

# READER'S GUIDE

## *Jane Austen in Boca*

by Paula Marantz Cohen

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### Questions for *Jane Austen in Boca*

1. How does *Jane Austen in Boca* combine satire with romance? Is the tone of the novel primarily critical or affectionate (or both)?
2. The novel deals with older people in a retirement setting. In what ways is this fundamental to the plot and in what ways is it incidental? How do you think different age groups would respond to the novel?
3. How does the use of Yiddish and the particular focus on customs and ethnic humor ground the book in a specific cultural group? How might some of these aspects—for example, food, shopping, child-rearing—be translated to other groups?
4. The book deals with romance, but it also deals with friendship. It's been said that May, Flo, and Lila resemble high school girlfriends. Why might aspects of friendship that we knew in high school get revived at this later stage of life?
5. The book contains many dramatic scenes or set-pieces (the Valentine's Day Dinner Dance, Hy and Lila's wedding, Hy's funeral, May's birthday present, Flo and Stan's confrontation, the final seminar, etc). Discuss the dramatic nature of these scenes and their function in moving the plot forward. You might also consider how these scenes might be staged in a movie—and who might play the key roles.
6. There's no sex in the book (excluding of course the Viagra scene—which is recounted rather than dramatically represented). Is the absence of sex a function merely of discretion, given the age of the characters, or is it fundamental to the novel's kind of romantic plot? Some people have said that the absence of sex in a book or a movie can be sexier than its presence. What do you think?
7. *Jane Austen in Boca* draws on the plot and, to some extent, the satirical style of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. What do the two books have in common, and what are the differences? What does this say about changes in society over nearly 200 years?
8. One of the themes of *Pride and Prejudice* is that first impressions may be misguided. How do our views of the characters and community change as we read *Jane Austen in Boca*?