

A Touch OF ROMANCE

ANTHOLOGY



Book Club Kit

PAULLETT GOLDEN



Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *A Touch of Romance* for your book exploration needs, be it to further professional development, engage in lively discussion, try new activities, or beyond. This book club kit will guide your group experience. Use what serves you, skip what doesn't, and be inspired to delve into other explorations that might be sparked by the kit's content.

This is unconventional story for the genre for reasons that tend to polarize readers by either loving the story or very much not loving it. The hero has factors stacked against him. He's introverted. He's a commoner. He's average, even a little on the short side. He's shy around women. He's a genius. And above all else, he's a nerd. When surrounded by alpha heroes who define *machismo*, with their muscles, height, wit, hooded eyelids and smirks, and swoon-worthy flirtations, what's a nerd to do? This book is written for the nerd lovers.

Jules is a hard nut to crack during the first half of the story because we see him from a limited perspective. When seeing him from the heroine's perspective, we see the nerd, complete with glasses pinching his nose. Not the most appealing hero at first glance. When seeing him from his own perspective, we hear the thoughts of a shy intellectual who doesn't fit in, someone who is too smart for his own good and thus is antisocial and misunderstood. Yet again, not so appealing. It's once we move into the second half that we get to know the hero beneath the veneer. The heroine begins to see the masculine and romantic man he truly is, and even his own thoughts shift to reveal the charismatic character he hides. To make matters more challenging for our poor nerdy hero, he must reside on the pages next to a quintessential storybook hero of good looks, wealth, and *amour*. But what a perfect opportunity to see our nerd reveal his strengths to win the girl and, hopefully, the reader.

Leila is no less unconventional, a blend of two cultures and set on putting her family's happiness before her own even to the point of sacrificing true love, never mind she is in a world of heroines ready to defy societal norms and parental dictates to marry for true love. Leila assumes the alpha role in the relationship, driving the romance forward while extracting Jules from his protective shell. In many ways, both these characters are outliers in the genre, neither filling conventional roles. With my love of nerds and outliers, these two are a favorite pair of mine. I confess I might have written this for those readers who would feel the same.

I hope this kit will offer the opportunity to open conversation and stir creativity.

Cheers!

Paullett xx

Literary Societies

Book Clubs started in France as "Literary Salons" in the 17th century



BOOK CLUBS

meetings included reading aloud, discussion, games, debate, and socializing

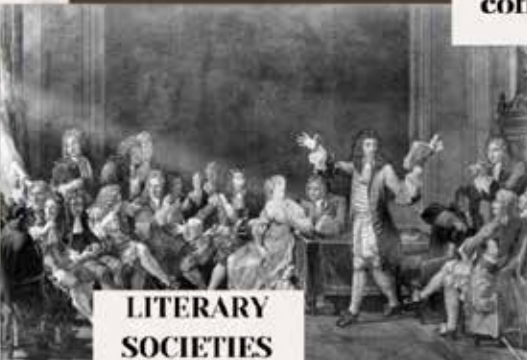


Both ladies and gentlemen hosted reading and writing groups in England in the 18th cent

SALONS
PURCHASING ONE BOOK TO SHARE WITH THE GROUP WAS COST EFFICIENT AND PROVIDED AN EXCUSE FOR INTELLECTUAL EXCHANGE



coffeehouses



LITERARY SOCIETIES

WOMEN POPULARIZED WRITING GROUPS TO AID EACH OTHER IN PUBLISHING

writing groups



Literary Society Collage (images from left to right, top to bottom): *The Coffeehouse Orator*, illustrator unknown; *Reading from Molière*, 1728, by Jean François de Troy; *A Literary Party at Sir Joshua Reynolds's*, 1858, by John Sartain; *The Public Lending Library At Scarborough*, 1813, by Mary Evans Picture Library; *Literary Salon*, 19th century, artist unknown; *Molière Reading Tartuffe at Literary Salon of Ninon de l'Enclos*, 1802, by Nicolas André Monsiau; *Four Women*, 1896, artist unknown.

Bengali Saree

We see two versions of Leila when it comes to fashion:

- ♥ Her daily attire in keeping of 1790s fashion
- ♥ Traditional Bengali attire with saree

Daily Attire

Leila's daily attire was in keeping of 1790s fashion, her usual gowns being the round gown and the open robe with round gown. Here we can enjoy a glimpse of Leila at the writing retreat, wearing some of her favorite wardrobe pieces, along with the saree worn at the masquerade.



Leila's Wardrobe: Images of Leila in daily attire from Shannyn of Wisteria.and.Lace and Personally. Speaking. Images of saree styles from IndyVogue.com. Images of saree drape steps from wiki.

Bengali Saree

When Leila returns home, she's expected to wear traditional Bengali attire to please her intended.

There are many draping styles for a saree, each style depending on region. Traditionally, the Bengali draping style is known as "Aatpoure" or "Athpourey," meaning eightfold, but that tradition does vary by communities. In addition to the saree draping style changing, what is worn beneath the saree (if anything) also varies by region and era of time. The length of a saree varies by the style worn, as many are only 6 yards in length, but some variations, such as the Bengali and Nauvari are 9 yards.

There are *many* different styles, just as many as there are regions in India. I've selected nine draping styles to spotlight, but there are certainly more than these.

Let's explore these styles, and then we'll look at step-by-step instructions as to how Leila might have draped her Bengali saree — have a scarf handy so that you might try it yourself!

Athpourey Style of Bengal

Steeped in tradition, the Bengali style has a box pleat at the front. The pallu (loose end of the saree that comes over the shoulder) comes from back to front on both shoulders. The end thrown over the right shoulder can be secured by a broach or attached with a ring keys, signifying the most important woman of the household.



Nivi Style of Andhra Pradesh



Nivi style originated in Andhra Pradesh as the style of aristocracy. Intended to show a woman's curves and look regal, although it is the most difficult saree to wear when walking.

The upper garment is usually referred to as the "uttariya." The skirt on the lower half of the body, draped as the saree, is referred to as the "nivi" or "nivi bandha."

This style pre-dates the Elizabethan period, as paintings from India from that time show women in Nivi-style sarees, among other styles of draping.

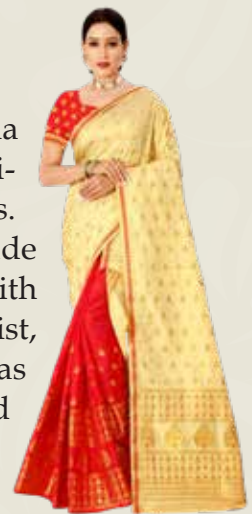
Mekhla Chador of Assam

The most elegant saree of Assam is Mekhla Chador (also Mekhela Chador). It is a typical handloom saree that comes in two pieces.

The bottom piece is the mekhla, a wide cylinder skirt, and is worn like a sarong with pleats folded in the front, fit around the waist, and tucked in. The folds are to the right (as opposed to the Nivi pleats which are folded to the left).

The upper garment is the chador, and is draped over and around the body, then tucked in triangular folds into the left side of the waist.

The end is thrown over the shoulder like a shawl, the extra length tucked over the elbow like a train. Traditionally, a garment called a riha would be worn beneath this saree, but a fitted blouse could also be worn.



Kunbi Style of Goa

The Kunbi drape is a way of styling the saree from Goa, predating the Portuguese and originated from the oldest tribe in Goa. It is the easiest drape but retains the elegance and grace of a saree.

It is draped around the waist and knotted on the right shoulder. A unique feature is how high above the ankles the hem is knotted to help women working in the fields move easily.

Traditionally, the saree is woven in large checks of red and black.



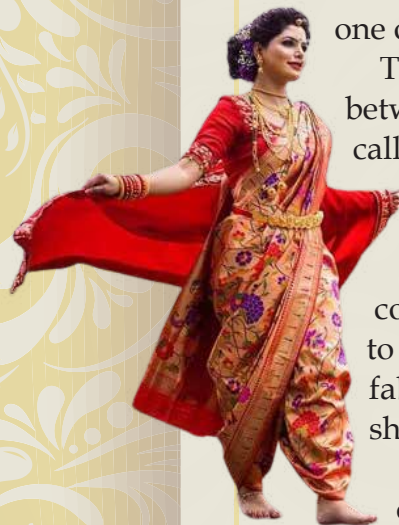
Nauvari of Maharashtra

Traditional Marathi sarees are also known as Lavani sarees, Kashta sarees, and of course Nauvari sarees. These are one of the trickiest sarees to drape for beginners.

They have an unusual draping pattern, tucked between the legs like a dhoti, which is a draping style called kachha. This allows for easy leg movement.

The upper part is worn as a normal saree, pleating with about 6-7 even folds before draping over the left shoulder. Arrange the fabric to cover the entire front of the bodice before pinning to the fitted blouse beneath. There should be enough fabric remaining to drape the pallu over the right shoulder if desired.

Lavani folk dancers are known to wear this style during performance.



Namboothiri of Kerala

The Namboothiri refers to an ancient and distinct style of draping unique to Kerala.

It does not have the archetypal draping of the saree over the shoulder; however, it is the oldest form of saree draping that covers only the lower half of the body.

The mundu (the lower garment) is worn around the waist, while the neriyatu (the upper garment) is tucked into the blouse.





Coorgi of Western Ghats

Related to the old myth of Kaveri and Agastya, this saree draping style allows Coorgi women to climb the hilly slopes of Western Ghats.

Paired with a full-sleeved blouse, the pleats form at the back. The end of the saree is tucked beneath both arms, then secured over the right shoulder with a firm knot called a molakattu.

It is often referred to as Kodagu style or Kodava attire.

Gol of Parsi

Parsi women often wear this style of saree during festivals and other special occasions.

The pallu is draped from behind and wraps around the blouse on the left shoulder and is draped over the right shoulder from the back so that it forms falls in the front.

The pallu is quite long in this style and nearly reaches the hem.

A light chiffon saree or a georgette saree is recommended for this style. The pallu is usually referred to as a Gara.



Kappulu of Andhra Pradesh

The Kappulu caste wears the saree from left to right, unlike other sarees that tie from right to left.

The style flatters the curves, and thus the longer the saree, the better it looks.

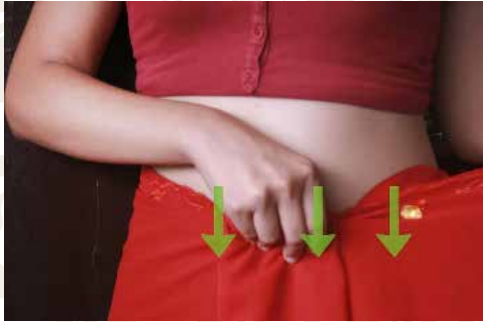
It has a narrow pleat at the back. The pallu lies over the right shoulder and can hang loosely or can be used to wrap around the neck like a scarf or over the head.

How to drape a Bengali Saree

To best follow the instructions, ensure you have a long enough piece of fabric, be a scarf, tablecloth, blanket, or otherwise. You want 9 yards for a true Bengali style, but 6 yards will do in a pinch.

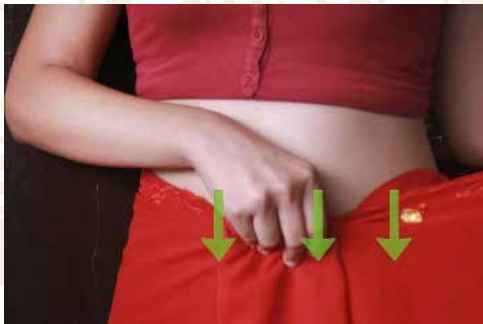
If the step-by-step instructions are at any point confusing, don't be daunted, as there are ample how to videos on YouTube to watch instead.

Step 1: Wrapping around the waist and tucking



1. Start the wrap on the right side of your waist.
2. Wrap it all the way around your body until it comes back to the right side.
3. Tuck in the entire top edge for a secure fit around the waist.
4. The hem should graze the top of your feet and be perfectly parallel to the ground.

Step 2: Box pleating around the waist



1. Take the edge of the cloth, and tuck it into the left side of your waist.
2. Then, reverse the direction, folding the saree back on itself from the left.
3. Tuck it again on the right side of your waist.

4. Moving from the right tuck, bring the cloth back across the front of your waist, and tuck it again on the left side.
5. Do this one more time, moving from the left tuck, and tuck it again on your right side.
6. In total, you should have tucked the saree *twice* on the left and *twice* on the right. The fabric should lie evenly.

Step 3: Pleating the saree before draping



1. Pick the saree up from the shorter edge (the end that is not coming directly from the tucked portion), and hold it vertically at the corner.
2. Start folding the saree in 4-5 inch sections, folding and layering the saree back and forth using your thumb and pinky finger to hold the fabric in place. Make clean, even folds.
3. Make sure the ends of the folds finish on the opposite sides of the pleat. For example, if the beginning, top corner of the pleat starts on the right side, then the end, bottom corner of the folding should finish on the left side.

Step 4: Draping over the shoulder



1. The end of the saree is called a pallu. The folded pallu will now be thicker since it's folded. Position the pallu over your left shoulder, pulling up from the front, bottom part of the saree so the pallu can be completely draped over your shoulder.
2. The bottom of the pallu behind your shoulder should fall somewhere in between mid-calf to lower calf length.
3. Make adjustments so that the decorated bordering of the saree is fully visible and relatively straight and vertical.

Step 5: Ornamenting across upper body



1. From the pallu hanging behind your back, grab the corner of the top fold. This corner is the corner facing outward, shown to the world, not the corner facing your back.
2. Pull this corner from the left side of your body to the right side.

3. Bring it over your right shoulder, so it is now in front of your body.
4. Attach a safety pin to this corner of the saree to pin it securely, then attach a decorative broach. (Traditionally, instead of a broach, the pin used would be a heavy house key or ring of household keys to denote the lady of the house, but any kind of weighted decoration will do to hold the corner of the pallu in place.)

Step 6: Finalizing the Look



Optionally, you don't *have* to drape on the right shoulder or secure with a broach, rather you can drape it around the elbow like a train, leaving the right shoulder bare, or you can wrap additionally around the waist to shorten the length to leave it hanging over the left shoulder, again leaving the right shoulder bare, or even drape over the head like a scarf. Traditionally, however, the end will drape the right shoulder and secure with a broach, thus *both* shoulders are draped for the final look of the Bengali style. While colors are optional, traditional Bengali sarees are red and white with gold embroidery.

Activities

The following activities are ways to engage your creativity. Some activities are better suited for book clubs, others for classrooms, and so forth. Enjoy the choices that best suit your group or be inspired to design your own activity.

Proceeding the list of activities is a “Learn & Apply” that offers the chance to craft something alongside a brief tutorial.

Writing

- ♥ Select a scene from the novel in which you wish to change the choices made by the hero and/or heroine. Either outline what the characters could have done differently and how that would have then altered the story or rewrite the scenes to have the characters make the alternative choices.

Design

- ♥ Create one or more memes and quote images by selecting quotes from the book that resonated with you.

Music

- ♥ Setup a playlist for key scenes. The playlist can be of any musical styling you would like, be it historically accurate selections you think would fit the scene, modern music to match the characters’ moods, your mood, the action or introspection of scenes, or otherwise. Comparing playlists and sharing playlists with the group could prompt further discussion.

Movies

- ♥ Create a mood board for the movie or series based on the novel. The mood board can include the casting choices (especially for the hero and heroine), the fashion choices, the setting locations, important scene inspiration, soundtrack ideas, etc.

Researching

- ♥ Using either a traditional story arc or a romance story arc, plot the key moments of the story, such as the inciting incidences, the climax, etc.
- ♥ Conduct your own research on literary charades of the era. Jane Austen was a lover of charades, after all. Consider sharing the ones you find with the group or even writing your own to share.
- ♥ Consider investigating Indian and Persian cultures during this time, and share with the group a few unique aspects that struck you. As a bonus, look into British perspectives of those cultures given British colonization and the expansion of the East India Company.

Learn & Apply Activity

Persian Ghazal

About

The style of poetry Leila favors is called a Ghazal. This is simultaneously a simple and challenging style of poetry, for the rules are simple, but applying them can provide a unique challenge.

The Ghazal originated as an Arabic verse in the 7th century, dealing with loss and love, but the medieval Persian poets made it their own, the typical theme of the Persian Ghazal being that of longing, specifically longing caused by unattainable love. Rumi and Hafiz are the two poets who brought it into Persian prominence. Ghazals are intended to be sung.

Alternate versions could be metaphysical in nature, or about love in general, but typically the theme is longing and melancholy.

Features include syntactically and grammatically complete couplets with an intricate rhyme scheme.

An example of a modern Ghazal is Patricia Smith's "Hip-Hop Ghazal"

Gotta love us brown girls, munching on fat, swinging blue hips,
decked out in shells and splashes, Lawdie, bringing them woo hips.

As the jukebox teases, watch my sistas throat the heartbreak,
inhaling bassline, cracking backbone and singing thru hips.

Like something boneless, we glide silent, seeping 'tween floorboards,
wrapping around the hims, and *ooh wee*, clinging like glue hips.

Engines grinding, rotating, smokin', gotta pull back some.

Natural minds are lost at the mere sight of ringing true hips.

Gotta love us girls, just struttin' down Manhattan streets
killing the menfolk with a dose of that stinging view. Hips.

Crying 'bout getting old-Patricia, you need to get up off
what God gave you. Say a prayer and start slinging. Cue hips.

Rules and Structure

- ♥ There are between 5-15 couplets (new fewer than 5 and no more than 15). A “couplet” is two successive lines in the poem.
- ♥ Each line is the same meter and length. Note that having the same meter only applies to Persian, not English.
- ♥ The first couplet introduces the scheme: a rhyme, followed by a refrain.
- ♥ Each couplet to follow uses the same scheme *in the second line only*, repeating the refrain and rhyming the second line with both lines of the first stanza.
- ♥ Each couplet ends on the same word or phrase (the *radif*), preceded by the couplet’s rhyming word (the *qafia*, which appears twice in the first couplet).
- ♥ The last couplet includes the poet’s signature, which could be the poet’s name, a symbolic representation of the poet, or otherwise.

Using the Patricia Smith example provided, see if you can spot each of these rules in play.

How to Write, Step-by-Step

Before we try writing the poem, let’s prepare the poetry worksheet. Make the following notes so you can follow them when writing each line:

1. Number the poem’s stanzas, ensuring you have at least 5 but no more than 15. Note that each stanza will include *two* lines (the couplet).
 - a. Tip: Each couplet should stand alone, as if it were its own poem. There is not a “narrative” with this kind of poem, simply one couplet at a time, each a mini poem of its own.
 - b. Tip: Every line is the same length.
2. The first couplet ends with the same word:
 - a. For example:

Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell **tonight**?
Whom else from rapture’s road will you expel **tonight**?
3. The rhyme within the first couplet is not the last word rather in the word immediately before the final word.
 - a. For example:

Where are you now? Who lies beneath your **spell** tonight?
Whom else from rapture’s road will you **expel** tonight?

4. All couplets after this will only have the rhyme and repeat in the *second* line of the couplet. Just as with the first couplet, the second to last word should rhyme with the first couplet and the final word should be the same as the first couplet.

a. For example:

My rivals for your love—you've invited them all?
This is mere insult, this is no **farewell tonight**.

- b. In the example here, notice that the last word "tonight" is the same final word as from the first couplet. Also note that "farewell" rhymes with "spell" and "expel" from the first couplet.

5. The final couplet is considered the "turn" in the poem where there's a shift in thought, perhaps hope, humor, or reflection. The first line of the final couplet will include your name.

For exemplification reasons, let's look back at the Smith example, but this time with the rhyming words bolded, the repeating words bold and italicized, and then the use of the poet's name in bold:

Gotta love us brown girls, munching on fat, swinging **blue hips**,
decked out in shells and splashes, Lawdie, bringing them **woo hips**.
As the jukebox teases, watch my sistas throat the heartbreak,
inhaling bassline, cracking backbone and singing **thru hips**.
Like something boneless, we glide silent, seeping 'tween floorboards,
wrapping around the hims, and *ooh wee*, clinging like **glue hips**.
Engines grinding, rotating, smokin', gotta pull back some.
Natural minds are lost at the mere sight of ringing **true hips**.
Gotta love us girls, just struttin' down Manhattan streets
killing the menfolk with a dose of that stinging **view. Hips**.
Crying 'bout getting old—**Patricia**, you need to get up off
what God gave you. Say a prayer and start slinging. **Cue hips**.

Now, it's your turn! While the traditional theme is longing, don't feel obligated since we're simply trying to write our own poem with this style. Let it be about any theme you'd like.

Persian Ghazal Worksheet

Theme _____

Reminders:

- ♥ Each line is the same length
- ♥ Each stanza (couplet of 2 lines) should be able to stand alone
- ♥ Can extend this to as many as 15 couplets if so desired (just move the poet's name notation in worksheet to the final couplet)
- ♥ As an added challenge (not required), each line should contain the same meter (number of stressed and unstressed syllables, such as iambic pentameter)

Couplet 1: _____
(2nd to last word: rhyme)
(last word: repeated)

Couplet 1: _____
(2nd to last word: rhyme)
(last word: repeated)

Couplet 2: _____

Couplet 2: _____
(2nd to last word: rhyme)
(last word: repeated)

Couplet 3: _____

Couplet 3: _____
(2nd to last word: rhyme)
(last word: repeated)

Couplet 4: _____

Couplet 4: _____
(2nd to last word: rhyme)
(last word: repeated)

Couplet 5: _____
(poet's name)

Couplet 5: _____
(2nd to last word: rhyme)
(last word: repeated)



Discussion Questions



- 1 What qualities about Jules make him heroic? Do you think you could admire a nerdy beta hero like him?
- 2 How would you describe Jules? How does his character grow and develop throughout the story?
- 3 Leila's mother portrays a number of Indian and Persian characteristics and behaviors – did you spot any?
- 4 What themes did you see in the story, either well developed or nuanced?
- 5 At which points during the love story's evolution were you surprised, be it by their choices in the relationship, reactions to each other, or otherwise? Could you predict the course of their relationship or the challenges they faced?
- 6 How do you think the story would have changed if Leila's father had not arrived home early?
- 7 Did you find the poetry elements enjoyable or not enjoyable?
- 8 Do you foresee any challenges for Jules and Leila as they move forward with their relationship?
- 9 What characteristics made Alistair more appealing than Jules for the typical heroine, and vice versa, what helped Jules stand out more as a hero?
- 10 Do you think Leila should have defied her parents by introducing Jules as her chosen partner?
- 11 Who were your favorite and least favorite secondary characters, and why? How did those characters help drive the story and/or the romance of our lead characters?
- 12 Were there characteristics about Leila that helped you resonate with her? Were there any characteristics or actions that made Jules swoon-worthy?
- 13 If the novel were to become a movie or series, what plot points and themes are the most important to keep, and what could hit the cutting room floor or would be too challenging to film?
- 14 What internal conflicts did the characters have to overcome in order to pursue the relationship?
- 15 After the novel, there are several flash fiction stories. Which one is your favorite, why?

For additional information about the Georgian era, fashion, etiquette, and more, consider exploring the author's research blog: <https://www.paullettgolden.com/bookresearch>

About the Author



Inviting Pullett Golden

If you would like to engage Pullett Golden as a keynote speaker, workshop facilitator, etc., interview her, or invite her for a booksigning or book reading, please visit the presenter section of her website: www.pullettgolden.com/presenter.

For recent interviews visit: www.pullettgolden.com/interviews

Book Boxes

For those engaging Pullett Golden as a guest speaker, virtually or in-person, a specialty book box may be sent to the group (be it a club, classroom, or otherwise) with book swag, such as bookmarks for the group readers, autographed bookplates, one autographed copy of the book, and other thematic goodies ranging from tea leaves to poetry pocketbooks, all inspired by the book of discussion.

About Pullett Golden

Celebrated for her complex characters, realistic conflicts, and sensual portrayal of love, Pullett Golden writes historical romance for intellectuals. Her novels, set primarily in Georgian England, challenge the genre's norm by starring characters loved for their imperfections and idiosyncrasies. The writing aims for historical immersion into the social mores and nuances of Georgian England. Her plots explore human psyche, mental and physical trauma, and personal convictions. Her stories show love overcoming adversity. Whatever our self-doubts, *love will out*.

Paullett Golden completed her post-graduate work at King's College London, studying Classic British Literature. Her Ph.D. is in Composition and Rhetoric, her M.A. in British Literature from the Enlightenment through the Victorian era, and her B.A. in English. Her specializations include creative writing and professional writing. She has served as a University Professor for nearly three decades and is a seasoned keynote speaker, commencement speaker, conference presenter, workshop facilitator, and writing retreat facilitator.

As an ovarian cancer survivor, she makes each day count, enjoying an active lifestyle of Spartan racing, powerlifting, hiking, antique car restoration, drag racing, butterfly gardening, competitive shooting, and gaming. Her greatest writing inspirations, and the reasons she chose to write in the clean historical romance genre, are Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Elizabeth Gaskell.

