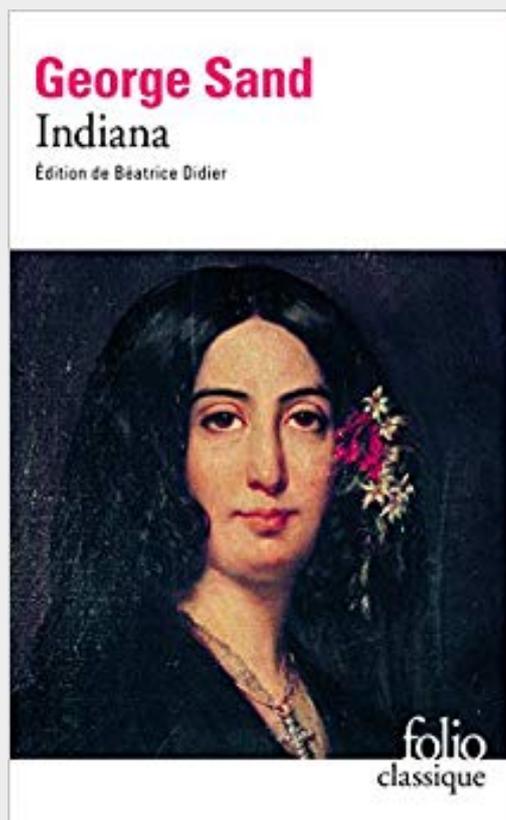


## Indiana by George Sand



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**ISBN:** 2070376044

**ISBN13:** 978-2070376049

**Author:** George Sand

**Book title:** Indiana

**Pages:** 395

**Publisher:** Schoenhofs Foreign Books (June 1, 1989)

**Language:** French

**Category:** Humanities

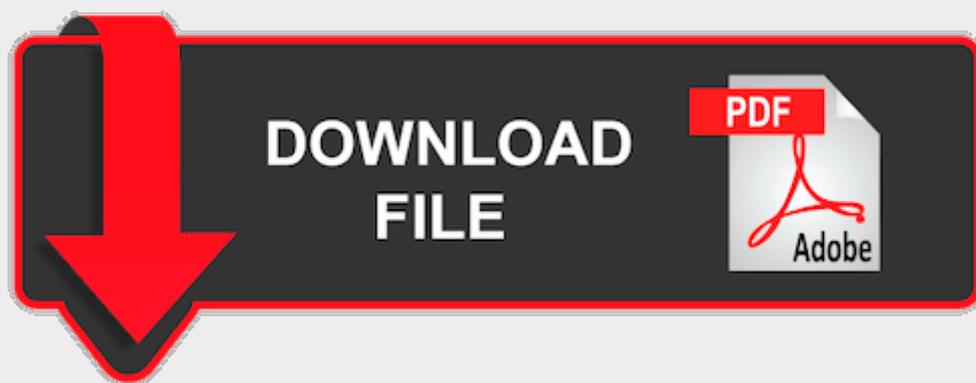
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The first novel that George Sand wrote without a collaborator, this is not only a vivid romance, but also an impassioned plea for change in the inequitable French marriage laws of the time, and for a new view of women. It tells the story of a beautiful and innocent young woman, married at sixteen to a much older man. She falls in love with her handsome, frivolous neighbor, but discovers too late that his love is quite different from her own. This new translation, the first since 1900, does full justice to the passion and conviction of Sand's writing, and the introduction fully explores the response to Sand in her own time as well as contemporary feminist treatments.



## Reviews of the *Indiana* by George Sand

1. Direbringer

This is a phenomenal book! I picked it up after learning that one of my favorite bands, Meg & Dia, used this book/character as the inspiration behind their song, "Indiana." Sure enough, as I made my way through the pages of this book, I noticed similarities between their lyrics and the text. Although this certainly did not become my all-time favorite book, it DID introduce me to George Sand who did become one of my favorite authors. I ended up donating this book to my local library before moving off to college, but I do wish I still had my copy so I could revisit these dark and complex characters.

## 2. Thoginn

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House - Literary Touchstone Edition*, written in 1879, was one of those "school-assignment" books that I had to read in high school (or was it college?). I should give it a re-read, now that there is no "test" on it. It was billed as one of the first works that addressed a woman's place (often unhappy) in marriage, and to a larger extent, society. It remains one of the most frequently performed plays in the world today. Yet almost half a century earlier, a female author, George Sand, no doubt reflecting some painful experience, wrote this novel whose central theme is essentially the same, and it is richer and more complex than *A Doll's House - Literary Touchstone Edition*, and sadly overlooked by the modern reader, including, until the past week, by this reviewer. "Indiana" was published in 1832 when Sand was only 28, yet seems to contain a full lifetime of experience in the relationship between the sexes. I have read her quite lengthy autobiography, *Story of My Life: The Autobiography of George Sand (Suny Series, Women Writers in Translation)*, and visited her still existing chateau in Nohant twice, and while not exactly a "Sand groupie," I remain in awe how this one woman was able to both understand so much and attract so many male artistic and literary giants of her time, including, most famously, Chopin.

Many of the reviews posted on this book seem to relate to one or more versions which are English translations. I read the French version, the "Folio classique" which is currently pictured, with an excellent introduction by Béatrice Didier. In a bit more than 20 pages, she provides the modern reader the historical background and context of the novel. For example, she explains how the woman born as Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, later with the married name of Aurore Dudevant became known to us as George Sand. It was a turbulent time in French history (I know, which period has not been!) France had been through the original

Revolution of 1789, and its aftermath, then the Napoleonic period, and empire, followed by the restoration of the monarchy under Louis XVIII and then Charles X. The novel is set immediately before, and during the Second French Revolution, or the July Revolution of 1830, which saw a transition for the more absolute rule of the House of the Bourbons to the House of the Orleans, under Louis Philippe. Dedier discusses how the three principal male characters, Ralph, Raymond and Indiana's husband, M. Delmare, each represent, respectively, one of the principal strains of political thought, in support of the Republic (they'd have to wait until 1848), the Monarchy, and the Empire (of Napoleon). Dedier also discusses the "Ophelia devise." The dog is name Ophelia, and is associated with scenes of drowning and suicide.

The central dynamic of the plot is Indiana's relationship with the three men as previously mentioned: her husband, stuck in the Napoleonic past; her ever-so-elusive prospective lover, Raymond, and her cousin, childhood friend, and surrogate father, Ralph. At times the drama, as well as the dialogue can be melodramatic, especially from the perspective of the modern reader. But there is considerable dynamic tension throughout the book, with sufficient plausible turns and twists to maintain a high level of interest. Again and again I was astonished at the depth of Sand's understanding, particularly for her age, of the many missed opportunities that make up so many human relations. Indiana herself often comes across as naïve (and Dedier, in the preface, makes a point of saying she is NOT a surrogate for Sand herself, who was much more complex.) Raymond is depicted very much as a "cad," who takes advantage of the naivety, so it is fitting that he, in turn, experiences a much more complex and calculating woman who can manipulate him cynically. And in terms of a woman physically abused in a marriage, long before the daytime soap opera confessionals on TV, Sand convincingly portrays physical abuse in the marriage, but the wife has serious regrets about leaving her husband "because he needs me.!!"

Another facet of the novel is how the colonies were a "safety value" for those discontented with French society. In particular, Indiana was raised on "L'Isle de Bourbon," modern day Reunion, the small island in the Indian Ocean, approximately 800 km east of Madagascar. It is viewed nostalgically as a "place of sanctuary." Today it is still a "department" of France, the furthestmost point from Europe where the Euro is legal tender. Almost two centuries later, the fantasy endures: a remote island, far from today's troubles, where one can find both peace and love. Does it require a Deus ex machine or will an ange ex machine be sufficient? 5-stars for Sand's debut novel, which will lead inexorably to her next: Lelia.

### 3. avanger

Wow! I can see why this novel was an instant success when published! It has beautiful prose, even though it is filled with the flowery language and some unfamiliar words of the period . It is an important book and should be read by anyone wanting to read classics of the time! That said, it has universal appeal and lessons for today, as well. I am reading historical fiction about Sand's life (The Dream Lover) at the same time and can imagine Sand "writing Indiana all through the night" as Berg explains in Dream Lover. In Indiana, one can see themes underlying the plot on many layers. One layer is the social mores for men and women, with a double standard and oppression of women: privileges men have just because of their gender, economic dependency of women on men where a husband was in charge of his wife's financial resources, etc. Another layer is the struggle to travel and obstacles therein. The description of the various settings Indiana experiences is detailed and powerful, especially in Bourbon. Above all of this, Indiana is a woman's book in that a woman can understand Indiana's thinking and state of mind regarding romance. (a generalization, of course-men should read it with an open mind). Otherwise, why would Indiana put herself through all the suffering for her love?! My husband and I shared it and it opened a good dialogue. There is so much powerful writing about relationships, as well. We feel deeply for the characters-I really came to loathe Raymond and feel compassion for Indiana's husband, in spite of his actions, some of which were reprehensible! I enjoyed reading it slowly and reflectively, although it moves along well enough to go more quickly. Enjoy!!

### 4. JoJolar

The melodrama is so thick you can cut it with a knife, no a stiletto! I love melodrama! That's why we read books, isn't it? I will admit that I was going to rate this book at only four stars towards the end of the story. But George Sand pulled it out, pulled it off, saved the day, saved the book! And she performed this miracle in the most surprising, unexpected, flabbergasting, jaw-dropping DENOUEMENT of all time! So don't stop reading before the last page. And buckle-up with a load of kleenex, cause its gonna be a wild and crazy, tear-jerking ride!

## 5. IWAS

Hard to believe that this novel was written (and beautifully so) two hundred years ago! Sometimes a bit self conscious in preaching but still a valuable reminder that women have been fighting for equal rights for a long time. Sand is a brilliant observer of the political spectrum whose projected audience would have been far more astute in picking up those innuendos than I. Read it as more of a period piece than just another novel of dysfunctional families? This was Sand's first novel on her own and it established her reputation overnight.

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