

A Book for Lovers of Literature and Dogs

“Shaggy Muses” looks at the inspiring canines behind five female literary heavyweights.

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“He and I are inseparable companions, and I have vowed him my perpetual society in exchange for his devotion.” So wrote the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning of her Cocker Spaniel, Flush.

“Shaggy Muses,” by Maureen Adams, explores the impact of dogs on five female literary giants: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, and Emily Bronte. Each writer had a close-knit bond with at least one special dog: Barrett Browning with Flush; Dickinson with her Newfoundland, Carlo; Woolf with her Cocker Spaniel, Pinka; Wharton with Finnish Spitz, Foxy, and Pekingese, Linky; and Bronte with her formidable Mastiff, Keeper.

With a chapter devoted to each woman, Adams provides readers with insightful biographies, linking together each writer’s personal and literary lives using their faithful companions. Blending her teaching background in both English and psychology, Adams goes beyond these writers’ famous works and intriguing lives to identify the influences this pack of canine muses had on their mistresses.

Readers may be surprised by some of the anecdotes Adams has unearthed. Reclusive Barrett Browning, who spent most of her time confined to her sickroom, defied her father to venture into the most notorious slums of London in search of dognappers who had stolen pets. Quiet Bronte, who shunned society outside of her family and spent her days strolling the Yorkshire moors, once beat her Mastiff for climbing onto her bed.

“Shaggy Muses” is a book for both lovers of dogs and literature, and is on sale now.