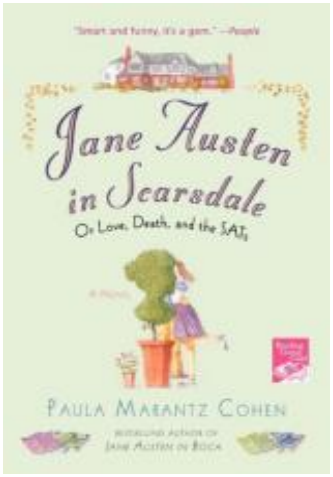
# Jane Austen in Scarsdale

by Paula Marantz Cohen




## About the Book

Anne Ehrlich is a lovely and dedicated guidance counselor steering her charges through the perils of college admission. Years ago, she let the love of her life get away, because her dear but snobbish grandmother didn't think penniless Ben Cutler from Queens was good enough for a wealthy, well-educated girl from Scarsdale. Anne has never married and hasn't seen Ben since-but when his nephew turns up in her high school and starts applying to college, Anne starts to wonder? Can old love be rekindled and past mistakes be put right?

Combining the wit and romance of Jane Austen's **Persuasion** with a brilliantly astute look at the frenzy of college admissions, **Jane Austen in Scarsdale** is an irresistible modern comedy of manners.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** Discuss whether the book is a realistic rendering of the college admissions process or a farcical exaggeration (this may well depend upon your own experiences with the process).

**2.** To what extent does the book achieve a balance between poking fun at the parents and treating them with understanding and sympathy?

**3.** How do you personally account for the kind of excesses that the book describes? Is it a matter of a particular community (an affluent suburb like Scarsdale) or of a larger social trend in parenting?

**4.** Do you understand why Anne gave up Ben at her grandmother's urging when she was twenty- one? Does this seem realistic to you or does it make you think less of Anne?

**5.** What is your opinion of Winnie? Do you think she genuinely changes in the course of the novel?

**6.** Do you believe in the idea that there is one person who is right for us in life and that if we miss our chance to connect with that person, we lose something invaluable and irreplaceable?

**7.** The novel is loosely modeled on Jane Austen's Persuasion. Anne is overly persuaded to give up Ben when she was young. How does this theme of over-persuasion fit with the students she deals with in her capacity as guidance counselor? Discuss the degree to which the parents in the novel see their children as accessories: signs of status and upward mobility.

**8.** Discuss the degree to which the frenzy over college admission is a genuine expression of the love, concern, and fear that parents have about their children. Do you feel that parents are now more fearful than they used to be about their children's future? If so, why?

**9.** If you have read Austen's Persuasion, discuss the likenesses and similarities between its plot and the story of this novel. Why do you think the author chose to diverge where she did?

**10.** Some people have said that the book, while poking fun at the college admissions process, also supplies some helpful tips on what to do in guiding one's child's application process. Discuss some of these tips.

**11.** Where does helpful coaching end and immoral manipulation begin in helping students present the best possible profile to a college?

**12.** Do you believe that early admission and early action should be discontinued?

**13.** Discuss the sample college essays that are given in the book and say why they are amusing (if you find them so). How do you think Anne will handle the college admissions process when (or if) she has children of her own?

## Author Bio

Paula Marantz Cohen is Distinguished Professor of English at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She lives in Moorestown, New Jersey, and her in-laws live in Boca Raton, Florida. Her previous non-fiction books include SILENT FILM AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE AMERICAN MYTH and THE DAUGHTER AS A READER: Encounters Between Literature and Life. This is her first novel.

**Jane Austen in Scarsdale**
by Paula Marantz Cohen

**Publication Date:** January 23, 2007
**Paperback:** 304 pages
**Publisher:** St. Martin's Griffin
**ISBN-10:** 0312366574
**ISBN-13:** 9780312366575