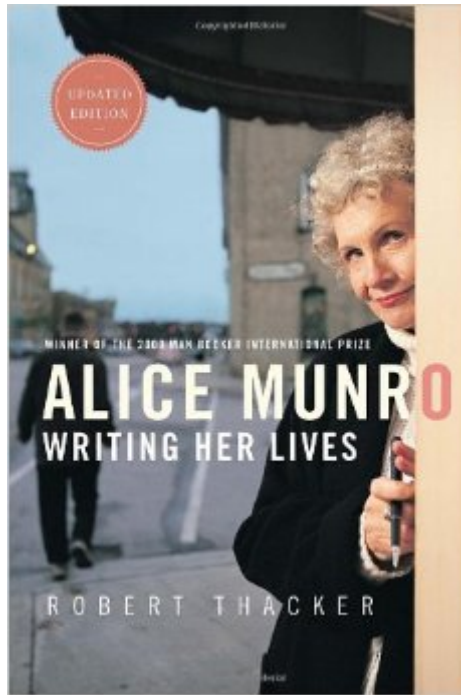


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Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives



Synopsis

This is the book about one of the world's great authors, Alice Munro, which shows how her life and her stories intertwine. For almost thirty years Robert Thacker has been researching this book, steeping himself in Alice Munro's life and work, working with her co-operation to make it complete. The result is a feast of information for Alice Munro's admirers everywhere. By following the parallel tracks of Alice Munro's life and Alice Munro's texts, he gives a thorough and revealing account of both her life and work. "There is always a starting point in reality," she once said of her stories, and this book reveals just how often her stories spring from her life. The book is chronological, starting with her pioneer ancestors, but with special attention paid to her parents and to her early days growing up poor in Wingham. Then all of her life stages – the marriage to Jim Munro, the move to Vancouver, then to Victoria to start the bookstore, the three daughters, the divorce, the return to Huron County, and the new life with Gerry Fremlin – leading to the triumphs as, story by story, book by book, she gains fame around the world, until rumours of a Nobel Prize circulate . . . From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's true that there's nothing salacious about this book. Also that, at 600+ pages, it's the weight of a brick. Yet I obsessively read it. Robert Thacker writes well. I found myself wondering who he is. I know that he has "followed" Alice Munro for thirty-five years, because it says so in his bio. It's strange to devote one's life to gathering the (often dry) details of another's, but he has done just

that. Thank God he doesn't attempt to explain her stories, rather he fixes them (sometimes ploddingly) to her past. If you can get through Part One: Ancestors, Parents, Home, you'll likely feel quite dizzy as a result. Learning the branches of her family tree is both fascinating and tiresome. That said, this scholarly work is something I cherish for the perspective it does give. It tells no more than I need to know, for to know too much might destroy the mystery. It tells enough. We learn that Alice Munro struggled, paid attention, was reasonably kind, and that throughout she was true to herself. Oh, and she wrote, since of course that is what a writer does. I don't know if she ever made grape jelly, nor do I particularly want to.

Fascinating for the already initiated, for awhile. It includes as much as you're likely to want to know about the background and details of Munro's actual life, personality and her relationship to her work. You're not likely to enjoy the numerous passages reviewing her reviews of the books of stories you better have already read if you're going to bother with this tome.

As the previous reviewer points out, the treatment of Munro's life here is shallow. But I think the point of a biography is to reveal something about the real life of the public figure. There is nothing intimate or even especially human about this book. The better part of it seems devoted to recording all the praise Munro has ever received by editors, reviewers, etc. No one would buy a \$40, 616-page book about Alice Munro if not already convinced that she is an extraordinary writer. I didn't feel I needed to read every scrap of adulation ever accorded to her. I wanted details about her life, her writing process, maybe an in-depth discussion of different stories. She's written tirelessly about adultery, tortured love affairs, estranged daughters. I was hoping for something specific or in-depth about how these themes have informed her own life. Again, that doesn't seem unreasonable for a biography. I'm not saying Thacker was wrong to resist visiting these places, especially as he is so star-struck and respectful of his still-living subject. But I am saying that this book was just too safe and careful to be interesting.

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