Success Center Tips for MLA Documentation Style

First Page of the Text

Include a four line heading only on page one. MLA does not require a title page.

Center the title. Capitalize it but do not underline, italicize, or bold it, or use quotation marks.

MLA style uses Times New Roman, 12 pt font, one inch margins on all sides, normal paragraph indentations of .5”, and double-spacing throughout.

Citations

MLA documentation style calls for students to acknowledge sources when summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting material. One way is to identify the author in the text with a signal phrase: According to Urda, . . . (132).

Writers may also use a parenthetical citation to document their sources. Parentheses ( ) are used at the end of a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Include the author’s last name and a page number reference: (Johnson 458) or (Jones and Chilton 175).

Note: There is no p. or pp., and no comma is used between the author’s name and the page number.

When no author is available, use a shortened form of the title (“Jane Austen Writings”).

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Professor Greene
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Marriage as a Dubious Goal in Mansfield Park

Jane Austen’s 1814 novel Mansfield Park begins and ends with the topic of marriage. In this regard it seems to fit into the genre of the courtship novel, a form popular in the eighteenth century in which the plot is driven by the heroine’s difficulties in attracting an offer from the proper suitor.

According to Katherine Sobba Green, the courtship novel “detailed a young woman’s entrance into society, the problems arising from that situation, her courtship, and finally her choice (almost always fortunate) among suitors” (2). Often the heroine and her eventual husband are kept apart initially by misunderstanding, by the hero’s misguided attraction to another, by financial obstacles, or by family objections. The overcoming of these problems, with the marriage of the newly united couple, forms the happy ending anticipated by readers.

Despite the fact that Mansfield Park ends with the marriage of the heroine, Fanny Price, to the man whom she has set her heart on, her cousin Edmund Bertram, the novel expresses a strong degree of ambivalence toward the pursuit and achievement of marriage, especially for women. For Fanny, marriage may be a matter of the heart, but for other characters in the novel—marriage—or the desire for marriage—is precipitated by, among other things, vanity, financial considerations, boredom, the desire to “disoblige” one’s family or simply to escape from it, and social and parental pressure to form a suitable match (Austen, Mansfield Park 5) . . . Many readers “dislike the character of Fanny as ‘priggish’” (“Jane Austen Writings”).

From the beginning, readers learn the factors influencing the marriage market for the daughters of respectable country families in late-eighteenth-century England. A woman was expected to bring a dowry to a marriage—and the higher the better. Maria Ward’s £7,000 is, perhaps, not a vast fortune . . . but it certainly represents a level of wealth well beyond that possessed by Jane Austen’s family. Austen’s family belonged to a class that the historian David Spring has called the “pseudo-gentry” (qtd. in Copeland 132).

In case we have any doubt about Maria’s motives for marriage, the narrator, with breathtaking irony, tells us the following:

In all the important preparations of the mind she was complete; being prepared for marriage by a hatred of home, restraint, and tranquility; by the misery of disappointed affection and contempt of the man she was to marry. The rest might wait. The preparation of new carriages and furniture might wait for London and spring, when her own taste could have fairer play. (Austen, Mansfield Park 188)
JSTOR.


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