



According to Jane

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It begins one day in sophomore English class, just as Ellie Barnett's teacher is assigning Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice". From nowhere comes a quiet 'tsk' of displeasure. The target: Sam Blaine, the cute bad boy who's teasing Ellie mercilessly, just as he has since kindergarten. Entirely unbidden, as Jane might say, the author's ghost has taken up residence in Ellie's mind, and seems determined to stay there. Jane's wise and witty advice guides Ellie through the hell of adolescence and beyond, serving as the voice she trusts, usually far more than her own.

Years and boyfriends come and go - sometimes a little too quickly, sometimes not nearly fast enough. But Jane's counsel is constant, and on the subject of Sam, quite insistent. *Stay away*, Jane demands. *He is your Mr. Wickham*. Still, everyone has something to learn about love - perhaps even Jane herself. And lately, the voice in Ellie's head is being drowned out by another, urging her to look beyond everything she thought she knew and seek out her very own, very unexpected, happy ending.

According to Jane Details

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Jane Hoppe says

Despite the cover copy's statement that Jane Austen's "wise and witty advice guides Ellie through the hell of adolescence and beyond, serving as the voice she trusts ..." this story is more an affront to Jane Austen's wise and witty advice, since Ellie ignores most of it. Readers expecting any kind of Victorian propriety in this story will be dismayed by its sexually explicit scenes. Belief in the sexual-freedom myth is alive and well in this story. It saddens me to see so many of this novel's characters exhibit so little self-respect. But the main thing I want to say is that According to Jane's cover promo copy is very misleading. It looks romantic, implies Victorian manners, and conveniently doesn't mention the details are disturbingly beyond erotica.

The book is well-written with realistic dating and family situations, but it offends any common sense of decency. For example, in the beginning of the story, Sam strokes the side of Ellie's breast during high school English class. Why does no one in the novel consider this improper, nauseating, perverted, harassing, or assaulting?

If this is what you want to read, okay. But if this is not your cup of tea, don't be fooled by the cover.

Kimm says

Have you ever gotten giddy from reading a book, just because you felt it was written for you? I treasure that experience, because it doesn't come along very often---and indeed, it has been a very long time since it last happened to me. Finally, Marilyn Brant's debut novel, According to Jane, showed up on my doorstep, jumped into my eager hands and fulfilled all my expectations.

I love this book. I can't quite put it into words, but it struck me on so many levels that I'm still not able to get the characters out of my head. Ellie is engaging, despite wanting to kick her in the behind a couple of times after watching her make some um...questionable decisions. The boyfriends (I'll just lump them all together shall I?), well...I can see how she ended where she did with them. Argh...could you not have seen that coming (repeat statement as needed)? As for Di, the funky sister, I was quite pleased with her story and relieved where it ended (wiping brow motion). I loved Sam. I would have jumped Sam in the first scene. Can I ask why Ellie didn't jump Sam? Yes, we wouldn't have had a story, but seriously...she should have jumped him. And finally, Miss Austen...I must admit, at the first "tsk" I seriously rolled my eyes and shuddered. Uh, oh, where in the world was this going? In fact, it did take me a while to warm up to the insertion of the ever wonderful Jane Austen into this story. I get the point/purpose and how it was necessary for the plot and all, but there were times when I got a little frustrated with Miss Jane's quips. Mm, pride and prejudice rears its head once again (and I'm not meaning the title).

Being a woman of...well, someone who can remember the 80's...I was delighted with this as the setting for most of the book. The nostalgia hit me over and over with each song mentioned in the story. Many memories evoked there. A special note on the dance scenes...thank you, thank you, Ms. Bryant for the way you wrote them together (read the book and you'll see what I mean).

Finally, the sum of all things considered, what hooked me the most in this book was the dialogue. Wordy, even pretentious, novels can be interesting to read--sometimes. They wow you with how much they know and how complicated they can tie the characters up. But my favorite, and Bryant hit the mark for me, is where rather than simply reading a story, you begin to feel like you're curled up on a sofa with a nice drink, listening to a long lost friend catch you up on the story of their life. Suddenly, you feel compelled to identify and compare your own experiences, drawing the two of you together in a special bond of familiarity. So now, after having finished *According to Jane*, Ellie has become my friend. We have shared our lives together, both the good and the bad, much like she shared hers with Miss Austen. Only without the insufferableness...

Monica Fumarolo says

Part of me really thinks that Brant's novel is actually a look into my future. The similarities between her book and my life are almost eerie, but I couldn't put it down, nor could my friend who I gave a copy of this to for her birthday. I love Jane Austen, so that's immediately what sucked me in.

And then there was more. The protagonist Ellie studied English in college (like me) and then went to graduate school at a university a few hours south of Chicago so she could study to be a librarian (also me). After that she gets a job at her old high school library (ME!). There were actual goosebumps on the back of my neck.

But even if you take away my odd connections to the character, you still have a fantastic story. Brant perfectly captures the insecurities that come along with high school and how just because you get older doesn't mean they go away. I occasionally got annoyed with Jane, but I think that was kind of the point - readers need her less as Ellie needs her less, too. It's hard to really say much without giving away spoilers, so I'll just leave it at this book was a random bookstore find and I completely fell in love. Any Austen-head probably will, too.

Paula says

With *According to Jane* author Marilyn Brant presents a chick lit story with a Jane Austen twist.

The chick lit portion of the book holds its own within the genre. Brant uses a time shifting technique flopping from past to present that is quite competent. The characters have depth enough to make us care about them.

The problem with the book is the Jane Austen device. Not only do I not buy it, but I believe it detracts from the book. The book provides that the main character is somehow a descendent of Jane's lost love and thus Jane is "haunting?" her mind in order to ensure she fairs better in the world of love than Jane did. It's not enough of a reason for Austen to be there. It feels gimmicky.

Gimmicks work to sell books initially (I was interested in this book because of the Austen thing--I like Austen). But I believe this book would be better without it. I cannot recommend this book to an Austen fan. I would embarrass myself. Unlike some other Austen-linked books (my most recent favorite being *Prada and Predjudice*) Brant doesn't use Austen's clever plot outlines, or use Austen's very strong female characters as

a model for her own. She actually speaks as Austen herself. To me--and others may not feel this way--I was offended by someone speaking for the author. As an Austen fan, I do not want anyone speaking for her, especially as part of a chick lit novel. I found myself skipping over any section that contained these exchanges. If I was any less dedicated a reader, I simply would have tossed the book.

That said, if the Austen piece was removed, the rest of the novel is fun. It's a typical self-discovery, coming of age book that is plotted through the loves in the main character's life. I would have liked to hear more about these episodes (what we got was interesting and sometimes quite nicely steamy). I'd like to see the characters in the more day to day dialogue, instead of rushed to move the plot ahead. I found the characters of ex-boyfriend Andrei and sister Di especially interesting and would have liked to see more of them.

As Brant's first novel, I think *According to Jane* is a decent first effort. I'd recommend the book to people who **really** enjoy chick lit. However, I hope she will drop the gimmicks and focus on developing characters (which she is quite good at) for her future books. Otherwise, she will not hold this reader for much longer.

Note: This book should not be listed as a young adult novel. It is not appropriate in its content or theme for young adults. It should be listed as romance or chick lit.

Debbie Brown says

This is utterly unique and hard to define. I wish I could recommend it to young readers because it so perfectly describes the pain of adolescence and trying to deal with the cruelty of peers and older siblings at that age. However, there are also descriptions of encounters of the sexual kind as Ellie Barnett ages from high school to her mid-30s that are NOT appropriate reading for less mature audiences. Despite that, I related so strongly to Ms. Brant's depiction of growing up and maturing that her book struck me as nothing short of brilliant.

Ellie tells the story in her own words, beginning when she was a high school geek in the 1980s. A straight-A student, she is far removed from all the cool kids, especially her overbearing older sister, Diana. Instead of trying to shield her sensitive sibling, Di takes every opportunity to embarrass Ellie in front of schoolmates. But Ellie's life changes on the day her English teacher hands out copies of *Pride and Prejudice*. Suddenly a voice pops up. Inside Ellie's head. And it's Jane Austen.

Yes, the Lady herself speaks directly to Ellie telepathically. The first thing JA does is to warn Ellie that Sam Blaine, who sits behind her in English class ("thanks to the eternal delights of alphabetical order," according to Ellie) is "your Mr. Wickham." Seems like JA's right, too. Sam is handsome, charming and he's popular despite being super smart. He's only the first of a series of boys and/or men we're introduced to through Ellie, and Jane is ever in her head trying to counsel her about them.

There's a lot of ironic humor throughout. For example, Ellie has her first sexual experience the night of her Senior Prom with a "safe" male friend who turns out to be completely inept and believes he's de-flowered her (as does the rest of the school) when, in truth, he has not.

JA and Ellie both are witty and have a way with words, but in characteristically different ways. The arguments going on in Ellie's head between the two are always entertaining. Naturally, Ms. Austen doesn't have full understanding of contemporary culture, so her perspective isn't always on the mark.

Jane does provide constant companionship for Ellie, encouraging and appreciating her for who she is as no one else in Ellie's world seems to. JA doles out wisdom and astute observations about what's going on in Ellie's life.

Significant truths are sprinkled about. For example:

JA: "Your mistakes in judgment are not due to the complexity of humanity, Ellie. They are due to the lens with which you view love."

Ellie: "You mean, I need to challenge the fairy tale and not the man?"

JA: "Precisely."

Me: YESSSS!!!

And Di, whose relationship with her husband Alex factors strongly here, correctly states, "True love... [is] all work and building trust and fighting for commitment, day after day after day. And both people need to want to make it happen. Bad. Otherwise, f**k it."

And I REALLY love the truth expressed in the turning point of this book that you can't have a healthy in-love relationship until you're okay with being alone without one. That doesn't mean that you're not open to romance, of course, but too many women marry a guy because they want to be married rather than because they're truly in love.

Ms. Brand's writing is flawless and beautiful. She successfully conveys the awkwardness of the various relationships Ellie has in her quest for her Mr. Darcy. These guys all turn out to be losers in one way or another, even when the sex is magnificently toe-curling.

I loved everything about this story: the writing, the characters, the plot development, and the theme. It transcends an ordinary romance.

Be warned that, along with the realistic sexual content, a homosexual relationship of one character leads to a gay wedding, which Ellie attends.

Marilyn Brant says

Since I'm the author, I'm wildly biased on this one, of course. :)

I truly hope those who read it will enjoy the story. And I hope Jane Austen would've been pleased by her place in the novel. I like to think so...

Many thanks to everyone interested in my debut book!

Heather McCubbin says

I thought I may have been one of the few people to still remember what teenage angst was like back in high school! Obviously not, because either I was inside Brant's head when she wrote this--whispering ideas to her like Jane Austen to Ellie--or she experienced and saw the same things I did years ago. Ellie's journey in "According to Jane" was to find true love, her identity and know what issues were worth fighting for, all the while having a little voice known as "Jane Austen" whispering thoughts and advice to her. This book is

incredibly well written and true to the teenager inside us as well as the adult.

It is very refreshing to read a well written, captivating adult fiction book where you can relive your high school years WITHOUT feeling the physical pain we endured as 17 year olds, and to remember what it was like to be a young adult floundering your way through relationships. I loved the interplay between Jane Austen's advice and Ellie's modern thoughts/remarks about it and laughed aloud numerous times at their little "spats" over a certain issue. (I've often wondered what some of the past great writers/leaders of our time would think of us now and I think Brant nailed Austen's view of the modern teenage and adult world.)

If you are looking for a non-vampire, heartfelt, emotional story about one girl's journey into adulthood, and the speed bumps along the way, then "According to Jane" is a must read!

Lexi says

A clever premise, beautifully executed. This book flew by, and I was sorry when it had to end; this was a book I did not want to put down. I highly recommend it to anyone who likes Jane Austen or who just enjoys a well-written novel.

Edit: I agree with the other reviewers who have noted that this book is much more explicit than you'd expect. I definitely would not categorize this as a young adult novel.

Elizabeth Hossenlopp says

Talk about a blast in time! I grew up in the 1980s and so enjoyed the music references in this book. I really liked this book. The characters and plot were interesting, seeing Jane as a ghost with her Regency advice bestowed upon was funny and very appropos even during the 80s. The Sam and Ellie relationship was fun to figure out because I kept trying to see if Sam was similar to Mr. Darcy, if Ellie was Elizabeth Bennett. Overall, I liked the book and would recommend it.

Meredith (Austen-esque Reviews) says

Wouldn't it be fantastic to have a Jane Austen's voice in your head? Wouldn't you just love to have Jane Austen in your subconscious, speaking to you, being your secret friend? I know I would! Going through my adolescent years would have been infinitely more bearable! But alas, we cannot all be as fortunate as Ellie Barnett, who from the age of fifteen has had Jane Austen's voice in her head.

Ever since Ellie's teacher assigned *Pride and Prejudice* as their next reading assignment, Jane Austen has taken up residence in Ellie's mind. And Ellie is most thankful to have her there! Over the years Jane has helped her avoid all the Wickhams in her life, laughed with her at all the Collinses she encounters, and encouraged her in her quest to find a Mr. Darcy. But now, at the age of thirty-four and still single, Ellie starts to wonder: Where is her Mr. Darcy? Are there any left? Or is the world just comprised of various versions of Wickhams and Collinses?

To continue reading, go to: <http://janeaustenreviews.blogspot.com...>

Laurel says

What young lady would not want romantic advice from Jane Austen?

Here's a new novel that tugged at my heart strings and validated my belief that if the world was run according to Jane Austen, we would be much smarter and happier. Enuff said!

Fifteen-year old Ellie Barnett is a bookish geek. She excels at academics, but according to her caustic older sister, she is digging herself into a hole of permanent unpopularity with her scraggly hair, lack of make-up, and inattention to fashion. There is however, one boy who since kindergarten has paid her a bit more attention than she is comfortable with. Sam Blaine may be good-looking, athletic, brainy, and popular - but he is trouble - and just happens to sit behind her in English class taunting her with pokes in the back with his pencil and sexual innuendo. When she cracks open her next reading assignment, a copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, she begins to hear voices. Jane Austen's British voice to be exact, interjecting observations and advice, specifically warning Ellie to beware of Sam Blaine. He is her Wickham, that charming scoundrel that wooed Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and then eloped with her younger sister Lydia. Ellie does not doubt the advice, just the whole hearing voices thing really freaks her out. Jane Austen's spirit has somehow inhabited her mind, commenting in her acerbic early nineteenth-century sensibility on Ellie's 1980's life and romances and she does not know why.

Over the course of twenty years, we follow Ellie through her life challenges as a single women looking for love and happiness in what Jane Austen deems to be a morally confusing world. Who of us could ever forget their own first love, the painful realization that you are being used, or the first time you were dumped? As Jane offers Ellie witty and wise advice on family conflicts, career choices, and a barrage of bad boyfriends that come and go, Ellie slowly realizes that she must learn some life lesson before she can move on. For Ellie, one painful lesson was bad-boy Sam who Jane advises to stay clear of yet she is still drawn too. As their lives keep crossing paths over the course of the years, they never seem to be at the right place at the right time to work it out. Ellie trusts and values Jane's opinion. Who better to advise her than an author who is valued for her keen judgment of human nature and romantic insights? But with Sam, she holds strong prejudices. Could she be wrong? Is he really her Wickham, or could he be her Mr. Darcy?

What an unexpected, uplifting, and urbane debut novel! To paraphrase Jane Austen's character Lady Catherine, Marilyn Brant has given us a treasure. Granted that there are hundreds of Jane Austen inspired novels written over the years, this totally unique and original concept of Austen's ghost inhabiting and advising a modern young woman is brilliant. The play of early nineteenth-century social mores against twentieth-century culture is so droll that I laughed-out-loud several times in total recognition. Like Austen, Brant excels at characterization offering a heroine in Ellie Barnett that I could totally identify with, and a hero in Sam Blaine that is so endearingly flawed that any woman worthy of her worn out VHS copy of the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* miniseries will be happy to swoon over. Subtly powerful and amusingly acerbic, you will be gently reproved into agreeing in the power of love to transform us all.

Laurel Ann, Austenprose

Michelle says

When I received this book from the author to read for first reads, I was excited, but that excitement soon disappeared. *According To Jane* is sexually explicit to a point that I had to skim through much of it completely skipping huge sections in order to escape reading the multitudinous bedroom scenes.

As a English teacher and a fan of Jane Austen, I loved the idea of this book--that the famed author would guide a women in her romantic life--however, I dare say that Ms Austen would not approve of much if anything that the main character, Ellie, does in the book. I also have a hard time thinking that the author would encourage some of the things she encourages in the book. The thought that repeatedly came to mind while I read was disgust that so many confuse lust for love and casual sex for real courtship.

Over and over I questioned why this book was recommended in young adult reviews as a good book for teens. It saddens me that such explicit books gain so much approval for our teenagers especially, but really for anyone. I would never ever have this book on my classroom shelf.

Heather says

I won this on Firstreads and can't wait to get it. I'm an Austen junkie!!!!

Updated October 2009 - I received this book yesterday. Incredibly fast shipping with a nice handwritten note from the author. Which makes me feel really bad about the review I'm about to write.

I should preface this by saying that I don't watch rated R movies. And I stay away from most PG-13 ones too. According to Jane was rated R, maybe even X. There were multiple scenes of explicit you-know-what. There was also a lot of swearing including the F-bomb, frequently. Not my cup of tea.

I read the first fourth or so and once I hit a few 'detailed' scenes I started skimming. I thought the storyline was cute and the growth of the character interesting, but I just couldn't be okay with the other stuff. I also had a hard time with just how much Ellie, the main character, slept around. A lot of it was with "steady boyfriends" but my code of morality doesn't justify that type of behavior. And neither does Jane Austen's. I don't think she would have approved of this book. Yes, she wrote about characters who did bad things (ie Willoughby, Lydia and Mr. Wickham, etc), but she never went into details. She always wrote about the immorality of those things - she did not embrace them.

In retrospect I shouldn't have finished the book. There are images in my head now that I'd rather not be there. I guess this review is for those that might be tempted to read a fun sounding Austen-y book, but have the same standards I do. Don't read this.

I know there is a large population of people who enjoy this type of book and I do not pass judgement. It's just not for me.

Anya says

I generally love all things Austen, but I found myself frequently frustrated with this book. First off, the whole gimmick that the spirit of Jane Austen decides to take up residence in the mind of a teenage American girl and impart advice did not work for me. At times, when Jane's voice would be absent for a while, I forgot that was even the concept of the book and didn't miss it at all. The point of Ellie's internal debates with Jane could have just as easily been achieved by Ellie having an interior dialogue with herself or with an actual friend. And, god, Jane could be annoying! Things were driven into the ground way too much. We get it, Jane disapproves of Sam Blaine. No need to reiterate that position for 5 pages at a stretch.

And, from a feminist point of view, I hated how at the end of the book Ellie comes to this mature decision to live for herself and make her own happiness, but then totally throws it out the window when Sam Blaine comes back into the picture. And I was really lacking some character development for Sam. All we really see is him sexually harassing Ellie in high school and being kind of a jerk. I would have liked to see more signs of redeeming qualities in high school to make his about-face at the end of the book more believable.

And then there are the sex scenes. While I have no problem with them in theory, I could have used some fair warning that I was actually reading a raunchy romance novel. The back of the jacket leads one to believe this is a frothy chick lit book geared toward high schoolers, but then you get these X-rated sex scenes, which, let me tell you, are awfully awkward to be reading while one is commuting to and from work.

Basically, I did not relate to Ellie at all.

Sheila Majczan says

I have had this book on my Wish List after reading other stories by this author. And now it was offered by kindle Unlimited so I grabbed it. What a wonderful story and I don't usually go for modern stories - I am definitely one who loves her JAFF "what-if" variations to P&P.

I have to note that I missed the '80's music, etc. due to the fact that I had children birthed in '79, '82 and '84 and refused to put anything other than children's music on the radio. I don't think it is cute when a 4 year old is dressed and dancing like Brittany Spears. So when I read this book again (and I definitely will) I will have to make a note of the music and pull it up. Oh, there are a few songs that are enduring hits which I did recognize but ask me about the '60's and I will know the music.

This story does have many flash backs and they are not in chronological order but the author does a magnificent job of interweaving the previous life events to illustrate for us why Ellie has reached a certain point in her life's journey. Of particular note are the categories into which she places men, the users, the commitment-phobic, the not-out-of-the-closet gay man, etc. And then there is the voice of Jane Austen and "why has Jane chosen to speak into Ellie's ear?" As one review states there are poignant passages and I did have a tear or two in reading such. Totally loved how Jane's experiences were brought into play here - Marilyn did so well with her research and her love of JA being incorporated into this story.

I found the family and community of this protagonist of interest and how true to life some of these relationships were presented: sibling antipathy changing into love and friendship, marriage relationships changing over the years, religious differences becoming a factor for some families, career, unwanted

pregnancies, etc. The modern world has so many factors that Jane's world did not have for women and it wasn't just the fact that marriage was the only career allowed. So Jane's advice could have been outdated if not written with finesse, as our author did here.

I am sure we all knew Sam was going to somehow win Ellie's heart in the end but I must say that at about half way through the story that hot Russian guy had me wanting to have a paperback book so I could skip to the end to check out my theory...LOL. This story does have some spicy parts and I would rate it for MA only.

I have read other books by this author but not all. I will definitely make sure she is one for whom I read all. I was enrapt by this tale!
