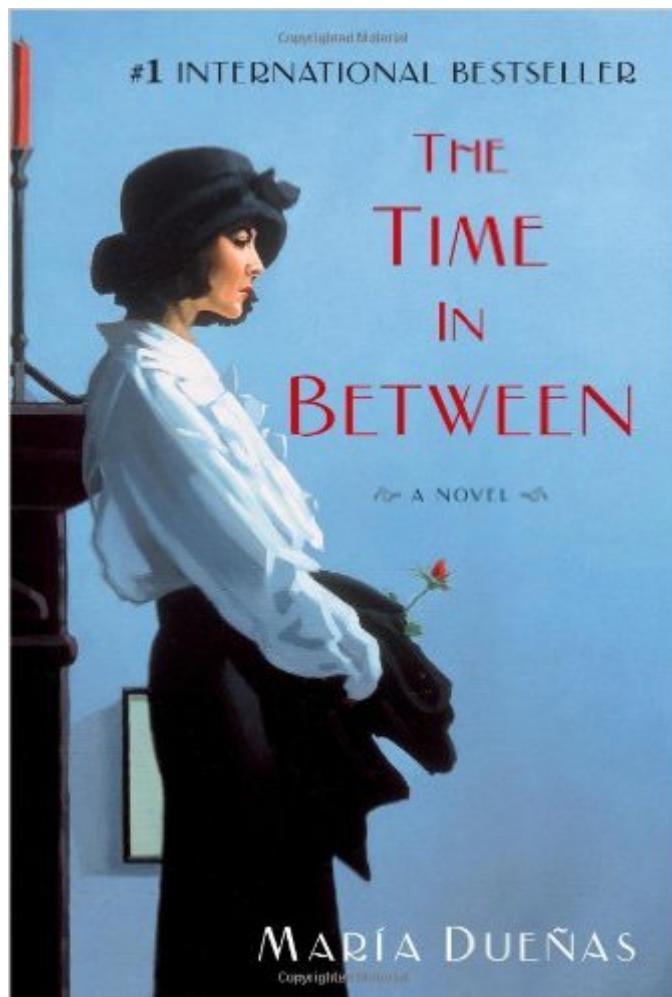


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# The Time In Between: A Novel



## Synopsis

The inspiring international bestseller of a seemingly ordinary woman who uses her talent and courage to transform herself first into a prestigious couturier and then into an undercover agent for the Allies during World War II. *Between Youth and Adulthood* | At age twelve, Sira Quiroga sweeps the atelier floors where her single mother works as a seamstress. At fourteen, she quietly begins her own apprenticeship. By her early twenties she has learned the ropes of the business and is engaged to a modest government clerk. But everything changes when two charismatic men burst unexpectedly into her neatly mapped-out life: an attractive salesman and the father she never knew. *Between War and Peace* | With the Spanish Civil War brewing in Madrid, Sira leaves her mother and her fiancé, impetuously following her handsome lover to Morocco. However, she soon finds herself abandoned, penniless, and heartbroken in an exotic land. Among the odd collection of European expatriates trapped there by the worsening political situation back on the Continent, Sira reinvents herself by turning to the one skill that can save her: her gift for creating beautiful clothes. *Between Love and Duty* | As England, Germany, and the other great powers launch into the dire conflict of World War II, Sira is persuaded to return to Madrid, where she takes on a new identity to embark upon the most dangerous undertaking of her career. As the preeminent couturier for an eager clientele of Nazi officers' wives, Sira becomes embroiled in the half-lit world of espionage and political conspiracy rife with love, intrigue, and betrayal. An outstanding success around the world, *The Time in Between* has sold more than two million copies and inspired the Spanish television series based on the book, dubbed by the media as the "Spanish Downton Abbey." • In the US it was a critical and commercial hit, and a *New York Times* bestseller in paperback. It is one of those rare, richly textured novels that enthrall down to the last page. *María a Dueñas* reminds us how it feels to be swept away by a masterful storyteller.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have to admit that Simon and Schuster piqued my curiosity about this title simply because they promoted it so heavily prior to its publication. In my mind, that's a huge vote of confidence from the publishing house. And, apparently it has been a bestseller in Europe, where it was originally published. Alas, my own response to *The Time in Between* was mixed. It got off to a rocky start, but ended much stronger--which is a better situation than had it been the other way 'round. With regard to the "rocky start," the first-person narrator of this 600-page epic is Sira Quiroga, a young seamstress from Madrid with a modest background. Unfortunately, she makes a terrible initial impression. Virtually the first thing we learn about her is that she is an inconstant woman. She behaves deplorably towards a man she's supposed to love, and then runs off to Morocco with a man slicker than Teflon. On many, many levels, her behavior is unforgivably stupid. Truthfully, I wanted to slap her. (Note to Authors: Having your protagonist repent and/or wise-up eventually does not justify making us hate her in the beginning.) And this whole opening drama takes up about the first hundred pages of the novel. Which leads us to issue number two... God, I felt like it took forever for this story to really get going! No way did this novel need to be over 600 hundred pages long. I would have written a far more positive review had it been condensed by a good 200 pages. The overly drawn out introduction (that made me sort of hate the heroine) could have been condensed so that we could get to the meat of this story so much sooner. As it is, the plot described in the jacket copy of this novel doesn't even come into play until well past the half-way point of the novel.

First Line: A typewriter shattered my destiny. Sira Quiroga is the daughter of a humble seamstress in Madrid, Spain. From sweeping floors and running errands, Sira grows into an apprenticeship. By the time she's twenty, she's learned her trade and is looking forward to marriage to a government clerk. However, she hasn't learned to resist charismatic men. The father she never knew and a handsome salesman turn her world upside down. Abandoned in Morocco by the man she loves, the only way Sira can survive is by using her needle. Through hours of hard work and determination, she becomes a respected modiste in Morocco. Catering to the collection of European expatriates trapped there by the war in Spain and the worsening political situation in the rest of Europe lays the groundwork for the next stage in Sira's life. She returns to Madrid, opens an exclusive couturier for

Nazi officers' wives, and becomes an undercover agent for the Allies. This was a very uneven reading experience for me. Its length (624 pages) is not for the weak of heart (or for those with weak wrists). If a story holds my interest, I don't care how long the book is, but this one only held it sporadically. In many ways, I enjoyed the first section of the book the most. My interest was fully engaged as I learned how Sira grew up, how she fell in love, and how she had to fight hard to make a living after being abandoned in Morocco. The reader's opinion of Sira will make or break this book since she is the narrator. At times I found that her naivete and impulsiveness made me want to slap some sense into her.

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