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La Bella Lingua: My Love Affair With Italian, The World's Most Enchanting Language



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Synopsis

"Italians say that someone who acquires a new language ’possesses’ it. In my case, Italian possesses me. With Italian racing like blood through my veins, I do indeed see with different eyes, hear with different ears, and drink in the world with all my senses...." A celebration of the language and culture of Italy, La Bella Lingua is the story of how a language shaped a nation, told against the backdrop of one woman’s personal quest to speak fluent Italian. For anyone who has been to Italy, the fantasy of living the Italian life is powerfully seductive. But to truly become Italian, one must learn the language. This is how Dianne Hales began her journey. In La Bella Lingua, she brings the story of her decades-long experience with "the world’s most loved and lovable language" together with explorations of Italy’s history, literature, art, music, movies, lifestyle, and food in a true opera amorosa - a labor of her love of Italy. Throughout her first excursion in Italy - with "non parlo Italiano" as her only Italian phrase - Dianne delighted in the beauty of what she saw but craved comprehension of what she heard. And so she chose to inhabit the language. Over more than 25 years she has studied Italian in every way possible: through Berlitz, books, CDs, podcasts, private tutorials and conversation groups, and, most importantly, large blocks of time in Italy. In the process she found that Italian became not just a passion and a pleasure but a passport into Italy’s storia and its very soul. She offers charming insights into what makes Italian the most emotionally expressive of languages, from how the "pronto" ("ready!") Italians say when they answer the telephone conveys a sense of something coming alive to how even ordinary things such as a towel (asciugamano) or handkerchief (fazzoletto) sound better in Italian. She invites readers to join her as she traces the evolution of Italian in the zesty graffiti on the walls of Pompeii, in Dante’s incandescent cantos, and in Boccaccio’s bawdy Decameron. She portrays how social graces remain woven into the fabric of Italian: Even the chipper "ciao", which does double duty as "hi" and "bye", reflects centuries of bella figura. And she exalts the glories of Italy’s food and its rich and often uproarious gastronomic language: Italians deftly describe someone uptight as a baccala (dried cod), a busybody who noses into everything as a prezzemolo (parsley), a worthless or banal movie as a polpettone (large meatball). Like Dianne, listeners of La Bella Lingua will find themselves innamorata, enchanted, by Italian, fascinated by its saga, tantalized by its adventures, addicted to its sound, and ever eager to spend more time in its company.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although the book took a while to sink its hooks into me, it succeeded. I had expected a more personal, less historical take on the always fascinating process of diving into another culture. What I got was a meandering path to becoming culturally literate, which can only happen when one has mastered a language.I ended up thoroughly enjoying the book and thinking how much fun it would be to read a similar book on acquiring English. The outsider’s perspective is never completely accurate, but it allows us to see our own culture with new eyes. I would be interested to know if Italians reading the book enjoyed it as much as I did.

I read this book to prepare for my first trip to Italy. I never had a chance to read it before I got there though. Jetlagged I picked it up for the first time in Milan and read it all the way on the train to Venice and then to Florence. By the time I got to Florence, I realized how uneducated I was about the history and people of Italy. This book made me appreciate the culture and the language. My 17-year-old daughter, who is studying in Sicily, loved it too. It has inspired me to continue my studies and to return again. This is one book I know I’ll read for at least a second time.

La Bella Lingua is almost my story. I couldn’t put the book down and I have re read it many times and use it as a reference book.My brand for myself is...I am genetically programmed to love everything Italian. I fell in love with Italy the moment I looked into my grandfather’s eyes at the age of three months. My first novel takes place in Rome. La Bella Lingua has inspired me to never stop learning the language.Ã Â The Man at the Caffe FarneseIf you love Italy, you will love this book. If you love the rythm of the most beautiful language on earth, you will love this book. If you desire to

learn about the customs and quirks of Italy, buy this book. It is beautifully written and fun. To enrich yourself even more, follow her blog!Janet Simcic, Author: The Man at the Caffe Farnese.

A great way to learn more about Italy & its history & culture while also improving your Italian..I struggle to learn to speak Italian but am even more certain after reading this book it's necessary to live there to become somewhat fluent. Learning about how the language developed, phrasing and local idioms can only help comprehension and get you more prepared for more formal study or your next trip to Italy. If you love reading about Italy, its history & people in memoirs, historical novels and non fiction, I recommend this engaging memoir. And then start planning your next trip!

This is a charming, informative and insightful book. It is about far more than the Italian language. I learned a good deal about my ancestral cultural heritage, as well as interesting developments in Western culture (e.g. pagination started in Italy, as well as dictionaries). She writes in a fluid, easy manner that carries you along. I found it to be surprisingly enjoyable. I am very glad I bought it on my kindle.

Being a first generation Italian and having studied the language (as well as having traveled to Bella Italia), I found the book fascinating and informative. It touches on so many areas of Italian culture and historical background that provides a real understanding of the people. I could not put the book down because I was so anxious to discover the next topic whether it was language dialects, history or personalities. The author does a great job of teaching one about Italian history in such a painless, clever manner. I would highly recommend this book for anyone who wishes to travel to Bella Italia. For someone who has not traveled to Bella Italia and plans to vacation there, read this book before you go. It may not be understandable in all areas, but once you get to Italy, the book will help you put things in place and perspective.

As a less-fixated, but still devoted student of Italian myself, this book is both entertaining and educational. Written in a fairly breezy, but well-edited style, the layering of both historical events and personal anecdotes is well balanced and very engaging. Having been to many of the places mentioned in the book made it somewhat more personal, but I think even those who have not spent much time in Italy, but still appreciate the culture, will get a lot out of this book.A pleasure to read and makes me want to get back to Italy again even more. Bravo!

Title is somewhat of a misnomer. This book is charming and captivating, but only somewhat about the Italian language. Not intended for a linguistic. Best read as a look at Italian high culture (general history, language, food, literature , opera, plays, travel, etc.).

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