



A Strange Beginning

Gretta Curran Browne

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He was later to become known as "The most beautiful and most famous man in England" — but not yet...

Beginning when he is a boy of ten years old, we join George Gordon when he is living a miserable life with his manic Scottish mother in a few rented rooms above a shop in Aberdeen; unaware that his true surname is not Gordon, and that his true heritage is with the English aristocracy - who soon come to claim him.

A life of wealth and privilege is then bestowed upon him, which eventually sets the stage for him to prove his own individual worth, in his own way, and in his own time.

Meticulously researched, and adapted into novel form, 'A Strange Beginning' is the first of a series of books about the most iconic young man of his time, whose fame still lives on today.

"My name alone shall be my epitaph."

A Strange Beginning Details

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Author : Gretta Curran Browne

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From Reader Review A Strange Beginning for online ebook

Ann says

Like so many, I had learned little about Byron, and read just tiny snippets of his work as assignments in high school. I knew next to nothing about his childhood or even that he walked with a limp from a deformed foot. This was an easy read and I found myself fascinated about his early life which so clearly defined him.

This first book covers his early childhood up to his age of 22 yrs old. His relationship with his mother, his sexual abuse as a child and how he found animals more loving and trustworthy than his mother and her followers. The portrait that is painted in this book is one of a gentle quiet young man who finds true friends and even love at Harrows and Cambridge amongst his fellow students. His wit and dashing appearance endears him to everyone. Away from his mother he is free to write and enjoy life as any young man should.

As he enters his early twenties multiple tragedies from the death of him mother (for whom he has very conflicted feelings) and the loss of several of his friends leaves him grief stricken. I can't wait to start the follow-on books which cover the rest of his life. He lived an extraordinary life and left the world with memorable poetry.

Janet Mahlum says

I think two stars is a generous rating. I started out liking it, but it grew tedious and boring the more I read. I read it on my Kindle and EVERY Kindle page had an italicized WORD. I got SO tired of READING all those STRESSED words. Also, I wanted to get out my red pen and correct all the grammatical errors. Who IS editing books these days? Although the description of the book says, "meticulously researched," I got out my Byron poetry book and read the biographical sketch it included. Although some of the details were certainly similar, some were polar opposites. I can't imagine how the author gets two more books out of the little life left after this book ends. Well, I guess she can do what she did in this book, quote Byron's poetry and other poets' poetry for pages. If you are having trouble sleeping at night, I'd recommend reading this book at bedtime. Otherwise I'm sure there are much better biographies out there.

Sandra Turner says

Interesting read

I do not know much about Lord Byron, but found the author's descriptions of him interesting. Especially the psychological perspective of his personality. His relationship with his mother, friends and servants describe a complex mind full of contradicting thoughts and emotions, yet very likable. I also liked Byron's poetry interspersed throughout the narrative. Would recommend to anyone who likes poetry and an introduction to Lord Byron.

Laura says

I was interested in learning about Byron's life, so I took a chance and bought this for Kindle through a BookBub special.

The book is a biographical novel and covers Byron's life from the age of 10 to his early 20s. For accounts of his later life, there are other books in this series.

The author has done considerable research on Byron's life and I find that commendable.

The book begins with 10-year-old George Gordon (Byron) living in Aberdeen, Scotland. He took his mother's surname, Gordon, since his father, Lord Byron, had lost all his money. George's English father left when he was a small child, promised to return, but died with debts, leaving his wife and son without much means of support. Byron lived with Catherine, his unstable mother, and her servant, May Gray, who sexually abused Byron. His mother was abusive physically and emotionally. To add to his woes, Byron was born with one deformed foot (apparently, from his vain mother using tight corsets during pregnancy) and was made fun of by other children, as well as by his own mother. Life was miserable for him until William, the 5th Baron Byron of Rochdale, England, declared him his heir and sent for him. The stipulation was that the boy took the surname Byron in order to obtain his inheritance.

With the death of the 5th Baron Byron, young George traveled to England as the rightful heir and lord. Byron now lived with his mother and servants at Newstead Abbey, an estate in Nottinghamshire that was the Byron ancestral home. He was sent to the best schools and adjusted to a life of leisure for a time. Due to his grief over his sweetheart Mary marrying another man, he left England to travel abroad for more than a year. He returned to find his mother had died the previous day. Byron was in shock. To add to his distress, he received the sad news that his good friend, Edward Long, had recently died. Charles Matthews, another dear friend, died within a few days of his return to England.

It was enjoyable to learn something of this great poet's life. It was wonderful to have some of his poetry and even a little of Wordsworth's in the book, but, unfortunately, the text was too often tedious and boring. There was relief in Byron's letters and poetry, as well as the accounts of Byron's pet bear and dogs. He did have a love for animals, as well as a great fondness for his friends. Byron was essentially a kind-hearted human being. What I found hard to take was the general self-absorption of the English upper classes in Byron's circle. Their hedonism, boredom, need to gamble, drink heavily, and be entertained was tiresome. All of this could have been more palatable if the author's writing had had more vibrancy.

Zuladawn Hall says

I totally loved this book. I love reading historical novels, and this one is actually a biographical novel, the first in the series. My mother wrote a biographical novel. It was the first time I actually read one that was a biography, but written like a novel, interweaving the life of her father's growing up years in Denmark and ending with the sighting of the Statue of Liberty. This book was done in the same manner as Mom's. She brought Lord Byron to life. The book was interesting and entertaining. Having enjoyed Lord Byron's poetry in the past, I'm not anxious to read them again, especially the ones quoted. However, the first book ended when he was 21 years of age. I wanted to wait a full month before buying the 2nd book, but didn't wait. I'm

now on chapter 18 of this 2nd book. Thanks Gretta Curran Browne for bringing him to life. (I wish I had access to this book when I was studying English lit.)

Gretta, if you are reading this, does the "e" at the end of your name (even though it is a surname) mean an hierarchy placement of you and/or your husband?

Gail Baugniet says

Sometimes a book is so good it is meant to be devoured in one day. For me, on this day, A Strange Beginning was that book. The author's extensive and loving knowledge of Lord Byron and the steady build-up of an intriguing storyline never wavered.

Browne takes the reader through the tumultuous childhood and college years of this famous poet, illustrating a world both strange and emotionally traumatizing.

Laticia says

Lord Byron

I gave this book a 4 because the beginning did not hold my attention for more than a little at a time. However, halfway through I couldn't wait to continue. A Strange Beginning gave me insight and a better understanding of Lord Byron. I am excited to continue the series.....*** I was given a free copy of this book in exchange for a review.

Phyllis says

This is the first in a series and begins when George Gordon is ten years old. He lives with his manic mother who at times loves him and then ridicules him. When an old uncle dies in England they move from Scotland to his ancestral home in England and he becomes Lord Byron. Well researched and well written with a little of his poetry working its way into the story.

Triin says

I was buzzing to read the novel and to learn about Byron - a true superstar of the era. Unfortunately this was not what I found. There were no sizzling details about his notorious lovelife. Even the historic details were generic - it had a long list of names Byron partied and had fiery intellectual conversations with, but the reader doesn't get a clue of the topics they might have discussed to get a better picture of the time period. The best part of the book were his poems.

Cindy Woods says

Excellent

This is an excellent biographical novel about the early life of Lord Byron written by Greta Curran Browne who has my most ardent praise for her amazing literary talent.

This author has blown life into a most enigmatic poet.....a very interesting story. The focal point of Lord Byron's poetry of love being his Mary is described in this book most thoroughly from his first meeting on. The many close, personal friendships he develops along the way as he is forced to deal with an outrageous mother are described in detail with smattering of his poetry are introduced.

One has to be in awe of such a talent, especially given the early 19th century setting in England and later during Lord Byron's extended travels.

I highly recommend this book to readers of historical fiction as I begin the next book in this enlightening series.

Theresa says

New appreciation for Byron and poetry

I'm going to be honest: poetry is not my jam. That said, this excellent, absorbing book piqued my interest in revisiting the poetry of Lord Byron. Why? I think it is because the author's excellent research, wonderful writing and inclusion of excerpts of his poetry and his many personal letters to his mother, half-sister and friends helped to put his writings into the interesting, relatable, complex and at times, heart-breaking context of Lord Byron's life up to age 23. Knowing why Byron wrote the lovely words for which he is known helps to make the poetry much more meaningful, at least for me.

Bottom line: As an English literature major, I did my fair share of reading poetry including Byron's and while I could appreciate the beauty of the language, it never "grabbed" me the way well written fiction does. Having read Ms. Browne's first offering in her Byron series, I can say that I have gained a much greater appreciation of his work as well as hers. It's not hard to understand how Byron is viewed as the creator of the Romantic Hero. He was one himself.

Dean McIntyre says

Just finished A STRANGE BEGINNING, first in the Lord Byron series by Greta Curran Browne. While there is much true-to-life biographical detail of Byron's life, the book is filled with much that is fictional and imagined. The book covers his early life up to his early 20s, including the challenge of his physical infirmity (deformed foot), overbearing and manipulative mother, sexual abuse, private schooling, inheriting considerable wealth and his title, numerous school and social friendships, his loves, and early successes as a poet. It's a good blend of story, history, and biography. Works well as a stand-alone volume....an enjoyable read.

Gin Hunt says

THE BEST!

I really thought that reading this book would be good for my literary knowledge but probably not too entertaining. I was so wrong. The author has allowed me to get to know and love Lord Byron. All the characters came to life. There were people in his life I would like to have banished to a desert island and others I wanted to bestow awards and accolades on for their live and loyalty. Even the animals were given life and made me wish they were all mine. This book is so well written you might think it fiction. The author brings history and poetry into your thoughts with color and motion. This is not a 'sit and read a few pages at a time' book. Far from it-I could hardly put it down and although it was a great ending to a stand alone book, there are more books continuing on with Byrons life and I can't wait to get them too! HIGHLY recommend! :)

HIGHLY RECOMMEND!!! :)

Eishinas says

A biographical reality more appealing than fiction.

I kept growing up with George Gordon or Lord Byron, at the turn of every page as author Gretta Curran enriched my knowledge and curiosity with her biographical novel.

Author Curran has showcased her talent of writing a well thought and well researched read by capturing the very basic moments, emotional outbursts and events in life of Lord Byron, weaving into an engrossing tale of life struggle through a disturbing and troubled childhood growing into a mature, respected and renowned man. A sad, heart wrenching past of mother Catherine Gordon provides an insight through multidimensional characteristics of her character, which was hard to believe and accept but was justified as the narration takes a stroll down the lane of her history revealing her own sad, cruel and fake relationship with her husband.

It was very inspiring to learn and look upon Lord Byron, whose 'not so perfect life' carved out a wonderful personality making this novel a spellbinding page turner.

'A Strange Beginning' is definitely a novel which can't be appreciated and described for its sheer beauty by mere words. Highly recommended to all history lovers. Those who find fictional read captivating this biographical reality is more appealing than fiction and worth reading!

Olga Wojtas says

I very nearly chucked this away while reading the prologue - no 18th century Doric-speaking Aberdonian urchins would have shouted: "Come an' see the laddie wi' the club foot!" But I stuck with this first volume of Gretta Curran Browne's Byron series and found it interesting and entertaining. It's not great literature, but I don't think it claims to be. She has certainly done her research, and her novel presents a plausible account of Byron's early life, backed by judicious use of his poetry. I wasn't impressed by the regular use of it's for its, and Burn's for Burns' or Burns's. And she has an EXTRAORDINARY habit of putting ODD words in italics for NO APPARENT REASON (for capital letters, read italics). If you can cope with a sentence like "Approaching Newstead Abbey and admiring anew the palatial magnificence of it's ancient architecture - he

saw that venerable old LIVING ANTIQUITY, Joe Murray, come rushing towards him, his strong mastiff face drawn with concern," you'll love it. I was less tolerant, but I still broadly enjoyed the story, which includes 21-year-old Byron's amazing embassy to Albanian tyrant Ali Pasha. Ms Curran Browne has no need to trouble herself over my opinion since she has a host of loyal fans who I'm sure will buy her entire Byronic series: I'm toying with the idea of doing the same.
