



## **The Jane Austen Handbook: A Sensible Yet Elegant Guide to Her World**

*Margaret C. Sullivan*

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Long before *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies*, Quirk published this guide to life in Regency England to the delight of Austen fans everywhere. Newly published with a revised cover, *The Jane Austen Handbook* offers step-by-step instructions for proper comportment in the early 19th century. Readers will discover:

- How to Indicate Interest in a Gentleman Without Seeming Forward
- How to Ensure a Good Yearly Income
- How to Ride Sidesaddle
- How to Behave at a Dinner Party

Full of practical directions for navigating the travails of Regency life, this charming illustrated book also serves as a companion for present-day readers, explaining the English class system, currency, dress, and the nuances of graceful living.

MARGARET C. SULLIVAN is the editrix of [Austenblog.com](http://Austenblog.com) and an active member of the Jane Austen Society of North America. Her favorite Jane Austen novel is *Persuasion*.

## The Jane Austen Handbook: A Sensible Yet Elegant Guide to Her World Details

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# **From Reader Review The Jane Austen Handbook: A Sensible Yet Elegant Guide to Her World for online ebook**

## **Leslie says**

This is a must read for every Janeite and JAFF reader. The author takes us on a delightful visit to Jane Austen's England and gives us the tools to survive the visit. You won't need your mosquito netting, but you will need a netting needle and a your dancing slippers.

By using excerpts and examples from JA's books she makes the trip fun and fancy free.

If reading on the Kindle the content seems to end at 77% but close the rating page and read on in the excellent and well researched appendix.

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## **Jodi Ralston says**

Enjoyable book. I learned some new facts about this time period, and I also had fun guessing what advice alluded to which Jane Austen novel. I would have liked a little more of the former, but the latter was fun. Overall, I would reread it for reference and eventually reread it for pleasure.

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## **Stacey Graham says**

Fellow Persuasion lover, Margaret C. Sullivan's new release THE JANE AUSTEN HANDBOOK (Quirk) is a charming dip into Regency manners and the proper way to secure a husband of good fortune. The Handbook delivers bites of information including the areas of How to Get Rid of Unwanted Guests and How to Carry Off a Secret Engagement. Sullivan's research into the Regency period and Jane Austen's novels is first rate. Her tone is quick and light-hearted, making the short volume a pleasure to read.

I found especially interesting the section on The Best Company; or Social Gatherings. There I learned how to behave at a dinner party - I'll be sure not only to gargle my fingerbowl water and not to drink it - as well as the best ways to avoid dancing with an undesirable partner, though some things never change from 8th grade dances - hiding and lying.

Sullivan's tongue-in-cheek advice extends to matters of the heart:

"Fall into a decline. Make yourself ill with unrequited love. He will hear of it and ride his horse into a lather to fling himself at your feet and beg your forgiveness. Just don't be so stupid as to actually die, especially if he has married someone else in the meantime."

The Handbook is a boon for writers as a quick reference on Regency life or to add a little lagniappe to their work. The appendix details a short biography of Jane Austen and her family, plus synopsis of her novels and other works rounding out the Handbook well.

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## **Jeanette says**

This is a delightful, charming, humorous and informative book, packed with information on Regency England. As the publisher said, this book is "for all those readers who dream about living in Regency England, The Jane Austen Handbook offers step-by-step instructions for proper comportment in the early nineteenth century. You'll discover:

How to Become an Accomplished Lady

How to Run a Great House

How to Indicate Interest in a Gentleman Without Seeming Forward

How to Throw a Dinner Party

How to Choose and Buy Clothing

Full of practical directions for navigating the travails of Regency life, this charming illustrated book also serves as a companion for present-day readers, explaining the English class system, currency, dress, and the nuances of graceful living."

You'll also learn just how rich Darcy really was and how much he would be worth today. I thought Sullivan explained entail better than anything else I have ever read about the subject. I feel like I finally understand entail and the hows and whys of its use.

All of the little day to day things that made up the life of the landed gentry during Austen's life time are covered. The writing is light and easy, less scholarly and more fun but just as informative and accurate as a more scholarly book.

I loved the tongue-in-cheek references to the novels that are found throughout the book. I found this approach humorous and enjoyable and almost felt like I was sharing an inside joke between myself, Margaret Sullivan and Jane Austen. For example, when writing about child rearing, Sullivan wrote that "if all else fails, liberal slices of cake solve many child-rearing problems." Could she be referring to Mrs. Musgroves approach to her grandsons that is found in Persuasion? This is just one example of such humorous little tidbits found throughout the book.

The illustrations by Kathryn Rathke make the book even more delightful and the wonderful appendices complete the book. There you find a short bio of Jane Austen, a glossary of Regency terms, synopses of each novel, a listing of film adaptations, a bibliography and a list of web site and discussion groups.

I checked this wonderful book out from the library but will be adding it to my Jane Austen book collection soon.

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## **Maria Grazia says**

If you plan to time travel to Regency as it happens to Amanda Price (Jemima Rooper) in *Lost in Austen* or to Courtney Stone in Laurie Viera Rigler's *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict*, you'd better read this highly informative *THE JANE AUSTEN HANDBOOK* by Margaret C. Sullivan before leaving. Especially the "How to Become an Accomplished Lady" section, in which you are suggested a store of accomplishments of

no practical use, therefore, quite attractive to gentlemen. Then, you can't miss the "How to Identify the Quality" or "How to ensure a Good Yearly Income" sections , where you learn to choose your company - and even your husband-to-be - according to birth, education, manners and rank as well as to ensure an income that will keep you in the common necessities of life.

Don't you plan to take a step from our frantic, highly technological 21st century?

You'll find this handbook very useful , anyway, in order to escape our crazy rhythms and consequent troubles, at least: advice is provided as to decline an unwanted proposal, carry on a secret engagement (read "affair" nowadays ), to get your "him" back after you have quarrelled, how to behave at a formal dinner party and so on.

Jokes apart, this lovely handbook is a must in any Janeite book collection. It must be on your Austen shelf! It is a precious object, cute and pretty to look at, but it is especially a witty, amusing way to have a glimpse into day-to-day life in Jane Austen's time. THE JANE AUSTEN HANDBOOK is perfect companion for fans of her novels and their film adaptations, complete with detail information on love among the social classes, currency, dress and nuances of graceful living.

Aren't you curious to spot all the hypochondriacs in Jane Austen's novels? Hilarious. To elope to Scotland? So adventurous! To learn all the secrets to be successful at an elegant Regency ball? Dreamy! Aren't you finding a way to get rid of unwanted guests? At last! Just get hold of this little treasureable handbook and you'll be ready to cope with all that and to enjoy your Austenesque reads even more!

This is also a perfect gift for a Janeite friend or a romantic young niece/daughter to incline toward Austen world, terrific for Mother's Day.

Margaret C. Sullivan

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## Cynthia says

An easy and enjoyable book to read. I picked this up from the library as I am a fan of Regency Historical romance; not necessarily Jane Austen. Actually, I've never read any of Ms. Austen's work. But I found this handy book helped me to understand the lifestyle of the Regency that I do read. It makes for interesting reading. You can read straight through or skip around to the sections that interest you most.

The short chapters are arranged in a logical order with the contents of each chapter divided into small, concise bullet points. The Glossary is a wonderful tool; don't overlook it. Now I know the difference between a barouche, chaise, curricule, hack, gig, and phaeton.

I always wondered the importance of Gretna Green when it came to a quick marriage - Now I know!

There were quite a few times that I caught myself chuckling. Here's an example of How To Get Rid of Unwanted Guests:

**Frighten them away.** Tell them that there is a putrid fever in the house. This is especially effective if the guests have children with them.

If you are a fan of the Regency or a Jane Austen fan, put this one in your library. You won't be disappointed.

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## Laurel says

### **Informative, impertinent and indispensable - a fun how-to book for any unaccomplished young lady**

Filled with pertinent facts that every Regency Miss should be aware of to become truly accomplished, it is easy for us to recommend this great little how-to book to our readers because we have used it personally over the past four years whenever we had a question regarding deportment, dancing, playing an instrument, frock shopping and making love (in the Regency context mind you) – the top five most critical social aspects to any young Regency ladies life. One can also throw in letter writing, entertaining house guests and managing a household and just about anything else our dear Austen heroines Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse or Anne Elliot already know that might qualify them as a truly accomplished young lady in Mr. Darcy's eyes. We shall not add Catherine Morland and Fanny Price into the mix. They are exceptions to the rule and shall be forgiven their lack of education, and might well benefit from this slim volume.

Besides being wise, this volume is also very witty, and that is where we take full enjoyment of its tongue-in-cheek manner. Who would not want to know how to choose a prospective husband (What? They do not choose us? Is that not the unspoken belief among all beaux?), how to decline an unwanted marriage proposal (Lizzy Bennet might offer some advice to Fanny Price on this too!), carry off a secret engagement (Lucy Steele and Jane Fairfax would benefit from modern Prozac no doubt), or elope to Gretna Green (Lydia Bennet FAIL). There are also other tidbits that really made us laugh too. Each page turn brought more delightful and humorous illustrations by Kathryn Rathke and informative vignettes of examples from Jane Austen's novels like: Who Died and Made Mr. Collins the Heir of Longbourn? or the Worst (and Funniest) Proposals in Jane Austen's Novels. \*snort\*

Informative, impertinent and indispensable, *The Jane Austen Handbook* is a must have for anyone eager to understand anything from the obvious to the nuanced differences of society in Regency England. Lest we think this frivolous fare, it also contains a brief, but well-written bio of Jane Austen, summaries of the major novels and minor works, a glossary, a list of modern film adaptations through 2007, resources online: websites and blogs (we are forgotten, \*sniff\*), Austen societies, Austen places to visit, libraries and archives, and a select bibliography. Lastly, we know that Mary Bennet would happily offer her pedantic stamp of approval of this volume because it contains a full index for ease of access to Janeites on the fast track to becoming truly accomplished.

Laurel Ann, Austenprose

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## Chancellor Fangirl says

Some really helpful info on the Regency Era, but too sprinkled with Austen inside jokes that wink at the reader to be as useful as it could have been.

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## Anna says

Margaret C. Sullivan, editrix of [Austenblog.com](http://Austenblog.com), has created the perfect book for fans of Jane Austen who would like to know more about life in Regency England. The *Jane Austen Handbook* is a wonderful companion to Austen's novels, especially given that Austen's works feature terms and societal rules/norms that are no longer in vogue. I admit that this book would have come in handy when I read *Sanditon* and was curious about bathing machines; thankfully, there are a lot of great online resources for Austen fans, but *The Jane Austen Handbook* packs the basic information into a single volume.

Sullivan groups these Regency facts into four sections and introduces each chapter with a relevant quote from an Austen novel. In the first section, "Jane Austen's World & Welcome to It," she discusses what constitutes an accomplished lady, the education of ladies and gentlemen, how to write a letter, and where to travel and what to do while you're there. Various modes of transportation, including gigs, curricles, and post-chaises, are explained and featured in illustrations. In "A Quick Succession of Busy Nothings; Or, Everyday Activities," Sullivan covers everything from planning a dinner party and raising children to how to dress for particular times of day and how to assemble the appropriate wardrobe. In "Making Love," selecting a husband, marrying off your daughter, handling unwanted marriage proposals, and eloping to Scotland are hot topics. The final section, "The Best Company; Or, Social Gatherings," will tell you everything you need to know about paying a morning call and attending dinner parties and balls.

The *Jane Austen Handbook* features illustrations of clothing and needlework and detailed descriptions of card games played in Austen's day, among other fascinating tidbits. For readers seeking more information about Austen, the appendix features a short biography, a summary of Austen's six novels, and details about the various film adaptations. Websites and other resources for Janites are included as well.

Sullivan writes with humor and an obvious affection for Austen and the world that lives on in her novels. My knowledge of Regency England was very limited, consisting of only what I learned from reading Austen's novels, so I found this book to be very informative. It was a light, fast read, and just what I needed for the work commute. The *Jane Austen Handbook* would make the perfect gift for an Austen fan, especially one in need of an easy-to-read and thoroughly entertaining resource to keep nearby when reading (and re-reading) Austen's works.

Review posted on *Diary of an Eccentric*

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## Kat says

Physically, this book is compact. But it holds a wealth of information that any Jane Austen fan would benefit from. If you've ever wondered how you should behave at a country ball, what kinds of activities to take part in during a holiday in Bath, or how to play a game of Whist, go to this book for the answers. The author did a lot of research by reading various biographies of Jane Austen, as well as histories of the Regency period. It explains a lot of the little details you'd be curious about while reading Austen's novels, e.g., why Mr. Darcy is such an eligible bachelor even though he's unemployed (gentlemen must be seen to be unoccupied).

The author makes little 'inside jokes' here and there, which won't make much sense to people who haven't read the particular novel to which she's referring. I read *The Jane Austen Handbook* little bits at a time over the past two months, and even though I finished reading it, it's going to be something I'll refer to again and

again in my rereading of Jane Austen's works.

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### **Castiron says**

I love Sullivan's fanfiction P&P/Northanger Abbey crossover, *The Firstborn*, so this purchase is my royalty payment. *Handbook* is fun and has an entertaining arch tone, but I didn't find it terribly educational; many of her lists are simply examples drawn from Austen's books, rather than supporting material showing that these really are the customs of Austen's time. It's cute, but honestly, if I'd read it at the library, that would've sufficed.

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### **Meredith (Austen-esque Reviews) says**

Imagine that you were Amanda Price from *Lost in Austen* or Courtney Stone from *Confessions of a Jane Austen Addict* and you found yourself inexplicably transported to the time period of Jane Austen's novels. Would you be able to pass yourself off as a Regency heroine? Or would your ignorance of Regency manners and mores leave you to be a scorned and shunned outcast? Would you know the proper way to decline an unwanted marriage proposal or how to indicate interest in a gentleman without seeming forward?

Best to be prepared for these sorts of things, you never know when you might wake up and find yourself in the pages of an Austen novel!

Want to read more? Go to: <http://janeaustenreviews.blogspot.com...>

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### **Kate says**

I liked about 40% of this book. Because 40% of it is interesting content about the world and social mores that Jane Austen's characters inhabited. 60% of it pretends to be that, but is actually slightly sarcastic lists that are essentially cribbed from Austen's book plots, rather than being factual serious content about the Regency period.

If you are looking for that kind of content, don't read this. Instead, get the *Annotated Pride and Prejudice* by David Shaphard - much better. <http://www.amazon.ca/Annotated-Pride-...> (ooo .. it looks like he's coming out with a new edition in Sept of this year - yay!!)

If, however, you are looking for a cheeky take on Regency life and like to feel smart because you get all the inside jokes and author makes, then this one is for you. It's not a bad book, but you do need to understand what it is and what it isn't - and it is not a historical guide to the Regency period.

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## Jo (An Unexpected Bookish Geek) says

I came across this rather cute little hardback entirely accidentally. The cover is gorgeous, it's a handy size, and it's all about Jane Austen and her world. What more do I need?

If you think that you are going to be sent to sleep with lots of information regarding the regency period, then you are mistaken. This book contains interesting information about the period, much of it, I admit to not knowing about. There are tasty snippets of fun facts, if you like, about Jane Austen novels. I was rather interested to learn of the original titles of "Sense and Sensibility" and "Pride and Prejudice" Sense and Sensibility is in fact, probably my favourite Austen novel. Throughout the handbook, there are beautiful quotes from Austen's works, that I enjoyed reading immensely.

The book is split up into four, well laid out sections and in these we are taken through the rather private and social lives of the people that exist in Austen's novels.

I have noticed, in several reviews on here, that many people think that this book is entirely for women, but I definitely disagree. This book is for males and females alike, and I believe men could get just as much out of this read, as women.

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## Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

Very much a "lite" social history. It was not until I read the whole thing that I realised this is probably a collection of the author's blogposts, which explains quite a lot. It's mental popcorn for Austen fans, but it's all very superficial--not a single footnote. If you want depth, look into one of the more scholarly tomes. Sullivan gleans most of her Regency knowledge from Austen's books themselves (and occasionally the film/TV directors' versions).

I get very tired of the "women didn't wear drawers" thing. Everyone seems to forget that women have menstruated since there *were* women, and then there are...well, fluids and things, with consequent smells and mess. (I'm a woman myself, I know this.) Back in the days when cloth was all they had, I know that at least the high-class women did take the days off, and the "naice" term for it was "being indisposed/unwell" and no questions were asked. (Why do you think all those rich ladies had "sick headaches" that kept them from leaving their rooms for days on end?) Since we know that cloths were indeed all they had, they had to have *something* to hold them in place. And I refuse to believe that particularly the high-class girls and women would trot about with their yoohoos waving in the breeze! I'm pretty sure that by the early 19th century there would be drawers, or pantalettes, or something. They certainly had them in other places. (Why else do you think the French revolutionaries were called *sans culottes*--men without drawers?) And another thing: "riding" implied "horse" in those days, and still does among the mounted classes, unless modified by "bicycle", "motorbike" etc. When Ms Sullivan repeatedly used the term "horseback riding", she gave herself away as a non-member of the gentry!

An OK bedtime read, but best read in snippets, not straight through, as it's too fluffy for serious perusal. A huge percentage is a description of the books themselves (crowded with spoilers for anyone who hasn't read them, particularly when she reveals absolutely all of Sense and Sensibility) and the films/TV series. She gets the information from other sources, and beyond "curating content" and reading other people's stuff, you can tell not a lot of personal work went into it. Rather like a highschool term paper.

