



Lady Audley's Secret (Oxford World's Classics)



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Mary Elizabeth Braddon

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This novel, with its most untypically forceful heroine, can be seen as an anticipation of Ibsen's great dramas, and as an unabashed bid for freedom from the constraints of Victorian womanhood.

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496 pages

Review

"It's gripping stuff...and is relished in every dramatic plot twist by Juliet Stevenson, who enjoys keeping the listener guessing until the final revelation." (*The Sunday Times*) From the Inside Flap

Weathering critical sarcasm, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) quickly established Mary Elizabeth Braddon as the doyenne of Victorian 'sensation' fiction, sharing the honour only with Wilkie Collins. Addictive, cunningly plotted and certainly sensational, *Lady Audley's Secret* draws on contemporary theories of insanity to probe mid-Victorian anxiety and the doubts that accompanied the rapid rise of consumer culture. What is the relationship between Mary Elizabeth Braddon's artful and charming heroine and a governess, a bigamist and a lunatic? Lady Audley's secret is investigated by Robert Dudley, aristocrat turned detective, in a novel that has lost none of its power to disturb and entertain. 'She may boast, without fear of contradiction, in having temporarily succeeded in making the literature of the Kitchen the favourite reading of the Drawing room.' For more titles in the Penguin Classics range, visit Amazon.co.uk's Penguin Classics Bookstore. From the Back Cover

Lady Audley's Secret (1862) was one of the most widely read novels in the Victorian period. The novel exemplifies "sensation fiction" in featuring a beautiful criminal heroine, an amateur detective, blackmail, arson, violence, and plenty of suspenseful action. To its contemporary readers, it also offered the thrill of uncovering blackmail and criminal violence within the homes of the upper class. The novel makes trenchant critiques of Victorian gender roles and social stereotypes, and it creates significant sympathy for the heroine, despite her criminal acts, as she suffers from the injustices of the "marriage market" and rebels against them. This Broadview edition includes a critical introduction and a broad selection of primary source material, including reproductions of the twenty-two woodcut illustrations from the *London Journal* serialization of the novel, extracts from two Victorian dramatizations of the work, satirical commentaries, and contemporary reviews.

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