

A heart too big for her body

Dolores!

NOËLLA ELPERS

'Dolores!' opens with a tragic drowning that immediately grabs the reader by the throat. Dolores' life subsequently plays out like a slow-motion film, via powerful flashbacks. Noëlla Elpers zooms in on her childhood. Dolores grows up as a dwarf, in 15th century Biar in Spain. When she is five she realises she is different to other people. But she refuses to reconcile herself to limitations and glosses over her handicap with a generous dose of humour.

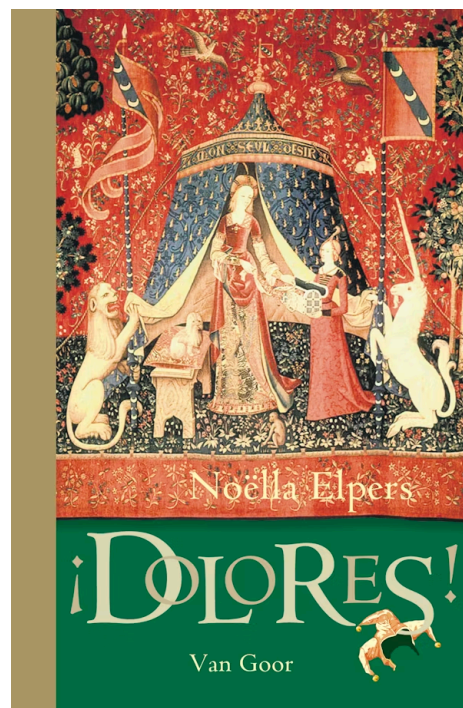
Elpers' narrative art is poetic and inventive.

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Her father sells her to King Ferdinand as a gift for his daughter, the gloomy Princess Joanna - remembered in history as 'Joanna the Mad'. That Dolores feels like a living doll is a fact that seems to escape everyone. Dolores becomes friends with her new mistress, but develops an even stronger friendship with the Moorish chambermaid Meryem. Elpers convincingly describes Dolores' many yearnings and her search for true love, with a heart too big for her tiny body. And then Joanna's ship is lost off the English coast. Joanna and Meryem manage to escape, but Dolores is swallowed up by the waves in the gripping final scene.

Both a historical novel and a fully-fledged, contemporary YA novel that paints a delightful picture of the difficult process of growing up

DE LEESWELP



AUTHOR



Noëlla Elpers (b. 1959) learned to 'travel in her head' at an early age. Her father came from a family of storytellers, and her mother introduced her to many books. Elpers made her breakthrough with her historical fiction for young adults. Critics praise her deep emotional empathy for her characters, her convincing characterisation and her true-to-life dialogue. *Dolores!* is the highpoint of her career so far, winning her the Thea Beckman prize, Boekenleeuw and Kleine Cervantes. Elpers has meanwhile published almost a dozen books for children and young adults. Photo (c) Peter Holvoet-Hanssen

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