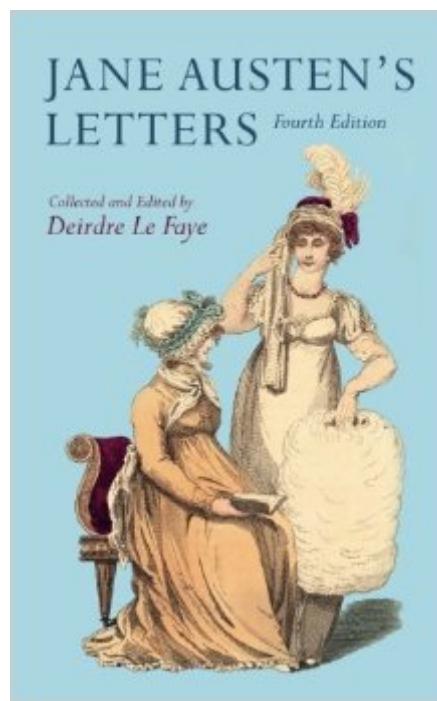


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# Jane Austen's Letters



## **Synopsis**

Jane Austen's letters afford a unique insight into the daily life of the novelist: intimate and gossipy, observant and informative--they read much like the novels themselves. They bring alive her family and friends, her surroundings and contemporary events, all with a freshness unparalleled in modern biographies. Most important, we recognize the unmistakable voice of the author of such novels as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. We see the shift in her writing from witty and amusing descriptions of the social life of town and country, to a thoughtful and constructive tone while writing about the business of literary composition. R.W. Chapman's ground-breaking edition of the collected letters first appeared in 1932, and a second edition followed twenty years later. A third edition, edited Deirdre Le Faye in 1997 added new material, re-ordered the letters into their correct chronological sequence, and provided discreet and full annotation to each letter, including its provenance, and information on the watermarks, postmarks, and other physical details of the manuscripts. This new fourth edition incorporates the findings of recent scholarship to further enrich our understanding of Austen and give us the fullest and most revealing view yet of her life and family. In addition, Le Faye has written a new preface, has amended and updated the biographical and topographical indexes, has introduced a new subject index, and had added the contents of the notes to the general index. Teachers, students, and fans of Jane Austen, at all levels, will find in these letters remarkable insight into one of the most popular novelists ever.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

There are some real problems with the paperback editions, and luckily I read about them before deciding to purchase the hardcover fourth edition of this book, which has all the letters in date order, with copious annotations and indices for the scholar. I've been reading and re-reading Austen's novels for decades and somehow missed her letters. What a treasure trove they prove to be! Unfortunately, her family destroyed some of them for fear of embarrassing people; what a shame! All those people have been moldering in their graves for more than 200 years, yet the letters that remain show the same wit and incisive knowledge of human nature that makes her books timeless classics. The hardcover edition is an excellent one, with good paper, secure binding, and an easy-to-read font. There are literally hundreds of pages of notes and indices, so whether you're a fan of Austen, a scholar, or just fond of this literary format, you can get as much (or as little) information as you want. The letters are more than just intelligent, charming and often humorous...there are some that draw tears. I was particularly moved by Jane's sister's letters to family and friends, written just after Jane's death. I highly recommend this book - but only in this edition!

i am an owner of the 3rd edition of LeFaye's collection of Austen's letters in hardcover. It is one of my most prized volumes in my Austen library which includes the most recent Cambridge annotated editions. Here LeFaye essentially builds on R.W. Chapman's editorial work that dates back to the 1920s. While the actual content of most of the letters is fairly innocuous (Jane's sister Cassandra having purged her correspondence of anything that might cause scandal or embarrassment to the living), the sharp wit and feisty personality of Jane Austen remains intact. The cumulative effect is one that leaves the reader only wanting more -- more which sadly we are only left to imagine but never to know. I will order the new edition, if only to see what new commentary might be offered. LeFaye's work is meticulous and informed and her status as an Austen authority is widely acknowledged. I give her work 5 stars but reserve a single star for 's rating system which seems to lump all editions under a single stew of ratings without differentiating between editions. If you look closely at the reviews listed here, the poor ones are not for the LeFaye edition (my 3rd edition hardcover is ruggedly clothbound with sewn-in pages -- very high quality) but for the cheap paper abridgements you find elsewhere. If you want a volume to last, this is it.

The content is great, and gives an insight into Jane Austen's stream of consciousness to her sister, and interesting tidbits about late 18th and early 19th century everyday life. What a gossip she was! Life before TV, Radio and even railway travel certainly was, to our point of view, very confined. But

her world was her area of expertise. Her brothers went out and saw the world beyond England. She loved the Navy and I find it sad that she never seems to have boarded a ship, even in dock - but it doesn't seem to have occurred to her that she should or could have. She saw the world through her sailor brothers' eyes, and drew that world into her novels, Mansfield Park and Persuasion in particular, again through the eyes of her male characters. If Ms. LeFaye had not added extensive notes at the back, this would be hard to follow. The comings and goings of the Janes and Marys, Georges and Edwards, would quite lose me. There are the Coopers, Biggs, and Lefroys - to the JA newbie, this would be very confusing indeed, but Le Faye has pages of notes of Who's Who at the back, Just as good, the Houses and Locations where these people live, are noted also. You need two bookmarks, This is a great companion book for Claire Tomalin's biography of JA, as you can go from one to the other, making a kind of fuller picure out of a jumble of people, places and homes. Read Tomalin first. The book itself, being used and offered at half-price, was buyer-beware, and the front pages were loose in the binding and soon fell out. However it is a hardback. I am very pleased with my purchase.

I got the hardcover version, edited by Deirdre Le Fay, out of the library and it's a wonderful and very complete version. (Over 600 pages long with useful commentary) I wanted my own copy to highlight so I ordered the paperback version. It's a cheap little pamphlet of 111 pages. **DO NOT WASTE YOUR MONEY ON THE PAPERBACK VERSION!** I should have paid more attention to the negative reviews. The paperback version is worthless! spring for the hardcover.

Wonderful compilation of Austen's surviving letters; the editor included many notes on the families Austen discusses, the events of the day, social customs and more, all of which serve to flesh out the understanding contemporary readers had which we may lack.

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