



All Things New

Lynn Austin

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In the aftermath of the Civil War, Josephine Weatherly and her mother, Eugenia, struggle to pick up the pieces of their lives when they return to their Virginia plantation. But the bitter realities of life after the war cannot be denied: their home and land are but shells of their previous grandeur; death has claimed her father and brother; and her remaining brother, Daniel, has returned home bitter and broken. The privileged childhood Josephine enjoyed now seems like a long-ago dream. And the God who failed to answer any of her prayers during the war is lost to her as well.

Josephine soon realizes that life is now a matter of daily survival--and recognizes that Lizzie, as one of the few remaining servants, is the one she must rely on to teach her all she needs to know. Josephine's mother, too, vows to rebuild White Oak... but a bitter hatred fuels her.

With skill and emotion, Lynn Austin brings to life the difficult years of the Reconstruction era by interweaving the stories of three women--daughter, mother, and freed slave--in a riveting tale.

All Things New Details

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Author : Lynn Austin

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Wanda says

This book will truly take you back in time - the Reconstruction Era - a time to bring an end to the vicious cycle of hatred and violence and give everyone a new start. It is the story of three beautifully portrayed women, Josephine, Eugenia, and Lizzie who are all caught up in this story of survival on a Virginia plantation after the civil war.

The endearing character of Josephine, the daughter of the Weatherly family, will capture your heart - a remarkable woman who along with the servants works hard to get back the beauty of White oak Plantation, but gets caught up in a forbidden love. She realizes early on that the only hope for survival is through the Freedman's Bureau. The plantations needed laborers and the Negroes needed work. The slaves became servants - this seemed to be the best solution for everyone.

Eugenia Weatherly, the very determined mother of the family, just wanted to go back to her life of luxury as it was before the war and to rebuild the plantation back to its glorious splendor. She refused to get her hands dirty and do what was necessary to survive. She was still stubbornly hanging on to the power of illusion and not able to make peace with the Negroes, showing them no compassion.

Lizzie, the slave/servant of the Weatherly family wants so much to get on with her life and family, but harbors deep scars of the past. She fears that she loves her family too much making her vulnerable for more hurt and suffering. She wants her children to become educated so they can have a better life and given a worthy responsibility. Lizzie is ready, but afraid to embrace all the changes brought on by the war.

This was a compelling read - one I'll not soon forget and one of my favorite books of the year.

Sherri Smith says

This is my first time reading anything by Lynn Austin, although friends have told me she is a good writer. I acknowledge that the story was well written with a good plot. It isn't your typical romantic love story, because it was almost as though you were there living the experience through the character(s). For me there were two main characters in the book, the mom and the daughter Josephine. You were introduced the brother and other sister, but even though I see where they played their rolls, they definitely didn't have a main roll in the book, other than in the situations that occurred.

As I said before, it is a very well written book, and it transported me to the days way before my time. I liked that the main characters stayed true to their position, especially in order for their to keep their honor in the deep south at that time. Too many books seem to romanticize the south, especially after the war, but it was a dark, hard period. This, I believe gave a new perspective. For that, I appreciate it.

Honestly, I'd love to see a continuation of the story. If anything, of Josephine, or of the neighboring plantation. Lest I give something away, that will be all I will say.

Sara Cardon says

This was powerful. Three women adjust to life in the South after the Civil War. I liked Lizzie's perspective as a newly freed woman who is still afraid to hope. The plantation's matriarch, Eugenia, expects life to go back to normal and to reclaim everything she once had. Josephine adjusts her expectations for the future more quickly than her mother. She steps in to help her family, their neighbor, and Lizzie and her family.

Davina says

***trigger warning: deals with suicide.

2.5 stars

Well told, but the story was too long for the little development it gave the reader. I had a very hard time getting into it and also couldn't identify with any of the characters.

The end came a little abrupt for me, leaving me wondering what happened to all the characters. Most of the story was very sad and hard, dealing with broken people after the war. I would have hoped for more peace or hope or at least closure at the end, even though I know that life isn't always like that.

The title promised all things new and well, it frankly didn't deliver.

Aerykah says

Well, I thought this would end up being at least a 3 star book... but I just couldn't finish it. I don't know why, but the more I read the less interested I was. Finally, after trying and trying, I just gave up and put it away in favor of the many other books that I have waiting to be read.

Rachel says

This was a fairly well written historical Christian fiction novel with well drawn characters. I just have never loved reading post Civil War era novels because they tend to be depressing. The Reconstruction period in the former Confederacy is just sad--so much has been destroyed and disrupted, and everyone is struggling with poverty and enmity towards others. However, this book was interesting in that it juxtaposed the viewpoints of some of the former slaves with those of the former owners, and I also really liked how Josephine came back to her faith in God and fell in love with *gasp* a Yankee, one of the few decent men in the whole book as far as I'm concerned. It was also interesting seeing how some of the characters were willing to change their mindsets and to actually deal with how things had to change and how others were not. One big issue I had with the book is that although I really did like the ending, I feel that it was entirely too optimistic and unrealistic for the time period--things just would not have worked out that well between the different factions of people at that time. Overall, I liked it well enough, especially after the first several chapters, so 3 stars.

Carolina Imhof says

I had never thought about what it meant to people when slavery ended... although it is slow at some points, with a bit too much preaching, and an unrealistic time-frame for changing people's way of thinking, it was interesting and nice to read.

Sydney Betts says

This novel is a great example of Christian Fiction at its finest. Not only do several characters actively follow Jesus, seeking direction from the Word and employing it regardless of the cost, they do so organically within the story--without making the reader feel "preached at." I also admire the way this author immersed the reader in issues relevant to both the novel's historical time period (Reconstruction) and today, refusing to back away from unpleasantness or sugar-coat portrayals of people groups involved. If I could, however, I would give 4.5 stars instead of 5 for one important (to me!) reason: the confusion between legal consequences and personal mercy (however admirable) that kept the ending from ringing true.

M says

Defying, inspirational, and passionate Josephine is what made this book from good to great! Josephine is a character that I will remember from years to come and hope that I shape into someone like her. She fights for what is right and doesn't care what others think as long as she is following God.

But, Josephine doesn't live in a world quite like we do with all of our fancy gadgets and a home we know we can return to at the end of the day. Her life is turned upside down with no certain home and definitely no luxury (though her mom is fighting to get it back). And the cause of all of this the Civil War. Even though Josephine's is a Confederate and the Civil War has practically ruined her luxurious lifestyle - she manages to find what is right in all of this and goes on to fight for it. This is especially difficult since she lives in a strongly opinionated Confederate community who despises Yankees.

Now, lets make Josephine's situation just a little more complicated. SHE'S IN LOVE WITH A YANKEE! She fights of the enemies (her own brother happens to be one of them) and does good for all of the innocent African Americans in her community!

Nise' says

Sometimes I hesitate to read Christian Fiction about a subject that I know can be filled with bitterness, hatred, rage, betrayal and pain as I wonder if it will be "sugar coated" to meet certain CF requirements. No hesitation was needed with this book as the author dealt with it all honestly. I appreciated that it did not end all neatly tied up, I was left wondering what decision the characters eventually made. The story is told in the voices of three women, Eugenia, a Southern lady, her daughter, Josephine and Lizzie their former slave, now freed. The three POVs added dimension to the story and gave a broader perspective to what each was dealing with in the aftermath of the War. The secondary characters are just as interesting. The message that joy can be found no matter what the circumstances is one that is needed today

This complimentary review copy was received thankfully from Noelle and Bethany House Publishers and in no way influenced my review of this book. These are my personal thoughts and reactions to the reading of the book.

Joyce says

Lynn Austin is one of my favorite authors. I have read many of her books, and enjoyed most of them. All Things New is a work of historical fiction set near Richmond, Virginia at the end of the Civil War. It is very well written. The author doesn't tell what, if any, of the story is based on fact or actual characters.

I struggled with several characters in the book to the point where I'd like to strangle them. The characters are for the most part believable, but few are likable. My favorite is Otis. I also like Jo and Alexander.

The details in the book were fantastic, both in character description and the physical surroundings. The author does a great job of painting the scene. And there's plenty of plot and antagonism in the story (no spoilers). It kept this reader turning pages. It was hard to put down!

The best part of the story is the parallel rekindling of faith in God and a willingness to take one's burdens to God in prayer, by two of the main characters. The dialogue which encouraged this spiritual growth, both verbal and written, and internal thoughts, was cleverly woven into the story, not tacked on.

There's a great deal of depth in the issues of this book, which are related to the issues of the Civil War. There's much food for thought, and discussion, if the reader is so inclined. This would be an excellent read for anyone studying philosophy of race or sociology of social status.

My rating: five stars

I highly recommend this squeaky clean historical story with a bit of romance woven throughout to any reader who enjoys a good read about courage and faith in difficult circumstances, real or fictionalized.

Naomi says

"All Things New" by Lynn Austin is set in post-Civil War-era Virginia and focuses on the months immediately following the end of the war. The Confederacy has just lost the war, the citizens are facing poverty and attempting to pick up the pieces of shattered lives, and deep prejudices continue to come to light.

Josephine Weatherly lost her father and one older brother in the war. Her family may lose their plantation as well with limited resources and no real ability to bring in a cotton crop. Josephine begins to see that life needs to revolve around basic survival, not trying to keep up a facade of life as it was before the war. Her mother, Eugenia, is appalled at the idea of her daughter expressing interest in tending a garden, sewing, and learning to cook, and she tries to forbid Josephine from having anything to do with "manual labor".

Lizzie is a freed slave who continues to live at White Oak plantation with her family after the war, primarily due to the promise of her children receiving an education thanks to the newly established Freedman's Bureau, run by a former Yankee soldier named Alexander Chandler. Lizzie and her family embrace their newfound freedom, but begin to experience a taste of the extreme difficulties that the freed slaves will face in this new phase of life.

This was a wonderful book that takes a look at different aspects of life during Reconstruction from three different perspectives. I loved how Austin showed the effects of war, bitterness, and hatred, and how the remedy is found in God's healing love and forgiveness. The characters were well-developed and there was just enough suspense to keep the reader engaged to the end. Overall, a good fictional read that focuses on an important and challenging part of American history.

(I've received this complimentary book from Bethany House Publishers through the Book Blogger program in exchange for a review. A positive review was not required and the views expressed in my review are strictly my own.)

IrenesBookReviews says

This author reminds me of Eugenia Price and her many books about the South. This particular book takes place after the Civil War has ended and the main character, Josephine returns to her home in Virginia. This story is very long and detailed but still worth spending your time reading.

I gave this book 5/5 stars. There was so much detail and description in the story that I was really able to picture what the characters were seeing and the circumstances they were dealing with. I loved the conversations in the book and thought they flowed well and were expertly written. Most of the time I read a longer book I say I wish some of the extra story lines had been taken out, but not this time! I think each page deserves to be there and the story would not be the same had the author skimped on detail or dialogue. I enjoyed this book and would recommend it to anyone looking for a moving story with developing characters.

I would like to thank the publisher for the copy of this book I enjoyed reading. I gave an honest review based on my opinion of what I read.

Sara says

I enjoyed that this book was set during the post-Civil War period, as it's not as popular as the antebellum period. I really did like this book, but the way it wrapped up so quickly and nicely at the end was not very believable. The characters were well-developed and I did enjoy reading their story.

Jamie says

(I received a free copy from Bethany House Publishers to review)

I wonder if Lynn Austin can write anything that's bad. Seriously, because I don't think it's possible. With All Things New, Austin once again writes an engaging and compelling story about the aftermath of the Civil War in the South.

Austin's development of the characters is rich, as each struggles with change suddenly thrust upon in the aftermath and realities of the South losing the war. Not only dealing with the physical loss and pain, but the emotional sides. I really liked the three main characters/voices in the book (Josephine, a young lady,

Eugenia, her mother & a widow and Lizzie, a freed slave).

Austin does a fine job of portraying those who let bitterness ruin them, those who moved past the pain, those who struggled to make sense of everything and those who decided to look toward the future and not dwell on the past.

While there was also a sweet romantic story, I loved that that wasn't the sole focus. The women in the book were strong solid characters that showed what it means to have faith, love, and the power of a resilient spirit. Yet another winner by Austin!

booksandbeverages.wordpress.com
