



## Madame Bovary's Daughter

*Linda Urbach*

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**Picking up after the shattering end of Gustave Flaubert's classic, *Madame Bovary*, this beguiling novel imagines an answer to the question *Whatever happened to Emma Bovary's orphaned daughter?***

One year after her mother's suicide and just one day after her father's brokenhearted demise, twelve-year-old Berthe Bovary is sent to live on her grandmother's impoverished farm. Amid the beauty of the French countryside, Berthe models for the painter Jean-François Millet, but fate has more in store for her than a quiet life of simple pleasures. Berthe's determination to rise above her mother's scandalous past will take her from the dangerous cotton mills of Lille to a convent in Rouen to the wealth and glamour of nineteenth-century Paris. There, as an apprentice to famed fashion designer Charles Frederick Worth, Berthe is ushered into the high society of which she once only dreamed. But even as the praise for her couture gowns steadily rises, she still yearns for the one thing her mother never had: the love of someone she loves in return.

Brilliantly integrating one of classic literature's fictional creations with real historical figures, *Madame Bovary's Daughter* is an uncommon coming-of-age tale, a splendid excursion through the rags and the riches of French fashion, and a sweeping novel of poverty and wealth, passion and revenge.

Look for special features inside.

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## Madame Bovary's Daughter Details

Date : Published July 26th 2011 by Bantam (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9780385343879

Author : Linda Urbach

Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, France

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## From Reader Review Madame Bovary's Daughter for online ebook

### Nancy says

I thoroughly enjoyed this novel that I received as a First Reads selection.

It is very challenging for an author to reprise a character from another writer's books. Too often they are crassly commercial and disappointing from a literary perspective. This imagined history of Madame Bovary's orphaned daughter could be criticized as not much more than a tragic Cinderella story but it has so much heart that the rags-to-riches element was easily acceptable to me.

I found Berthe Bovary a very compelling heroine. She had some of the elements of the gritty female characters in John Wayne Westerns:

... she wasn't afraid to get dirty;  
... she didn't feel sorry for herself;  
... she didn't depend on her beauty for her identity;  
... she did what she needed to do to survive;  
... and, most important, she had confidence in her own abilities.

The result was a compelling page-turner that took us from a rural French farm to the depressing fabric mills of Lille and on to the glory of 19th Century Paris and the salon of Charles Frederick Worth. I enjoyed every gritty aspect of Berthe Bovary's coming of age except the conclusion of the novel. It just required too much suspension of disbelief for me to accept the ending that Urbach wrote--but it didn't diminish my pleasure in this interesting historical novel.

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### Jeannie Walker says

I think this is a wonderful, and very well-written historical romance.

Was any daughter ever cursed with a mother such as hers?

I am sad to say, yes, there are other daughters who were cursed to have such a mother. I know, as I was one of those unfortunate girls to be born to such a mother. However, I don't think my own mother disliked children, she just had a particular hatred for me- the reason is something I am still looking for.

I also know about poison: My millionaire ex-husband was poisoned to death. No, not by me - by his next wife and her lesbian friend. I helped law enforcement solve the murder.

I know a little about cotton mills since I was raised on a farm. We pulled cotton and were paid \$2.00 per hundred pounds. A hard way to make a living, to be sure. In case you don't know: picking cotton is different from pulling cotton. Picking cotton is carefully picking the cotton from the cotton boll and putting it in the sack that you pull around the cotton field. Pulling cotton is pulling the entire cotton boll and putting it in the sack. Either way those sharp, prickly burrs on the cotton boll will tear your hands to pieces, even with gloves on.

Well, so much about me- back to my review of Madame Bovary's Daughter.

I believe the author carefully crafted her research as most of this novel is historically accurate. I love how Linda Urbach tells her story of a determined female who has courage in the face of every difficulty. Her rags to riches tale is about a woman, who has an intense feeling of loss and a powerful longing for the love she never knew.

I think you will enjoy reading this novel. It has lots of interesting, intriguing elements, humor, sorrow,

rejection, and astuteness, to name a few.

Will Madame Bovary's Daughter, Berthe Bovary, find the love she craves? Will she mark her mark in the dog-eat-dog haute Couture of the 1800's? I can only suggest you read this delightful novel to find out.

Jeannie Walker - Award Winning Author of "Fighting the Devil" - A True Story of Consuming Passion, Deadly Poison, and Murder

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### **Diane Lockward says**

I absolutely adore the original Madame Bovary and used to teach it to AP English Lit students. I enjoyed this sequel for the most part. It was fun to reencounter familiar characters and see how Urbach created her own plot threads, picking up where Flaubert left off. But I was disappointed by the ending. The author simply fails to provide a resolution. Instead, she just stops writing. Also, I couldn't help thinking that she must have taken a workshop on How To Write Sex Scenes. Flaubert knew how to suggest without being tediously descriptive. There were times in the second half of the novel when I found it rather hard to believe the turns Berthe's life was taking.

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### **MaryannC. Book Fiend says**

I enjoyed this book about Emma Bovary's daughter Berthe. I liked Berthe's drive and her determination not to let her mother's scandalous life and death ruin her future. I also liked the details about the fashion and the use of fabrics of that time period. This book kept my interest till the end.

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### **Jennie says**

I haven't read Madame Bovary so maybe that is part of the reason, but I just didn't click with this book. It wasn't that I hated it or disliked it completely. I liked it in pieces – like the beginning of Berthe living with her Grandmother, and the portion when she was working with Charles Frederick. Otherwise, I just wasn't connected or really interested in the plot.

The time period was interesting – the insight into the dangerous cotton mills was written realistically and descriptively. The words conveyed the emotions well - I became connected to the poor, innocent children slaving away in such horrible conditions.

I didn't hate this story, I just didn't connect with it enough to keep me turning the pages. This was one of those stories I had to force myself to finish just to be done with it.

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## **Darlene Foster says**

It is not easy to take a minor character from a much loved classic and create great a story, but Linda Howard Urbach does it beautifully in this novel about Berthe, Madame Bovary's neglected daughter. This story has everything I love in it; fashion, history, art, food, Paris, sex and friendship. It is a fun read which holds your interest as you follow the determined Berthe from the French countryside, to the streets of nineteenth century Paris, the hazardous cotton mills and the elegant fashion houses. The descriptions of the fabrics and fashions of the time are amazing. I loved how the author wove real historic figures like Levy Strauss, Jean-Francois Millet, and Charles Frederick Worth into the story in a very believable way. There are many captivating fictional characters too like her thieving friend Helene and the charming artist Armand. You will find yourself cheering for Berthe as you wonder if she will make it, or if she will fall into her mother's habits.

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## **Mary says**

This book is a jumble, orphaned girl, a love story, a woman on her own story, a bit of sex (including rape and homosexual encounters and wife swapping), a bit of history, some comedy, some really lose morals, a bit of reference to Madame Bovary . . . At times, it works and at times it's either too chaotic or just funny. It's the just funny part that saved it for me. Okay, at times the humor (Mr. Worth, a clothes designer, can't speak French well and says the funniest things and some of the sexual encounters and some of the interactions between the men) gets to be a bit tired, but I still liked it.

Madame Bovary's daughter Bertha is orphaned, is shunted to mean family, has to work in a mill, is rescued by a "bad" family (with a bit of a twist here), falls in love, is betrayed, you get the drift.

So, what makes it worth reading? The odd twists and turns, the funny characters and it's just a fun novel.

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## **Jessica says**

I wan't that big of a fan of Madame Bovary because Emma's selfish way of life annoyed me so much, but I think that's why I enjoyed this book about her daughter so much. Berthe didn't like the way her mother had lived and spent her life, so starting from right after her parents died, she decided to have a life the opposite of her mother's. I love historical romances, and this book had every aspect of historical books that I love. It had the old fashioned society with gowns and balls. There was passion, affairs, scandal, and secrets (basically everything that made the 1800s a juicy time to read about). This book had some boring moments, but I loved following Berthe's life as it passed through the four different sections of the story. I really liked how even though Berthe had no one, she wasn't afraid to put herself out there and make something of herself. Her passion for fashion (haha, that rhymed :) ) was so much fun to read about and I really admired how she loved something so much, even if her life wasn't at the best of times. Madame Bovary's Daughter is definitely a historical romance that is intriguing to read and a great, juicy follow up to the old classic.

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## **Holly Weiss says**

What a fabulous idea for a book! What happened to the ignored, orphaned daughter after her adulterous

mother, Madame Bovary, committed suicide? *Madame Bovary's Daughter: A Novel of Fashion and Fortune* is the story of a daughter determined to distance herself from her infamous mother. Berthe remembers every rosette and bow on her mother's gowns, but no kind words or affection. She carries a photograph of her mother in a gorgeous white tulle gown from place to place, noticing how the seams are placed, how the crystals are attached--a harbinger of better times. Her journey from peasantry to grand society ensues by turns of good luck and her own pluck.

After her father's death, Berthe lives with her reticent grandmother. She milks the cow, forklifts hay and is made to replace the maid. Berthe yearns to put the peasant life behind. She dreams of owning a beautiful home with marble staircases, satin cushions, dancing guests and rooms filled with gorgeous gowns. Her mother had instilled in her a love of fine fashion, romantic stories, and luxury. Most importantly, she desires "what her mother never had: the love of someone she loved in return." Berthe's grandmother dies when she is thirteen. With no resources or family to turn to, she finds work in a cotton mill.

Beautiful Berthe's fortune is changed when she is hired as a lady's maid in a Paris home. She manages to survive in a home where consenting and non-consenting sex abounds. The household is passionate about couture. Despite her lack of experience, she perfects her sewing skills and studies the latest fashions. So begins her training for what ultimately will bring her the most joy.

Urbach writes a complex heroine who vows to transcend the mistakes her mother made and claim a happy life. Berthe is deceptive along the way and makes some decisions that will make you cringe. She bears much unfairness and misfortune. Although a complex and fascinating character, she is certainly not a squeaky-clean heroine. Urbach tends to overuse the technique of telling us about Berthe by comments from other characters. Assumptions of Berthe's expertise flow frequently from people she encounters. We are left to wonder if she knows her own strengths or merely deduces them from their opinions. Finally, Berthe finds herself and seizes her passion. She takes the reins of her journey and discovers that a passionate life can be a life well lived.

Established author and screenplay writer Linda Urbach Howard founded *Memoirs*, writing workshops for and about mothers. *Madame Bovary's Daughter* is her third novel. She is currently working on a new book, *Sarah's Hair*, the story of Sarah Bernhardt's hairdresser.

The author uses much period detail about weaving factories. Interlaced with the plot are vivid descriptions of Victorian women's apparel. Each gown is easily pictured from the details the author deftly provides. The information about fashion design and the beginnings of retail clothing stores is fascinating.

*Madame Bovary's Daughter* is great fodder for books groups whose interest in the classics is surging. Urbach weaves memories of Berthe's childhood into the book so a reading of *Madame Bovary* is not necessary. Reading the French classic, however, will enhance your appreciation of the new release. Comparisons of the two will percolate discussion. An author's interview and questions for book groups are provided.

Random House graciously supplied the review copy. All opinions expressed are unbiased and wholly those of the reviewer.

Reviewed by Holly Weiss, author of *Crestmont*

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### **Susanna says**

Whatever description of this book's plot that you read, it's probably oversimplified. *Madame Bovary's Daughter* consists of four parts, each spanning about two years: Berthe's stay at her grandmother's farm, her time spent working at a cotton mill, her tenure as an upstairs housemaid in a wealthy Parisian home, and her fashion career as it begins at Worth's. Covering a wide array of settings and social positions, Urbach packs a ton of information into less than 500 pages. She occasionally takes some creative license with dates and famous personages but helpfully explains all historical inaccuracies in her postscript. While the plot moves slowly, it is not uninteresting, and Urbach successfully maintains her novel's connection to *Madame Bovary* while simultaneously allowing Berthe to forge her own story. She also provides excellent historical details on art, fashion, and Victorian culture without making these details become overbearing and dry. I felt like the last 50 or so pages of the novel were a bit rushed, but again, Urbach has packed a lot into one novel. While *Madame Bovary's Daughter* can be read without prior knowledge of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, I found that this continuation of the story provided some insights into Flaubert's original characters and increased my understanding of the 1856 novel.

Review originally posted on my blog: <http://susie-bookworm.blogspot.com/2011/05/review-madame-bovarys-daughter.html>

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### **Marie says**

Realistically depressing but worth it.  
<http://www.burtonbookreview.com/2011/05/review-madame-bovarys-daughter.html>

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### **Dorian de Jandreau says**

I was overwhelmed by this book. It's still hard to write a review of this book because I still live with it. When I started reading it, I thought it will be just a regular love story, but I was so wrong. I couldn't put it down so easily. I finished it in 10 days because it took my heart. I was crying, laughing and blushing while reading. I cannot believe it this book was standing on my shelf for over a year and I forgot to read it. It fascinated me same as the original "Madame Bovary". It's a heartbreak story with a happy end. I wish such stories could happen in reality, but, alas, it's just a book.  
I can say it was a book I was looking to read all my life. Author perfectly showed Victorian times in Paris. Since I love myself to make Victorian style clothes- it was a very touching book. I will recommend it to everybody who loves dramatic love stories with happy ends and a lot of sexy details.

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### **Sonja says**

I didn't care for Berthe Bovary at all. All her thoughts centered on not turning out like her mother as if that was all she was about. Oh yeah....and fashion. The scene at the end with Monsieur Boulanger was annoying, as we're Berthe's sexual encounters considering three of them were either molestation or rape. This book was filled with unlikely scenarios and seemed to be directed at a much younger audience. I do agree with Urbach's note at the end: Flaubert would probably hate this horribly done sequel.

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### **Kyle Wendy Skultety (gimmethatbook.com) says**

From the moment I started reading this, I knew it was going to be wonderful. I did not need to have prior knowledge of the original Madame Bovary to grasp what the characters were about. Filled with humor, pathos, intrigue, and luxurious descriptions of the burgeoning fashion industry in Paris, this novel is a quick and easy read. I found myself rooting for Mme. Bovary throughout, as she tries to shake off her mother's reputation and make her own way in the world.

Urbach mixes historical and fictional characters seamlessly; as Mme. Bovary has interactions with Charles Frederick Worth, Jean-Francois Millet, and even Levi Strauss. Her descriptions of 1800's fashion, sweatshops, and society's attitudes towards women are spot on. I really enjoy being able to read a book and feel that I'm immersed in that time period; and this novel did not disappoint. I read it in a few hours because I was so entranced. Kudos to Urbach for introducing new readers to the Bovary name.

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### **Sarah Mac says**

This is a good example of why I tend to dislike picaresque novels. No, Berthe Bovary isn't Tom Jones, but she does wander in search of purpose & has various sex scenes along the way. Granted, such a plot is common in bookclub fodder, but the flag-waving Checklist o' Different Worldview Characters with which she experiments and/or observes others' sexual identities is highly picaresque & annoyingly overplayed. Horndog farmboy, crossdressing master, lesbian mistress, rapey playboy, posing nude for a platonic mentor/painter, etc... meanwhile, the crawling plot is repeatedly interrupted for Berthe's memories of Emma Bovary before jumping forward several days or months. Said interruptions happen without warning, sometimes in the middle of a conversation -- then happen AGAIN not two pages later.

These characters just weren't strong enough to support such a herky-jerky method; everyone was a cliche, from bitchy Grand-Mere to lusty Renard to the wandering artist to impoverished mill workers, crooked landlady, & gay fashion guru. Berthe herself had very little presence -- for the central character of this weird little epic, she had very few thoughts of her own & no vividness whatsoever. Yawn.

In short: meandering plot with flat archetypal characters & no flow to the current storyline, thanks to those repeated flashbacks. This book tried to be many things -- picaresque, pastoral, Dickens-ish social commentary, romance -- but ultimately fails to embrace any genre enough to define itself. Too many cooks in the kitchen, y'know? \*shrug\*

Skip it & read Flaubert's original, which is nothing like this hot mess.

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