IN SEARCH OF TRUE LOVE

If you like someone let them know – single author Lauren Henderson discovered this sage advice from a surprising source. *Mex Cooper* reports

Sick of playing mind games in the date-eat-date world of New York's singles scene, Lauren Henderson turned to the woman whose words she had cherished since a child.

The fact that author Jane Austen had been dead for nearly 200 years, lived in an era when marriage could be as romantic as a banking transaction, and was single her whole life didn't deter Lauren from believing she held the key to finding a good man.

The result is *Jane Austen's Guide to Dating* in which Lauren draws on the author's cynical satires of Regency courtships for insights into 21st century dating.

"Her novels can be read as instruction manuals on how to assess a partner to see if you're mutually compatible with each other, how to behave when you want to attract the right kind of people, and how to avoid the toxic flirts who just want a quick fling and nothing more," Lauren says.

Lauren wrote the guide frustrated when with the "very cut-throat, game-playing *Sex and the City* dating atmosphere" of the Big Apple in which the "treat 'em mean keep 'em keen" philosophy of dating handbooks like *The Rules* suggest women keep egg timers by the phone so they don't talk for too long.

Instead, she created her own rules based on books such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* which include: if you like someone let them know; don't play games or lead people on; don't fall for superficial qualities; and have faith in your own instincts.

"Jane Austen's rules teach us how to find (a loyal and true) relationship – her books are full of examples of couples who get things right and ones who went terribly wrong, and we can learn so much from that," Lauren says.

Jane Austen's Guide to Dating contains summaries of all the love stories and their characters, along with two quizzes to find out the character you are most like, the character the man in your life is most like and which characters are compatible.

"I'm definitely a Mary Crawford from *Mansfield Park* – worldly-wise, but with a tendency to be bitchy and cynical," Lauren says.

"I need a guy who's nicer than me, someone strong but sweet who brings out my better side and can use humour to take me down a peg if I need it."

And by following her favourite author's advice Lauren says she found him. "My fiancé Greg is a Henry Tilney from *Northanger Abbey* – he's essentially nicer than me, and has a great capacity to tease me out of bad behaviour. We're a very good match," she says.

***Jane Austen's Guide to Dating* by Lauren Henderson is published by Headline. RRP $24.95**

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Fed up with the New York dating scene, Lauren Henderson turned to the romances of Jane Austen for inspiration.