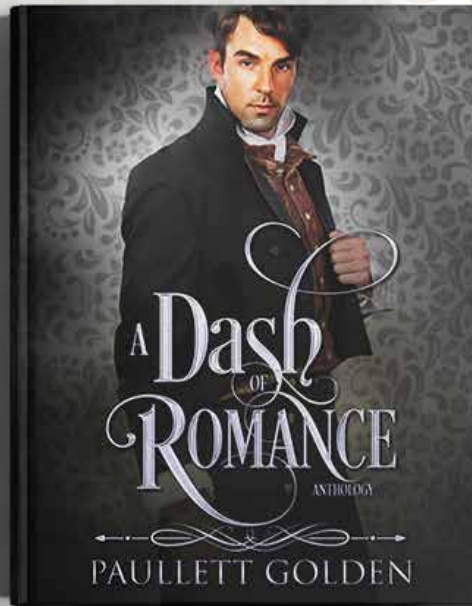


A Dash
OF
ROMANCE
ANTHOLOGY



Book Club Kit

PAULLETT GOLDEN



Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *A Dash 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.

The inspiration for this novel came from several unlikely directions. Prior to this novel, my only series available was *The Enchantresses*, which were lengthy, slow-burn, and drama-filled, all with adult themes ranging from childhood trauma to complications of married life. As loved as these novels are, readers were hoping my next novel would be lighthearted, a short beach read, courtship based, comedic and sweet, and appropriate for all age groups. While readers weren't necessarily requesting *all* those things in a single novel, I thought, *why not?* And thus, I created the *Romantic Encounters* series, the intention of each novel to fulfill all those roles. The idea to include flash fiction stemmed from that "beach read" request, for what if a reader takes the novel on vacation but only finds they have a few minutes to read? The flash fiction stories offer a quick infusion of romance. There's no commitment for a lengthy chapter or book, simply a short and satisfying romance. Adding those in each novel of this series made sense.

Something of note about *Dash* is the flip on scandal and compromise where it's the gentleman who feels he has been compromised, tricked into a betrothal. So rarely do we see the ladies trapping the gentlemen, but that was, indeed, a concern of the time. No honorable gentleman could escape a trap with his reputation intact. Percy and Abbie have an unconventional courtship since neither *wants* to be betrothed, yet they are each so determined to save their own reputation and appear the better party and best catch when the betrothal is called off that they go to extremes to prove to everyone of their undying affection. Another element I hope readers enjoy is the town mouse vs. country mouse vibe, although instead of one envying the other's life, they're both prejudiced against the opposite lifestyle, Abbie assuming all city boys are rogues and Percy assuming all country girls are dull.

There is much fun to be had with this story, along with the flash fiction pieces. I hope this kit will offer the opportunity to open conversation and stir creativity.

Cheers!

Paullett xx

The Baffled Knight

In Chapter 6, Abbie entertains her father and Percy with a song. Percy is first surprised that it is a lively folk ballad rather than a sonata or piece designed to showcase her skill, but then shocked to his toes that the lyrics are a tongue in cheek tease about a maiden duping and then trying to seduce an innocent knight. The tale makes him wonder if their predicament is truly all her machinations rather than a matter of mistaken identity.

Since the song is quite bawdy in its double entendres, you might be surprised the vicar is unperturbed in the scene. This song originates from the Tudor era and was a popular Elizabethan ballad, one that was performed in the noblest of drawing rooms, typically dramatized for entertainment value. The Georgian crowd would have enjoyed similar traditions, as well, with a variety of folk ballads, bawdy or otherwise. It would have been more likely for countryside entertainments to feature folk music, especially ballads with double meanings, which Percy would not have been accustomed to.

The song in question is “The Baffled Knight.”

Some of the more challenging to decipher words have been noted in footnotes for convenience.

There are two links I’ll include here to variations of the song performed on YouTube, along with the video information to make it easy to search should the link addresses break in the future. Listening to the song performed is a not-to-be-missed experience for the ears since you can enjoy the auditory tease alongside Percy, imagining Abbie’s performance vividly.

- ♥ The Baffled Knight, posted by City Waites-Topic, directed by Lucie Skeaping, <https://youtu.be/w7nURUXAHtU>
- ♥ Joel Frederiksen — Yonder Comes a Courteous Knight, posted by Molly, sung by Joel Frederiksen and Ensemble Phoenix Munich, <https://youtu.be/Ifg2NKf1Kh4>

I
Yonder comes a courteous knight;
Lustely raking over the lay¹
He was well ware of a bonny lasse,
As she came wandering over the way.

Chorus

*Then she sang downe a downe,
hey downe derry*

1 lay = meadow



The Baffled Knight by John Byam Liston Shaw



II

‘loue¹ you speed, fayre lady,’ he said,
‘Among the leaues that be so greene;
If I were a king, and wore a crowne,
Full soone, fair lady,
shouldst though be a queen.

Chorus

III

‘Also loue saue you, faire lady,
Among the roses that be so red;
If I haue not my will of you,
Full soone, faire lady,
shall I be dead.’”

Chorus

IV

Then he lookt east,
then he lookt west,
He lookt north, so did he south;
He could not finde a priuy place
For all lay in the dieul’s mouth.

Chorus

V

‘If you will carry me, gentle sir,
A mayde² unto my father’s hall,
Then you shall haue your will of me,
Under purple and under paule³

Chorus

VI

He set her up upon a steed,
And him selfe upon another,
And all the day he rode her by,
As though they had been sister and brother.

Chorus

1 Jove
2 maid
3 pomp and circumstance



VII

When she came to her father’s hall,
It was well walled round about;
She yode⁴ in at the wicket-gate,
And shut the foure-ear’d⁵ fool without.

Chorus

VIII

‘You had me,’ quoth she, ‘abroad in the field,
Among the corne, amidst the hay,
Where you might had your will of mee,
For, in good faith, sir, I neuer said nay.

Chorus

IX

‘Ye had me also amid the field,
Among the rushes that were so browne,
Where you might had your will of me,
But you had not the face to lay me downe.’

Chorus

X

He pulled out
his nut-browne⁶ sword,
And wipt the rust off with his sleeue,
And said, ‘loue’s curse
come to his heart
That any woman would beleue⁷!’

XI

When you haue you owne true-loue
A mile or twaine out of the towne,
Spare not for her gay clothing,
But lay her body flat on the ground.

4 went
5 four-eared implies two don-
keys, so a possible reference to the
knight being a double-arse
6 rusty, as in unused and inexperienced
7 believe

Character Profiles

Main Characters

Miss Abigail Walsley (Abbie), 24

Miss Walsley, at the positively ancient and spinsterly age of 24, resides in the quaint little village of Sidvale. The last of the vicar's daughters to marry, Abbie is content to assist her father with writing sermons, visiting with villagers, and writing an advice column under a pen name for the village newspaper, *The Bard*. If the table and chairs isn't enough writing, her dream is to publish a novel (a medieval adventure epic) and spends her time with the Ladies Literary Society revising her work.

Often, Abbie can be found with ink smudges on her face and dyed fingers, adding to her understated charm.

Mr. Percival Randall (Percy), 28

As the second son of the Earl of Camforth, Percival spends his time flitting about London, enjoying days (and evenings) at White's and driving his curricule. Quick witted, humorous, and absolutely charming, Percy lives a life of luxury with no direction, much to his father's dismay.

He has been given an ultimatum by the Earl to marry by 30. Percy half-heartedly pursues Miss Merriweather, with a mistress on the side, but everything goes sideways after receiving a letter from a Lord Dunley.

Secondary Characters

Mr. Leland Walsley – The Vicar of Sidvale is an affable, warm-hearted man. Exactly the sort of individual you would expect, or at least hope, to be a vicar. A widower and father of four daughters, Mr. Walsley has a soft spot for Abigail.

Earl of Camforth, Ronald Randall – Percival's father resides in Aylesbury with his second wife, Evie. A father of four, two from each marriage, the Earl of Camforth is a loving father even when handing down ultimatums.

Lord Dunley, Viscount – Lord Dunley has no interest in Sidvale and his infrequent visits to see mother have had an unintended consequence. Much like his mother, he doesn't like to be told "no" but most of all he just wants to be free to pursue typical peerage pursuits in London.

Lady Dunley – Lord Dunley's mother and staple in the Sidvale community. She is quite overbearing and doesn't like to hear the word "no."



Members of the Ladies Literary Society

Miss Hetty Clint

Miss Isobel Lambeth

Miss Leila Owen

Hero's Siblings

Freddie Randall

Baron Monkworth (Heir to the Camforth earldom) lives in East Hagbourne with his wife Margaret and their three sons.

Sammy

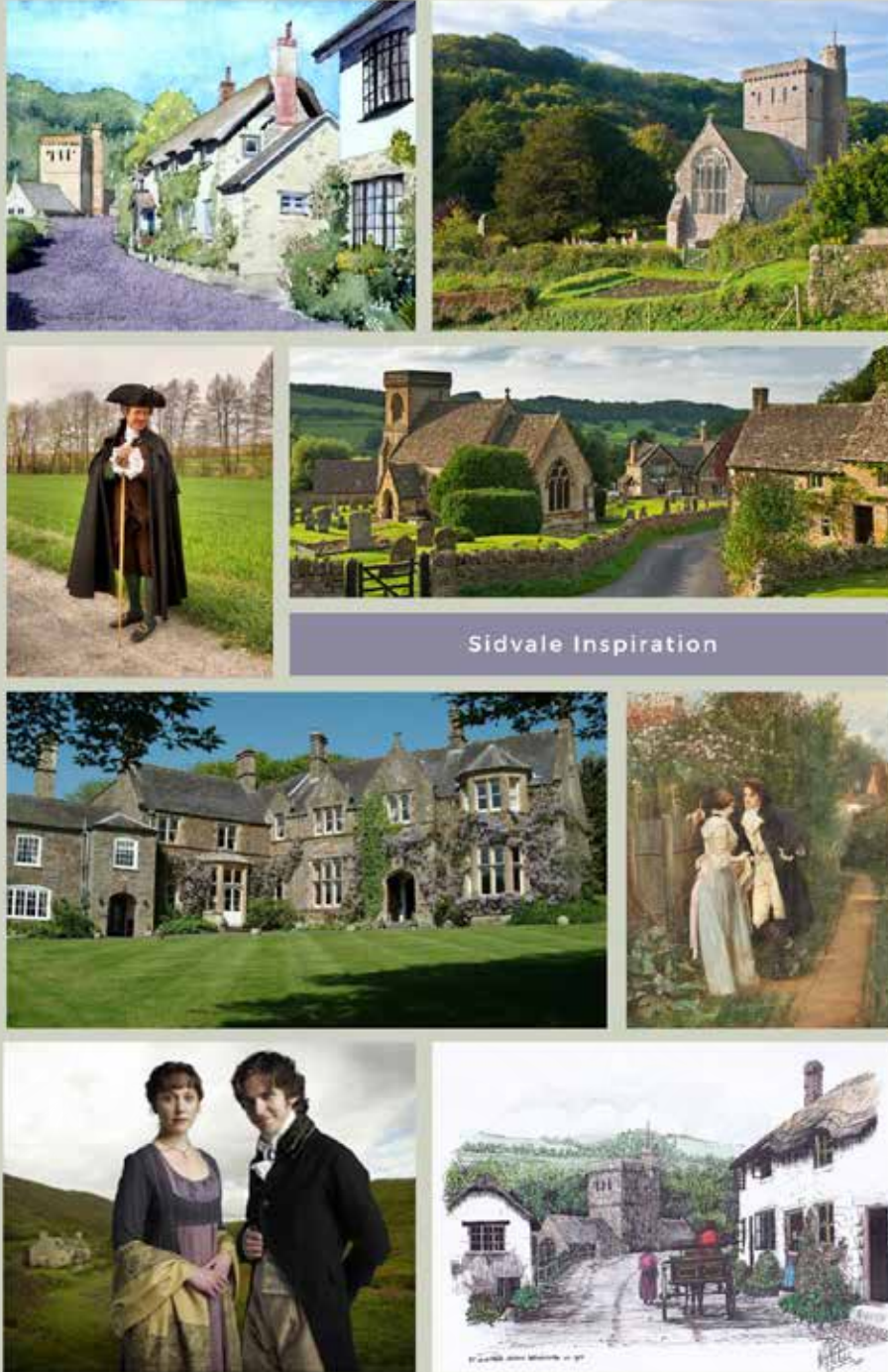
The younger half-brother from the earl's second marriage.

Sally

The younger half-sister from the earl's second marriage.



Sidvale Inspiration



Sidvale Inspiration Collage (info from left to right, top to bottom of collage): St. Winifred's Church in Branscombe, watercolor, artist unknown (signature illegible); St. Winifred, Branscombe, photo by Philip Capper; Johann Cleophas Hinrichs, Village with a View, photo by Adam Burton; Northcote Manor, photo retrieved from Northcote Manor official website; Spring (At The Fence), by Wenceslas Václav Brožík; Movie still from *Sense and Sensibility*, 2008, BBC mini-series; Saint Winifred's Church, Branscombe, by Jerry Pitcher

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.

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.
- ♥ Based on the lives of second sons in aristocratic families, research what expectations Abbie would need to fulfill as the wife of the second son of an earl.
- ♥ Consider researching about how clergymen and their families were viewed, specifically a vicar and his family. Based on that research, decide if Abbie would receive any censure in Percy’s social circle or if she would be accepted and respected.

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.

Learn & Apply Activity



Rural newspapers had no shortage of columns, even including scandal sheets that spread information and gossip about the local landowners. The fictitious newspaper *The Bard*, featured in *A Dash of Romance*, represents a typical newspaper of the time. That said, the two newspapers I was most fond of reading and found inspirational for the Literary Society's approach to *The Bard* were *The Female Tatler* and *Lady's Monthly Museum*.

The Female Tatler served to satirize the popular *Tatler* of the time. The primary author of *The Female Tatler* disguised herself with the pseudonym "Mrs. Crackenthorpe." To this day, the true author remains a mystery, but scholars believe the author was Delarivier Manley, a playwright and novelist, based on the similar writing style and topic choices, as well as the mysterious change in authorship of the newspaper during Manley's

arrest and trial for publishing scandalous and libelous material elsewhere.

The newspaper published three days a week and always spoke to the readers as though they were treasured friends sharing a conversation.

So popular was *The Female Tatler* that a rival newspaper began circulating, posing as the original. The authors of each address the mimicry of their rivaling versions, and in the real *The Female Tatler*, Mrs. Crackenthorpe points a finger at a male writer trying to undermine her paper with his own by posing as her. Scholars agree with the assessment that a male writer was the culprit. The competition kept the public entertained, especially as the authors addressed each other in their rival versions, each claiming to be the authentic voice.

Eventually, the public sided with the original as their preferred choice given the quality of writing and information they had grown accustomed to reading. Towards the end of its publication days, the authoress hired a Society of Ladies to take over penning the pieces. Their writing, sadly, lost the interest of the public, not being in the voice readers admired, and so the newspaper ended.

Nearly every newspaper of the time, be it for ladies, gentlemen, or both sexes, featured advice columns, most of them dealing with advice about handling the opposite sex. The advice, unlike what we see in *Dash*, was bold, brash, often tongue-in-cheek.

Archives of *The Female Tatler* are available to read. Should you take a peek at them, you might notice some of the fun ways names are veiled, all with tell-tale references to real people that, undoubtedly, every reader would have been able to identify, such as in one edition, you'll see Mrs. Saintly, Mrs. Orthodox, Lady Prudence, Mr. Whinlove, Capt. Brazen, Duchess of Twangdillo, Sir Harry Wildhair, Mrs. Busybody, and so forth. There is no end to the humor!

The Female Tatler was not the only newspaper written by and mostly for women. *The Female Spectator* and *Lady's Monthly Museum*, for instance, were two others, and yet there were still plenty more! The *Lady's Monthly Museum* was another inspiration for the newspaper featured in *Dash* and the columns we see our characters writing. *Lady's Monthly Museum* was written by a group of women (called the "agony aunts") who answered anonymous letters to the editor posing personal questions and problems.

SOME of my readers will probably imagine, from the motto I have chosen, that I intend to pronounce a philippic against matrimony, and that my design is to hold it up to derision, or to convert it into an object of fear. Patience! gentle reader! I have no such intention; but if I do counsel you to observe some degree of caution in forming connections, from an exhibition of the failures which some of my acquaintances have incurred for want of due consideration, I hope I shall be heard with indulgence, and my maxims recorded as the effusions of friendship.

I have long been in the habit, when any of my friends entered into the holy estate of wedlock, to examine impartially into the reasons which in my unprejudiced judgment led to an union of this solemn and durable nature; and after noting them down briefly in a memorandum book, I have made some private anticipations as to the result of the connection,—whether it would be happy or otherwise, whether the parties would jog on together through life in calm indifference, or whether their tempers, like oil and water, would prevent any lasting agreement; or if like acids on limestone, they would effervesce till one sunk to the bottom, and the other lost all farther power of action.

In the conclusions I have drawn from my premises, where I was intimately acquainted with the parties, I have seldom

In addition to answering the letters within the newspaper pages, the columns also focused on etiquette advice, guidance on manners, relationship tips, and solving of personal dilemmas. Other features included poems, stories, charades, illustrations (especially fashion), biographies, essays, domestic duties and tips, and more. As with *The Female Tatler*, archives of *Lady's Monthly Museum* are available—they're not to be missed, truly.

Included here are two links for archives to be explored, one link for *Lady's Monthly Museum* and one for *The Female Tatler*.

♥ *Lady's Monthly Museum*, Jan-June 1807 editions, hosted by Hathi Trust: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433115383949>

♥ *The Female Tatler*, 1709-1710 editions, hosted by Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/pub_female-tatler

The tone of newspapers such as these, especially those responding to reader letters, ranged from sympathetic to bracing. All advice, however, reflected the rules of etiquette at the time, specifically whatever was supported by the most recent publications in manners and etiquette—which, incidentally, the editors of these newspapers often authored. By relying on these books for their advice, it not only credentialed those books as being the definitive guides to etiquette but also legitimized the advice as being sage, informed, respected, accurate, and contemporary.

The advice, then, changed through the decades to emphasize what was in the manners/etiquette publications. For example, a letter to a reader on the subject of marriage published in November 1770 advises:

Prudence and virtue will certainly secure esteem but unfortunately, esteem alone will not make happy marriage, passion must also be kept alive....

Similar advice was shared in a late Regency newspaper that pointed a finger at passion as the ruination of good marriages rather than the maker of good marriages and pressed that a happy marriage should be built on modesty, virtue, and keeping a tidy house.

Before thinking the topics of these newspapers were restricted to the women's columns, know that the newspapers tailored for the gentlemen held *the same columns*, right down to the "dear editor" letters and answers with sage advice. The advice sought was often of a different nature, however, for while the women's magazines might ask advice on marriage, the gentlemen's magazines tended towards more external matters. Consider this example:

Letter to the editor: A young Man being an apprentice, and having served about half his time, hath a very fair opportunity to marry much to his advantage; would you advise such an one to take opportunity by the Fore top, or to let her go and say he cannot marry because he is an Apprentice? Gentlemen, Pray favour me with a speedy Answer.

Answer: Fair and Gently, Lad; marriage is no foot ball play... few men till some years above twenty know either how to govern themselves, choose a wife, or set a true value upon Money. Not one marriage in five hundred, made before twenty five, or thereabouts, proves happy....

Interestingly, the newspapers geared towards the rural and laboring readers featured more of these "agony columns" that offered advice and answered questions than any other column, while the newspapers tailored towards the upper crest were more focused on politics and scandal than advice columns.

Enjoy a few examples of other items that appeared in newspapers at the time. This should inspire you for the activity to come!

Example 1: Marriage Broker hoping to do some matchmaking:

LADIES.

The delicate and restrained condition which custom imposes on females, subjects them to great disadvantages,—Mrs. Morris offers to remove them. Ladies or Gentlemen who have formed predilections may be assisted in obtaining the objects of their affection; and those who are unengaged may be immediately introduced to suitable persons; but she cannot assist applicants in any marriage if their characters are not irreproachable, and their fortunes considerable and independent. She will not admit any others.

Apply or address (post paid) at the Bow-window, next door to Margaret Chapel, Margaret-street, Cavendish-square. Ladies who require it, may be waited upon at their own houses.

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Example 2: Matrimonial Advertisement by a gentleman seeking a wife (he sounds like a real winner!):

ADVERTISEMENTS MATRIMONIAL.

The two following contain much of the Essence and Spirit, though perhaps but little of the language in which these curious Publications are generally dictated.

TO THE LADIES.

“ A Gentleman, who has lost a considerable fortune by drinking, wenching, and gambling, by which means he has been disinherited by an uncle on whom his last reliance was placed; whose constitution is not destroyed, though his morals are thoroughly corrupted; would be glad to meet with a foolish young girl or liquorish old dowager with an independent fortune to recruit his shattered finances. He can swear, drink, and game, to perfection—is a perfect adept in the attendance of the tea-table—has been flattered with the praise of beauty—is five feet 10 inches in height—entitled to wear a red coat and a cockade; and would promise to make any woman happy—for a month—and miserable all her life after. Letters with *real names*, and places of abode, containing an accurate account of the lady's fortune, and the rental of her estate, shall be immediately attended to on directing a line to, &c. &c.”

TO BACHELORS;

Example 3: Charade & Solution (the answer to the charade always posted in the next edition of the newspaper):

CHARADE.

IN black, like one that mourns a friend,
Behold my *first* appears,
And oft while willing crowds attend,
My *first* my *second* wears;
He that unto my *whole* attains,
May gain a living by his pains.

SOLUTION

OF THE CHARADE WHICH APPEARED IN OUR LAST NUMBER.

PRIEST-HOOD.

Let's Write!

For an activity, try your hand at writing an era-appropriate newspaper column. A few options to stir creativity:

- ♥ a gossip column using aliases, dashes, or initials (Mrs. Busybody, Lady P., or Mrs. --)
- ♥ an advice column on any topic ranging from getting tough stains out of linen to ensuring a husband returns from the pub before nightfall
- ♥ a marriage advertisement
- ♥ a service solicitation, such as piano lessons or marriage brokering
- ♥ an instructional column, such as how to embroider a flower on muslin
- ♥ an observational commentary, such as a reflection on a growing moral problem in society
- ♥ an entertainment piece, such as a literary charade or caricature
- ♥ a reply to a "letter to the editor" offering advice
- ♥ a brief biography of a famous person, written in a way to interest and titillate readers
- ♥ an essay, brief, on a topic of interest (for example, one such essay in *Lady's Monthly Museum* was on "the custom of saluting after sneezing")
- ♥ a fashion recommendation



Discussion Questions



- 1 What was it about the countryside that you think won over Percy, especially when he was so adamantly against country living at first? If you had stumbled on a village like Sidvale, would you have grown as accustomed to it as Percy did, or would you have found it stifling and dull?
- 2 How would you describe Percy? How does his character grow and develop throughout the story?
- 3 Since Lord Dunley went through all the trouble of searching for Abbie's supposed betrothed, then writing to the gentleman, why do you think he admitted defeat as soon as Percy arrived to Sidvale rather than pursuing the matter?
- 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 What role did the newspaper letters play in their relationship and veiled communication?
- 7 What about Abbie do you think attracted Percy, especially when he found her plain and unremarkable at first?
- 8 Why might Abbie have clung for so long to her belief that Percy was a rogue?
- 9 Do you foresee any challenges with the class differences between Abbie being a vicar's daughter and Percy being an earl's son? Which challenges do you think will be the most difficult for them to overcome?
- 10 At the end of the story, Abbie's father shares the fabricated tale of how Percival and she met. Why would he have done this knowing at that point the story was a lie?
- 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 Abbie that helped you resonate with her? Were there any characteristics or actions that made Percy 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 each main character face?
- 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 Poullett Golden

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

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

Book Boxes

For those engaging Poullett 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 Poullett Golden

Celebrated for her complex characters, realistic conflicts, and sensual portrayal of love, Poullett 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*.

Poullett 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.