



Heartstone

Elle Katharine White

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A debut historical fantasy that recasts Jane Austen's beloved *Pride & Prejudice* in an imaginative world of wyverns, dragons, and the warriors who fight alongside them against the monsters that threaten the kingdom: gryphons, direwolves, lamias, banshees, and lindworms.

They say a Rider in possession of a good blade must be in want of a monster to slay—and Merybourne Manor has plenty of monsters.

Passionate, headstrong Aliza Bentaine knows this all too well; she's already lost one sister to the invading gryphons. So when Lord Merybourne hires a band of Riders to hunt down the horde, Aliza is relieved her home will soon be safe again.

Her relief is short-lived. With the arrival of the haughty and handsome dragonrider, Alastair Daired, Aliza expects a battle; what she doesn't expect is a romantic clash of wills, pitting words and wit against the pride of an ancient house. Nor does she anticipate the mystery that follows them from Merybourne Manor, its roots running deep as the foundations of the kingdom itself, where something old and dreadful slumbers . . . something far more sinister than gryphons.

It's a war Aliza is ill-prepared to wage, on a battlefield she's never known before: one spanning kingdoms, class lines, and the curious nature of her own heart.

Elle Katharine White infuses elements of Austen's beloved novel with her own brand of magic, crafting a modern epic fantasy that conjures a familiar yet wondrously unique new world.

Heartstone Details

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Author : Elle Katharine White

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From Reader Review Heartstone for online ebook

Jaime Arkin says

“They say a Rider in possession of a good blade must be in want of a monster to slay—and Merybourne Manor has plenty of monsters.”

This book... was amazing!

I'm going to start by saying that I'm not usually a fan of epic historical fantasy it's just too much for me to ingest and this cover just screams it with that dragon... but I knew I had to give it a try when I read it was touted as Pride & Prejudice meets dragons, wyverns and warriors!

From the very first page I was pulled into this story, and yes you get hints of the P&P elements in both the plot and characters, but White has created her own story here filled with fantasy and imagination. It's both familiar and something completely new and wondrous.

Aliza Bentaine lives at Merybourne Manor with her parents and sisters... the manor has recently come under attack by a pack of gryphons, including an attack that took the life of one of her beloved sisters. Aliza is our Elizabeth here... she's quiet but loyal and loves her sisters and family, and she would do anything to keep them safe so the loss of her sister is heartbreak. She's reassured though when Lord Merybourne decides he has no choice but to hire a group of Riders to come rid the grounds of the gryphons and so arrives Alastair Daired.

Alastair is our Darcy equivalent character and dare I say he's exactly who I had hoped he would be. Descended from a legendary warrior, Edan the Fireborn, he is a dragonmaster and cranky and grumpy and everything you would expect he might be. Of course it doesn't hurt that he's also handsome. From the get go Alastair and Aliza butt heads and disagree on so many things, but the predicaments they are forced into also build a level of trust and admiration between them.

But not only are our main characters well done, the secondary characters are wonderfully developed... from Master Brysney to Anjey, Leyda & Mari I loved getting to know each of them, and their parts of the story were just as developed as Aliza and Alastair. I also really enjoyed the development of all of the relationships in this story... from the sisters to the riders, their stories kept me turning pages and again you get hints of P&P here in the relationships that develop, but they are still totally unique!

Of course there is some romance... there are moments you will definitely swoon and if you're like me, you can't help but cheer for Aliza and Alastair as they learn that maybe they aren't the person they originally thought each other were and learn more about what makes them who they are. Let's just say my shipper heart was super happy... even if I did want some more kissing.

I mentioned that there are dragons in this story and I have to tell you that I loved them... I loved the history that White has created for them, and I really loved their role in this story. But dragons aren't the only fantastical creature here... White introduces us to so many others and the world-building around them was wonderfully done.

It makes me sad to say that this is a stand-alone, because I selfishly want more! I will be looking forward to anything that White will be writing in the future. With excellent world-building, action-packed story-telling,

and incredibly developed characters and relationships, I'm excited to get this on my all-time favorites bookshelf!

Alyssa says

4.5 stars. Maybe 5 stars. I haven't decided yet. I LOVED this book. =)

EDIT: OKAY FIVE STARS IT IS. :D :D :D :D :D

Check out a swoony excerpt from the book! While *Heartstone* is NOT a romance novel, it does feature a lovely and subtle romance. =) Click the graphic below!

Review posted on The Eater of Books! blog

Heartstone by Elle Katharine White

Publisher: Harper Voyager

Publication Date: January 17, 2017

Rating: 5 stars

Source: eARC from Edelweiss

Summary (from Goodreads):

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modern epic fantasy that conjures a familiar yet wondrously unique new world.

What I Liked:

I love Pride and Prejudice, and I love fantasy, so I had high hopes that I would enjoy this book. I'd only seen one other review for the book when I started it, so it was fairly fresh and "untainted" to me. I am so pleased that I LOVED this book! I've been feeling kind of meh about the books I've been reading - they've been good (some were not-so-good), but I haven't felt gushy-passionate about most of them. This book though! This is one to gush about for ages.

Aliza Bentaine lives in Merybourne Manor with her three sisters and parents. The Manor has been attacked by gryphons several times recently - including one attack that claimed the life of her youngest sister. Lord Merybourne hires Riders to hunt down the gryphon, and so they arrive. Aliza's older beautiful sister takes a liking to one of the Riders, and that romance blossoms. But one of the Riders, Alastair Daired, is as haughty as he is handsome, and doesn't like anyone. But he's the finest of the Riders, with an impressive lineage and impeccable instincts. The Riders rid Merybourne Manor of the gryphons, but something ancient is awakening. Gryphons at Merybourne Manor were just the start of a war that has been brewing, unbeknownst to all.

I. Looooved. This book. I feel like I can't even write a proper review because all I want to do is gush and squeal and direct everyone to Amazon and Barnes and Noble and Chapters Indigo to buy a copy for yourself. This is adult fantasy, with an intense and sweeping story, fascinating world-building, really likable characters, and a swoony, subtle romance. Squeee! This is everything I love, all in one package. And with a beautiful cover to boot!

This book is told from Aliza's first-person perspective. Aliza is the equivalent of "Elizabeth", in Pride and Prejudice. Aliza is softhearted and kind, and she isn't bold or fierce. Yet she would do anything for her family and those she loves, something that she proves over and over, as the story goes on. Aliza is somewhat of an artist, and an herbmaster, and everyone likes her. She isn't as beautiful as her sister, so she likes to think that she is more in the shadows, but she's very likable and sweet.

I liked Aliza, and I loved Daired. He's the equivalent of Darcy, and oh my goodness what a fine grouchy, haughty male protagonist he was. White captured the essence of Darcy perfectly. Daired seems like a haughty Rider that keeps to himself, and he doesn't seem very nice at first. But as the story goes on, we see that he isn't so bad, like he appeared to be. Daired is extremely selfless and noble, even when it appears that he is being selfish. He thinks of others first all the time; Aliza seriously misjudges him at first. But the author set up the story that way, so who could blame her. Daired was never completely awful to Aliza, not in a cruel way, or intentionally. He's so Darcy-esque and I adore him!

The secondary characters are quite likable as well. Aliza has three sisters (one older, two younger), and each are incredibly different. Anjey is the older, beautiful Bentaine girl who falls for one of the Riders (not Daired). She is sweet and sunshine-y. Leyda is restless and always looking for an adventure. Mari is reserved and quiet, never attending balls because she is stuck in a book. The Riders are mysterious at first, but I liked them. Brysney is the one who falls for Anjey, and he is such a charming guy. His sister, Charis, is another Rider; she is a fierce warrior. There are several other Riders whose names I've forgotten - their roles aren't as important in the book. The dragons are very important - Akarra is Daired's, and she plays a significant role in the book.

Dragons and gryphons aren't the only magical creatures in this story's world. There is a haunted forest, an

ancient and deadly creature, the Silent King (you do not want to mess with him)... so many secrets unfold, and it all starts with gryphons attacking Merybourne Manor. The author paints the setting well, and crafts the world-building expertly. I love the world that she has created here. I could vividly picture and imagine what was happening.

It felt like one big epic, or a large story that did rise to a climax, but there were other smaller climaxes throughout the book. An interesting thing about this story was that there were little stories that arose with conflicts, but those subplots were resolved, but then they showed up again. For example, Aliza received a marriage proposal from a nobleman. She refused, but then her friend ended up having to marry him. Further into the story, Aliza goes to visit the friend, and she and Daire meet again (after months, because he and the other Riders left Merybourne Manor). I liked how the subplot resolved itself (Aliza didn't marry that strange man, her friend did) but then showed up again (Aliza went to visit her friend, and met Daire there, which was a surprise, but very necessary for the story to move forward).

Of course, this novel is a standalone, so it was bound to feel like one big story with little stories happening too. I love standalone novels! This one was magnificent. I loved the tone of the writing too - it's a light tone, despite the seriousness of the plot. I wouldn't necessarily say humorous, but definitely light. There is a lot of fun, especially with the dragons, with gnomes, with forges and massive castle-like mansions. Aliza had her own adventure, in this story!

The romance was wonderful! Very subtle, but also very swoony. If you're familiar with Pride and Prejudice, then you sort of know what to expect... the author does follow the romance of Pride and Prejudice to an extent, but I'd say the romance of this book is very much its own. I shipped grouchy Daire and sweet Aliza so hard. They were perfectly for each other! Daire was constantly (unintentionally) doing things that ended up irritating Aliza, and she didn't exactly hide her irritation sometimes. While she isn't a fierce warrior, she is definitely headstrong, and the two of them go toe-to-toe and are a good match.

I should also mention that there is NO love triangle. I know in Pride and Prejudice, there is Mr. Wickham... there is a character that is "Mr. Wickham", in this book, but Aliza barely knows him at all. They interact exactly two times, and there isn't anything between them. Aliza never had a particular good feeling about him, and with good reason. Nothing remotely triangular about this story's romance!

Things started out "simple" (with the Riders coming to hunt the gryphons), but the story got complex and intense as the story went on. The ending is a whirlwind of action and emotions, and I was completely sucked in and hanging on for dear life. I love how the author chose to wrap things up. It was a neat, tidy ending that was very satisfying, with just a hint of bittersweet (nothing to do with the two main characters). I will definitely be rereading this book in the future!

What I Did Not Like:

Hmmm, the romance addict in me would have loved to see more between Daire and Aliza! But for an adult fantasy fiction that draws inspiration from Pride and Prejudice, obviously this book wouldn't be like that. Which is totally okay!

Would I Recommend It:

I definitely recommend this book, to anyone adult fiction fans, fantasy fans, Pride and Prejudice fans. This story was light and entertaining, yet complex and dense and so well-written. I've read a number of adult fiction novels this year (not adult romance, mind), but I think this one is my favorite.

Rating:

4.5 stars -> rounded up to 5 stars. Yup, I'm giving a book five stars. I adored this book! I am looking forward to reading more fantasy by this author. Especially if she will be writing more retellings!

Sarah says

Pride and Prejudice with dragons.

...

Pride and Prejudice. WITH DRAGONS.

....

WITH DRAGONS people! Oh please, please, please let this be as awesome as it sounds!

C.G. Drews says

I have a small bit of "love/hate" for this book. Because, like DRAGONS. And they did the dragons *so so well* that I'm not only impressed, I'm a huge fan! We have dragon riders and battles and they kill evil monsters and like yaaaas. **THIS IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF DRAGON STORY I WANT IN MY LIFE.** But. Haha. The middle was so insufferably boring and a dead mushroom has more personality than Aliza. So. Those are rather large drawbacks.

Okay and I confess! I've never read Pride and Prejudice. This is mostly because I can't spell "prejudice" without spellcheck and also stabbing myself in the eye with a spork sounds more appealing than a period drama. But I *have* seen the Lizzie Bennet Diaries vlogs and they're hilarious and great! So I had a good idea of the basic gist of the story. **So I thought it was a good retelling and very entertaining in that respect!** What I reeeeally liked was how there were women warriors and dragon riders and monsters slayers!! So yes the world is still sexist and marriage is still the #1 goal for most of the women....buuuuuuuut WOMEN WERE STILL OUT THERE DOING COOL STUFF.

Now Aliza. Oh dear dear Aliza. You know that song "*there's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza, dear Liza, there's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza, todayyyyyy*". Heard of it? Please? I hope so? it's like some folk tune or something. **BUT MOVING FORWARD:** there's a hole in Aliza's bucket and her personality fell out. Like, dude. She paints and she likes to heal things with herbs. But other than that **she is so passive a potato could've done the polka before her and she would have just smiled demurely.** I kind of cannot even with her. Although I was really impressed that she DIDN'T need a man to save her and she was also a woman of colour.

I did like Darcy! Erm...I mean Daired. He was awkward and kinda dumb and quite cute by the end. I think he would've been 10 x more interesting if he hadn't of followed this method of romance:

Daired: [DON'T LOOK AT HER]

Daired: [DON'T SPEAK TO HER UNLESS YOU HAVE TO ASK TO PASS THE POTATOES]

Daired: [TELL HER YOUR DRAGON LIKES HER]

Daired: [BUT DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT]

Daired: Erm so Aliza...will you marry me. I've been in love with you for months.

Aliza: WTF MAN NO.

That is a true and accurate depiction of the romance. Which I assume is like the original so I can't complain?? But **it's still kind of laughably dumb okay??** Like there is NO chemistry, NO connection, NO CONVERSATION...until he's suddenly asking her to marry him. It did get *better* thank goodness and Aliza wasn't an air-headed fluffball who's whole life was just on pause till a maaaaan came for her. But dude. Let's talk about the definition of *love*.

Hey but at least I was amused! Even when the romance was going terribly, I thought it was HYSTERICAL. Obviously the appropriate reaction, right?

And so much monster killing!! LIKE. The dragons really feature in the first half and people get sliced and burned and they take down evil griffins and yaaas. **Unfortunately that just DROPPED OUT about 40% in and didn't retake until the last 10%.** So do you know what I'm calling that middle bit of the book? FRIKKIN' BORING, MATE. They have tea. Visit a pregnant friend. Comment on the lilies in the fields. Take more tea. Aliza continues to be as interesting as that speck of dust on the carpet. I took 9 naps and waited for the dragons to come back. **And when they did come back THEY DELIVERED, so it was worth it.** But duuuuude. so. bored.

ALL IN ALL: I liked the secondary characters very much so and I adored the dragon scenes. I just can't look passed the fact that the middle was so tedious and Aliza was an absolute void. Excuse me. But I honestly think ALL classics should be retold with dragons, and if someone doesn't write me Black Beauty but with dragons instead of horses and Huckleberry Finn where he is a dragon changeling -- then, YA KNOW, I'M JUST GOING TO BE SITTING HERE WAITING. **I did enjoy this book! I just didn't fall in love with it like I was hoping to.** Definitely recommend if if you like dragons or period dramas or a romance that's so awkward you ship it because the awkward levels are actually admirable.

Debbie Brown says

4.5 rounded up to 5 stars

This is a thoroughly entertaining variation of *Pride and Prejudice* that very effectively transports the reader to a fantasy world filled with mythical creatures, and there's lots of humor and a touch of mystery thrown in for good measure. I don't usually take note of a cover since I read most of my books on an old ink display kindle, but this one is gorgeous. It seems as though Heartstone has been discovered by fantasy readers but not JAFF readers, so I hope to be like a town cryer and encourage you *P&P* lovers to get on board!

All the character names have been changed. Elizabeth Bennet is Aliza Bentaine, Jane is her sister Angelina, Mary is Mari, and Lydia is Leyda. Fitzwilliam Darcy becomes Alastair Daired. Charles Bingley is Cedric Brysney, and his sister's name is Charis instead of Caroline. There's good reason to make such radical changes in the names because, while most of the characters exhibit some trait/traits similar to the originals, many don't at all.

The plot itself shows identifiable parallels to Jane Austen in parts, yet it is also completely original. Women are respected warriors here, just as much as the men. Awesome! There are fierce battles with gryphons and a

lindworm which are integral to the story (UNlike that horrible Zombies book). Daired, Brysney and Charis are among a group of Riders who partner with wyverns/dragons to fight dangerous creatures.

This is beautifully written and makes this alternate universe real to the reader. I am not a habitual reader of fantasy works, so I struggled a bit with the many, many different imaginary species mentioned, some only in passing, trying to remember which were friendly to humans, which required caution, and which were always dangerous. It seemed this knowledge is so commonplace in this world, detailed explanations were deemed unnecessary.

Character names took a while for me, too. I'm so accustomed to reading variations that retain Jane Austen's names that it took a few chapters for me to get used to these new monikers. But that's on me, not the author.

I really got caught up in this universe, though. Loved that when Daired's proposal to Aliza is refused, it's his dragon companion (Akarra) who explains the truth about Wydrick (Wickham) and about Daired's reason for separating Brysney and Angelina to Aliza rather than her reading it all in a letter. And, of course, by this time in the story it didn't surprise me at all that a dragon and human would be having that conversation together! The battle scenes are thrilling, and the climax... WOW! SO great!

Highly recommend to all my JAFF-loving friends!

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

I want to admit up front that I have never, ever read any Jane Austen. How I was able to navigate through four years at a liberal arts university without ever reading this author still amazes me, but I did, without any grand plan by myself to do so. All of which means that when I picked up *Heartstone* by Elle Katharine White I was experiencing this fantasy retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* without any real knowledge of the original, which I actually believe helped make the experience more exciting.

The story here revolves around Aliza Bentaine of Merrybourne Manor; this second of five sisters attempting to survive the horrible monster invasion which has turned their home into an isolated fortress in a sea of gryphons. But, thankfully, a band of Riders has come to Merrybourne to drive off the creatures.

Among this band are two very eligible bachelors, Master Brysney and Master Daired. Both of whom Aliza's mother hopes to pair up with her eligible daughters. But, of course, Daired has made a horrible first impression on Aliza, which keep her from warming to him, so much so that she is only his uneasy ally in the fight to drive off the monsters from the area.

Quickly, the immediate threat of the rampaging gryphons begins to fade in importance, as a much bigger threat looms ever larger. A deadly foe emerging, one who threatens to bind all the monsters to its cause and set them loose on an unprepared land.

Probably the element I appreciated most about this story was something that did not happen. Having only heard things about Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, one of my worst fears when opening this book was that this fantasy retelling would not be modern enough for my sensibilities. I mean, Victorian steampunk is all well and good in my mind, but I just could not see myself enjoying a narrative where the female

characters had to wear dresses while riding dragons or act in the manner of women from the P & P era. So, it was with great thanks I found the author had jettisoned most of these societal trappings in favor of a more modern society.

The other enjoyable part of *Heartstone* was the fantasy elements seamlessly incorporated into this age old tale. Fantastical creatures were woven into all layers of society, not relegated to mere monsters. Dragons were nicely done with their own particular lore. And, the world itself was well endowed with its own history, religion, and cultures.

The only negative I have with the tale is the focus on relationships, specifically the growing romantic relationships between the parties. Yes, I realize this was a retelling of *Pride and Prejudice*. And, yeah, I realize what the main plot of that story is about. But, for whatever reason, I assumed a fantasy retelling meant the author would not be following the original plot line in such a dedicated way. Truly, it bothered me that the #1 goal of these female characters seemed to be getting married.

In sum, *Heartstone* is a fine retelling of Austen's classic. Other reviewers have commented that this narrative is (up until the end) a near perfect match for *Pride and Prejudice*, and I will accept that they are not misleading us by that description, but even with that being said, the author has added her own ideas to Austen's tale and ends it with a fast-paced, exciting conclusion which is all her own. So, whether you like *Pride and Prejudice* or not, *Heartstone* is a fantasy you very well might enjoy.

I received an advanced reading copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

mith says

My love for this book is endless. Eeeeeeeeendlessssss, I tell you. (Eta: (March 12th) so endless that I had to read it again and probably will do so again. And soon.)

It was actually just last year where I fell in love with *Pride & Prejudice*, and I admit, while I did like the book, it was the 2005 movie (the one with Keira Knightley!) that totally won me over. Ever since my AP lit teacher showed my class a snippet of the movie, I put that on the moment I got home. I was a goner for the story then.

Since then I've been trying to find a good P&P retelling to relive the story. Frankly, finding this story felt like a gift I didn't deserve. When edelweiss accepted me, I could hardly contain my surprise.

Heartstone includes the wonderful elements that make P&P such an amazing love story--but it goes beyond that, as any good retelling. Told in a fantasy land with dragons and other wonderful creatures, there's a bigger play at end than just Aliza and Alistair falling in love with each other. White manages to incorporate the cuteness that it those two with the danger in their world and it makes for a wonderful fantasy debut!

As much as I loved *Pride & Prejudice*, there were, of course, some characters that annoyed the living hell out of me, and others I plain didn't like. I knew what to expect from them, but I was so wrong. The way White wrote her secondary characters, those who would directly affect Aliza, she gave them such a beautiful and heartbreak story! The direction she took with Leyda and with Charis, the equivalents of Lydia and

Caroline Bingley. When I finished this, I couldn't help but think that White wrote a fantasy P&P (with DRAGONS!) and better characters (as in, where none of them annoyed me).

I LOVED Aliza! She was smart and brave and caring and at heart, just such a wonderful character! It's so clear she loves her family and would do so much for them. In the book, Aliza is shown to have guilt over a certain tragedy and it made my heart ache every time. I absolutely adored her and her narration was wonderful.

Alistair!!! Oh my goooooooosh, White perfectly captured him with Darcy's attitude and personality!! It's all I can do to not straight up gush about him and them about him and Aliza. By no means is this a romance book, but there are undertones of it involving them AND I LOVED EVERYTHING ABOUT IT. Watching Alistair struggle and even do embarrassing things around Aliza made my poor romantic heart stop beating several times. In any case, Alistair was a loyal and dedicated character throughout the book and I loved him (if you somehow didn't already get that).

THE DRAGON!!!! There are more dragons but the main one was Akarra, Alistair's dragon. (Long story short: there are several riders in Aliza's town to kill off the gryphon infestation and they each have a beast they work with.) Akarra was such an important character and I ADORED HER so much! She was always kind to Aliza and loyal to Alistair--it was clear that both the dragon and the rider would do anything for each other. In time, it was like that with Aliza and Akarra as well.

As a fantasy setting, I loved how White painted her scenes. It was vivid and beautiful and it definitely shows her skill with writing. I also loved the way she incorporated the other fantasy creatures throughout the book! There were quite a few of them and they played a part in the bigger picture of the book! I thought that was super unique--this was a retelling, but every good retelling has more to it, and White definitely did that with Heartstone.

I'm going to just stop it here. I loved this book, every single thing about it. The romance, the characters, the dragons... everything was just perfect. I definitely recommend this book if you love fantasy and/or Pride & Prejudice!

That being said, ALL THE STAAAAAAAARS!!

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/02/06/...>

Pride and Prejudice retellings and other Austenesque-inspired stories have traditionally been hit-or-miss with me, but there was something about Heartstone that drew me to it right away. Might it have been the dragons? Okay yeah, it was the dragons.

While I'll be the first to admit I'm no aficionado on the works of Jane Austen, I am familiar enough with Pride and Prejudice to know that Heartstone is actually a pretty faithful rendition of the original, in some places following the plot so closely that I was surprised the author took such a direct route. The story follows Aliza Bentaine, the second of five daughters in a family living at Merybourne Manor. Their home has been set upon by monsters as of late, and six months ago tragedy struck as Aliza's youngest sister was attacked and killed by one of the wild gryphons that have invaded the surrounding woods. This has led to the arrival

of a band of Riders who have come to Merybourne to eradicate the creatures, and among them are the warriors Master Brysney and Master Daired.

Excited to have two noble bachelors visit the household, Aliza's mother quickly ensures that her daughters would be present at the party to receive the Riders, and her hopes are answered as Brysney takes an immediate liking to Anjey, the eldest. Aliza herself, however, is unimpressed by Daired, whom she finds rude, arrogant, and standoffish. It also didn't help that due to a hilarious misunderstanding, Daired started off their introductions by kicking Aliza's good friend Tobble the hobgoblin clear across the yard. But in order to be polite to their guests, Aliza makes an effort to get to know the Riders and help them hunt the gryphon hordes in any way she can, even befriending Daired's majestic mount, the dragon Akarra.

The publisher blurb for this book describes it as Elle Katharine White infusing Austen's classic with her own brand of magic, and I find that wholly accurate. If you know your *Pride and Prejudice*, many of the major plot points in *Heartstone* won't come as much of a surprise, i.e. just as Elizabeth and Darcy manage to find common ground and eventually fall in love, Aliza and Daired also come to an understanding with each other and gradually a romance blossoms between them. With the exception of the ending, I wouldn't say that the strength of *Heartstone* is in its story since most of the plot closely mirrors the original, but what really shines is the world-building. White doesn't stop at populating her book with all sorts of extraordinary creatures from hobgoblins and wyverns to lamias and lindworms, for she has also fleshed out the world with a vibrant culture that's entirely of her own imagination. I loved how this world had its own history and religion, and even the dragons had their own set of traditions. One of the elements I most appreciated about this book was the fact that White did not set out to copy Austen's style or reproduce the Regency period, because I doubt that would have worked as well for me.

Still, just when you think you've taken this book's measure, the author does have a couple surprises hidden up her sleeve, waiting for the perfect time to spring them on the unsuspecting reader. I had briefly mentioned the ending, which definitely deserves more attention. For one thing, you most certainly won't find anything like it in the original, and in a way I'm really glad this is where White decided to go "off-script" because otherwise I probably wouldn't have enjoyed this book so much. *Pride and Prejudice* retelling or not, when a story features wyvern and dragon-riding warriors, I think it's a safe bet that most readers would expect a battle scene or two to see them in action, and in this regard, I'm pleased to say *Heartstone* did not disappoint. That epic ending capped off what was for the most part a relatively tame and faithful retelling, and it was exactly what the book needed because I don't think things could have wrapped up more perfectly.

In sum, *Heartstone* is described as a *Pride and Prejudice* retelling with fantasy elements, and for better or worse, that is exactly what you get—as in, right up until the grand finale, the plot matches up with the original almost perfectly, down to the similarity in character names, which at times can feel a bit disconcerting. That said though, I thought the decision to depart from the Regency style and language made this book a lot more readable and engaging, and the author's own additions to the world are wonderfully original and well integrated. Whether you're an Austen fan or not, I think you'll also find that the world-building elements are a key highlight along with the story's superb ending, and despite its strength of being a rather close retelling, there's no denying *Heartstone* was at its best when it was doing its own thing, delving into the fantastical. All told it was a delightful experience that felt comfortably familiar and fresh all at once, and I highly recommend it.

Sophie says

When I first heard about this book, I was immediately drawn to it because of the dragons, and because it seemed like a fantasy debut that was worth a read. Once early reviews came out, and I realised it was a Pride & Prejudice retelling too, I immediately preordered it, because anything linked to P&P is right for me.

In Heartstone, Aliza Bentaine lives in a Manor with her parents and sisters, and in the recent months, the manor has been attacked by gryphons, and the Lord has no other option but to hire the Riders to come and destroy the beasts. These Riders, are gentlemen and women, who have a Dragon partner, and are part of the upper echelons of society. Aliza's eldest sister, Anjey, becomes attracted to one of the Riders, who appears to like her back, and all of the Manor seem to wish for a union to take place. Aliza, however, is one of the only ones, who isn't falling over herself to impress the Riders, and one in particular, Alistair Daire, has particularly got her back up. When the Riders get rid of the gryphons, with the help of Aliza, they leave, and Merybourne Manor is left to deal with the fall out. However, that isn't the end to it all, as the gryphons were just the beginning.

I adored this book. Like I thought, it was perfect for me, and everything about it, was just what I wanted. Both the retelling elements, and the fantasy elements, were extremely well written, and if I didn't know better, I would have said this book was by a seasoned author, and not a debut. The descriptions were so rich and vibrant, and the characters well written and fleshed out.

Aliza and Alastair, of course, were my favourites, though all of the characters had qualities I enjoyed. Even Charis, the Caroline Bingley character, who I hate in about every single P&P retelling I've ever read, was such a good character, and had one of the best story lines, apart from the main story. Even the dragons, especially Akarra, Daire's dragon, were so well written, and played such an integral role in the story. The romance between Aliza and Alastair, was exactly what I'd want, and I never tire of reading about these two falling in love, in whatever manner it may be. Obviously, it was slow, and took some getting past the hatred to the mutual respect and love, but each moment of that made the book better, and the danger of the story line, with the dragons and whatnot, helped readers become more invested in their romance than ever.

I'd definitely recommend this book to any lovers of Pride & Prejudice or fantasy, and can't wait to see more from the author in future. I kind of hope for a sequel from the book, but it was so well written, and everything wrapped up, that it's just because I adored the story so much, and would never tire of more.

Cait • A Page with a View says

It's a Pride & Prejudice retelling with DRAGONRIDERS.

I remember being excited about this one last year and then somehow forgot about its release. So I'm super glad I remembered because that was totally brilliant and everything I never knew I needed in a P&P retelling. It kept the heart of the story but made some pretty clever changes. I don't even know how to explain how epic the last 1/3 was... if you like dragon battles + Mr. Darcy then definitely check this one out!

Cindy ☆? Savage Queen ? says

Rating 3.5?

This book is a bit difficult for me to review because it had SO MUCH potential, and while it wasn't terrible it certainly could have been better.

Dragons & Dragon Riders? Yes, these were great aspects. But I wish they were better explored. Like we did not really get to see as many action-packed battles as I would have liked. We did not even get to see them defeat the creatures they were originally brought to Hart Run's to defeat. The only semi-decent fight we got to see was near the very end.

The world-building? Felt a bit lackluster, like, I get the overall idea. But by the end, I still could not fully imagine the world in my head, or where all the cities were in respects to each other.

The romance...well first let me confess, I have never seen or read Pride & Prejudice. Though I do own a lovely copy and it looks great on my bookshelf lol. That being said, I can certainly see where the inspiration came in, Alastair certainly had a lot of pride and Aliza had plenty of prejudice. But my main complaint in the romance department is that Alastair's initial confession felt completely out of nowhere.

"I've been in many battles in my lifetime. I've slain monsters by the hundreds and won more victories than I can count, but against this there's no defense. From the moment we met I tried fighting it—gods, I've tried. Nothing works. I thought I'd be safe at the other end of the country, but the minute I heard you were coming to Edan Rose I flew here as fast as Akarra would take me. I'm a Rider and you're a nakla," Daire said. "There's nothing we have in common. There's nothing we should have in common. Your birth, your bloodline, all of it—it's beneath me. I know all of that, and it hasn't changed a thing. I've lost, Aliza. You've defeated me."

Fortunately, my opinion of their pairing, and both of them in general, improved after they later reunited. Honestly, I kind of adored Alastair by the end. Because you sort of realize that he never really meant to be offensive in any way, he is just sort of socially awkward and horrible at showing/putting his feelings in to words. But again, he is better by the end.

The pacing?

The first 30% - Pretty good this seems promising

30-70% - Basically not much happens

70% and beyond - Yes, finally, real romance development and some actual action!

The character development was another issue in this book, because other than the changes in Alastair and maybe a bit of change on Aliza's part, none of the other characters were even remotely developed. I liked the supporting cast, and I wish we would have gotten to know them better. Personally, Aliza's Aunt Lissa was probably my favorite because she helped Aliza realize what she really wanted, and her words to the couple at the end was sound.

"Aliza, Alastair, promise us something, will you? You've already passed through peace and war, fire and blood, and gods know you'll pass through more of it before the end. This life you're trying to make together won't be easy...But then, nothing worthwhile ever is. Promise you'll never stop fighting for each other."

All-in-all this was an enjoyable and easy read, so for anyone who's looking for a decent tale about dragons with some romance and action thrown in I say go for it.

Norah says

This book is...odd. There are talking dragons, "Darcy" has a mohawk neck-braid, "Lizzy" plays with Hobgoblins, and griffons are roasted on the spit. Yet the plot outline follows the BBC Pride and Prejudice miniseries (not the book) so very, *very* closely. That is not the problem, however. What it is missing is real emotional tension and depth of character.

Three generous stars for some unique (albeit strange) ideas and a hearty attempt at a reimagining.

Fafa's Book Corner says

DNF

Mini review:

I had been hearing good things about this book. So I decided to read it. Unfortunately I did not enjoy this.

The beginning was really good and so funny! But after that it went downhill. I couldn't even feel the romance. It came out of nowhere. And I was just found myself bored.

Still recommend.

Nastassja says

Pride and Prejudice and Dragons!

If you are a fellow *P&P* fan you can imagine the scope of my excitement for this book. And now after I've finished it a couple of hours ago I can finally say that **I mostly liked the author's revision of the original story**, but it was not enough for me to make me not to return in my head to favorite scenes from *P&P* while reading *Heartstone*.

Just like in *P&P* in this book we have a world of high society, ladies and gentlemen and balls, of course. But right besides *Regency period* we have a world filled with *dragons*, *wyverns*, *gryphons* and other magical creatures.

They say a Rider in possession of a good blade must be in want of a monster to slay—and Merybourne Manor has plenty of monsters.

So the *Riders* arrive to slay the said monsters and with them arrives the most infuriating Dragonrider, *Alastair Daired*. The rest of the story you can guess if you've read *P&P*, because the author followed the original plot step by step, widening the story with new details here and there to complete the fantasy part.

I really liked how the author created the fantasy part of the story and inhibited it with all kinds of magical

creatures. My issue, though, wasn't in the world itself, but in how the imaginary world and the real one clashed together. **The contrast between fantasy and Regency era was too stark.** It was hard for me to follow high society's rules and then abruptly jump into battles, shirtless men fighting vile creatures and more so when young women fought said creatures, and then just donned pretty dresses and turned into ladies again like nothing happened. I know, I know, there's plenty of books where said tactics worked perfectly (*Lady Helen*, for example), but in the case of *Heartstone*, what I am trying to say is that the change between one side of the story into another was not smooth enough to be believable for me. Maybe it had to do with the fact that every time there was a similar scene from P&P, my brain blocked everything else and I couldn't imagine how "this" or "that" could be something other than the part of the original story.

The other thing that bothered me is the interactions between main characters *Aliza Bentaine* (Elizabeth Bennet) and *Alastair Daired* (Darcy). They didn't click for me as a couple. Yes, their *battle of wits* were interesting to observe, but it didn't make my heart beat faster like it did with the original couple. I won't deny that I liked how the author re-imagined the infamous proposal scene. Here it is if you are curious (view spoiler), but, overall, **I didn't feel the chemistry between Aliza and Daired.**

But apart from the romance, I really liked Aliza's character. She's **not your typical girl ready to grab a sword and fight monsters.** On the contrary, she's a healer and killing is not something she's aspiring to do. I admired her, because she wasn't afraid to admit her weaknesses and mistakes. And I pretty much liked the whole *Bentaine* family. Four sisters (the youngest was killed by a monster) took care and supported each other and, overall, created an endearing sisterly image. Girls rock in this novel for sure!

All in all, I liked *Heartstone* more than I didn't and **would definitely recommend the book**, whether you are a fan of P&P or not doesn't matter, because, in one case, you'll find a solid fantasy story, and, in the other case, a nice retelling of a beloved Jane Austen's story. And let's not forget that it is a **debut novel** for *Elle Katharine White*, and she'd done a wonderful job creating this magical story. **The writing was compelling enough to keep me reading and enjoying the book.** And now I am definitely looking forward to author's future novels!

Gillian Berry says

so WHOOPS I accidentally read that in one day. This is by no means a perfect book but BOY HOWDY did i love reading it! Ships and humor and dragon riders and beasties and shippity ship and yes, slightly rushed execution and kinda dropped plots but YOU KNOW WHAT if this means a surprise sequel I am heeeeere for it

tl;dr, it's got some debut growing pains but this book is thoroughly enjoyable, both as a P&P retelling and a high fantasy in its own right. Tbh I think I liked the parts where it differed from P&P the best, which is odd for me because I could probably recite a good quarter of P&P from memory, but I'll sort my feelings out more in the full review. Basically, I LIKE. I LIKE V MUCH.
