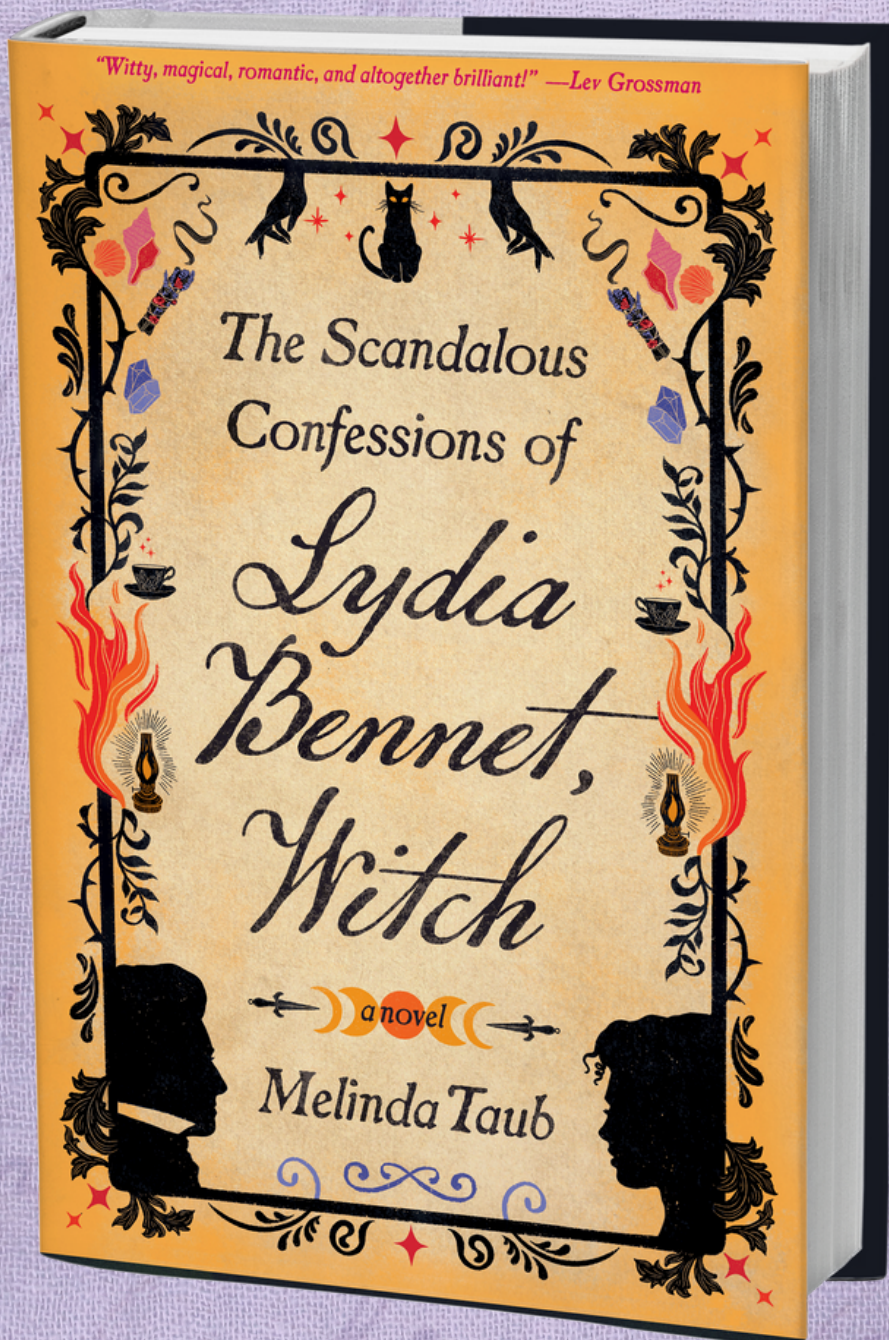
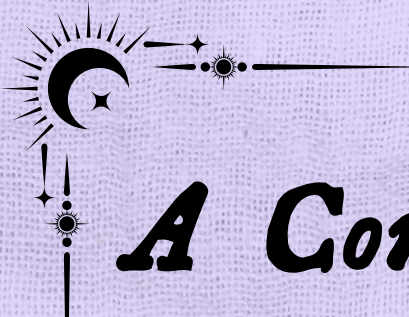


# Book Club Kit





# *A Conversation with the Author*

**1. What kind of research on Jane Austen's England and English folklore did you do for this novel?**

SO MUCH RESEARCH. I own multiple books about what Regency people had for breakfast and how they did their hair. (The fact that there are multiple books about this is a real credit to our love of Miss Austen, I think.) I also did a lot of reading about the experiences of multiracial Britons in history, and about the city of Brighton – Brighton is such a huge part of Lydia's story and I had never been there, and I started writing in 2020 so I couldn't go! I spent weeks reading and watching Brighton-related materials until I felt like I had a grasp of the place. (Thanks, Rick Steves.)

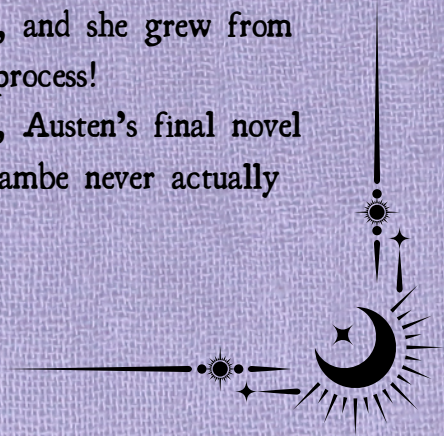
**2. Many of *Pride and Prejudice's* main characters play roles in your novel as well, but you also expand the parts of minor characters or invent wholly new ones. Where did you get the idea to make Mary King a bigger part of the story, and where did Maria Lambe come from?**

One of the ugliest things Lydia says in *Pride and Prejudice* is when she calls Mary King a “nasty little freckled thing.” I knew I didn't want my book to directly contradict P and P on anything, so I wanted to give more depth to why Lydia would say something so mean. Having Mary King be a nasty piece of work made it a little more understandable, and she grew from there. I didn't know she was Miss Lambe's cousin until quite late in the process!

Miss Lambe is actually an Austen character. She's mentioned in *Sanditon*, Austen's final novel fragment, though unfortunately Austen died without finishing it so Miss Lambe never actually appears.



Photo Credit: Ari Scott





**3. How did you determine the rules of magic within Lydia's world, and why did you decide to put such an emphasis on spell-prices?**

Everything in Jane Austen's world comes back to money. It's completely normal, even laudable, to marry for money. Polite conversation at parties consists of minute calculations of the other guests' income. It's a pretty world but a brutal one. I wanted the magic system to mirror and expand that. Lydia and the other witches in the book each have to weigh whether escaping their own suffering is worth making other people pay the price. They don't always come to the same conclusions.

**4. *Scandalous Confessions* is filled with humor, wit, and fun but also explores more serious themes. Were there any ideas you particularly wanted to explore through the lens of witchcraft and magic?**


I think I wanted to use magic to alter the course of Regency misogyny a bit. The most subversive thing I could do with Lydia was to give her a happy ending, but given the roles imposed on women at the time, that was nearly impossible. (Jane Austen gave Lydia what was, for the time, a radically merciful fate, but in retrospect it looks pretty grim.) The only way to make it happen was to introduce this wellspring of power and status that men didn't, and couldn't, control. So: magic.

**5. One of the major elements in *Scandalous Confessions* that is missing from *Pride and Prejudice* is England's perpetration of slavery and colonialism. You speak to this in the author's note, but what was your research process like, and did you learn anything that affected your plotting of the novel?**

This was the most-revised part of the book. Initially Sainte-Josephine was a sort of idyll of racial equality where slavery had never existed. Consulting with an expert made me see that this was impossible, even in a fantasy novel – slavery was just too woven into the fabric of the Caribbean economy. I couldn't avoid it, and I was letting myself off the hook by trying. That's when I dug in to do a deeper round of research. One thing I learned was that there were actually few, if any, real Miss Lambes at the time. 25 or 50 years before, yes, but by the early 1800s slavery was on the way out and white Britons were in the early stages of a racial panic. It became harder for mixed-race heirs to inherit, and white society closed its doors even to their own mixed-race family members. Hence Miss Lambe's struggles with the Kings.

I wanted to write about the role of women in Regency society, but I couldn't do that without acknowledging that white women benefited from oppression as well as suffering from it.





**6. You cover an impressive amount of ground both in terms of plot and structure: the book is epistolary, it goes back and forth between Lydia's present day and past, and it takes us through the timeline of the *Pride and Prejudice* and beyond. Did you run into any struggles while writing?**

ANY struggles? Writing is 90% struggles. A lot of Lydia's complaints about writing – hand hurts, takes too long, would rather be buying hats – are actually mine. I got stuck for about six months between between part 1 and part 2 and I thought I might never finish. Two things kept me going: my sister Amanda, who kept demanding to read more; and spite. Every time one of my enemies announced a personal success I wrote another 10,000 words. Please tell everyone you know to buy this book, to hurt my enemies.

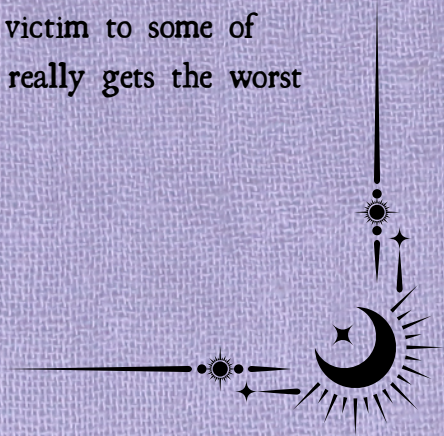
The epistolary form also helped. When I had trouble cracking a character, I would write a letter from them. One of these – the one toward the end from Wickham – actually made it into the book. Parts of a letter from Miss Lambe made it in as well. Not the parts where she was like “how dare you put me in your novel, I'm calling my lawyer, etc.” Even though I made her up I feel like she regards me with suspicion.

**7. How does your background as a television writer and a comedy writer affect your writing style as a novelist?**

It makes me a bit picky about structure. Jokes have a certain rhythm, even in prose. As a TV late night writer I constantly wrote about power – who had it, who abused it – and ultimately that's a big theme of this book too.

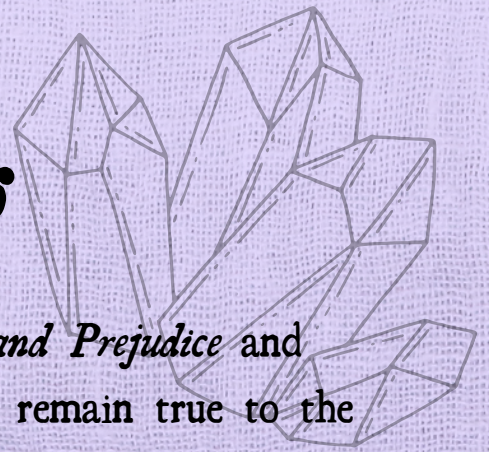
**8. Which character from *Pride and Prejudice* was the most fun to put your own spin on (besides Lydia)?**

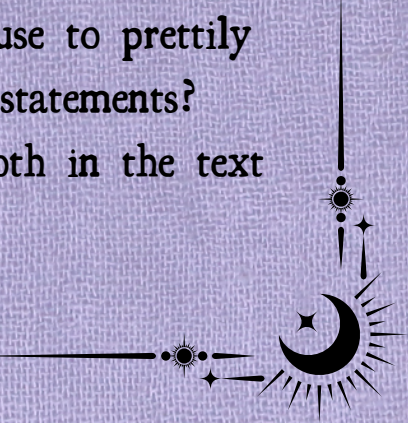
I really enjoyed writing the other Bennet sisters. Kitty's mix of girlish and cattish traits was very fun and very much inspired by cats and sisters I have known. Poor Mary was a favorite as well. She is such a serious person so I found it very fun to make her fall victim to some of Lydia's dumbest magic. I could write a whole lot more about Mary, who really gets the worst deal when it comes to being a Bennet. Maybe someday I will...






# Discussion Questions



1. Compare the characterizations of Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Scandalous Confessions*. In what ways does the author remain true to the original character? How does she enhance the readers' understanding of Lydia, or expand upon it?
  2. Consider Lydia, Maria Lambe, Georgiana Darcy, and others. In what ways do these characters fall outside of society's strictures, and how/ to what degree are their lives affected?
  3. How does the inclusion of magic in Regency-era England subvert social hierarchies of the time? Does it ever serve to uphold them? How do you think the rules or hierarchies of our own society would be changed by witches and magic?
  4. Mentions of race or colonialism are absent in *Pride and Prejudice*, but they are a central element in this novel. How does their inclusion impact your understanding of both novels? Of our own world history?
  5. "Jane says that the rules of etiquette exist to make everyone comfortable. The most important part of politeness, she says, is putting everyone at their ease, whether or not they deserve it. . . But etiquette is also a weapon. A velvet-wrapped cudgel that the powerful use to prettily brutalize the weak" (PAGE 18) Do you agree with these statements? What examples can you think of to support these views, both in the text and in our own world?
- 



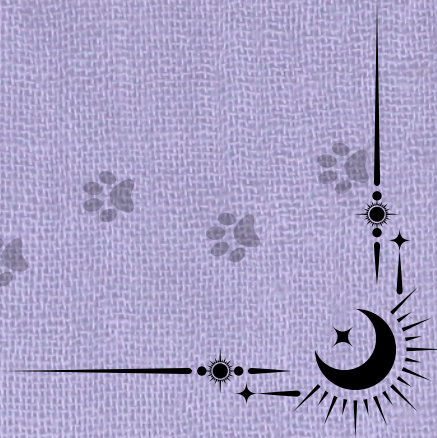
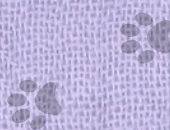
6. Consider the magical entities pulled from English legends, like Wormenheart and the Long Man. How does their existence manifest in the non-magical world? What elements of their characters do you see reflected in England itself?

7. “My father, as you can see, is a monster.” (PAGE 28) Do you agree with Lydia’s assessment of Mr. Bennet? If you first encountered his character in *Pride and Prejudice*, has your opinion of him changed? As the person with the most social and legal power in the household, what does he owe his family?

8. Kitty compares her feelings for Denny to a gravitational force: “The floor looks straight enough, but if you place a ball on the floor, wherever it starts in the room, it rolls to the southeast corner. That’s what it’s like for me. I don’t mean to, but I always come to rest next to Denny.” (PAGE 115) What kinds of love are depicted in the novel, and how do various characters express their love for each other?

9. In what ways do Lydia’s motivations change throughout the novel?

10. Besides Lydia, what other fictional characters do you think deserve a retelling?





# *The Regency Witch*

## *Cocktail Recipe*

Recipe From Ivory & Noire

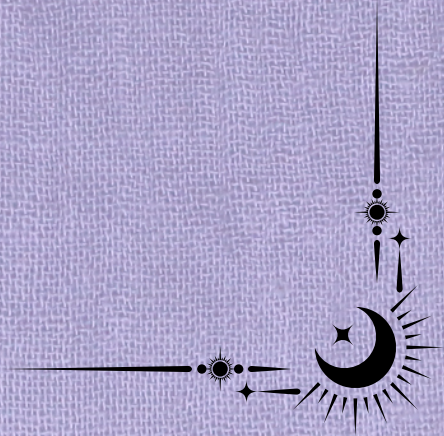
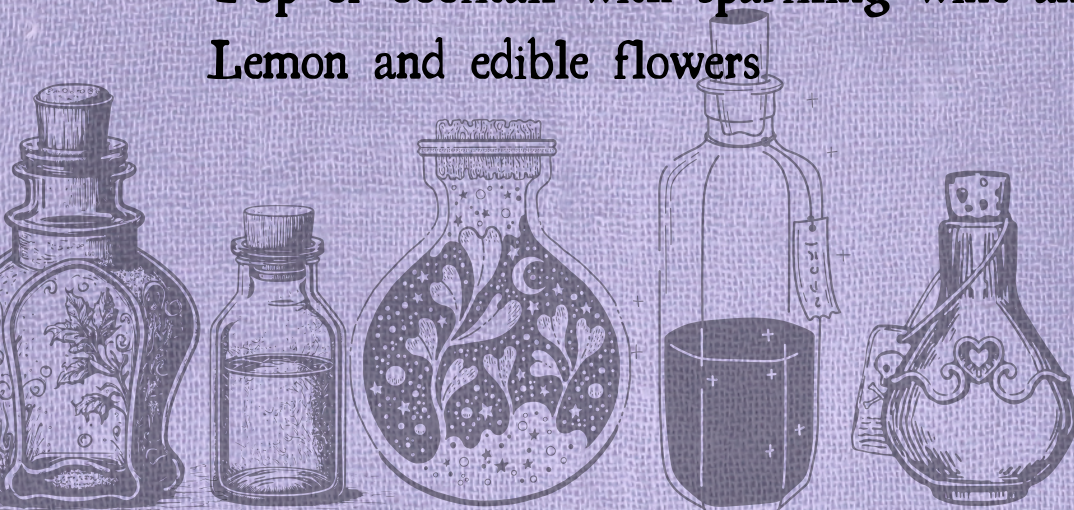


### INGREDIENTS

- 1.5 oz Empress Gin 1908
- .75 oz fresh lemon juice strained of pulp
- .5 oz Lavender syrup
- Sparkling wine or champagne
- Lemon slices for garnish
- Edible flowers for garnish

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Shake all the ingredients with ice in a cocktail shaker except the sparkling wine
- Strain into a chilled martini glass
- Top of cocktail with sparkling wine and garnish with Lemon and edible flowers



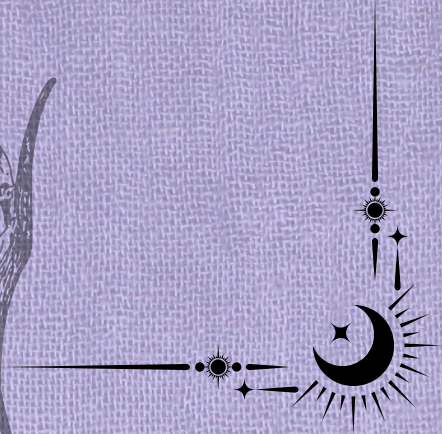


# The Austen Witch's Must Watch Movies

## Pride & Prejudice Adaptations



## Witchy Watches







# *Herb Guide for Beginner Witches*

From The Salem Witch Museum



**Basil**  
Banish negativity



**Thyme**  
Repels nightmares



**Chamomile**  
Attracts money



**Lavender**  
Used for healing



**Sage**  
Helps spiritual purification



**Rose**  
Aids in love spells



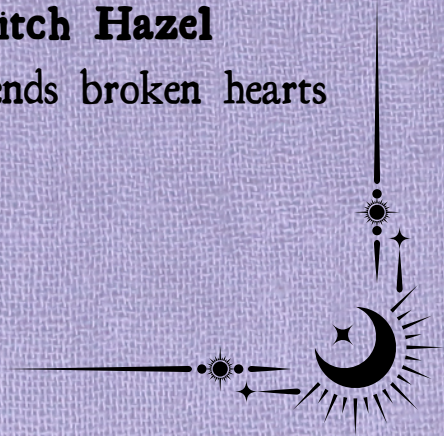
**Garlic**  
Protects the home



**Witch Hazel**  
Mends broken hearts



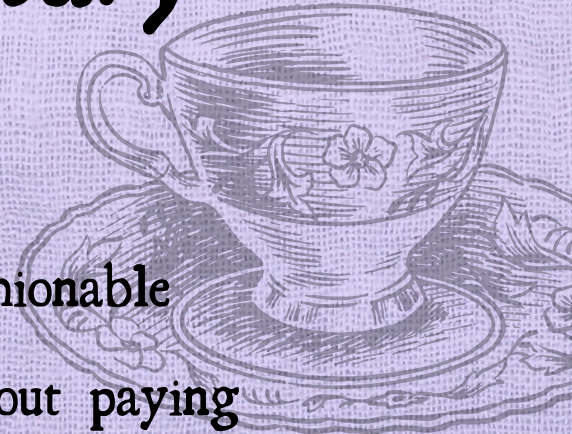
**Daisy**  
Brings luck





# Regency Slang Glossary

Can we start using these again, please?



"All the crack" - very fashionable

"Shoot the crow" - leave without paying

"Bag of moonshine" - lot of nonsense

"Raise a breeze" - make a fuss

"Corky" - bright and lovely

"On-dit" - gossip

"Cucumberish" - to have no money

"Plumper" - lie

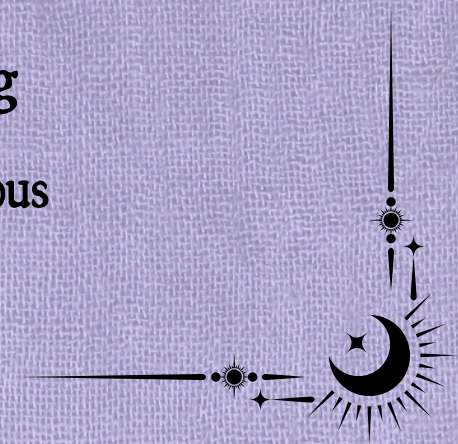
"Friday-faced" - sad looking

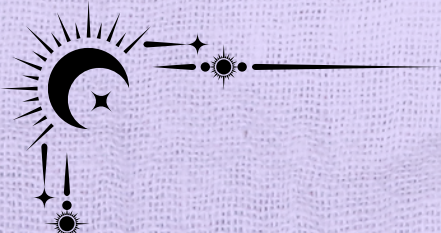
"Gingerbread" - money

"Knocked-up" - exhausted

"Pitching the gammon" - lying

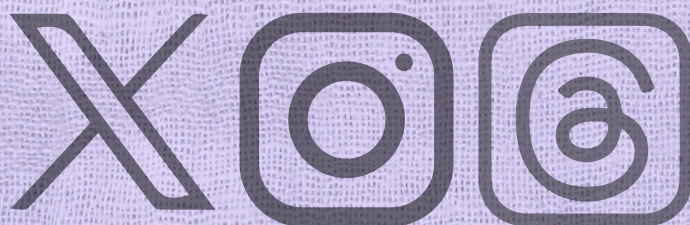
"Too smoky by half" - suspicious





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