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# Seeking Mansfield



## Synopsis

Sixteen-year-old Finley Price has perfected two things: how to direct a world-class production, and how to fly way, way under the radar. The only person who ever seems to notice Finley is her best friend and godparents' son, Oliver Bertram. Since Finley moved in with her godparents after the death of her father, she and Oliver have grown close. If Finley could just take Oliver's constant encouragement to heart and step out of the shadows, she'd finally chase her dream of joining the prestigious Mansfield Theater. But when teen movie stars Emma and Harlan Crawford move across the street from the Bertrams, they shake up Finley and Oliver's stable friendship. As Emma and Oliver grow closer, Finley realizes that Harlan's attention is shifting to her. She discovers she might have feelings for him too. Or, is she only interested in Harlan because Oliver is taken? Finley doesn't want to be won, and she doesn't want to see Oliver with anyone else. To claim Oliver's heart - and keep her own - she'll have to find the courage to do what she fears most: step into the spotlight.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This debut ultimately weaves an impressive mosaic and is an excellent selection for fans of young adult literature that is heavily thematic or romantic." --School Library Journal  
"A commendable adaptation of a 200-year-old tale made fresh for a 21st-century audience." --Kirkus

Reviews "[Seeking Mansfield] will especially appeal to theater kids and celebrity-culture enthusiasts."  
Booklist This story a modern-day retelling of the Jane Austen novel will definitely appeal to girls in your school. Word of mouth might make this one a popular read. School Library Connection

"Watson has created a charming romance with complicated characters, love triangles, and themes related to family, duty, and finding oneself." ALAN Review --Various

Kate Watson is a young adult writer, wife, mother of two and the tenth of thirteen children. Originally from Canada, she attended college in the States and holds a BA in Philosophy from Brigham Young University. *Seeking Mansfield* is her first novel, with a companion novel to follow in 2018. She is also a contributor to Eric Smith's *WELCOME HOME* adoption anthology (Flux 2017).

This YA debut is a retelling of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, and it's wonderful. I'm a big fan of the "best friends turned sweethearts" trope, and author Kate Watson pulls it off fantastically. Finley and Oliver so obviously belong together (their chemistry is equal parts sweet and swoony), yet the obstacles keeping them apart are real and compelling. *Seeking Mansfield* isn't all romance; there are some really interesting family dynamics at play, and when movie stars Emma and Harlan roll into town, there's plenty of friendship angst, too. In fact, one of my favorite aspects of this novel is the affinity that develops between Finley and Emma. If you're an Austen enthusiast, a theater lover, or a contemporary YA fan, grab a copy of *Seeking Mansfield*!

The author is super true to *Mansfield Park*, but makes it fun and modern. Very few authors can successfully do that with Jane Austen (call out to my girl *Bridget Jones* who knocked that out of the park. Mr. Darcy is my home boy). I'm not normally a fan of love triangles, but this one was well done. I actually liked both gentlemen, which normally I hate one and think, "Get it together! He/she is CLEARLY the more delectable option!". Not so with *Seeking Mansfield*. It's deliciously done and our girl Finley has some hard, but delightful choices. The writing was superb. Normally reading a first author sort of feels like getting onto a cruise ship. You can't example pinpoint why you feel off-kilter, but something is off. Not unlike the seafood buffet on a cruise ship. However, Kate, or Miss Watson if you're nasty, is a flawless writer. Her grammar and sentence structure is "on fleek" as the cool kids say and the story just flows. Much like the water under a cruise ship. Highly recommended for anyone who likes reading. And romance. And human beings. As I like all three, I enjoyed this book. Immensely. Bravo, Ms Watson.

This had more depth than I expected from what appeared to be a fluffy YA. Finley's backstory and demons broke my heart, yet her inner strength had me cheering. I cried more than once, and I

swooned at least as often. This book is perfect for fans of Jane Austen and the original Mansfield Park, yet the story stands on its own. There were so many little hat tips to the original, but if you don't know the original, they fit in seamlessly into Watson's story. There are even areas I genuinely feel were improved upon, like Edmund Bertram as Oliver Bertram. Superior in every way for this Janeite. Also, one of my biggest regrets in Mansfield Park is that I've always wanted more Henry Crawford. Bam. Got it. If you like Jane Austen and classics, or if you like YA contemporary, this is for you.

**\*\* spoiler alert \*\*** I loved this book! This is really saying something because I normally either HATE or feel very 'meh' about Jane Austen retellings. I think one of the reasons for this were the choices that Watson made on what to keep and what to dismiss from the original story. Most retellings feel like a pale shadow of Austen's work. Watson's 'Seeking Mansfield' <sup>TM</sup> was its own vibrant story. It taught the modern versions of the lessons of Mansfield Park and kept what there is to love (and hate) about the original characters without feeling forced or restrained. The way Watson wrote the characters made them three dimensional and excellent modern versions of Austen's characters. Watson actually makes you like Crawford and his sister just enough that you hope that they change, but not enough to make you crushed when they don't. I think modern readers who don't care for Fanny price will see what Austen was trying to convey about her in Finley. And all this doesn't even get into the swoon that Watson packs into the book! The love triangle and the internal struggles of the characters having to do with their feelings for each other are excellent. All the kissing and flirting is perfectly done. One of the choices Watson made that I found the most interesting was the shifting of Finley's trauma to be mostly in her past as opposed to Austen's having Fanny's trauma be mostly in her present. It made for an interesting unfolding of understanding as we learn about what happened to her slowly through the book. Finley's trauma had a lot more physical elements to it than Austen's version. I think that was an excellent choice for a modern retelling. I loved the little things, the unconscious actions, that Watson gave Finley to begin showing us what happened to her. This is an excellent read, I highly recommend it.

I am the very first person to say that I am tired of Jane Austen retellings (as I write my own fairy tale retellings, but that's beside the point) and so I have to admit that I was even a little nervous about this one, despite it being something other than Pride and Prejudice. Since I know basically nothing about Mansfield Park, however, it turns out that this reads like a fully contemporary novel. It has NONE of the annoying "retelling" traits: characters with out-of-time names, odd turns of phrase,

implausible familial relationships, awkward pacing because "that's how the story has to go". Instead, Watson has kept the parts of the story, the parts of the character that matter, and discarded the pieces that don't make sense. What's left is a completely swoon-worthy, heartbreaking YA romance about a theater kid who figures out how to stand up for herself. Throw in some famous ex-child star neighbors, a kissy-face boy, and genuine snort-worthy one-liners, and that's this book.

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