



Jane Austen: Her Life

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Drawing on diaries, memoirs, and letters written by members of the Austen family, this sympathetic and probing biography enters the private world of Jane Austen, revealing experiences and observations she drew upon to write such masterpieces as *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. Austen's childhood is recreated, sketching her devotion to her ambitious parents and drawing a lively picture of Jane's two brothers—one of whom served with Nelson's navy at Trafalgar—and of Jane's closest confidante, her elder sister Cassandra. Set against a backdrop of rural Hampshire and Bath, Austen's life moves between a closely observed domestic setting with family and friends to descriptions of dances and parties, social mores, and malice. This account brings new insights into her checkered love life, her moments of loneliness and frustration, and her ironic appreciation of her situation as an intelligent, economically dependent woman.

Jane Austen: Her Life Details

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From Reader Review Jane Austen: Her Life for online ebook

Beth says

This book is dense and very scholarly.

Though I love Jane Austen's novels, her life isn't fascinating reading. She loved her big family and lived the mostly quiet life expected of an unmarried lady of her time. That's about it.

The excitement was in the life of the mind and in her very careful attention to her writing, but that is hard to discern, much less write about.

Still I'm glad I read it. It reminded me of all she had to overcome and what a short life she had to write her books.

Melissa says

As far as Jane Austen Biographies go...this one is okay. Honan is more interested in placing Jane Austen in context with her family and social surroundings and all that was going on around her, than he actually is in her, which is unfortunate as she is interesting in and of herself.

Jeslyn says

This took some time for me - I often felt Honan was off in the weeds, pulling in neighbors, friends, acquaintances, etc. in a biography purportedly about Jane Austen. But this is as much a biography of the construction of her novels as it was about her, and Honan shows how indivisible Jane is from her writings. It does make the reading denser, and sometimes tedious, but overall I liked it and was glad I read it.

Jessica says

This book analyzes Austen writing instead of her life. What was in it about her life was good and informative, but I wish they would have kept it to just her life.

Cindy says

I love Jane Austen and wanted to learn more about her. I borrowed this book from my mom, but just could not get into it. I had it for more than a year and finally gave up. I have since read other things about Jane Austen which I liked more.

Maggie says

Good writing. Seemed sometimes like conjecture was presented as fact. Had the view that reading aloud was Austen's version of a writer's workshop, which is very interesting. And after her death, her family did their best to describe her as loved and lovable in spite of being a writer and a woman prone to books.

Emily says

I'm a little ashamed to admit this, but once again I'm relistening to a book-on-tape. I checked out some other books-on-tape from the library after finishing this one, and they ended up being so insipid and flat after the real-as-flesh life of Jane Austen, that I just couldn't return this one to the library, just yet. So, I'm catching more details the second time around, read in a clipped formal British accent.

Besides, Kirstie Lovell just loaned me "Becoming Jane" on DVD last week, and I had to go over the details of Jane's relationship with Tom LeFroid (sp?) and compare the film's version with the biographical account. If you haven't seen BJ the movie yet, know that there's a scene reminiscent of "A Room with a View" wink wink (to the moon!).

Anyway, this biography was written in the 80's, I think, and was a tad feminist, but so enjoyable, dripping with details of the real-life characters and events who inspired Lizzie and Jane Bennett, the Miss Dashwoods, Emma, and, of course, Missstuh. Daahrcy.

David K. Lemons says

Like Emily Dickinson, details of Jane Austen's life do not seem to have revealed much of who she really was. We can only know from her writing, and that's how it should be for any writer. Who cares if Jane set fire to her older brother (which she did not), for example, or Hemingway cracked John O'Hara's walking cane over poor John's head at the Algonquin (which he did, and maybe that matters)? We have learned to love these authors through their stories. Biographies of authors are essentially gossip, giving us a chance to view them from a different perspective, which is why I love to read them, not only of authors, but of artists, actors, composers, military heroes, and politicians. A biography is essentially a novel anyway told with a straight face.
