

# MLA Sample Paper Format

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Marriage as a Dubious Goal in *Mansfield Park*

Single Tab

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 the situation, her courtship, and finally her choice (almost always fortunate) among suitors"(2). Green adds that 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. Sometimes, as in Shakespearean comedy, there are multiple marriages happily celebrated; this is the case, for example, in Austen's own *Pride and Prejudice*.

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 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 vanity, financial considerations, boredom, and the desire to "oblige" one's family (Austen, *Mansfield Park* 5).

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Works Cited

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All work should be double-spaced, have a one-inch margin, and be in 12-point font, with no bold print.