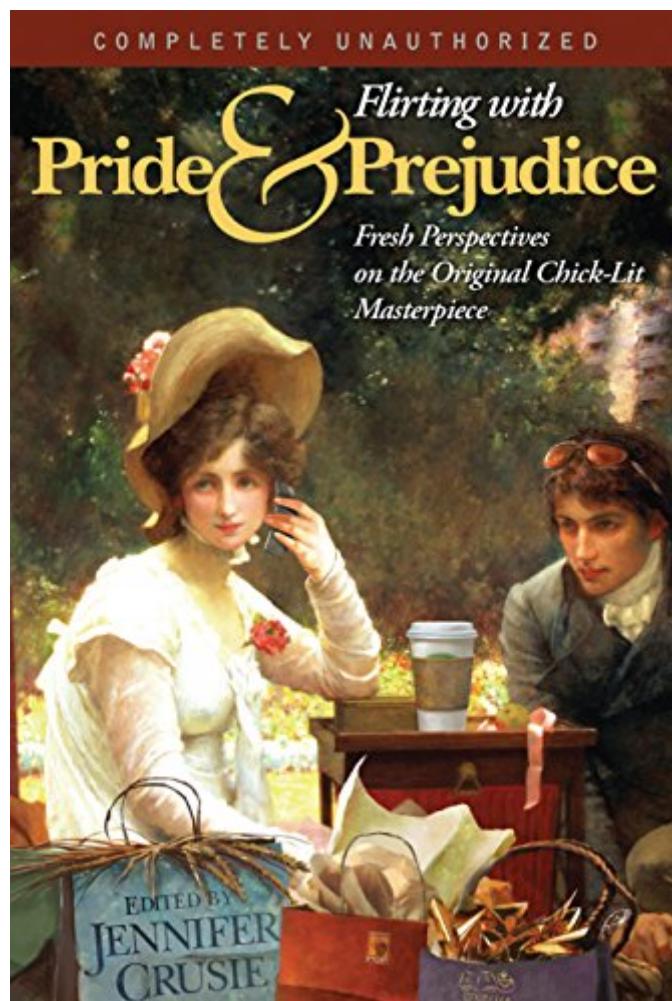


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Flirting With Pride And Prejudice: Fresh Perspectives On The Original Chick Lit Masterpiece (Smart Pop Series)



Synopsis

One of fiction's most well-loved novels, this 19th-century classic continues to capture the hearts of contemporary readers with its notions of marriage, dating, and romance. Leading authors in the area of women's literature and romance contribute to this fresh collection of essays on everything from Lydia's scandalous marriage to George Wickham to the female-dominated Bennett household and the emphasis placed on courtship and marriage. Contributors include Jo Beverly, Alesia Holliday, Mercedes Lackey, Joyce Millman, and Jill Winters. This compilation is an excellent companion for both those new to Jane Austen and well-versed Austen-philes.

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Customer Reviews

Flirting with Pride and Prejudice is supposed to be a light-hearted look at Austen's best known novel from a contemporary "Chick-lit" perspective, mostly made up of essays by current writers ruminating on the modern-day popularity of the novel, and even a section of Pride and Prejudice sequels or rewrites, such as ones from the perspectives of Georgiana Darcy or Mary Bennet. This sounds like a promising read, a fun way to spend a few hours reading. Unfortunately, it's too light. The essays (if you could call them that, as they are rather too short and ephemeral to be true essays) do not

have much of a clear point to them, other saying that the novel is a predecessor to Bridget Jones's Diary and similar contemporary novels, or that we all can relate to Elizabeth Bennet. This all becomes rather repetitive and tiresome after the third or fourth essay. Also, far too many of the writers spend their words reiterating the plot of the novel. Chances are, if someone's picked up this book, they've read Pride and Prejudice, or at the very least, seen one of the movie or television versions. I found myself skimming through most of the paragraphs of boring plot summary. I will admit a few of the writings are amusing, like "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Critic", a fictional dialogue between an Austen scholar and a romance reader, or interesting, like the piece by Karen Joy Fowler, author of the Jane Austen Book Club. I do not regret having read it; but I wish I'd saved my money and borrowed it from the library instead.

Misled by the marketing, I was hoping to find this a volume of accessible critical analysis of Jane Austen's influence on modern fiction. Boy, was I wrong. Only two of the essays were really thought-provoking: Lauren Baratz-Logsted's essay on Austen's heirs in chick-lit and Karen Joy Fowler's discussion of Austen's modern audience. However, I also enjoyed Jo Beverly's interesting exploration of women's economic prospects in Austen's period, which brought Elizabeth Bennet's budget into modern terms. Lawrence Watt-Evans' essay on war in Austen (or the absence of war in Austen) was very thorough if somewhat out-of-place. Aside from these stand-outs, the other essays are, for the most part, musings on Austen's relevance to the authors' personal lives -- light, amusing fare. Some of them are rewritings or sequels of part of Austen's own work, and I can't evaluate these: I found them tiresome, but perhaps that's just because they weren't what I wanted from the book.

This collection of dates with Jane Austen has something for everyone, and the diversity of the essays points to the continuing popularity of "Pride and Prejudice". Several writers examine Austen as The Mother of All Chick-lit, leading the reader to wonder at the esteem in which Austen is held, while the thousands of books she spawned languish in their pink ghettos. Several writers examine details of Austen's world, while others freely enter in to it, and still others drag her into the 21st century. I don't know when I've enjoyed a collection of essays so much. A few of the writers I've read elsewhere, but many are new to me. Not all of the twenty-five perspectives offered will appeal equally, but all are well-written, informative, and amusing. And they'll all send you back to the original, thinking.

a mixed bag but enjoyable overall. I am always fascinated to read new takes on Jane Austen's books which are among my favorites and *Pride and Prejudice* is one of her very best. The articles by Adam Roberts, Joyce Millman, Shanna Swendson, Jill Winters, Erin Dailey, and Jane Espenson are the stand outs in this book.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that magazines should be judged by their best contents and collections and journals by their worst, as they are not under the same pressure to meet deadlines and fill pages. The worst here is Mercedes Lackey who in the absence of anything useful or interesting to say has inserted an advertisement for her own writings, but the competition was pretty severe, including Adam Roberts who has used his pages to defend simply indefensible conduct on the part of certain (other) academic critics. Crusie, an excellent writer herself, should not have signed off as editor to a collection containing these articles. Jane Austen wrote out *P&P* at least three times longhand, and sweated off at least a quarter of her text before it went to a publisher. I'm not sure some of these authors did more than type once and hit the spellcheck. All of which said, Jo Beverley's "Gold Diggers of 1813" is first-rate work--a neat summary for beginners of the dilemma of an Austen heroine. It deserves to be reprinted in better company. Until it is, this one will stay on the shelves.

Reading this book of essays is much like sitting down to discuss *Pride and Prejudice* with a group of friends over coffee. Not every essay is a winner. Some cause laughing out loud (what if the characters in the book had been equipped with cell phones, indeed). A few sound like English class assignments written the night before a deadline. There is something worthwhile in all of them, though. This is a good book to take traveling since the reader can pick it up, read a brief essay or two, and come back to it later. One reason *P & P* remains a top seller is that each generation sees the book with a fresh perspective--as displayed nicely in *Flirting with Pride and Prejudice*.

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