

Write a Winter Letter

'KIND LOVE
& GOOD WISHES
FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL'

Jane Austen loved writing letters, especially in the winter when bad weather would have made it harder to go visiting people. Take a leaf out of Jane's book(s) and write a wintry letter of your own!



If you're unsure what to write about, take inspiration from Jane Austen's House and use our handy prompts below to guide you. You can use the handy letter template overleaf to fill in your answers.



Most of Jane's letters were written to her big sister and best friend, Cassandra. They often start 'My dearest Cassandra'. Who are you writing your letter to? Your best friend? A family member? Someone you haven't seen in a while?



Start outside, in the **garden**. What is the weather like? Is it frosty? Chilly? Does it look like it might snow? Or is there some winter sunshine?



The **Drawing Room** is where Jane would have practiced her 'accomplishments', like sewing, reading, dancing, and playing the piano. An 'accomplishment' is a fun skill or hobby, such as speaking another language, playing an instrument, making art, or being



active. Are there any accomplishments you've been working on lately? What are you good at?

The **Dining Room** would have been a very lively place around Christmastime, just like today! What is your favourite food to eat in winter? Jane would have enjoyed turkey, gingerbread, sweetmeats and mince pies – although her mince pies would have had actual meat mince in!



We think that Jane might have shared her **Bedroom** with her big sister Cassandra. They were best friends and did everything together, and Jane is always very nice to her in her letters, often paying her compliments. She addressed a short story to her with this compliment: 'Madam, you are a phoenix'. Pay a compliment to the person you are writing to. What do you like about them?



The **Family Room** looks at Jane's great big family – she had six brothers! She

also had lots of nieces and nephews who she loved playing games with. One Christmas, she wrote a letter to her niece Cassy in a secret code – she wrote it entirely back to front, starting ‘YM RAED YSSAC’ and signing off ‘ENAJ NETSUA’. Can you write a sentence of backwards words?



Take a look around **Jane Austen Undressed**. With no radiators or electricity to keep her warm, dressing in warm clothes would have been very important to Jane. She would have worn flannel petticoats and a cosy shawl. Can you describe something you wear to keep warm?



Our most precious objects are in the **Treasures Cabinet**. The two beautiful gold necklaces belonged to Jane and Cassandra, gifts from their little brother Charles. What gift do you want the most?



Our exhibition, **Jane Austen in London**, looks at the trips Jane enjoyed going on in the city. She would write letters describing her adventures to Cassandra, who stayed here in Chawton with their mother whilst Jane was in London. Can you write a line or two describing your trip to Jane Austen’s House? What is your favourite thing that you’ve seen today, or have you learnt something interesting that you didn’t know before? What might they like to know?



Now think about how you might like to end your letter – how do you want to say goodbye? Don’t forget to put your name at the end, or else they won’t know who the letter is from! Maybe you could sign your name backwards, like Jane did in her winter letter to Cassy.

How to fold your letter into its own envelope

Paper was really expensive in Jane Austen’s time. Envelopes were not used, so letters would be folded up and sealed with wax. Here’s how to fold your letter up – you might need an adult to help you, it is a bit fiddly!

- 1. Cut down the middle of the booklet, so your letter is a single sheet of paper with writing on one side.**
- 2. Turn it over, and fold along the dotted lines to make a small packet. (Fold inwards, so your writing is in the middle.) you should end up with should be a rectangular packet, with the address panel on one side.**
- 3. Then turn the packet over and if you can, tuck one side inside the other and stick them closed with a wax seal (or a piece of Sellotape!)**

Now your letter is ready for sending – just write the address on the back and pop on a stamp!



My dearest



The weather today is

I am getting very accomplished at

My favourite winter food is

You are

Crack the code (if you can!)

I am keeping warm wearing my

I really really want

Today I went to Jane Austen's House



Love from

Write the address here:

