

Bridget Jones is Mad about the Boy [C1]

Renée Zellweger interpreta l'eroina romantica nell'adattamento del romanzo della saga di Helen Fielding. L'autrice britannica racconta come percepisce l'evoluzione del personaggio in una società che sta cambiando, ma in cui persistono ancora alcuni stereotipi.

Love her or hate her, Bridget Jones is back on the big screen. American actress Renée Zellweger **reprises** her role as the inimitable romantic heroine in *Mad About the Boy*. It is the fourth film in the series based on the novels by British author Helen Fielding. The first book, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, **heralded** the era of chick lit, **resonating** with a generation of professional young women. Published in 1996, it chronicles the life of the titular Bridget Jones as she navigates life in London as a thirty-something single woman. Bridget worries about everything: her weight, her habits, her career and, above all, her love life. **Scores** of women recognised themselves in the tragic yet loveable heroine and the book became a bestseller. The Bridget Jones phenomenon introduced a whole new lexicon*, including 'singletons', 'smug marrieds', 'fuckwittage', that **tied in** with 1990s culture and was adopted in everyday speech.

BRIDGET GROWS UP

The cast of characters introduced in the first book include Bridget's close friends Shazzer, Jude and Tom, her **domineering** mother, her soft-hearted **fat** her, her **sleazy** boss Daniel Cleaver and the mysterious Mark Darcy. However, despite a 'happy ever after', it was inevitable that Bridget would return. *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* was published in 1999, focusing on a theoretically more mature Bridget in a stable relationship and career. The final **instalment**, *Mad About the Boy*, came out in 2013. All have been adapted into blockbuster movies, with an additional film, *Bridget Jones's Baby*, based on a screenplay co-authored by Fielding. *Mad About the Boy* **premieres** in cinemas on Valentine's Day. In an interview about the film, Fielding began by explaining where Bridget finds herself at this point in her

life. **Helen Fielding (English accent):** Bridget is now a mother. And **parenthood** for Bridget now becomes another thing she thinks she's supposed to be really good at, and now she thinks she's really **crap** at. But I think the essential thing with Bridget and her children is, it's a terrible **muddle**. She does forget them sometimes and leave them on the pavement. She does sometimes worry that they'll be **taken into care** by the social services. But essentially, she loves them.

JANE AUSTEN INFLUENCE

The name of the children's **father**, Mark Darcy, is no coincidence. The novels and the movies contain references to the works of Jane Austen. Bridget Jones's Diary alludes to Pride and Prejudice, while The **Edge** of Reason **roughly** follows the plot of Persuasion. British actor Colin Firth played Mr. Darcy in the BBC serialisation of Pride and Prejudice, before he played Mark Darcy in the Bridget Jones films. Fellow Brit Hugh Grant has also appeared in the movie adaptation of Sense and Sensibility. In Mad About the Boy, he returns as the deliciously ambiguous Daniel Cleaver. **Helen Fielding:** I love Daniel as a character. Well, I also love Hugh as a character. And I think Hugh contributed a huge amount to the **funny lines** in the movies. For example, the line in the movie where he's seducing Bridget and she's wearing the big pants and **he goes**, "Oh, don't worry, I'm wearing something rather similar myself. Oh, Mummy!" That came from him. So, I really wanted to keep him present and he's **godfather** to Bridget's children. The thing about Daniel is, I think people do stay in people's lives and old boyfriends do become friends. And you know, he's still Daniel. He's still, "What colour are your panties?" And still, you know, **having a crack at** seduction **whenever it presents itself**. But he's still in her life. And they accept each other as they are.

A FAMILIAR FAVOURITE

Despite now being a fifty-something mother of two children, Bridget is also largely unchanged. She is still **wracked** by self-doubt, questioning her own **worth** in every aspect of her life. It does not sound much like comedy, but

Fielding says she endeavoured to make it incredibly funny and relatable.

Helen Fielding: Bridget is constantly resolving to change, but I don't think anyone ever really changes, do they? I think she's still got the same sense of wild optimism, followed by despair. So, one minute, she's, "Oh, I'm marvellous, I'm a sex goddess," and then, next minute, she sees a poster for an over-fifties trip to Hastings, and then she starts to think she's an old lady, with a shopping bag and a tight perm. So, she goes from one extreme to the other. But the thing is, she's always got her friends. That's the thing. And she's always got her friends to make her laugh about stuff.

LIFE AND LOSS

The third book, and fourth film, are considerably darker than their prequels.

Without disclosing too many spoilers, Bridget is in mourning over the loss

of a major character. Fielding explains this sombre turn of events.

Helen Fielding: No one gets to Bridget's age without suffering some sort of loss.

Life doesn't turn out like you expect. And the thing about Bridget is, the comedy has always come from something real and I didn't want this book to be a weak copy of the other books. The thing about Bridget is, her motto is 'KBO': "keep buggering on". Tough things happen in life and she gets through. She survives, she has a friend, she deals with it and she comes through the other side and she's still finding things funny and it hurts, but she's still laughing. And that was something important that I wanted to say.

AGEING GRACEFULLY

Fielding has another point to make about media's obsession with youth and beauty. Mad About the Boy is unusual in having a middle-aged female protagonist. The author used the book and the screenplay, which she also co-authored, to address some serious issues relating to female stereotypes.

Helen Fielding: There will always be stereotypes. And when I wrote the first book, I was in my thirties and the stereotype was that if you weren't married, you were a tragic, barren spinster, who was going to end up dying alone and being eaten by an Alsatian. And all your uncles would ask you how your love

life was. And now I think that the stereotype that Bridget's struggling with is that of a woman of a certain age. And she thinks she's that woman who refuses ever to come out into daylight and spends her whole time in **darkened rooms**, with candles and **firelight** and then **smears** her **lipstick** all over her face, because she can't see, because she needs reading glasses. There's a lot of very unkind stereotypes for women in their forties and fifties, sitcom characters who **are deluded into thinking** they're still attractive, but they're not. And I think it's really **mean**. And I think we need some better, more realistic.

BRIDGETSPEAK

Bridget and her urban family use a very British vocabulary, including a **host** of new colloquialisms that became everyday language in the 1990s. Here is a selection of words and expressions from the Bridget Jones universe, along with their **meaning**. Be careful in using them, as some can be considered quite rude! **bloke**: colloquial word for 'man' (similar to 'guy'). **bugger**: vulgar **slang** for something **annoying** or **awkward**. **bugger off!**: go away!. **fuckwit**: amalgamation of 'fuck all', **meaning** 'nothing', and '**nitwit**', **meaning** 'idiot'. **emotional fuckwittage**: **mindgames** played by men when **dating**. **granny pants**: **girdle-like undergarment** designed to **flatten** the stomach. **pervy**: sexually perverted. **shag**: have sex. **singleton**: single person, similar to the old-fashioned '**spinster**' (female) or '**bachelor**' (male). **sloaney**: a fashionable, upper-class young woman (originally from Sloane Square, London). **smug married**: an **annoying** married person who **makes fun of** singletons' unmarried status. **super**: excellent. **tart**: female prostitute. **tarts & vicars party**: British costume party where women wear provocative **outfits** and men dress as Anglican **priests**. **telly**: **short for** 'television'. **trollop**: a disreputable woman who has many sexual partners. **wobbly bits**: **rolls** of body **fat**.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CHICK LIT

British author Helen Fielding is today described as "the grandmother of chick lit." Short for 'literature for **chicks**', the term refers to popular fiction for

young women — women like Bridget Jones. Bridget was first introduced to the world in 1995 in a newspaper column. The Independent had **commissioned** Fielding to write a diary about herself and that appealed to women like herself. So, Bridget was introduced as a single, middle-class woman in her thirties, who lived in London, worked in **publishing** and worried constantly about finding a boyfriend. She takes notes about her weight, calorie **intake**, alcohol units consumed and cigarettes smoked. The semi-autobiographical column was published anonymously, so Bridget herself appeared to be the author. The format was easy to read, the prose was funny and the stories **relatable** to its **faithful** readers. When it was published as a book, retaining its diary form, it became an instant bestseller and started a trend that dominated popular fiction for the next two decades. A **host** of female authors followed Fielding's example. The more successful ones had characters that became familiar favourites across multiple novels. Irish novelist Marian Keyes wrote (and is still writing) a series of books following the daughters of the Walsh family in Dublin. Sophie Kinsella's Shopaholic series follows its protagonist from **quirky**, single journalist through marriage and into **motherhood**. Fans grow up with the books, as they see themselves reflected in the stories, as they pass through life's different stages. Authors like Jill Mansell, Emily Giffin and Jenny Colgan are joined post-2000 by Jojo Moyes, Mhairi McFarlane and Meg Cabot. Inevitably, the most popular books found their way onto the screen. Besides Bridget Jones's Diary, these also include Amanda Brown's Legally Blonde (2001), Lauren Weisberger's The Devil Wears Prada (2006) and Cecilia Aherne's P.S.I Love You (2007). The TV series Sex and the City was also based on a 1997 novel by Candace Bushnell. Chick lit started to decline in the 2010s. Evolving views about gender roles and female empowerment were changing the narrative. While some might consider the genre anti-feminist, the original novels helped to open the debate. They have become cultural **touchstones** for a new **breed** of media, which expand on the theme of what it **means** to be a young woman today.

Glossary

- **endeavoured** = impegnarsi
- **gets through** = superare
- **firelight** = luce del fuoco
- **bachelor** = scapolo
- **Scores** = moltissimi
- **roughly** = grosso modo
- **barren** = sterile
- **motherhood** = maternità
- **sleazy** = squallido
- **instalment** = numero
- **godfather** = padrino
- **mindgames** = manipolazioni psicologiche
- **dating** = uscire (con qualcuno)
- **intake** = consumo
- **faithful** = fedeli
- **Edge** = bordo, limite
- **having a crack at** = tentare di
- **point to make** = argomentare
- **darkened rooms** = stanze buie
- **annoying** = fastidioso
- **fat** = grasso
- **heralded** = annunciare
- **turn of events** = svolta degli eventi
- **outfits** = abiti
- **is in mourning** = essere in lutto
- **keep buggering on** = continuare a infastidire
- **mean** = meschino
- **funny lines** = battute divertenti
- **smears** = spalmare
- **slang** = gergo
- **awkward** = imbarazzante
- **girdle-like** = simile a una fascia
- **makes fun of** = prendersi gioco di

- **commissioned** = incaricare
- **touchstones** = punto di riferimento, termine di paragone
- **domineering** = dominante
- **resolving** = decidere
- **comes through** = uscirne vincente
- **relatable** = con quelli che si identifica
- **tight perm** = permanente
- **disclosing** = rivelare
- **lipstick** = rossetto
- **parenthood** = genitorialità
- **muddle** = confusione
- **he goes** = e lui va e dice...
- **are deluded into thinking** = illudersi
- **nitwit** = stupido
- **flatten** = appiattire
- **short for** = abbreviazione
- **breed** = tipo
- **premieres** = mostrare in anteprima
- **whenever it presents itself** = ogni volta che si presenta l'occasione
- **worth** = valore
- **host** = moltitudine
- **spinster** = zitella
- **publishing** = settore dell' editoria
- **quirky** = stravagante
- **resonating** = continuare a farsi sentire
- **tied in** = essere in sintonia con
- **wracked** = spremere le meningi
- **rolls** = maniglie dell'amore
- **chicks** = ragazze
- **crap** = disastro
- **undergarment** = indumento intimo
- **priests** = sacerdoti
- **reprises** = riprendere
- **taken into care** = dare in affidamento