



Mansfield Park

Mansfield Park

by the Author of "Sense and Sensibility" and
"Pride and Prejudice"

*"We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it,
than any other person can be."*

Summary: **Fanny Price** is the oldest child of a large family with little money. At the insistence of her abrasive aunt Mrs. Norris, Fanny is taken in to be raised by her wealthier, indolent aunt and strict uncle Mrs. and Mr. Bertram. Fanny is shy and put upon by the beautiful and somewhat spoiled **Maria Bertram**, her sister Julia and eldest brother Tom. Maria's brother **Edmund Bertram** becomes Fanny's friend and champion. During a business trip which takes Mr. Bertram away, sophisticated visitors **Henry Crawford** and his intelligent but pragmatic sister Mary Crawford turn the household upside down with a scheme of putting on a play. Hearts and lines are crossed as morality and obligation are debated, and happiness is sought.

How to use this book: Read the paragraphs out loud.

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- Those marked "Scene" are to be acted out by the group.
- Characters whose names are bolded appear in the scene. Supporting cast are played by GM or Jane Austen's player.
- Those paragraphs in *italics* help set the stage for later scenes.
- Special scenes occur occasionally - *Jane's life, Hunt/Parlor and Dance.*
- Jane Austen's player will join this novel during Act 3.

SUPPORTING CAST

Mrs. Norris - the widowed sister of Lady Bertram. Has strong opinions. She is quick to moralize but slow to make any sacrifices herself. Responsible for Fanny's position in the Bertram family, and doesn't let her forget it. Takes charge of Maria and Julia and is very invested in their importance.

Sir Thomas Bertram - serious, hard-working baronet patriarch of Mansfield Park. Fairly severe with his family, and consequently somewhat distant from his children. Takes responsibility to do the right thing, and frowns on frivolity.

Thomas Bertram - the eldest child and heir to Mansfield Park. Got into gam-

bling debt to such an extent that Mr Bertram had to sell the parsonage meant for his brother Edmund. Takes having fun seriously.

Julia Bertram - the youngest daughter. Influenced by Maria and jealous of her.

Mr. Rushworth - new to the neighborhood, newly rich and somewhat dull. He is forever planning the renovation of his estate that make those with taste shudder. He and Maria Bertram are engaged.

Mary Crawford - a lively attractive young woman. Sister to Thomas' friend Henry Crawford. Not religious, pragmatic about money and flexible about propriety.

The Price Family - Mr. and Mrs. Price, Susan: working class folks. Living with little and with much rougher manners than the gentlefolk.

SCENES FROM JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE 1

ACT 1

Fanny grows up in luxury but neglected by the family she is adopted by. She is often lectured by Mrs. Norris about how grateful she must be. She is companion to Lady Bertram, indolent and more interested in her pug dogs than her children. Mrs. Norris directs the other girls raising and "coming out" into society, but Fanny is left behind. Only Edmund, a smart, caring boy, befriends Fanny.

The eldest boy, Thomas, gambles away his brother's inheritance--his father has to sell the parsonage they had set aside for Edmund, in order to pay Thomas' debts.

Sir Bertram and Thomas travel to their estate in Antigua which needs attention. It is not stated, but the estate is most likely worked by enslaved people, still legal in British holdings despite the abolition of slavery on English soil and the British crackdown on slave trade ships. Edmund takes over as the man of the estate in the absence of his father and brother and the family flourishes.

Scene:

Fanny is in “her room” a small attic sitting room that the servants rarely light a fire in. It is her retreat, the only place she finds comfort. **Edmund** visits her there. He lets her know that his father sent approval for Maria’s engagement to Mr. Rushworth. Seeing how poorly Fanny is being treated, Edmund calls for a fire to be lit in Fanny’s room every day.

Tom comes back from Antigua, while his father stays behind. He brings friends with him a dandy named Yates, and Henry and Mary Crawford, who had to leave London abruptly due their guardian Admiral Crawford taking his mistress into his household.

Scene:

Tom introduces **Mary and Henry Crawford** to **Edmund and Maria Bertram**. Henry makes a comment to Mary about how engaged women are fun to flirt with. They discuss Yates’ idea to put on a play at Mansfield Park. Mary Crawford at first thinks to capture Tom’s heart since he is the oldest and heir, but she finds herself drawn instead to Edmund. Maria starts the conversation bragging about her engagement to Mr. Rushworth but is charmed by Henry. When Mr. Rushworth comes in to invite them to visit Sotherton, his estate and the shrubberies he is so proud of, she contrasts how boring he is and gravitates to Henry. [Note to GMs: Yates is not in play. GM plays first Tom, then Mr. Rushworth]

Scene

The young people visit Sotherton. They take a long walk, beyond Fanny’s endurance. Fanny ends up on a bench where people come and go by her. All find her and say “who left you alone?” --**Edmund and Mary** bring her there then leave. Mary tries to jokingly talk Edmund out of becoming a clergyman. Fanny defends the church and Edmund’s choice of profession.

--**Henry, Maria and Mr. Rushworth** arrive, but blocked by a locked gate Mr Rushworth goes back for a key. They slip thru and leave together.

--**Julia** asks where Henry and Maria went and follows them.

Fanny tries to ask her to stay with her.

--Mr. Rushworth arrives with the key, he sits with Fanny and asks what she thinks of Mr. Crawford. Fanny tries to comfort him.

[GM Note: bring the characters on and off scene]

HUNTING & PARLOR INTERLUDE

When you finish your scenes, gentlemen join the others to go hunting. Ladies to sew in the parlor. Mingle with characters from the other books and Jane Austen.

Men: write down what you've hunted to contribute to the feast for the dances, write down the feelings you cannot share.

Women: write down what you are making for other character's trousseaus, write down the feelings you cannot share.

ACT 2

The idea of putting on a play takes fire with the young people. They choose a play and start casting roles. Edmund is uneasy with it at first, but is charmed by the idea of playing a part with Mary. Mrs Norris likes the bustle and feels important making costumes. Fanny holds out against them but is overruled.

The remodel the billiards room for a theater and begin rehearsals. Fanny will not act, but becomes indispensable helping people learn their lines. The various actors practice with her then pair off with one another. She unhappily watches Edmund and Mary's flirtation grow, as well as Maria's infatuation with Henry.

Scene:

On the night of the dress rehearsal, **Maria** is triumphant about being able to do a kiss with **Henry** during the play. **Mr. Rushworth** is upset, and has to be soothed by them saying it is just pretend and compliments to his beautiful cape costume. **Fanny** is needed to take a role or they cannot go on. She refuses and even **Edmund** urges her to change her mind. When she does not, **Mrs. Norris** attacks her verbally, calling her ungrateful. As Fanny is about to give in, **Sir Bertram** returns and lectures them all on ruining his game the house and disappointing him with their

poor judgement. He singles out Fanny for being the only one with good sense and loyalty.

[GM Note - play NPCs in turn, Mr. Rushworth, Mrs. Norris, Sir Bertram]

The set is destroyed. The Crawfords leave and life goes back to being constrained and simple again at Mansfield Park.

Scene:

Sir Bertram becomes concerned about **Maria's** engagement. He realizes that Mr. Rushworth is foolish and that she does not love him. He gives her the option to break it off, but with Henry Crawford gone, she says she will marry Mr. Rushworth after all.

Some time later, the Crawfords return to stay with relatives nearby. Mary singles out Fanny for friendship.

Scene:

Mary invites **Fanny** over for dinner and **Henry** begins courting her. **Edmund** joins the three for cards, and Fanny is very uncomfortable with Henry's attention, as well as how close Mary and Edmund are becoming. Edmund plans to take orders soon which he talks about, and he wants to ask Mary to marry him which he does not say. Mary and Henry try to encourage him to take some other career. **Sir Bertram** sees Henry giving Fanny attention and encourages him.

DANCE

At the Dance:

Fanny Price: This is her first dance. She is "coming out." She is asked to dance by Henry Crawford and fears he may think he loves her. Then she dances with Edmund and floats on air.

Maria: She dances with Mr. Rushworth and feels worse about her marriage every minute. Then she dances with Henry, and feels more and more torn about her decision.

Edmund: Excited to ask Mary to marry him, he asks to dance with her first. Then he dances with Fanny, and is amazed at how mature and beautiful she is.

Henry Crawford: dances with Fanny Price, seeing how delicate and lovely she has become. Imagines he loves her. Then dances with Maria Bertram, and becomes tempted again by her.

REST BREAK

SCENES FROM JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE 2

ACT 3

(With Jane Austen)

Mr Rushworth and Maria marry. They travel to Bath with Julia for the honeymoon.

Fanny is getting more exercise, and is looking very well. Henry Crawford is drawn to her sweetness and asks for her hand.

Scene:

Henry Crawford proposes to **Fanny**. She turns him down. **Edmund** pleads with Fanny to reconsider. She refuses. **Sir Bertram**, dumbfounded and angry lectures her and tells her she may want to spend time with her birth family to consider her future.

Scene:

Fanny is sent to visit her family. Her **Mother** welcomes her, and her **Father** ignores her. She cannot believe how disorganized and loud their home is. She spends time with her sister **Susan** who would benefit from better environment and cries herself to sleep over her choices.

Scene:

In Bath, **Maria Rushworth**, **Mr. Rushworth** and **Julia** encounter **Henry Crawford**, fresh from his rejection by Fanny. Maria has Julia cover for her, allowing her to sneak away to see Henry. They talk of their unhappiness, and decide to run away together.

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SCENES FROM JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE 3

ACT 4

Scene:

Henry Crawford and Maria's affair is revealed. **Mary Crawford** comes to Mansfield Park to head off gossip, and tells **Edmund** about it. She blames Maria for making it so obvious and implies that she and Henry could have had a secret affair and no one would have cared. Edmund realizes that he and Mary are too far apart for him to ever love her. After Mary leaves, he informs the household and everyone is upset. **Mrs Norris** is stunned to hear that her favorite did this. **Sir Bertram** apologizes to **Fanny** for refusing Henry.

Scene:

Edmund realizes **Fanny's** value and dearness to him and he proposes to her. She has always loved him and says yes.

Scene:

Maria and **Henry** are at Gretna Green in Scotland. They scheme about their future, glancing off the constraints of money and family that confront them. They enjoy their happiness together.

SCENE FROM JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE 4

DANCE

At the Dance:

New couples enjoy each others company, mingle and dance and those of their acquaintances who have also found joy.

A feast is laid, bounty of the hunt.

Brides, collect your trousseau, gifts from your peers.

Jane Austen is a guest at this gathering. If there is time, find her to thank her for your sorrows and joys.