



Jane Fairfax

Joan Aiken , Jane Austen (Creator)

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Jane Austen's *Emma* has been a favorite novel for Austenites since 1816. In the mid-1990s it became a favorite movie for millions of new admirers.

A key reason for *Emma's* success is that the story has two heroines-Emma Woodhouse and Jane Fairfax. In Austen's novel, Jane's background is left obscure, and the turmoil underlying her current reduced circumstances is mysterious.

At last we learn her whole story in Joan Aiken's superb retelling of *Emma*-this time from Jane Fairfax's point of view. When *Jane Fairfax* was published in hardcover, Aiken's wit, style, and skill prompted *Booklist* to say, "Brilliant...extraordinarily well done and highly recommended."

This worthy companion to the great original is for the first time now available in paperback.

Jane Fairfax Details

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Author : Joan Aiken , Jane Austen (Creator)

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From Reader Review Jane Fairfax for online ebook

Karla says

A die-hard Austen fan, I looked forward to reading the "backstory" of Jane Fairfax. But I found this to be somewhat of a disappointment. While convincingly written in the style of Jane Austen and meticulously faithful to her book, Emma, I felt it lacked the humor of the original and, obviously, the surprises. One of the fabulous things about Austen's writing is that her characters are human. They make mistakes, have character flaws; and that makes it so easy to identify with them. Joan Aiken's Jane, while interesting, was just too perfect. As an homage, it was well done, but reading her book reiterated for me the utter genius of Austen's writing.

Rachel says

I have been so surprised to discover that none of my Jane-Austen-Fan-Friends have not read this book yet (as of this review)?! Like me it doesn't seem like many of us even knew these books existed...or we would have read them much sooner! ;)

Anyone who has read Jane Austen's Emma will be thrilled and enamored with finally being able to hear the whole story from Jane's perspective! From the time they were children, Emma and Jane have known one another, but their lives must take very decidedly different roads. As Jane leaves her beloved aunt and grandmother at Highbury for the home of Colonel Cambell and his family, Jane's story unfolds as Austen never fully shared in her own writings. What happened to poor Jane after she left Highbury as a child? What were her growing up years like? What of Weymouth and the fabled "Mr. Dixon"? And what were Jane's real thoughts and feelings as the intrigue and hidden engagement with Frank Churchill took place once more in Highbury? All these questions and more are answered in a beautifully written Austen-style story, neatly filling in the gaps perfectly. Austen fans will be delighted...it's like getting a new Jane Austen book!!

I could easily quote my favorite passages along while reading this story. It was perfectly balanced, with no more or less of the plot from the original Emma story than needed to be shared from Jane's perspective. I fell in love with the characters afresh, and this (one of my lesser favorite Austen novels) has quickly become a new favorite and Jane my "new" favorite heroine. I finished this very quickly and could hardly bare to put it down!

Kristi says

This companion novel to Jane Austen's Emma is, I think, a much more satisfying story than the original! I've never enjoyed Emma, simply because the "heroine" is to me, unlikable. Aiken's story fills in the gaps about the mysterious Jane Fairfax and creates a character that I sympathized with and befriended.

Girl with her Head in a Book says

For my full review: <http://girlwithherheadinabook.co.uk/2...>

Early in this year's *Austen* in August, I discovered that well-known author Joan Aiken had penned several *Austen* spin-offs. Given how much I enjoyed her *Black Hearts in Battersea* series, I was at once intrigued. The consensus appeared to be that the best of her work was *Jane Fairfax* and since that lady is one of *Austen*'s more thought-provoking minor characters, I decided to risk my reading time on another *Austen* spin-off. Alas. The disappointment for me here is that not only has Aiken not produced a good *Austen* spin-off, it's also not a good book. Like PD James' *Death Comes To Pemberley*, this feels more like a vanity project rather than a sincere attempt to engage with *Austen*'s characters and I finished reminding myself once again that spin-off literature is more full of dust than diamonds.

In attempting to understand why an author as clearly able as Aiken would produce something as dull and dim-witted, I got to thinking about the original story glimpsed in *Emma*. *Jane Fairfax* is the elegant and demure niece of the impoverished Mrs and Miss Bates and since she is the exact same age as *Emma Woodhouse*, it has long been assumed that the two young ladies must be friends. *Emma* however finds *Jane* too polished and perfect - or is it possibly that she is unwilling to kow-tow to *Emma*'s wealth? *Emma*'s 'friendship' with *Harriet Smith* implies that *Emma* is not looking for equality in her companions, being determined to be always placed first. *Emma* is jealous of *Jane Fairfax*'s good looks and musical talent whilst simultaneously congratulating herself for her own good taste in being able to recognise *Jane*'s superiority.

With *Jane* having been brought up by the *Campbells*, who were friends of her father, she has travelled more than *Emma* and is assumed to be more worldly. However, now that the *Campbells*' daughter is married, it is expected that she will have to make her way in the world as a governess. *Emma* is certain that there is some scandal involving *Jane Fairfax* and Mr *Dixon*, the new husband of Miss *Campbell* and along with Frank *Churchill*, attempts to uncover the secret. As the novel heads towards its conclusion however, it transpires that Frank *Churchill* has been playing a double game and that he and *Jane Fairfax* have been engaged the whole time. The whole point of *Emma* is that she is clueless about the world around her while telling herself that she sees all and her misunderstanding of the connection between Frank *Churchill* and *Jane Fairfax* is ultimate example of this.

The secret romance between *Jane* and Frank threads through the novel and becomes very obvious on the re-read. He fusses and sulks over having to go and call on the *Bateses* since due to having met her at *Weymouth*, there is 'just the degree of acquaintance' between him and Miss *Fairfax*, it would be rude to do otherwise. He asks his father to ask Miss *Bates* in supposedly because that lady's chatter amuses him, then Mr *Weston* says that if they're asking Miss *Bates*, they really ought to ask Miss *Fairfax*. Frank *Churchill* is forever engineering quiet moments between himself and Miss *Fairfax* and nobody notices. When he is grumpy at *Box Hill*, we later realise that it is because the pair have quarrelled and when he rescues *Harriet* from the gypsies, he is only on the spot because he has just left a secret rendez-vous with *Jane*.

I was interested to note in other reviews of *Jane Fairfax* that certain readers believe that the tale of *Jane Fairfax* is more interesting than that of *Emma Woodhouse*. With its twists and turns and trickery, it would be the more obvious fodder for a novelist. *Jane Austen* however turns away from their story because contrary to popular opinion, she was not a romance novelist. She focuses her novel instead on the stuck-up girl's journey towards self-discovery. *Jane* and Frank's affair is a tease - we can see that something is going on but *Emma* is utterly oblivious to it so we never get to look closer. The few hints we have dropped to us however imply a love that is truly passionate - the couple within *Austen*'s canon who risk the most for love are the pair who are barely ever seen to speak to each other.

Aiken's novel starts promisingly and I was impressed by how she seemed to sustain the *Austen*-esque cadence within her prose - the opening pages seemed almost plausibly written by the great lady herself. The

idea of Jane Fairfax growing up wearing Emma Woodhouse's cast-off 'wearing apparel' was an intriguing one, further linking these two unwilling friends together. Equally the idea of them sharing a music master as an act of charity from Mrs Woodhouse. It seemed entirely plausible that Mrs Woodhouse should have died in childbirth and that the child Emma should become impossible to deal with - but it all began to go a little pear-shaped when Aiken had Emma turn against Jane when she discovered that Mrs Woodhouse had bequeathed Jane money for her education.

Matters head further towards the absurd when young Jane is packed off to be raised by the Campbells. The emphasis on how foreign their customs are, the way in which Colonel Campbell goes from kindly and understanding to domestic tyrant and then back again repeatedly, to the strange Mary-Sue-ish Rachel Campbell - it rather stretches credulity. Likewise the introduction of the Dixon characters, referred to repeatedly as 'Matt' and 'Sam'. Because that doesn't stick out like a sore thumb at all in a story that is intended to be a spin-off from a book where a man (Frank Churchill) makes a point about referring to his fiancée as Miss Fairfax because he wants to show her respect. It's unfortunate because it means that the characters over whom Aiken has the greatest creative control are the most unbelievable and inconsistent with the parent-narrative.

The problems with this book go a good deal deeper though. We are told that Mrs Campbell's mother, who comes to live with the family, has a vendetta against Jane and then there is the 'bracelet affair' which causes the death of Jane and Rachel's young ladies' maid. This happens, we are assured it is important, then it is never referred to again. This is just poor plotting - and then it gets worse. Much is made in Emma of the moment where Jane Fairfax is almost swept overboard while on a boat outing and then is saved by Mr Dixon (or 'Matt'). Emma Woodhouse decides that this means that there is a forbidden love between Miss Fairfax and Mr Dixon - she is looking for a scandal. The reader can deduce from Frank Churchill that this is more likely the moment that he realised the depths of his own feelings. For Aiken to dismiss this scene and place it 'offstage' is one of the worst mistakes that this book makes. That should have been the key pressure point within her novel. Instead, Aiken spends far too much of the novel being just as foolish as Emma Woodhouse herself, implying that Jane is in love with 'Matt'. We already know that she was not, because Emma said she was and Emma is always wrong.

In Aiken's novel, Frank Churchill is quieter and less foolish - less interesting. His love springs on Jane as a surprise while she is mourning the sacrifice of 'Matt' to her friend Rachel. It never seems as if she actually loves him, meaning that all the later Highbury sufferings are meaningless. She is watching her betrothed flirt with Emma and caring very little. She is not hoping against hope that they will be able to find a way to be together, she is still weighing up whether being a governess might not be slightly better than chancing a partnership with someone so unreliable. Aiken throws in stray plot ideas as if she is out of inspiration - one minute men are proposing to Jane left right and centre because they erroneously believe that she will come with a dowry, then there is a race between Rachel and her cousin Charlotte since whoever marries first will inherit jewels. In the midst of it all, Rachel laments that moving to Ireland for her husband will mean that she will lose her career as a 'political cartoonist', but the reader can hardly be expected to care about something mentioned for five lines fifty pages ago. Jane Fairfax is an odd, odd book - it is not just that it fails to marry up with the original narrative, but Aiken also manages to make it a very dull story.

So - as is no doubt clear, this is not a book that I could recommend. Still, I did find myself wondering - Emma was put off by the reticence of Miss Fairfax's character, by the perfection of her features and accomplishments - is Jane Fairfax perhaps too flawless to be a compelling heroine? Many people have taken against Emma down the centuries because she is snobbish and insensitive and frankly stupid - but is it easier to love someone who has imperfections than someone like Jane? In narrative tradition, Miss Fairfax would be the more classical heroine - poor but deserving, beautiful and hard-working, trying to live a blameless and

virtuous life and finally rescued by a kind and rich gentleman. Except that said gentleman has some decidedly ungentlemanly qualities and it seems implicitly acknowledged that it is not fair that it is either this or the governess trade. Emma was Austen's most sophisticated novel and she was doing something very clever with the character of Jane Fairfax but you would never guess so from reading Jane Fairfax.

Toni says

This book is a rendition of Jane Austen's, Emma, seen from the viewpoint of Jane Fairfax. I had every intention of loving it, but can only say that I liked it. Aiken tried very hard to stick with the style of writing that Jane Austen used. For the most part she did well, but there were moments of irritation. I feel that her focus was off quite a bit as well. She spent far too much time narrating Jane's childhood and not enough time on the romance between Jane and Frank Churchill. I found it strange that with all the time they spent together in Weymouth, there was no confession of attraction or love until the very day Jane returned to Highbury. Even then, it wasn't all that glorious because Jane, apparently, didn't even have feelings for Frank. This just doesn't sit well with me. Frank was always in the background in Weymouth, when he ought to have been at the forefront. The main reason why I checked this book out was I wanted to read all the sappy details about Jane and Frank, and I was disappointed. :(

Cori says

From my blog:

I've never been one to read fan fiction because I've always equated it with science fiction (Star Trek, BSG, etc.) or Harry Potter. Then I realized I've read a slew of fan fiction based on Jane Austen in the last few years, although I've never really thought about it like that. The books have ranged from good (Bridget Jones's Diary) to not so good (Mr. Darcy's Daughters -- like Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth would ever allow those things to go on under their roof!). I thought that Joan Aiken's Jane Fairfax was better than most.

The story centers around (shocker) Jane Fairfax, from Austen's Emma. We learn a lot about her childhood and more about Emma as a young girl (who you really want to slap). We meet the cast of characters, most of whom are just mentioned in passing in Austen's work. As Jane grows up, she moves back to Highbury and interacts with the main story of Emma. It's been years and years since I've read Emma, but as far as I remember, Jane Fairfax is mostly true to the story. From what I recall, I wish more of the Jane's original dialogue was in this book, though -- I felt that the connection between the two stories could have been a little stronger.

Aiken's writing is solid and although it's not Jane Austen, one can suspend that knowledge and get lost in the story. My biggest beef is that the story floats along until the last twenty pages when Aiken must have said, "Oh crap. I really should wrap this up since my deadline is in half an hour." It speeds up and an enormous amount of storyline is crammed into those final pages. Still, the story is Austen, and it ends happily.

My Rating: 7 out of 10 for being light and airy -- a good read for the summer.

MJ says

I CAN'T BELIEVE I READ THIS ENTIRE BOOK IN LIKE 6 HOURS BUT MOM HOLY FUCK.....I LOVED IT???????? Jane Fairfax origin story revolving around how being so similar to Emma yet driven apart by class is the real reason for their rivalry on both sides.....like.....holy shit.....

This was just genuinely great from start to finish, I loved the fleshing out of the Campbells, I loved the explanation of how being raised in high society affected Jane's perception and enjoyment of Highbury, I loved the additions of travel and the war and death and real life random unfortunate consequences on top of the typical period romance. Though I still don't enjoy love triangle situations, working in a genuine crush on Mr. Dixon that could not work out for more reasons than Emma suspected was very well done, and it was fun to recognize the tiny portions of dialogue from the original book at significant moments!

My one reason for docking a star was that because of the aforementioned Mr. Dixon plot, I felt Frank's character in the Weymouth portion was not featured enough before the proposal; I still didn't have a totally clear sense of him as a person before he was pretending to be someone else. I felt working more modern perceptions of romance here might actually have helped more than relying on the Regency-appropriate ones and made the reader more strongly inclined towards him to offset how much Jane hated the situation. As much as I like the idea of them trying to court AFTER getting engaged (this is like, a top-tier fanfic trope, god) I felt trying to balance that with Jane's discomfort didn't work out for me as a reader--it would've been a stronger bolster to the romance if either she liked Frank enough to go against her judgment re: the engagement BEFORE both were in Highbury, or if in Highbury her distress (at least at the beginning) was more feigned than genuine to play her part like Frank played his.

NONETHELESS, THIS IS AN ENTIRE NOVEL WRITTEN IN JANE AUSTEN STYLE, THAT MADE ME LOVE JANE FAIRFAX AND EMMA ALREADY 349857398456378 TIMES MORE, AND THAT I ALREADY WANT TO READ AGAIN!?!?! BOY...

Hilary Moon Murphy says

I had mixed feelings about this one. I loved Joan Aiken's *Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, and I felt that the concept of this book was brilliant. The subtitle of this book alludes to it being the "secret story of the second heroine of Emma," the very private and reserved Jane Fairfax. In Emma, Jane Fairfax initially appears to exist only as a foil for the main character: she is a deserving and gifted beauty that is doomed to a life of drudgery as a governess because she has no diary. But as Austen's novel winds to a close, Jane Fairfax is revealed to have been holding on to a deep secret that leads to her own happy ending, and proves pivotal in bringing the other deserving couples of the novel together.

Having read -- and loved -- Emma, I really wanted to love this book. There was so much potential here. And there were parts that I did love. I liked the depiction of Jane's early childhood and her education with Colonel Campbell. I liked that we traveled everywhere Jane Fairfax did, giving this book far more scope for character interactions than Austen had.

SPOILERS BELOW:

But there are some serious flaws here that I found hard to take. I didn't care that the storytelling style was different than Austen's. Few Austen sequels manage to emulate her narrative voice and the wit of her dialogue. I didn't care that the author messed up her research a little by having women go to a funeral. Women in Austen's day did not attend funerals. But I did mind it when Joan Aiken changed the characters of the original book. Miss Bates was a non-stop talker in Emma, and a source of much of the original book's humor. Here, she sounded almost normal, boring non-entity.

In the original book, Emma draws an incorrect conclusion about Jane Fairfax, assuming that she is harboring a secret love (perhaps even an affair) with Mr. Dixon, the husband of her childhood friend. She then shares this conclusion with others, needlessly smearing Jane Fairfax's reputation. But it is revealed in Austen's novel that Emma was incorrect, and wrong to spread this baseless rumor. Because of this, I felt cheated when Aiken had Jane Fairfax be in love with Mr. Dixon in this novel.

But nothing was more upsetting to me than having no real love affair with Frank Churchill. Frank Churchill in Emma was charming and a talented music performer. I had read the book hoping for the scene where Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill fall in love in Weymouth, perhaps during a performance on the pianoforte. Frank Churchill was a complicated character that exuded charm in Emma; I was hoping to see that side of him in this book.

I will give the Aiken points for showing Jane Fairfax's later exasperation with Frank Churchill... That **was** fun. However, I wanted a reason why Jane Fairfax would have waited for him and put up with all his bad behavior. I wanted more love and affection than what existed between the two.

It was not a terrible book -- far from it. I gave it three stars because it was so well written. But it lost two stars for lack of faithfulness to the original material.

Sarah says

I felt like the author was doing well developing some characters that weren't as well developed in Emma then all of a sudden she had a deadline to make so she wrapped the book up early. I enjoyed the book up to the point where (I don't think this is a spoiler, since it's in Emma) Frank Churchill proposed the secret engagement. The whole last section in Highbury seemed rushed and it never seemed like Jane liked Frank *enough*. So it made me sad that she seemed to be settling. It's a shame, because I think Joan Aiken could have taken a little more time to develop a romance between Jane and Frank, but instead the proposal just came out of left field and then she spent the rest of the book comparing him to other men.

That said, I think the first two-thirds or so were pretty good (not Austen good, but a worthy summer read) and probably worth putting up with the end.

Amber says

The concept for this book is a great one - tell Jane Fairfax's story, all that we missed in Emma. The beginning, while she's a child in Highbury is charming, and seeing Emma and the other characters through different eyes is very interesting. The prose is well done, it's nicely Austenesque, and reads well. We really feel for Jane in her mixed status as one of the Campbell family, but not fully one of them, with – to

paraphrase Dickens – no great expectations, despite all her accomplishments, integrity and intelligence.

Though we all know the story is leading up to how she became engaged and is finally able to marry Mr. Frank Churchill, Frank isn't much of a character and we still don't end up seeing their relationship develop. He waits patiently on the slide line, and she eventually accepts his affections, which is not very satisfying.

Meredith (Austen-esque Reviews) says

What a wonderful book. No, it is not in the style of Jane Austen, but if that is not important to you then it is a great book for you to read. It takes you back into the beginning when Emma and Jane were little playmates. If you read Emma and wondered what her childhood was like, then you will love this book. You can discover the real reason why Emma dislikes Jane.

What is so terrific about this book is that you fall in love with Jane, she really is the second heroine of the novel. It is wonderful to be inside her head and find out why she had a secret engagement with Frank Churchill. She is such a sweet and endearing heroine, and in addition she is strong, intelligent, and loving. You will grow to like her and grow to dislike Emma. Which makes you wonder, isn't that the way it is supposed to be? Jane Austen's own words were that she created a character that no one but herself will like. Furthermore, it follows Jane's life you learn what happened in Weymouth, and who the Dixons are. You go on an emotional journey with her. Her struggle with being poor and her love for her aunts.

If you root for the under dog then this is the book for you. Or if you loved the movie Emma, you love this too, you will wish that they will make it into a movie someday

Fabiana Udolpho says

The first half of the book is delightful, with fine character development, great drama and an engaging heroine. Emma is a little too evil, but that's Emma from Jane's point of view, so it makes sense. Also, it's a good thing that Aiken tells Jane's story outside Highbury, instead of just rewriting Austen's novel. Unfortunately, the second half is atrocious. Jane is messed up and everything is ruined. The relationship between Jane and Frank is never developed, and her reason for marrying him is very disappointing.

(view spoiler)

Garnette says

Brilliant style, Jane Fairfax is written with full compliance with Emma yet with undertones that enhance rather than diminish Jane Austen. What I learned from this book was more than what I learned about Emma, with grace, without heavy handedness, the book is fully accomplished craft. To my wondering eyes, the author unfolds depths of understanding of motivation and characterization Jane left for the reader to discern. I even see Emma herself with new eyes - 'the hundred pounds', Frank Churchill more fully realized, and Jane Fairfax herself is wonderful with her compassion, surrender and wisdom grown from a deep morality. What Joan Aiken has done in remaining true to the Emma story, with no frills or impossible plot twists, is to widen

Emma as well as give a deeply satisfying read on its own merit. I felt like I was reading Emma for the first time, even though it is one of my most beloved books over the decades, frequently re-read. As Booklist said, 'extraordinarily well done.' Not a 'badly done' in it.

Carol Douglas says

Jane Fairfax is the story of one of the characters in Jane Austen's Emma. If you like Emma, you'll probably enjoy this book. Joan Aiken did a good job simulating Austen's style.

I am an Austen fan. Emma is not my favorite of her books, but I like all of them. I reread them every few years. But I'm not a fan of all the recent rewrites. I don't want to read about vampires inhabiting the towns where her characters live. I was disgusted by one novel that was almost pornographic; I couldn't read more than perhaps five pages.

This book really reads like Jane Austen, with no strange additions.

Jane Fairfax is an interesting character. She is an orphan from a respectable but poor family. She lives with her aunt, the memorable Miss Bates, and her grandmother, Mrs. Bates. But the wealthy Campbell family brings her to London to be a companion for their daughter, Rachel.

The Campbell family members are well-defined characters. Rachel is painfully shy and needs a friend. The two form a bond. Jane has a chance to see a wider world than she otherwise would have.

Of course she falls in love, more than once. She has always cherished a crush on Mr. Knightly, but we know that won't end in marriage. Frank Churchill, whom Emma readers know is Jane's eventual husband, is described in a way that is consistent with his character in the book.

Jane's interactions with Emma are fraught. I think Aiken likes Emma less than I do.

If you want to read more about Austen's characters, this is an entertaining read.

Jenny says

Joan Aiken's story did something that I long believed impossible. She made Emma Woodhouse into a sympathetic character. Jane Fairfax of this story becomes proud and judgmental, especially when it comes to Emma.

Barb says

I struggled to get myself totally interested in this book, Jane Fairfax, and have also struggled to figure out why. This is a well written book, and the character of Jane Fairfax is fairly complex and interesting. I enjoyed the writing and the character. So, why did I keep putting off reading this book when it has been on my TBR pile for years?

Emma is one of my favorite Jane Austen stories and I always found the character of Emma to be so agreeably flawed. You just see her rushing pell-mell into one mess after another. She is so obviously wrong about so many things and is adamant she is right. The biggest thing she is wrong about is Jane Fairfax. Jane is everything Emma is not - hard working, talented, beautiful, admired by all, a considerate friend and family member. It is no wonder Emma dislikes her so much; she is so close to perfection. I wonder if this isn't what kept me from reading her story. How could someone so perfect be anything but boring?

But, Jane Fairfax is not boring. She is actually quite courageous and a very good friend. As a poor girl without any prospects, poor Jane faces a life of servitude. At least she has people who will help her become educated so she may become a governess worthy of being hired by a good family. Jane dreads this. Who would look forward to raising someone else's children and being a servant after living the life of a beloved almost daughter to Colonel and Mrs. Campbell? Who would want to give up her friendship with Rachel who has almost become like a sister to her? Jane has no future as anything but a governess as she has no dowry or societal connections, so she must find employment. But, what Jane doesn't realize is no one else really wants her to become a governess either. They want Jane to find love and marriage and they are putting off as long as possible the time for her to find a job. Jane is loved by the Campbell family and her Aunt Hetty and Grandmama. They all wish her well.

So, Jane is now sort of stuck in a world where she is floating without a real place. She doesn't belong in the society of the Campbell family and she can't live in Highbury for ever without some income. Who would blame her for dreaming of love and marriage with first a man from her childhood, then the man who is the love of her best friend, and then finally, the young man she has barely noticed as he has been falling in love with her? She is heading home for a visit to her Aunt and Grandmother at Highbury and her life is so up in the air and her future is not defined. Can anyone blame her for accepting a secret engagement?

Jane Fairfax allows us to meet and know Jane as she was from childhood and what her experiences were prior to the action of the book Emma. We also see Jane as she views the world from the other side of Emma's matchmaking schemes and theorizing about the lives of those around her. In Emma we see how Miss Woodhouse views Jane Fairfax, but in this title, we see how Emma is viewed, and disliked, by Jane. See? Jane isn't really all that perfect and she is perfectly aware of what Emma is doing. In addition, she is very uncomfortable keeping her secret from all of her family and friends, and Frank's antics with Emma do not help make life any easier.

I still like Emma, but Jane Fairfax is a fascinating view of the other side and provides the perspective of someone who cannot find Emma amusing. This is very well written and I think JA would approve. Definitely recommended. It should be noted, however, that this book is not available as an ebook.

Jennifer says

Someone needs to hand this book to a soap opera TV show producer...it would make a perfect script for one of their shows.

Wow. I was in turns incredulous at and disgusted by this extremely shallow, sensational, insipid Jane Austen copy. There were times that I felt like laughing at the absurdity of it all.

I will say that the first few chapters were very promising and I was settling in to what I thought would be a first-rate story. Then it quickly disintegrated into insanity. At the end I could not care less what happened to the characters and just decided to finish it because I had gotten so far and it's not a hard read. I was also curious how the author would entwine her story with the original Emma.

Definitely not my type of book, I guess.

Oh, one positive remark I have to make - the cover IS beautiful.

Gigi Ann says

My Thoughts...

I recently found this book while meandering around in Barnes & Noble one day. I love many of the sequels of the Jane Austen books. Since Emma is my favorite book by Jane Austen, and when I noticed the title of this book I knew I just had to have it to read. I found that it was a worthy companion to the original book Emma. It will have a special place on my bookshelf right beside the book Emma.

I loved this book and awarded it 5 stars. However, I think you will only enjoy the book if you are a Jane Austen fan and have read the book Emma, or at least have seen the movie. I personally have seen the movie several times. I never bore of Emma, her character is one I've come to have a love/hate relationship with. But in the end I find I love her and her bossy ways.

Margaret Sullivan says

It's very well-written and a good story, but I would not have made the same choices for back story.

Sophia says

In honor of the 200th Anniversary of Jane Austen's Emma, I have been reading stories set in that world. I love it when an author tackles a secondary character and gives them their own story. In this case, it is the enigmatic Jane Fairfax. Jane was the woman that Emma set up as her own rival and was engaged to a man that was an iffy choice for hero. I was so curious to see what the author would do with Jane's story.

I found the treatment of Jane's character, her background, and her circumstances away from Highbury, the setting of Emma, was fascinating and believable. The author's writing had a classical tone to it and she wrote Jane's story and Jane Fairfax herself without rose-colored glasses and if it had a fairy tale quality to it, it wasn't the bright romanticized version. I loved this story for its bittersweet taste.

Truly, there are only two things I would change. I didn't like that Emma becomes almost a villainess in what felt like a 'push Emma down to pull Jane up'. I also wanted a bit more in the end. Jane spent a lot of the book away from Frank and she endured so much while they were secretly engaged. I wanted to see her in happy circumstances when the conflict was resolved.

But the story was not all melancholy. The treatment of Miss Bates and Mrs. Elton had me snickering. Miss Bates the chatterbox and Mrs. Elton the vulgar, sneerer were well-written.

The setting, thoughts, actions, conversations, and overall feeling felt true to the historical period and situation. The author did beautiful work and left me believing I was the words of someone strongly acquainted with Jane Austen's voice and works.

I would definitely recommend this as a good sequel to Jane Austen's Emma and because of the way it is written, the reader should have some acquaintance with the original story to appreciate this book.
