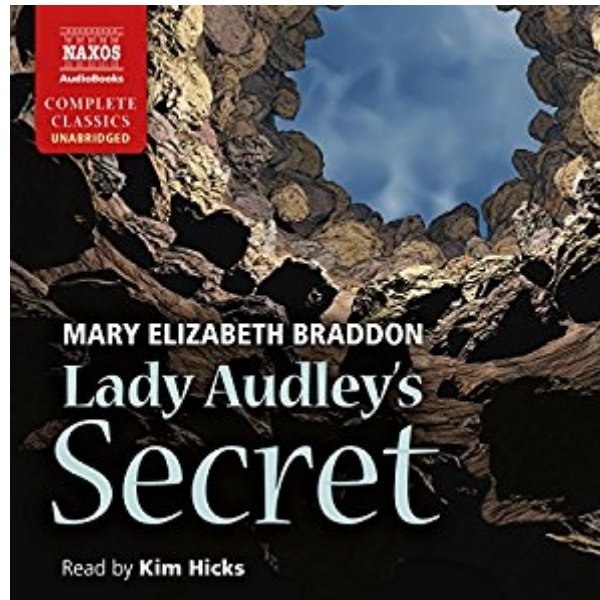




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Lady Audley's Secret



Synopsis

Lady Audley is universally adored: Beautiful, kind, and charming, she enamors all whom she meets. It is not until the strange disappearance of widower George Talboys that her behavior takes an odd turn. George's friend, Robert Audley, Lady Audley's nephew-in-law, is on the case; an upper-class layabout turned detective, he is determined to get to the bottom of things. Mystery, mayhem, madness, and despair: *Lady Audley's Secret* is the gripping and suspenseful novel that has been branded "the most sensationally successful of all the sensation novels" (John Sutherland) and rivals some of Wilkie Collins' best books, such as *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Dickens, and Henry James all admitted to reading Braddon's work with great enjoyment; Alfred Lord Tennyson professed to have read everything she ever wrote. Kim Hicks gives an absorbing reading, full of charm and insight.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There's a treasure trove of free reading material in the public domain that's available for Kindle. One reader's treasure, however, may be another reader's trash. This was a treasure for me, but not only for the read itself but also because of the author and the story behind the read. Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) was a prolific writer of plays, short stories, essays, poems and 75 novels during the Victorian era in England. Her mother and father separated when she was five, her brother left for India and then Australia (where he became prime minister of Tasmania) when she was ten. She herself worked for three years as an actress to support her mother and herself before her

writing career took off. Her life story fascinates me, especially since we're talking about a time of more repression of women than we have today. She seems to have been the kind of woman who decides to live her life her way, not the way society dictated. In 1860 she meets John Maxwell, a publisher of periodicals who is married with five children, but whose wife is in an asylum in Ireland. They live together and have six children, until marrying in 1874, when his wife died. Braddon wrote but also edited a literary magazine and founded another one. Such a busy woman, especially considering there were 11 children in the Braddon-Maxwell household. (I seem to be crushing on her, but, really, she must have been an amazing woman.) Her first novel was published in 1860 and her last in 1908. What a career. Well, I guess none of this is to the point of posting a review of this particular book. This is her most successful and most popular sensation novel and was published in 1862. The interesting thing about this mystery is that it was inspired by a real crime during the Victorian era. (If you're interested in reading about the real-life crime, try Kate Summerscale's book, *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher: A Shocking Murder and the Undoing of a Great Victorian Detective*, a non-fiction account.) The plot of this has a lovely, lively young woman coming to a small village to serve as governess in a household. She catches the eye of an older, wealthy, widowed baronet and they marry. The baronet's daughter's nose is put out of joint by this, and she and her new stepmother aren't, to say the least, the best of friends. What seems to be a separate story also begins at the same time. A young married man with a baby, who had set off for Australia to make his fortune there, arrives back in England after a few years to discover that his wife has died. He is devastated by this and is supported by an old school chum he accidentally meets up with. Said school chum is the nephew of the wealthy baronet. Now the story takes off. Lots of secrets to be revealed. Mesalliances, possible murder, attempted murders, psychological studies of characters, investigations into lives by the nephew turned P.I. There's even a bit of romance here. I enjoyed the first half of this book tremendously but it seemed to slow down and become more verbose, flowery and repetitive in the second half. That's to be expected, I suppose, during this age of sensation novels, but Braddon did such a stellar job in the beginning section that the second half disappointed somewhat. Still worth the read, for certain, if only for the historical aspects.

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET's title would suggest that the book holds in its pages something that would deeply scandalize the reader. I suppose, the fact that it didn't surprise me, when the ominous secret was finally revealed, says something about what our society has grown accustomed to, as well as the fact that I read too many crime novels;-) That being said, I did rather enjoy reading this book. The story flowed well, and the style of Braddon's writing is very accessible. I read this for a lit

course, and thus think of it, for the moment at least, in terms of motifs and symbols and feminism and the gothic, but it is actually quite entertaining, too. Despite this, Braddon is far from as famous as her Victorian contemporaries, the Bronte sisters and George Eliot. This is the only book by her that I am familiar with, so I cannot judge what qualities her work may have lacked, which the others possessed. Maybe it was because *LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET* was considered a sensational novel, and thus not deemed as literary and worthwhile as the other ladies work? Then again, the previously mentioned writers also had one book which was far more famous than their others, so maybe, at the time, Braddon held her own with them... Just thinking. I suppose I'll be reading up on her Wikipedia page;-) Anyway...I have to admit, I do prefer the Brontes, but I think Braddon's novel is far more than a scandalous little volume. It brings up the limited rights of women at the time, and, in a way, gives the reader a dubious answer to what may happen when women are 'forced' to take care of their own best interests. It also highlights facets of Victorian life and traditions, fascinating not simply on a scholarly level. I would recommend reading this, especially if you enjoy other Victorian literature.

An excellent choice of reading, if you enjoy: words creating exquisitely depicted scenes, Conversations with meaning, an excellent plot with twists and turns quite unexpected, and surprisingly good ending. I highly recommend

An interesting mystery written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon in 1862. I thought it was very thought out except that in order to end happily, it went a little too long. The book is about the marriage and secret of a young blonde woman to an old, rich widower. Meanwhile, the widower's nephew reacquaints himself with an old friend who, upon returning from Australia, tells the nephew the story of how he married a young woman, was disowned by his father, and in desperation to support his wife and their baby, leaves them to seek his fortune three years earlier. Unfortunately, he soon discovers that his wife has 'died.' Thinking there is nothing for him, he makes his friend, Robert Audley, the guardian of his child and would have left to return to Australia, except for the renewed friendship. They travel to Audley's uncle's home but soon afterward, George Talboys disappears. Most of the book surrounds Audley's efforts to find out what happened to Talboys.

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