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**“The quickest way to learn history is to stand at the wrong end of a bayoneted rifle.”**

# *The* **Education of Crazy Jane**

A NOVEL



*Steven B. Sandler*

So begins *The Education of Crazy Jane*. A college student named Sam discovers the risks of protesting against the Vietnam War when he is confronted at gunpoint by a hostile soldier. Sam is rescued by the charming intervention of Jane—Crazy Jane to his friends.

When he and Jane become romantically involved, Sam is both ecstatic and worried. Jane’s idealism fuels her relentless determination to stop the war, and Sam frets about her safety. Not surprisingly, she gets arrested after smearing red paint on the walls of the Ann Arbor draft board office. The couple struggle with their relationship, not just because of Jane’s protest activities, but because she is a young woman with a problem. She is passionately committed to ending the war, but she has trouble committing herself to anyone trying to get close enough to love her.

Writing with humor as well as compassion, the author invites the reader to bear witness as Jane faces her day in court, Sam tries to protect her, and they both try to hold onto each other during the social upheaval of the Sixties.



**The Education of Crazy Jane** by Steven B. Sandler

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## About Steven B. Sandler



Steven B. Sandler is a psychiatrist and writer, author of the forthcoming novel, *The Education of Crazy Jane*. The theme behind his fiction is the theme of his psychotherapy sessions: seeking a better appreciation of who we are and why we behave as we do. His characters are often struggling to navigate the challenges of a close human relationship. A young therapist tries to forge a bond with Freud and win his approval; a man tries to find his missing mother who abandoned her family years ago; a young couple on campus try to create a lasting relationship amidst the social and political turmoil of the sixties.

Dr. Sandler teaches psychotherapy at Albany Medical Center, where he has repeatedly earned the Distinguished Teacher Award. He has lectured on psychotherapy in the U.S, Canada, and Europe. He began his writing career with *Remembering with Emotion*, written for professional therapists. In the interest of explaining psychotherapy to

the general reading public, he next wrote *Tea with Freud: an Imaginary Conversation about How Psychotherapy Really Works*. His third book was the novel, *The Age of Worry*. Having raised three children, he and his wife live in Upstate New York where he maintains a private practice in psychiatry.

### Talking Points

- Writing fiction as a psychotherapist
- The theme of close relationships
- Writing about the Sixties
- Reading fiction as a path to personal growth

### Connect

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### Q&A

#### What made you want to write a novel about the Sixties?

It wasn't really a logical decision. I was wondering what to write about after I finished my novel, *The Age of Worry*. A visual memory popped into my mind. I remembered a crazy mural on the wall of a neighbor's apartment in college. Someone had drawn caricatures of his friends, and each friend was paired with an animal. I thought it was so clever and creative, and it got me to thinking about all the creativity of the 60s. I began to imagine a character who would draw such a mural, and that was the beginning of *Crazy Jane*.

**Did you have to do a lot of reading and research for the book?**

Absolutely. If you're going to place your story in the late 60s, you can't ignore all the startling events that were going on at that time. The March on the Pentagon, President Johnson's decision not to run for re-election, the tragic assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Bobby Kennedy, the chaos of the Democratic National Convention—all these events had to be brought into the story, so I needed to go back and read about them and get my facts in order.

**Is the book autobiographical?**

No. There is a scene or two that actually happened to me, including the opening scene of the confrontation with the soldier. But the other events of the book are fictional, as are the characters.

**Were you trying to compare the Sixties with our current era?**

No, but some similarities did strike me as I wrote. The adversarial, polarized political atmosphere was there in the Sixties, as it is now. And the Russians—the Soviet Union—invaded Czechoslovakia in '68; it's sad to see yet another invasion, this time of Ukraine, in our time. But there are so many differences between the Sixties and today, and I was not trying to offer a commentary on our current era.

**Much of your story focuses on the relationship between Sam and Jane. How much is your writing influenced by your psychotherapy practice?**

A great deal. I have noticed over the years that whatever problem a person brings to therapy depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, etc.—there is often a secondary problem involving relationships. I'm sure that intimate relationships have always been a challenge, but I think the issue came to the forefront in the Sixties when the old mores were discarded. The birth control pill was synthesized, women began to demand equal rights, and the old gender roles were suddenly in question. A relationship had to be discussed and negotiated, as Sam and Jane learn throughout the story.