



The History of England

Jane Austen , Cassandra Austen (Illustrator) , Deirdre Le Faye (Photographer) , A.S. Byatt (Introduction)

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As a schoolgirl, Jane Austen must have suffered terribly under her lessons of English history. The sixteen-year-old finally took revenge and wrote her own history of the Kings and Queens of England. Containing thirteen mischievous portraits of the English Royals, this very entertaining--and incomparably unreliable--history book is illustrated by Mandy Schludt, whose previous work in illustration and book design received the distinguished Stiftung Buchkunst Prize in German (2005).

The History of England Details

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From Reader Review The History of England for online ebook

????? Jenn ???? says

I enjoyed Ms. Austen's take on the kings & queens of England. This short history is written as a commentary that included her contempt of some, ambivalence towards others, and the upmost respect for a few. Loved how she claims her ignorance, lack of interest, and her own biases in her writing. Overall, an enjoyable book especially as many illustrations of her longhand version were included.

Elin says

I have been a Jane Austen fan since I first read Pride and Prejudice over 20 years ago. That's why I picked this book up. It's pretty obvious that this is something she wrote in her teens. It's fun, and I did enjoy it, but it's far from as good as her novels.

K. says

Would have been much more delightful if I was well-schooled in my British history (sadly, I am not).

Susanna Olson says

I have a confession:

I am a teenage girl. I am a christian teenage girl. I am a christian teenage girl who loves literature. I've never really liked Jane Austen Novels.

Please.

Don't kill me.

At least let me explain first.

Her work has much merit - I admit, but I never really understood the hype. Her stories can be interesting, her characters solid (Mr. Knightley = YES!) and her writing good - no doubt. However, I find her prose a bit stuffy and the attention to needless details annoying. [i.e. the lengthy portion of Emma describing the arrangements for a small ball that doesn't end up happening anyway.] I may be prejudiced, simply by the fact that I've never been one for romance novels. Romance in novels is fine. Novels entirely devoted to fictional character marrying other fictional characters and how much money they gained, not so much.

Still, I admire Jane Austen - she was well educated, strong, and out of pace with her society's expectations. One of the historical figures I would love to have met. When I found out that she wrote a history of England

when she was my age - I couldn't help but be interested.

Now I have another confession: I am a history geek.

Jane Austen's The History of England begins as follows:

The history of England
from the reign of
Henry the IV
to the death of
to Charles the I

By a partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian.

N.B There will be very few Dates in this History

Sound promising? I thought so.
And it only get's better from there.
A young Jane Austen full of wit and hilarity
completely ridicules the most popular history
texts of her day by shying a way from their
obsession with the objective to quote sources
such as Shakespeare's plays, a popular novel,
and her own opinion.
She writes in the style of a haughty history
text but fills it with her own personal opinions,
outrageous misstatements, and horrid puns.

To see one of the most popular novelist's in history
in a young and untamed shape, was extremely interesting.
The added bonus was seeing a famous 18th century opinion
on one of my favorite topics - English history.
I walked away still chuckling with laughter and feeling
a much higher respect for this famous authoress.
Her adolescent and unpolished talents reveal a
young intellectual bubbling with wild opinions,
wit, and cynicism. It made me realize something I had
heard before: Jane Austen hadn't just written long romances,
her novels were satires. Admittedly a tamed version.
The more I think about it, the more it makes sense.
I am sure this realization will make for a much more understandable,
a much more enjoyable, and a much more informed reading of
future Austen novels. I am actually looking forward to diving
into the last two Austen's I have yet to tackle - Persuasion and
Northanger Abbey.

I will never regret reading the tiny history.
I laughed and I learned and would gladly do it again.
I recommend it for anyone who loves Austen or history or both.
Knowing the true facts greatly helped me to understand her silly statements,
but I do not think that is necessary to at least partially enjoy this little volume.
So unloose your seriousness and break out your funny bone.
Enjoy Austen in her unbroken state - fresh, young, and extremely funny.
As far as I can say - Austen at her best!

Reread? Yes. Probably tomorrow in fact.

Trish says

Bwahahaha. What a delightful little read. Jane Austen proves that she was a woman with a great sense of humour.

The book contains a quick run-down of Henry the 4th, 5th and 6th; Edward the 4th and 5th; Richard the 3rd; Henry the 7th and 8th; Edward the 6th; Mary (yes, Bloody Mary) and Elizabeth; James the 1st; and, finally, Charles the 1st.

Although I expected it to be fun, I was actually surprised just HOW funny Jane Austen was when writing about these historical figures. Her dry wit that I so treasure in her novels is applied here as well although the chapters are quite short of course (so as not to bore the reader). More like a collection of witty thoughts about the monarchs, really.

Katie Lumsden says

Not a great history perhaps, but certainly a great piece of wit.

Kelly says

I bought this quaint little book for the Jane Austen Centre in Bath and I'm so glad I did. It is a wonderful little book at just made me burst out laughing at several intervals because of Austen's well known sarcasm which, at the tender age of 15, was already fully formed. I can see it being my go-to book when I need a little pick me up. It's reiterated Jane Austen as one of my favourite authors.

Fred says

Isn't Jane Austen great? This was such fun!

Jane Austen's wit and sparkingly no-nonsense writing style is absolutely unrivalled: when you read one of her books, not only do you enjoy the writing but you enjoy her *personality*!

Regardless of how true the facts in this book are, I trust Jane totally and therefore feel inclined to agree with EVERYTHING she says. Plus, this is the most entertaining (if unreliable) history book you will ever find!

Who knew Jane was so vehement against the Tudors? In particular, she absolutely **despised** Queen Elizabeth I, calling her a “disgrace to humanity” and a “pest in society”. The primary reason for this was she thought the execution of Mary Queen of Scots was practically a murder, given how unjust it was (in her eyes). Jane acquitted Mary of all crimes and evidently admired her a lot.

She also admired the ‘witty and beautiful’ Anne Boleyn, who she also acquitted of any crimes, whilst quite rightly slating Henry VIII in the process.

0/5 for historical accuracy. 12/5 for entertainment and an honest, unrestrained opinion of every monarch from Henry IV to Charles I! Ten minutes very well spent. :-)

Elliot A says

This was hilarious and sort of ridiculous. I love Jane Austen’s wit and steadfast opinions. Another little treat I found in Bath, I can see how it delighted Austen’s family.

Julia says

A history of England from 1399 to 1649, written by a 16-year-old Jane Austen who had her tongue firmly in cheek.

Declaring herself a “partial, prejudiced, & ignorant Historian” on page one, she proceeds to mangle and muddle all the historical facts she can think of in a delightfully droll parody of every dry history textbook you have ever read. Henry IV, we are told, ascended to the throne “after having prevailed on his cousin & predecessor Richard the 2d to resign it to him, & to retire for the rest of his life to Pomfret Castle, where he happened to be murdered.” Henry VI is condemned solely for having been a Lancastrian, while Richard III is deemed “very respectable” for having belonged to the house of York. And Henry VIII’s only virtue, apparently, was “not being quite so bad as his daughter Elizabeth,” herself a “pest to Society” who persecuted the “amiable” and “innocent” Mary Queen of Scots.

Wonderfully witty. Wonderfully wry. And an important look at the girl who would go on to pen Pride and Prejudice in just a few short years time.

Mary Catelli says

One of her juvenilia. As usual, extremely funny and light-hearted. She had satire down pat early.

Cynda says

3 1/2 ?

Jane Austen laughs at the ignorant, prejudiced women of her time. Women were educated to be accomplished, to have general information. But they were not so educated to be informed. What would be the purpose of this education? So as not to have completely unaware wives and mothers? I think some of it maybe

philosophical. The science of the day was often called "natural philosophy." I just don't know. The middle class was increasingly literate. This is the beginning place of women's education. Across the Atlantic in the US, middle-class women were being encouraged to read and to become educated. They were to be the mothers who would be the first educators of the sons who would need information and education to better take advantage of the new opportunities in the new country. In England, this impetus did not exist. Austen had much to laugh at in England. So could do so because she was well, or definitely better, educated than most other women.

In the 1999 Mansfield Park movie-- the novel, Austen's letters, and Austen's The History of England-- all went into the making of the movie. Fanny Price is in her bedroom/old governess's room with Edmund, reading her manuscript to him, a book that does not exist in the novel, a book that exists in Austen's body of work. This Fanny Price calls her manuscript "The History of England by a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant historian," Apparently Austen believed many women of her era fit this description.

I enjoyed this book. I laughed and smiled and recognized raucous humor. That would be 3? by my rating system. The quality of satire takes this to the next 1/2 star. What prevents this from being 4 ?? Still juvenalia. Raucous fun. Workable and worked topic. I will probably read it again. Not enlightening.

(This selection is part of a short collection: Lesley Castle)

Daren says

A book of two separate parts - published as a Penguin 60s Classic.

The first part - which gives the book its title - is an irreverent and amusing summary of the line of succession of the English Throne from Henry the 4th (who took power in 1399) through to Charles 1st (who reigned from 1625 to 1649 when he was executed). More than anything it serves to remind us what a boring period we have lived in, with regard to the British Monarchy - with the current Queen in occupation over 63 years. Austen's short summary tells of the turmoil and constant change!

The second part is a self proclaimed 'unfinished novel in letters'. Letters sent variously between the characters of the novel provide the narrative and the letters often contradict each other when explaining the two sides of the same situation - lots of gossip, backstabbing and self serving. Not really my genre, but an interesting way to have written a novel, and short & fast moving enough to finish quickly.

I was disproportionately annoyed with the spelling errors - every occurrence of friend, believe (etc) were printed with the I & E transposed. I have no idea why the publishers left it this way - I suppose it was supposed to be quirky?

Nevertheless, somewhere between 3 and 4 stars - rounded up as I did enjoy the royal rundown.

Shelved as fiction (the second part definitely is) because there is enough untruthfulness and opinion in the royal part.

Becca says

"By a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant historian," Jane Austen's wit comes through in her comical take on Britain's monarchs. She wrote this at sixteen. For me the highlight of the book is when she gets to the Tudor

monarchs, including, "that pest of society," Elizabeth.

Lisa Brantly says

It was diverting. smiled a couple of times.
