



# The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England

*Kristine Hughes*

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## **The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England** Kristine Hughes

In this timesaving reference book, respected author and historian Kristine Hughes brings 19th century England to life as she leads you through the details that characterize this fascinating era. From slice-of-life facts, anecdotes and firsthand accounts, to sweeping timelines and major historical events, this guide presents the delightful and often surprising daily realities of Regency and Victorian England. With it, you'll craft a vibrant story as you learn what people ate, from pigeon pie and turtle dinners to syllabub and milk punch, where a prisoner would go if he were remanded to the "hulks; " the four coats a gentleman must have in his wardrobe, and other fashion requirements of the era; the rules honored by decent society, from the proper way to promenade to the polite hours to "call; " how couples married and divorced, through churching, wife-selling and other practices; what people did for work, from cottagers and climbing boys to milkmaids and manservants; the meaning of common slang words like mawleys and moleskins; what Cook's Tours were life and where they could take the adventurous; and trends in entertainment, such as dandies, panoramas and more.

## **The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England Details**

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Author : Kristine Hughes

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## From Reader Review The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England for online ebook

### Rebecca says

This is not a unique kind of book. There are others. There are others which are much better. This feels very much like a collection of notes of interest and quotations - not reflecting on what was norm, what was common, what you could do and what was an oddity but could still happen, nor much on differences of class in everyday life. The chapter on fashion is mainly the author saying there is so much to say that she can't cover it all (why then include it to begin with?) and then long quotes (6 pages of them) from one single book from 1864 to make up the rest of the fashion chapter. The editing isn't perfect either - for instance the subject of servants in mourning can be found both in the chapter on servants (in the beginning of the book) and in the last chapter, covering the subject of mourning in general. And the book begins with: "During the nineteenth century, modes of lighting underwent drastic changes. At the beginning of the century, primitive means of lighting, rush lights and tallow candles were the norm, while by the century's end, electricity was available to all." [No it wasn't!]

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### K.M. Weiland says

I'm surprised this book has gotten so many low reviews. I've read quite a few of the entries in this series, and this is by far the most readable, most interesting, and most applicable. It's true that it deals in large measure with the Victorian era, but its Regency references don't skimp nearly as much as the negative reviews make out.

Unlike other entries in the series, which compose their the bulk with index-like lists, this one actually provides most of its information in highly readable, well-organized sections, all of which are fascinating. It's not quite as witty and fun as Daniel Poole's *What Jane Austen Ate* and *Charles Dickens Knew* (and much of the information necessarily overlaps between the two), but it's a wonderful and engaging read all its own.

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### Jeanne McElvaney says

Packed with great information about a time in history that ignites my imagination.

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### Mauri says

An excellent resource, considering it's subject matter.

It does tend, however to quote huge blocks of texts from other resources. There aren't enough enough pictures; I had to use wikipedia to find out what a 'frock coat' looked like.

Each chapter end in a bibliography full of even more useful second-tier resources.

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## Lu says

The book is very interesting but a little too superficial to give the reader a real insight into Victorian life. A good reference book nonetheless.

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## Kara says

It's a good collection of facts about 19th century London, but needed just a little more editing to the structure and some more primary sources to be considered a really good resource.

The book itself has a good start to structure but the author's text and the primary sources quoted and mixed together too much, making it difficult to tell which is which.

Also, the 19th century Brits were notorious for having a ton of stuff and for writing numerous books, journals, magazines and newspapers with pictures of said stuff – so why was there such a lack of pictures of primary source items?

So, good start, but by no means the last word in 19th century history.

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## Marsha Altman says

Assuming the information is correct (sometimes it isn't), this is a very valuable resource about the basics of life in England in the 19th century, and touches on some things like what things were made of and when things were invented that aren't covered in books about Regency society or political developments. Important for authors.

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## Madhulika Liddle says

*The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England from 1811-1901* is a pretty long, but singularly apt, title. Because that is what this brilliant little book is. It's only about 250 pages, including some very comprehensive appendices, an equally comprehensive index, and more. But, in that brief space, Kristine Hughes manages to cover just about every aspect of everyday life for the English between 1811 and 1901.

Each chapter deals with one (or more, if related) aspects of everyday life—and that means not just the everyday life of the commoners, but everyday life for just about every conceivable member of society: from royalty and the aristocracy to chimney sweeps, from domestic servants to farmers, from doctors and seamstresses and soldiers to sailors and actors and drivers of stage coaches. What houses they lived in, how furniture was arranged, what food was eaten, how it was eaten, how it was cooked. What they wore. Not just on a daily basis, but for special occasions. For presentations at court, for balls, for mourning (there's a very interesting chapter on the etiquette surrounding mourning, and the businesses that grew out of catering to that). How they were expected to behave and when and with whom.

There are sections on entertainment, on the army and navy (including the Army in India), on sanitation and

heating and lighting, on laws and the legal system, transport, industry, advertising, everyday commerce (where did you buy your milk and bread?). There are timelines of important events, and there are excerpts from contemporary sources—memoirs, letters, and so on—and even illustrations of everything from furniture to mourning dress, to a shower fixture that fitted around the neck of the wearer!

I loved this book not just because it's such a handy reference for the writer, but also because even for someone who may not delve deep into the world of Regency and Victorian England, there is plenty here to satisfy. Delightful trivia, for example: "*...in the country, workmen had certain rights to the surrounding woods. While they could no longer cut down trees for their own use, they were allowed to take out all the deadwood they could find "by hook or by crook"; that is a shepherd's hook or a laborer's weeding crook.*" or "*... Though there may have been many ships at sea that were built along the same lines, each could be identified by the clothes worn by its crew. In 1840, the captain of the HMS Blazer ordered a blue-and-white striped coat for his men, with the name of this garment, the blazer, later passing into civilian usage.*"

What's more, Hughes provides plenty of help in the form of leads for further research. Besides the bibliography (which goes into several pages at the end of the book), there are appendices with information about dozens of museums and other such institutions where one can visit for a deeper understanding of specific aspects of the period. Furthermore, Hughes provides URLs for websites, forums and other online resources that can also help in doing research.

A must-read if you're interested in nineteenth century England, never mind if you're a writer or not.

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### **Greta says**

This is an excellent resource for writers or for history buffs/readers who are interested in what life was like during the the Regency and Victorian eras. A quick read, the book was sectioned into three parts. I found the last part - Arts and Entertainment - the most interesting. For example, "breakfast" was rarely served before 1 pm and it was best to get an inside seat on a carriage during the winter or risk freezing to death. (Seriously. They lost several people during particularly bad snowstorms.)

The other two sections, about the practical aspects of everyday life and the structure of government and the military, were also instructive, and made me glad to be living in the 21st century instead of the 1800s!

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### **Liza says**

Not as much depth as I hoped for. A lot of what's described as "everyday life" doesn't specify what class it would be "everyday" for. So ... not very useful to a writer, who'd better be very clear on class. Instead, I'm finding What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew to be much more detailed and useful.

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### **Nicki Markus says**

I bought this book as research for my next vampire story and overall I found it a good resource. Granted, the focus tends to be more on Victorian than Regency (the period I am interested in), but it is well laid out, with

detailed information that always manages to stay fun and doesn't get bogged down in boring facts.

This is a book you can either read cover to cover or just dip into at your leisure: definitely a good book for period writers and those interested in life in that period.

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### **Christy B says**

A nice overview of life in the Regency and Victorian eras. Separated into three parts: Everyday Life; Government, War and the Economy; Society.

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### **Elizabeth says**

As a whole, this books is basically exactly what you'd expect. It's informative, but brief.

Some of the information was new to me, some was not. Some of the information was extremely detailed, with excellent uses of sources, both modern and of the time. Some of the information was extremely brief and lacking in detail. The fashion section for example was very short, particularly considering the era is often known for its fashion. I wish it had been a bit more detailed on a number of subjects, but it was only meant to be brief. This book works as an excellent way to dip your toe in before fully immersing oneself into the time period. It's a great starting point and has a very thorough bibliography and suggested sources to look into for any subjects that were intriguing. The writing was a bit on the dry side, but not overall poor.

I would recommend this to anyone, writer or otherwise, looking for a brief taste of the overall daily life of the time period.

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### **Jen Miller says**

Good reference book, but has a lot more Victorian era information than Regency.

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### **Caroline says**

Interesting enough, very helpful about somethings, not so helpful about others. I really wish I had read it in the few days before the England trip last year.

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