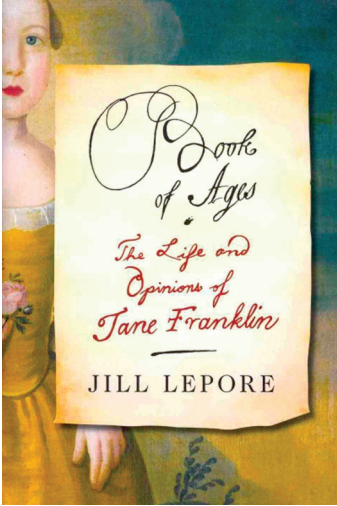


*May 2014*


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**Reading Guide: *Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin* by Jill Lepore (2013)**

1. Some reviews have called *Book of Ages* a biography, while others see it as a work of women's history. How would you categorize this book?
2. Benjamin Franklin has been the subject of many biographies. Did you gain a different perspective on him from this book? What were your new insights?
3. Readers' opinions vary on the strength of Benjamin Franklin's relationship with his sister Jane. How important do you think their relationship was to each other?
4. Despite the limited sources available, Jill Lepore managed to give a strong sense of Jane Franklin Mecom's personality. Do you think you would have liked her if you had met her? Why?
5. Much of Jane Franklin Mecom's story is missing due to loss of documents and the "invisibility" of women in the 1700s. What parts of her life would you have liked to know more about?
6. Although Jill Lepore is an academic historian and has published many scholarly works, she deliberately chose a less formal voice for this book. Did it work for you? Why or why not?
7. Were you glad you read this book? Would you recommend it to a friend? Why or why not?
8. Are there related books, museum exhibitions, websites, or other resources that you would like to share with fellow readers of this book?

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**About Jill Lepore**

Dr. Jill Lepore is a professor of history at Harvard University and the chair of the university's history and literature program. She is also a staff writer at *The New Yorker*. Her writing ranges from historical scholarship to political commentary to historical fiction and she publishes widely in both the scholarly and popular press. Her next two books, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* and *Dickens in America*, will depart the 1700s to focus on the 19th and 20th centuries.

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**Other Related Texts**

If you liked *Book of Ages*, you may enjoy these other books (descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com):

- *Blindspot* by Jill Lepore and Jane Kamensky (Spiegel & Grau, 2009)  
Stewart Jameson, a Scottish portrait painter fleeing his debtors in Edinburgh, has washed up on the British Empire's far shores—in the city of Boston, lately seized with the spirit of liberty. Fanny Easton is a fallen woman from Boston's most prominent family who has disguised herself as a boy to become Jameson's defiant and seductive apprentice. Written with wit and exuberance by accomplished historians, *Blindspot* is an affectionate send-up of the best of eighteenth-century fiction. It celebrates the art of the Enlightenment and the passion of the American Revolution by telling stories of ordinary people caught up in an extraordinary time.

- *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* by Walter Isaacson (Simon and Schuster, 2004)  
In this authoritative and engrossing full-scale biography, Walter Isaacson, bestselling author of *Einstein* and *Steve Jobs*, shows how the most fascinating of America's founders helped define our national character. In this colorful and intimate narrative, Isaacson provides the full sweep of Franklin's amazing life, showing how he helped to forge the American national identity and why he has a particular resonance in the twenty-first century.
- *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* by Jill Lepore (Vintage, 2006)  
*New York Burning* is a well-told tale of a once-notorious episode that took place in Manhattan in 1741. Over the course of a few weeks in 1741, ten fires burned across Manhattan, sparking hysteria and numerous conspiracy rumors. Initially, rival politicians blamed each other for the blazes, but they soon found a common enemy. Based solely on the testimony of one white woman, some 200 slaves were accused of conspiring to burn down the city, murder the resident whites, and take over the local government. Crisply written and meticulously researched, *New York Burning* is a gripping narrative of events that led to what one colonist referred to as the "bonfires of the Negroes."
- *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* by Jill Lepore (Vintage, 1999)  
In 1675, tensions between Native Americans and colonists residing in New England erupted into the brutal conflict that has come to be known as King Philip's War, named after Philip, the leader of the Wampanoag Indians. Jill Lepore's book is an evocative and insightful study of America's recollection and understanding of one of the bloodiest wars to take place on its soil. Skillfully drawing on accounts of substance from participants on both sides, Lepore presents a balanced overview of the causes and effects of this conflict and the reverberations it would have over the centuries to follow, ultimately revealing that how a past event is interpreted is often just as important as the event itself.

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