



Jane Addams: Spirit in Action

By Louise W. Knight

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In this landmark biography, Jane Addams becomes America's most admired and most hated woman?and wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

Jane Addams (1860-1935) was a leading statesperson in an era when few imagined such possibilities for women. In this fresh interpretation, the first full biography of Addams in nearly forty years, Louise W. Knight shows Addams's boldness, creativity, and tenacity as she sought ways to put the ideals of democracy into action. Starting in Chicago as a co-founder of the nation's first settlement house, Hull House—a community center where people of all classes and ethnicities could gather—Addams became a grassroots organizer and a partner of trade unionists, women, immigrants, and African Americans seeking social justice. In time she emerged as a progressive political force; an advocate for women's suffrage; an advisor to presidents; a co-founder of civil rights organizations, including the NAACP; and a leader for international peace. Written as a fast-paced narrative, *Jane Addams* traces how one woman worked with others to make a difference in the world. 32 black-and-white illustrations

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Jane Addams (1860–1935) was one of the leading figures of the Progressive era. This "pragmatic visionary," as Knight calls her, is best known as the creator of Hull House, a model settlement house offering training, shelter, and culture for Chicago's poor. Addams also involved herself in a long list of Progressive campaigns. Her rhetorical skills as both speaker and writer made her internationally recognized as a supporter of civil rights, woman suffrage, and labor reform. Using brief quotes and contextual details, Knight (*Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy*) describes her subject's journey from a Victorian upbringing that stressed family duty through her practice of lofty "benevolence" as a young woman to the confidence to unhesitatingly risk her substantial reputation advocating pacifism during WWI. Her continuing peace activities earned her a Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, but antagonized many longstanding supporters. In this well-supported and appealing portrait of an iconic American, Knight emphasizes Addams's struggle to redefine Victorian womanhood and claim her right to "possess authority in the public realm" and "exercise authority" as a lobbying feminist who helped women acquire the right to vote. 32 illus.

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From [Booklist](#)

Jane Addams' life story never becomes irrelevant. With the passage of time, her reputation and her remarkable accomplishments have only increased in stature. As the cofounder of Hull House, the first settlement house in America, she gained a level of independence, influence, and respect seldom achieved by a woman in the late nineteenth century. As the twentieth century dawned, Addams began translating her own heartfelt spirit of democracy into both social and political action. In addition to helping the immigrant residents of her working-class Chicago neighborhood, she became a tireless advocate of labor unions, free speech, civil rights, women's suffrage, and world peace. Knight, the author of *Citizen* (2006), provides the first full-length biography of Jane Addams in 35 years. She carefully traces Addams' philosophical progression as she evolved from a passive reformer into an active collaborator, who tirelessly worked with, not for, others to usher in a new era of democracy and social justice. --Margaret Flanagan

Review

Louise W. Knight's masterful biography of Jane Addams not only brings to life this remarkable crusader for peace and justice but serves as an eloquent reminder of the ideals for which she stood. Addams may be gone but with the publication of this spiritually imbued biography her dreams will live again and her life can be a model for yet another generation. To commemorate the 150th birthday of this icon of American decency and fairness, Knight's biography is a book that begs to be given as a present to others. --James McGrath Morris, author of *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power*"

Only superlatives like excellent and elegant can do justice to Louise W. Knight's fine Jane Addams. Whether Addams was grass-roots organizing, founding Hull House, or fighting for women's suffrage, she was always an indefatigable warrior. If there was any real fairness in this troubled world Addams would have won three Nobel Peace Prizes instead of one. Highly recommended. --Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*"

This book is as fine an introduction to the life and thought of Jane Addams as one is ever likely to read. Her internal growth as a world-class democrat, coupled with the many public causes with which she interacted, is so beautifully laid out that the reader sees vividly why Addams was, is, and remains an iconic figure in American history.--Vivian Gornick, author of *Fierce Attachments* and *The Men in My Life*

Louise W. Knight's masterful biography of Jane Addams not only brings to life this remarkable crusader for peace and justice but serves as an eloquent reminder of the ideals for which she stood. Addams may be gone but with the publication of this spiritually imbued biography her dreams will live again and her life can be a model for yet another generation. To commemorate the 150th birthday of this icon of American decency and fairness, Knight's biography is a book that begs to be given as a present to others.--James McGrath Morris, author of Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power

As the granddaughter of a Hull House teacher, I read this beautiful biography with a sort of intimate awe. This biography is a gift to my generation, a call for us to be as courageous and visionary in our own time as Jane Addams was in hers.--Courtney E. Martin, author of Do It Anyway: The New Generation of Activists

Jane Addams lives in these pages. So does her work and wisdom on such ongoing concerns as immigration, the intertwined restrictions of sex and race, striving for peace in a nation at war, and acting locally while thinking globally. Thanks to Louise Knight, we can meet an experienced organizer and a friend we need right now.--Gloria Steinem

Users Review

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