women's fiction with a hip vibe and readers who enjoy old-school chick lit. [See Prepub Alert, 2/14/11.]-Karen Core, Detroit P.L.

Booklist

Isabella, Mary, and Lauren are quickly realizing that the postcollege years aren't a parade of guaranteed, life-altering changes. Invited to a dizzying array of bachelorette parties, weddings, and showers both baby and bridal, the three get the sense that the adult world only applies to their acquaintances. After seeing each other through disastrous blind dates, unfulfilling career choices, and tense family holidays, they comfort themselves with the small victories of singledom. *Girls in White Dresses* is genuinely empathic, and Close brings a tender sense of humor to each of the episodic chapters. With a voice similar to those of Melissa Banks and Cindy Guidry, Close's novel expresses the perfect blend of midtwenties angst, collegiate nostalgia, and plentiful laughter. With different chapters narrated by each protagonist and some of their close friends, the novel is richly satisfying. Anyone who has attended a bridal shower while incredibly hungover, rolled her eyes at another gift-wrapped Onesie, or heard the phrase "It's MY day" too often to count will love this touching portrait of female friendship.--Stephanie Turza

Publisher's Weekly

Artfully spare prose adds a literary tinge to the chick lit staples--navigating relationships, bridesmaid duties, disappointing first jobs--explored in Close's debut collection. At their weakest, the stories owe too much to their predecessors: "The Showers," in which the recurring characters travel to a suburban bridal shower, is essentially a retelling of a snappier Sex and the City episode, and Isabella's boss in "Blind" has the dark shades of *The Devil Wears Prada*. The standout moments come in "The Peahens," when Abby reveals her unusual family and her struggle to fit in (she "studied hard, taking notes on the silver link bracelets all the girls wore"), and the sharp "Hope," when Shannon takes a backseat to her boyfriend's naive political passion for "the Candidate" of a presidential campaign. Occasionally funny (as when Isabella refers to her dinner dates as "parallel eating"), but without the risk taking of *The Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing* or the deeply explored emotion of *Prep*, these stories will resonate with readers in the throes of the quarter-life churn who can see themselves in the cast. (Aug.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved

Kirkus Reviews

Three young women and their friends navigate the tricky world of big-city adulthood after graduation.

Mary, Isabella and Lauren-the trio at the heart of this low-key coming-of-age-might not want to change the world,

but they do hunger for lives more interesting than the marriage-and-babies routine that seems to have captured all their former schoolmates. Their story is told in a series of loosely connected chapters. The girls move to New York, fall for unworthy boys, find (and lose) jobs, all while attending an awful lot of weddings and bridal showers. Insecure wit Isabella comes from a big family and takes a dead-end position at a mailing-list company where she can go to work hungover, while Mary focuses on getting a law degree. Isabella and Mary share a tiny Manhattan apartment, prompting Isabella's little suburban niece to wonder aloud if Auntie Iz is poor. Party-girl Lauren works as a waitress and begins sleeping with a "dirty sexy" bartender at her restaurant, before discovering a talent for selling real estate. Mary passes the bar and gets a job at a law firm where she has to work until 9 p.m. just to keep up. And after a string of disappointments, Isabella meets Harrison (not Harry), a catch so appealing she fully expects she will screw it up during an especially challenging ski vacation. There is more, naturally, for the girls as they try to figure out who they are and what they really want, and their friendship evolves accordingly. With a light touch and utterly believable characters, Close's modestly appealing debut manages to capture the humor, heartache and cautious optimism of her protagonists.

Wryly funny sketches of life in one's 20s.

Discussion questions (www.litlovers.com/)

1. Which character did you relate to most closely, and why?

2. How does Close use humor to convey character? Are the women themselves funny, or the situations they find themselves in?
3. Ambivalence—toward jobs, men, apartments, and children—is a recurring theme in *Girls in White Dresses*. Why do you think that is?
4. What did Isabella learn from Jon Benét?
5. Several of the characters keep some pretty big secrets, such as the way Abby keeps her friends away from her hippy parents. How does this affect Abby's life? How do the book's other secrets affect the characters?
6. What is the metaphor of the peahen?
7. On page 98, Isabella thinks about her young nephew, Connor, "All he wanted was to know what to expect. His world didn't look like he'd thought it would, and she understood. How could he keep calm if he couldn't see?" Who else does this describe?
8. Why does "the ham" become so significant for Lauren?
9. Mary wonders why nobody warned her that during her first year as a lawyer, "You will be constantly afraid." (page 120) What role does fear play in the women's lives?
10. "Kristi and Todd stood with their shoulders touching, wrapped in the cloth. It reminded Isabella of the way that Lauren and Kristi used to huddle together, whispering and laughing at jokes that only they understood." (page 174) Why does Isabella get so emotional during the "chuppah within a chuppah" wedding scene?

11. Connect the dots between Shannon, Dan, Barack Obama, and the contestants on "The Biggest Loser." Why is hope so important?
12. Throughout the book, questions of identity pop up. For example, when a friend gets divorced and decides to keep her married name, Isabella thinks it may be because, "She's afraid no one will remember who she is." (page 249) How do these characters determine who they are? By the end, who seems to have created the strongest sense of self?
13. What is the turning point for Isabella in her relationship with Harrison?
14. Why is Lauren ready to call the turtle Mark gives her Rudy, when she wouldn't use that name for the goldfish?
15. Discuss the last scene. How have the women changed over the course of the book? Who is the most satisfied with her life?
16. Where do you imagine Isabella, Mary, and Lauren will be in five years?
(*Questions issued by publisher.*)

Read-Alikes

Candace Bushnell, [*Sex and the City*](#) (2002)

Author Candace Bushnell and her alter ego Carrie discuss the glamorous and driven members of Manhattan's elite social set, whose world is populated by successful people on the prowl. *Sex and the City* is a compilation of

Bushnell's columns from the *New York Observer*, a collection that both highlights the excesses of the elite and defines the personae (the modelizer, the toxic bachelor) one is likely to encounter. For all the emphasis on glamour, money, and sex, Bushnell points out that the one thing women are looking for is the perfect spouse, one who is equally trendy and glamorous, but a husband nonetheless.

Joanna Rakoff, [*A Fortunate Age*](#) (2009)

A Fortunate Age is a novel about a group of Oberlin College graduates who are just starting their lives in New York City in the early 21st century. Sadie Peregrine is an up-and-coming book editor who seeks a balance between her personal and professional lives. Emily is a talented but starving actress who seems to be going through a bit of bad luck. Beth is an aspiring English professor who is still in love with her ex-boyfriend Dave, a piano virtuoso and struggling musician. Lil is a scholar battling with depression. Only Tal seems to have his life in order, working as a successful actor. The group struggles to maintain their friendship during the most tumultuous time in their lives.

Lauren Weisberger, [*The Devil Wears Prada*](#) (2003)

Young Andrea Sachs accepts a promising editorial assistant's job right out of college, hoping to parlay it into a spot at *The New Yorker* within a year. However, keeping up with the inane demands of her boss, Miranda Priestly, editor-in-chief of *Runway* magazine, proves more

wrenching than Andrea could ever have imagined, and she begins to wonder if it's really worth it.

Susan Lyons, *Love, Unexpectedly* (2010)

In *Love, Unexpectedly* by Susan Fox, two friends take a train ride that leads them on a romantic journey. Kat Fallon, still single at 31, needs a date to her sister's Vancouver wedding. Her friend, Nav Bharani, is more than eager to accompany her. When Nav learns that Kat--his longtime crush--likes the mystery of encountering strangers while traveling, he devises a plan to finally make his feelings known. As the train makes its way through Canada, Nav introduces himself again and again to Kat in a different disguise each time. Surprised and captivated by Nav's performances, Kat must decide if their friendship could lead to romance.

Katie Fforde, [*Wedding Season*](#) (2008)

In *Wedding Season* by Katie Fforde, two weddings strain the skills and friendship of three single women. Sarah, a professional wedding planner, has been hired to handle all the details of a movie star's big day. With help from friends Elsa, a seamstress, and Bron, a hair stylist, Sarah is confident that she can please her client. That is, until Sarah's overbearing sister announces her pregnancy and plans for a last-minute wedding. With two ceremonies and receptions to plan within a tight time frame, Sarah, Elsa, and Bron must work together.

Jennifer Chiaverini, [*The Wedding Quilt*](#) (2011)

The Wedding Quilt is a novel from author Jennifer Chiaverini's Elm Creek Quilts series. Sarah McClure first came to Elm Creek after her wedding, and from then on her time was spent learning to quilt under the tutelage of master quilter Sylvia Bergstrom Compson. Once Sarah had mastered the art of quilting herself, she opened Elm Creek Quilts. Now it is time for Sarah's own daughter to get married, and Sarah learns that wedding quilts are doubly special. As she works to create the perfect quilt for her daughter, Sarah thinks about the importance of family and of friendship, and how like the blocks of a quilt, each person is sewn into one's life to form a cohesive piece. Chiaverini is also the author of *The Quilter's Kitchen* and *The Aloha Quilt*.

Jennifer Weiner, [*Then Came You*](#) (2011)

In *Then Came You* by Jennifer Weiner, a surrogate pregnancy affects the lives of four women. It is no secret that India Bishop married Marcus Croft because he is rich. When their union fails to produce a pregnancy, India hires a surrogate mother--Annie Barrow (a mother of two), and an egg donor--Jules Wildgren (an Ivy League student). Both are in desperate financial straits. Bettina, India's stepdaughter, is opposed to the plan. When baby Aurora arrives, each woman reacts differently. Bettina is most surprised by her new role when Marcus dies unexpectedly and leaves a surprising stipulation in his will.

Watch-Alikes

[*Sex and the City: TV Series*](#) (1998 – 2004)

[*Sex and the City Movie*](#) (2008)

[*Sex and the City 2*](#) (2010)

A sensuous and ironic sitcom about four young, desirable, virtually inseparable New York bachelorettes who lead and confide in each-other their ever changing and confusing sex lives, as different as their natures. Carrie Bradshaw is a charming petite columnist, and often the narrator of the story, either writing her copy or off screen, constantly tossing up and rejecting different views on just about anything that does or might impact modern women's sex lives; she tries almost everything, is constantly disappointed, but always seems to return to a certain Mr. Big. Miranda Hobbes is a red-hair lawyer determined to score professionally and to be tough in love to, yet her only faithful lover is an insecure nerd. Charlotte York is a gallery-managing wasp from a prestigious, super-rich family, with high old-fashioned moral standards for her lovable but insecure self but unfortunately almost impossible to live up to for any lover, whenever she can find a socially acceptable one. Samantha Jones is every feminist's hero, and the utterly unashamed voice of lust at their meetings: an acclaimed PR agent and unstoppable nymphomaniac man-eater who can flirt the pants off almost any man (often literally and fast) and always feels like more, without a hint of commitment, claiming this is the age for woman to do what men always did to them. – KGF Vissers via IMDB

[*Mansfield Park*](#) (2000)

This fun and sexy comedy tells a timelessly entertaining story where wealth, secret passions and mischievous women put love to the test...with delightfully surprising results! When a spirited young woman, Fanny Price, is sent away to live on the great country estate of her rich cousins, she's meant to learn the ways of proper society. But while Fanny learns "their" ways, she also enlightens them with a wit and sparkle all her own! Featuring an exciting ensemble cast of young stars – you'll join critics everywhere in their overwhelming praise of this smart, playful and funny hit!

[All About Steve](#) (2009)

Crossword puzzle constructor Mary Horowitz is smart and pretty, but a disaster that shakes news cameraman Steve to the core. Set up on a blind date with Steve, Mary thinks the chemistry is undeniable and just knows she's found her soulmate. She decides to do anything and go anywhere to be with him. Mary's escalating infatuation is encouraged by the self-serving actions of news reporter Hartman Hughes who enjoys torturing his insolent cameraman at every opportunity. When the overzealous Mary becomes embroiled in the news story of the year, Steve and Hartman begin to see her differently.

[How I Met Your Mother](#) TV Series (2005 – present)

A love story in reverse: 'How I Met Your Mother' is a comedy about Ted and how he fell in love. When Ted's best friends Marshall and Lily decide to tie the knot, it

sparks the search for his own Miss Right. Helping him in his quest is his bar-hopping “wing-man” Barney, a confirmed bachelor with plenty of wild schemes for picking up women. Ted’s sights are set on the charming and independent Robin, but destiny may have something different in mind. Told through a series of flashbacks, Ted recalls his single days, the highs and lows of dating and the search for true love.

[The Mary Tyler Moore Show](#) (1970)

Join all of your favorites in the WJM-TV newsroom for the hilarious, heartfelt comedy classic that turned the world on with a smile. It’s time to share the love, the lunacy, and the laughter with all of the gang in this timeless, Emmy Award-winning classic.

Listen-Alikes

- She & Him, '[Volume One](#)' (2008)
- First Aid Kit, '[Big Black and the Blue](#)' (2010)
- Alicia Keys, '[Girl on Fire](#)' (2012)
- Pink, '[I’m Not Dead](#)' (2006)



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