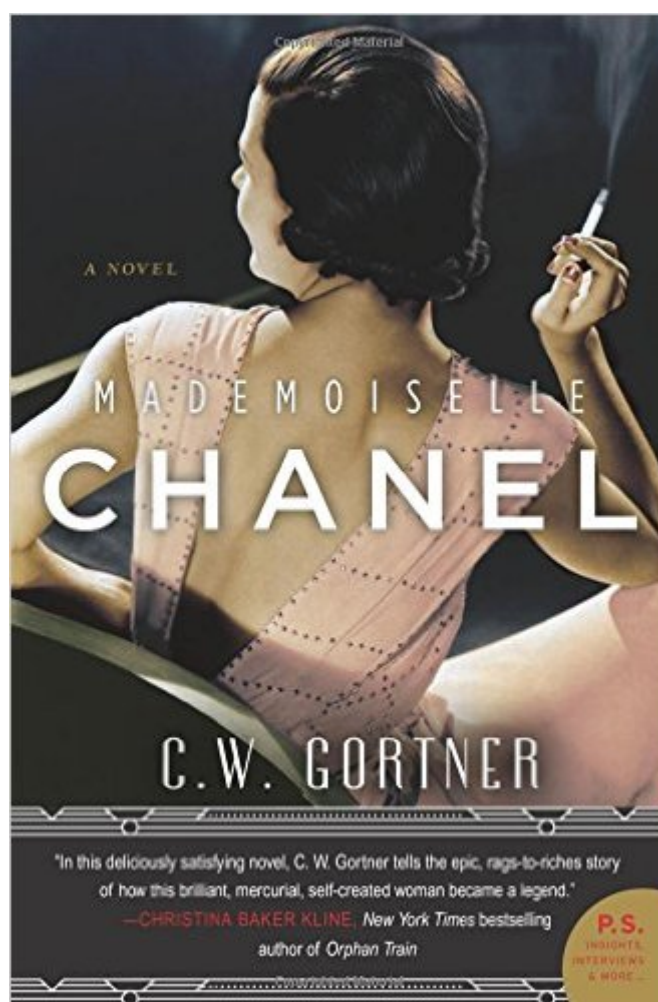


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Mademoiselle Chanel: A Novel



Synopsis

For readers of *The Paris Wife* and *Z* comes this vivid novel full of drama, passion, tragedy, and beauty that stunningly imagines the life of iconic fashion designer Coco Chanel—the ambitious, gifted laundrywoman's daughter who revolutionized fashion, built an international empire, and become one of the most influential and controversial figures of the twentieth century. Born into rural poverty, Gabrielle Chanel and her siblings are sent to orphanage after their mother's death. The sisters nurture Gabrielle's exceptional sewing skills, a talent that will propel the willful young woman into a life far removed from the drudgery of her childhood. Transforming herself into Coco—a seamstress and sometime torch singer—the petite brunette burns with ambition, an incandescence that draws a wealthy gentleman who will become the love of her life. She immerses herself in his world of money and luxury, discovering a freedom that sparks her creativity. But it is only when her lover takes her to Paris that Coco discovers her destiny. Rejecting the frilly, corseted silhouette of the past, her sleek, minimalist styles reflect the youthful ease and confidence of the 1920s modern woman. As Coco's reputation spreads, her couturier business explodes, taking her into rarefied society circles and bohemian salons. But her fame and fortune cannot save her from heartbreak as the years pass. And when Paris falls to the Nazis, Coco is forced to make choices that will haunt her. An enthralling novel of an extraordinary woman who created the life she desired, *Mademoiselle Chanel* explores the inner world of a woman of staggering ambition whose strength, passion and artistic vision would become her trademark.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've watched two different movies about Coco now. I've had the same complaint about each one.... They show us her childhood quickly--her growing up an orphan in a nunnery, her talent for sewing increasing each day. Then we'll see her singing in a bar, sewing for a cheap shrew nearly in exchange for room and board. Then it introduces us to her first lover, the wealthy horseman, who let her make hats in his home and introduced her to her second lover, Boy. And Boy comes and sweeps her off her feet and then...he dies. And perhaps the movie will show Coco designing a line of clothes after that and yet, that's it. The movie, and with it, her story, ends. As if that was all there was to Coco--her love with Boy, her loss of him, and oh, a few clothes. There was so much more to Coco and C.W. Gortner shows us that. He goes far beyond the death of Boy. When Boy passes on, it's only halfway through the novel, that's how much Gortner gives us of Coco, the woman, the designer, the lover, the spy. We see her as a daughter, then an orphan who loves to read and sew and feels slighted by her remaining family members, abandoned. Then we live with Coco as young woman working for a pittance, singing, debating whether she wants to take a lover or not. Lover Coco wonders why she doesn't feel the way others do. Marriage and children do not appeal. She wants to be independent and she makes this happen through persistence and hard work. We love Boy with her and feel her frustration at the things he does. We travel all over France with her as she renovates houses and designs clothes, introduces the little black dress, battles over a perfume contract, mourns, takes lovers.

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