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Lizzy Bennet's Diary

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Editor's Choice:

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Media type:

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At the back of this delightful, imagined diary of Jane Austen's most beloved heroine, Marcia Williams explains in her author's note that she was inspired to create it after reading **Pride and Prejudice** for about the tenth time!?. Fittingly, my 12 year-old daughter must be on her tenth or so reading of Williams' previous books, **Archie's War**, and **My Secret War Diary**, finding them endlessly engaging and informative.

Lizzy Bennet's Diary in which we follow the events of the novel as experienced by Lizzy herself, has much in common with these daughter's favourites, being another enchanting confection of charmingly naive illustrations, doodles, fold-out letters, menus and programmes. Williams convincingly captures the idiom and cadence of the language of the time, and readers yet to encounter the real Elizabeth Bennet will be introduced to an appropriately feisty heroine as Lizzy declares on the first page 'I shall never marry for money or position'. There are some nice witty asides 'Here Endeth All Talk', and Williams has done her research carefully. I particularly enjoyed the detail and historical texture she has added by providing an order of entertainment for the Meryton Ball for example, or the inclusion of 'Aunt Gardiner's Camomile Rinse' for shining hair, a recipe which contemporary readers will almost certainly be tempted to try. Winningly, Williams has also thought up names for Mr Darcy's four dogs.

Quibbles, I have but few. The photographic illustrations are less successful, introducing a jarring, too modern note. I felt too that Williams had missed a trick in places by not using certain lines from the original: Mr Darcy's pronouncement: 'She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me' is a gift horse, frankly. More seriously, the voice of Lizzy sometimes feels a little immature for her age: you'd think her sixteen rather than twenty. However, this problem largely disappears once Lizzy is reborn a chastened woman, having discovered the true natures of Messrs Wickham and Darcy.

Experts might also argue with the dating of the diary to 1811-12. **Pride and Prejudice** was originally written in 1797, and though revised fourteen years later is generally agreed to be set in the final decade of the 18th century. But **Lizzy Bennet's Diary** is such a delightful introduction to the novel, I judge it perfectly fine to leave that sort of debate to later, by which time readers of **Lizzy Bennet's Diary** will doubtless have become confirmed Jane Austen fans.

Links:

[1] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/lizzy-bennet?s-diary>

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[3] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/caroline-sanderson>