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# THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE



MURIEL SPARK

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**"INTELLIGENT, WITTY, AND BEAUTIFULLY  
CONSTRUCTED . . . Mrs. Spark's powers of invention  
are apparently inexhaustible."**—*Commonweal*

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**"A GLORIOUSLY WITTY AND POLISHED  
VIGNETTE . . . the enigma with which Mrs. Spark teases  
us is the question of betrayal. For even in a novel where comic  
observation and spicy dialogue provide the chief pleasure,  
she is far from a simple writer."**

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**"MURIEL SPARK IS ONE OF THE FEW WRITERS  
on either side of the Atlantic with enough resources, daring,  
and stamina to be altering, as well as feeding, the fiction  
machine."**

—John Updike, *The New Yorker*

## *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

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MURIEL SPARK, born and raised in Edinburgh, is the author of more than fifteen novels. Her most famous novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, was first published in 1962 to enormous critical acclaim. It was made into a hit play of the same name and, later, into a popular movie that starred Maggie Smith.

"A KUTTER'S COMEDY. — The Canadian

"WITTY AND BEAUTIFUL  
CONSTRUCTED... Mr. Spark's powers of invention  
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"NOT TO BE MISSED." — *Can. and Am. Times*

"A GLORIOUSLY WITTY AND POLISHED

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— *John Updike, The New Yorker*

## The Prince of Miss Jean Brodie

MR. SPARK, down and earthy in his approach, is the al-  
most of more than human power that these various novel  
The Story of Miss Jean Brodie, was first published in 1952  
in numerous critical reviews. It was made into a hit film  
of the same name and later, into a popular opera, that  
started Maggie Smith

The Prime of  
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# The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

MURIEL SPARK



HarperPerennial

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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A substantial portion of this book appeared originally in *The New Yorker*. This edition was previously published in paperback in 1984 by Plume, an imprint of New American Library, a division of Penguin Books USA, Inc., by arrangement with Harper & Row.

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First HarperPerennial edition published 1994.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Spark, Muriel.

The prime of Miss Jean Brodie / Muriel Spark. — 1st  
HarperPerennial ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-06-092398-9 (pbk.)

1. Women teachers—Scotland—Fiction. I. Title.  
PR6037.P29P7 1994  
823'.914—dc20

93-37201

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94 95 96 97 98 RRD 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Miss Jean Brodie



The Prince of  
Miss Jean Brodie

# 1



THE boys, as they talked to the girls from Marcia Blaine School, stood on the far side of their bicycles holding the handlebars, which established a protective fence of bicycle between the sexes, and the impression that at any moment the boys were likely to be away.

The girls could not take off their panama hats because this was not far from the school gates and hatlessness was an offence. Certain departures from the proper set of the hat on the head were overlooked in the case of fourth-form girls and upwards so long as nobody wore their hat at an angle. But there were other subtle variants from the ordinary rule of wearing the brim turned up at the back

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and down at the front. The five girls, standing very close to each other because of the boys, wore their hats each with a definite difference.

These girls formed the Brodie set. That was what they had been called even before the headmistress had given them the name, in scorn, when they had moved from the Junior to the Senior school at the age of twelve. At that time they had been immediately recognisable as Miss Brodie's pupils, being vastly informed on a lot of subjects irrelevant to the authorised curriculum, as the headmistress said, and useless to the school as a school. These girls were discovered to have heard of the Buchmanites and Mussolini, the Italian Renaissance painters, the advantages to the skin of cleansing cream and witch-hazel over honest soap and water, and the word "menarche"; the interior decoration of the London house of the author of *Winnie the Pooh* had been described to them, as had the love lives of Charlotte Brontë and of Miss Brodie herself. They were aware of the existence of Einstein and the arguments of those who considered the Bible to be untrue. They knew the rudiments of astrology but not the date of the Battle of Flodden or the capital of Finland. All of the Brodie set, save one, counted on its fingers, as had Miss Brodie, with accurate results more or less.

By the time they were sixteen, and had reached the

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fourth form, and loitered beyond the gates after school, and had adapted themselves to the orthodox regime, they remained unmistakably Brodie, and were all famous in the school, which is to say they were held in suspicion and not much liking. They had no team spirit and very little in common with each other outside their continuing friendship with Jean Brodie. She still taught in the Junior department. She was held in great suspicion.

Marcia Blaine School for Girls was a day school which had been partially endowed in the middle of the nineteenth century by the wealthy widow of an Edinburgh book-binder. She had been an admirer of Garibaldi before she died. Her manly portrait hung in the great hall, and was honoured every Founder's Day by a bunch of hard-wearing flowers such as chrysanthemums or dahlias. These were placed in a vase beneath the portrait, upon a lectern which also held an open Bible with the text underlined in red ink, "O where shall I find a virtuous woman, for her price is above rubies."

The girls who loitered beneath the tree, shoulder to shoulder, very close to each other because of the boys, were all famous for something. Now, at sixteen, Monica Douglas was a prefect, famous mostly for mathematics which she could do in her brain, and for her anger which, when it was lively enough, drove her to slap out to right and left. She had a very red nose, winter and

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summer, long dark plaits, and fat, peg-like legs. Since she had turned sixteen, Monica wore her panama hat rather higher on her head than normal, perched as if it were too small and as if she knew she looked grotesque in any case.

Rose Stanley was famous for sex. Her hat was placed quite unobtrusively on her blonde short hair, but she dented in the crown on either side.

Eunice Gardiner, small, neat and famous for her spritely gymnastics and glamorous swimming, had the brim of her hat turned up at the front and down at the back.

Sandy Stranger wore it turned up all round and as far back on her head as it could possibly go; to assist this, she had attached to her hat a strip of elastic which went under the chin. Sometimes Sandy chewed this elastic and when it was chewed down she sewed on a new piece. She was merely notorious for her small, almost non-existent, eyes, but she was famous for her vowel sounds which, long ago in the long past, in the Junior school, had enraptured Miss Brodie. "Well, come and recite for us please, because it has been a tiring day."

She left the web, she left the loom,  
She made three paces thro' the room,  
She saw the water-lily bloom,

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She saw the helmet and the plume,

She look'd down to Camelot.

"It lifts one up," Miss Brodie usually said, passing her hand outward from her breast towards the class of ten-year-old girls who were listening for the bell which would release them. "Where there is no vision," Miss Brodie had assured them, "the people perish. Eunice, come and do a somersault in order that we may have comic relief."

But now, the boys with their bicycles were cheerfully insulting Jenny Gray about her way of speech which she had got from her elocution classes. She was going to be an actress. She was Sandy's best friend. She wore her hat with the front brim bent sharply downward; she was the prettiest and most graceful girl of the set, and this was her fame. "Don't be a lout, Andrew," she said with her uppish tone. There were three Andrews among the five boys, and these three Andrews now started mimicking Jenny: "Don't be a lout, Andrew," while the girls laughed beneath their bobbing panamas.

Along came Mary Macgregor, the last member of the set, whose fame rested on her being a silent lump, a nobody whom everybody could blame. With her was an outsider, Joyce Emily Hammond, the very rich girl, their



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delinquent, who had been recently sent to Blaine as a last hope, because no other school, no governess, could manage her. She still wore the green uniform of her old school. The others wore deep violet. The most she had done, so far, was to throw paper pellets sometimes at the singing master. She insisted on the use of her two names, Joyce Emily. This Joyce Emily was trying very hard to get into the famous set, and thought the two names might establish her as a something, but there was no chance of it and she could not see why.

Joyce Emily said, "There's a teacher coming out," and nodded towards the gates.

Two of the Andrews wheeled their bicycles out on to the road and departed. The other three boys remained defiantly, but looking the other way as if they might have stopped to admire the clouds on the Pentland Hills. The girls crowded round each other as if in discussion. "Good afternoon," said Miss Brodie when she approached the group. "I haven't seen you for some days. I think we won't detain these young men and their bicycles. Good afternoon, boys." The famous set moved off with her, and Joyce, the new delinquent, followed. "I think I haven't met this new girl," said Miss Brodie, looking closely at Joyce. And when they were introduced she said: "Well, we must be on our way, my dear."

Sandy looked back as Joyce Emily walked, and then

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skipped, leggy and uncontrolled for her age, in the opposite direction, and the Brodie set was left to their secret life as it had been six years ago in their childhood.

"I am putting old heads on your young shoulders," Miss Brodie had told them at that time, "and all my pupils are the *crème de la crème*."

Sandy looked with her little screwed-up eyes at Monica's very red nose and remembered this saying as she followed the set in the wake of Miss Brodie.

"I should like you girls to come to supper tomorrow night," Miss Brodie said. "Make sure you are free."

"The Dramatic Society . . ." murmured Jenny.

"Send an excuse," said Miss Brodie. "I have to consult you about a new plot which is afoot to force me to resign. Needless to say, I shall not resign." She spoke calmly as she always did in spite of her forceful words.

Miss Brodie never discussed her affairs with the other members of the staff, but only with those former pupils whom she had trained up in her confidence. There had been previous plots to remove her from Blaine, which had been foiled.

"It has been suggested again that I should apply for a post at one of the progressive schools, where my methods would be more suited to the system than they are at Blaine. But I shall not apply for a post at a crank school. I shall remain at this education factory. There needs



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must be a leaven in the lump. Give me a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life."

The Brodie set smiled in understanding of various kinds.

Miss Brodie forced her brown eyes to flash as a meaningful accompaniment to her quiet voice. She looked a mighty woman with her dark Roman profile in the sun. The Brodie set did not for a moment doubt that she would prevail. As soon expect Julius Caesar to apply for a job at a crank school as Miss Brodie. She would never resign. If the authorities wanted to get rid of her she would have to be assassinated.

"Who are the gang, this time?" said Rose, who was famous for sex-appeal.

"We shall discuss tomorrow night the persons who oppose me," said Miss Brodie. "But rest assured they shall not succeed."

"No," said everyone. "No, of course they won't."

"Not while I am in my prime," she said. "These years are still the years of my prime. It is important to recognise the years of one's prime, always remember that. Here is my tram car. I daresay I'll not get a seat. This is nineteen-thirty-six. The age of chivalry is past."

Six years previously, Miss Brodie had led her new class into the garden for a history lesson underneath the big elm. On the way through the school corridors they