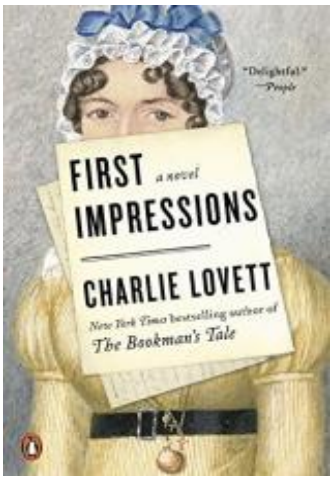
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

First Impressions

by Charlie Lovett



About the Book

Charlie Lovett first delighted readers with his *New York Times*?bestselling debut, THE BOOKMAN?S TALE. Now Lovett is back with another brilliantly imagined mystery, this time featuring one of English literature?s most popular and beloved authors: Jane Austen.

Book lover and Austen enthusiast Sophie Collingwood has recently taken a job at an antiquarian bookshop in London when two different customers request a copy of the same obscure book: the second edition of A LITTLE BOOK OF ALLEGORIES by Richard Mansfield. Their queries draw Sophie into a mystery that will cast doubt on the true authorship of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE --- and ultimately threaten Sophie?s life.

Discussion Guide

1. Are you a fan of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE or other works by Jane Austen? How well do you think Charlie Lovett captured Austen?s writing style and the themes of her novels?

2. Sophie Collingwood is a serious bibliophile, but the work of Jane Austen clearly holds a special place in her heart. Why do you think that is? What about Austen?s writing --- PRIDE AND PREJUDICE in particular --- draws such passionate readers to her stories?

3. When Jane Austen and Reverend Richard Mansfield actually meet after initial bad first impressions, they become fast friends. What made them change their minds about each other?

4. What parallels does Lovett draw between the relationships of Jane and Reverend Mansfield and Sophie and her beloved Uncle Bertram? What circumstances allow for these intense, but somewhat unusual friendships?

5. In FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Austen thinks of her relationship to Reverend Mansfield as ?nothing to do with romance but everything to do with love (p. 197).? What does that mean? Do you have any relationships you would describe in the same way?

6. Why do you think Lovett chose to center the mystery of FIRST IMPRESSIONS on the authorship of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE? What is especially scandalous about even the fictional possibility that the book was, in any way, not Austen?s own work?

7. As a former antiquarian bookseller and book collector, Lovett was able to weave in wonderful details of late 18th- and early 19th-century book publishing. Did anything about the antique book world surprise you? How did these details make the fictional mystery of who really wrote PRIDE AND PREJUDICE more believable?

8. SPOILER ALERT: Don?t read on if you haven?t finished the book!
After Winston reveals his plan to frame Jane Austen as a plagiarist?even when Sophie?s evidence proves otherwise?Winston says ?Jane Austen plagiarizes the most famous novel in English literature?that?s a better story. And the better the story, the more people will pay (p. 295)? Is this true? Why or why not?

9. Were you satisfied with the ending of FIRST IMPRESSIONS? In what ways does Sophie?s love story echo that of Eliza Bennet?

Author Bio

Charlie Lovett is a former antiquarian bookseller, an avid book collector, and a member of The Grolier Club, the oldest and largest club for bibliophiles in North America. He is the author of THE BOOKMAN'S TALE, FIRST IMPRESSIONS and THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF EBENEZER SCROOGE. In 2015, Lovett curated *Alice Live!* , a major exhibition of Lewis Carroll and Alice memorabilia at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, as well as wrote a new introduction for Penguin Classics? 150th anniversary edition of ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND and THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS. He and his wife split their time between Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Kingham, Oxfordshire, in England.

Critical Praise

?A delightful novel.?

First Impressions
by Charlie Lovett

Publication Date: September 29, 2015
Genres: Fiction, Literary Mystery, Mystery
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Penguin Books
ISBN-10: 0143127721
ISBN-13: 9780143127727