

Reading Guide for  
*Etiquette & Espionage*  
*Finishing School Book the First*

by Gail Carriger



**Book Description**

*It's one thing to learn to curtsy properly. It's quite another to learn to curtsy and throw a knife at the same time. Welcome to Finishing School.*

Fourteen-year-old Sophronia is a great trial to her poor mother. Sophronia is more interested in dismantling clocks and climbing trees than proper manners--and the family can only hope that company never sees her atrocious curtsy. Mrs. Temminnick is desperate for her daughter to become a proper lady. So she enrolls Sophronia in Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality.

But Sophronia soon realizes the school is not quite what her mother might have hoped. At Mademoiselle Geraldine's, young ladies learn to finish...everything. Certainly, they learn the fine arts of dance, dress, and etiquette, but they also learn to deal out death, diversion, and espionage--in the politest possible ways, of course. Sophronia and her friends are in for a rousing first year's education.

**Trailer:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CCTCH\\_h9L0&list=PL7A39021B57CFBDC3](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CCTCH_h9L0&list=PL7A39021B57CFBDC3)

**Music Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTM2B14ntCE>



Photo by Robert Andruszko

**Meet the Author**

Gail Carriger writes comedic steampunk mixed with urbane fantasy. Her debut novel, *Soulless*, won the ALA's Alex Award. The following books were all bestsellers and are published in dozens of languages. She was once an archaeologist and is overly fond of tea. Gail has kickstarted a full cast audio production of her YA sci-fi *Crudrat*.

### **The Finishing School Series in Gail's Words**

A young lady discovers her dreaded lady's seminary is a great deal more than anyone realizes.

#### **Characters**

##### *Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality*

###### Students:

- Sophronia Temminnick – youngest daughter of the Temminnick family, covert recruit, 1<sup>st</sup> year student
- Dimity Plumleigh-Teignmott – 1<sup>st</sup> year student, Sophronia's first friend and roommate, unofficial tutor of etiquette for balls and order of precedence
- Sidheag Maccon, Lady Maccon – 1<sup>st</sup> year student, Sophronia's friend, great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Lord Maccon (a werewolf), unofficial tutor of fighting techniques, Agatha's roommate
- Agatha Woosmoss – 1<sup>st</sup> year student, Sophronia's friend, Sidheag's roommate, unofficial tutor of math and calculating household management
- Preshea Buss – 1<sup>st</sup> year student, Monique's roommate, pretty and deadly
- Monique de Pelouse – final year student who failed her final exam because she did not return with the prototype, sent to take lessons with the 1<sup>st</sup> year students as punishment, Preshea's roommate

###### Teachers:

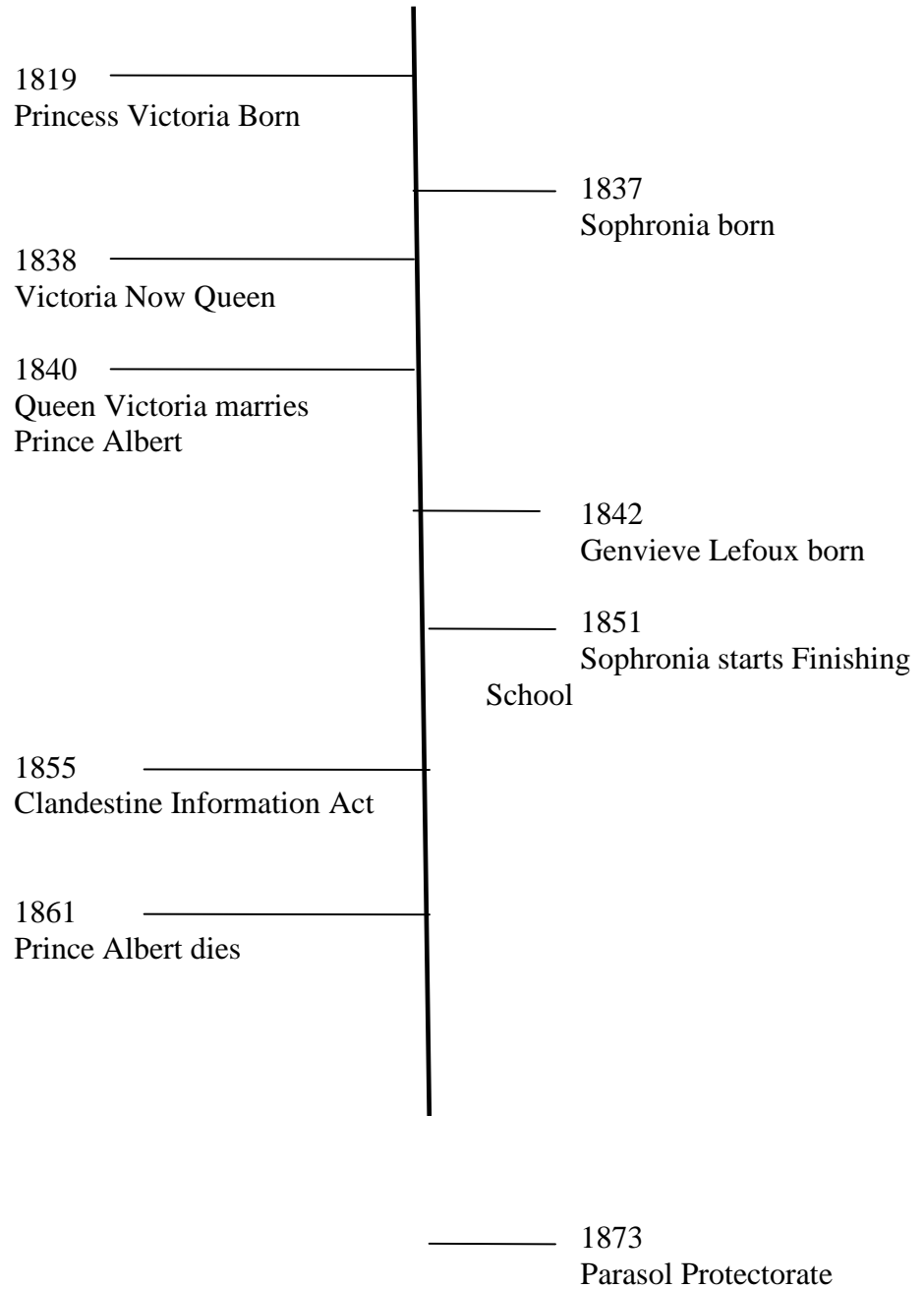
- Mademoiselle Geraldine – dance, dress, diversion teacher
- Lady Linette – music, intelligence gathering, espionage teacher
- Sister Mathilde Herschel-Teape – (AKA Sister Mattie) household management, medicinal cures, proper poisonings teacher
- Professor Beatrice Lefoux – modern languages, modern weaponry, technological advances teacher
- Professor Braithwope – a vampire, history, deportment, vampire lore, vampire defense, etiquette teacher
- Captain Niall – a werewolf, weapons teacher

###### Allies and Adversaries:

- Soap – young man of African descent who shovels coal in the boiler room, Sophronia's friend
- Vieve/Genvieve – Sophronia's friend, Professor Lefoux's niece, an inventor who dresses as a boy
- Pillover Plumleigh-Teignmott – Dimity's younger brother, studies at Bunson's Polytechnique
- Mrs. Barnaclegoose – friend of Sophronia's mother, graduate of Mademoiselle Geraldine's, recommended Sophronia to finishing school
- Pickleman—interested in gaining wealth, power, influence, hired flywaymen to obtain the prototype, identified by a green ribbon tied around his hat

- Pistons – group of young men at Bunson’s who enjoy causing mischief and bullying Pillover, identified by a brass-colored ribbon tied around the hat and gears fastened to the waistcoat
- Flywaymen – robbers who travel by small airships along the roads where they find victims

### Etiquette & Espionage Timeline



Activities are designed to work before, during, or after reading *Etiquette & Espionage*.

**Activity #1:** Southern England Explorations

**Activity Lead In:** The events within *Etiquette & Espionage* take place in southern England.

**Activity Description:** Locate some of the places mentioned in the book and discuss the relative distances between them.

*Etiquette & Espionage* Locations:

- Dartmoor
- Swindon
- London
- Wiltshire
- Wootton Bassett

**Activity # 2:** Steam Engine/Boiler Workings

**Activity Lead In:** Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing School for Young Ladies of Quality is located on a group of joined dirigibles. Steam engines provide power for most things at this finishing school.

**Activity Description:** Research how a steam engine works, draw a diagram of the process and then talk about it as a class.

**Activity #3:** Finishing School Curriculum

**Activity Lead In:** Education as we understand it (where everyone learns science, math, reading, etc.) was only for boys during the Victorian era. Girls of the upper class could be sent to a finishing school during this time period.

**Activity Description:** Research what a finishing school actually entailed during the Victorian era and then discuss your opinions of the "curriculum" during class.

**Activity #4:** Codes for Everyone

**Activity Lead In:** Mentioned in passing in *Etiquette & Espionage*, codes are a useful espionage tool.

**Activity Description:** Working in small groups, research different types of codes and then create a message using one of the codes, either of the group's own making or L33t speak ([http://www.chatslang.com/leet\\_sheet](http://www.chatslang.com/leet_sheet)). Share your message and the code's key with another group and see if they can decode the message.

**Activity #5:** Victorian Outfits

**Activity Lead In:** A person's daily outfit required more clothing during the Victorian Era than we wear today.

**Activity Description:** Research the different types of outfits men and woman wore during the Victorian Era. Draw a picture if you like.

**Activity #6:** *Taste buds for Tea*

**Activity Lead In:** In *Etiquette & Espionage*, characters have "tea" and eat strange food.

**Activity Description:** Research what "tea" might entail and what type of etiquette would be practiced. Then have a tea party and try tea and foods such as sponge and trifle.

**Activity #7:** *Lighter than Air Transportation*

**Activity Lead In:** Dirigibles are commonplace in *Etiquette & Espionage*: The finishing school itself is group of joined dirigibles, the flywaymen use small dirigibles and so do the sky pirates.

**Activity Description:** Research how a dirigible or hot air balloon works and then draw a model of one.

#### **Activity #8: Victorian Games**

**Activity Lead In:** It was an important social skill to know how to play various games during the Victorian era. In *Etiquette & Espionage*, the students are taught and practice some of these games.

**Activity Description:** Learn how to play battledore, shuttlecock, pass the slipper, whist, or another Victorian parlour game.

### **Discussion/Essay Questions**

1. How is Mademoiselle Geraldine's Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality different from what Sophronia expected in a finishing school? Where did she get her information about finishing schools?
2. How is Bumbersnoot similar to the system used to power the dirigible? Draw a picture of Bumbersnoot if you like.
3. Why is Sophronia able to lead a group or successfully carry out an operation?
4. Discuss how Sophronia interacts with or views the sooties and Vieve differently than other students like Preshea or Dimity and Pillover.
5. How do Sophronia and her friends change from the beginning of the book to the end? What have they learned?
6. Swiffle-on-Ex is a town made up by the author, Gail Carriger. Why might a writer choose to invent a town rather than use an existing one?

### **Core Curriculum Standards Met by Pre-Reading Activities and Discussion/Essay Questions**

- ▲ Reading Standards for Literature 1 and 4
- ▲ Reading Standards for Informational Text 1 and 4
- ▲ Writing Standards 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9
- ▲ Speaking and Listening Standards: 1 and 4
- ▲ Language Standards: 1, 2, 3 and 4
- ▲ Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: 1, 4 and 7
- ▲ Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9

### **Suggested Additional Reading List**

City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau

Candle Man, Book One: The Society of Unrelenting Vigilance by Glenn Dakin

Howl's Moving Castle by Dianna Wynne Jones

The Ordinary Princess by M.M. Kaye

Airborn by Kenneth Oppel

Trickster's Choice by Tamora Pierce

The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman

The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket

The Hunchback Assignments by Arthur Slade

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne

Dealing with Dragons by Patricia C. Wrede

Leviathan by Scott Westerfeld

Sister Light, Sister Dark by Jane Yolen

## Websites of Interest

<http://www.airships.net/dirigible>

<http://history.howstuffworks.com/world-war-i/dirigible2.htm>

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/27/v27i02p096-106.pdf>

<http://www.emilypost.com/everyday-manners/table-manners>

<http://www.emilypost.com/everyday-manners/important-manners-for-every-day>

<http://www.emilypost.com/everyday-manners/common-courtesies>

<http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blsteamengine.htm>

<http://inventors.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://technology.niagarac.on.ca/people/mcsele/newcomen.htm>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESfSG2OIQYQ>

[http://www.haworth-village.org.uk/steam-trains/locomotive\\_works/steam-boiler.asp](http://www.haworth-village.org.uk/steam-trains/locomotive_works/steam-boiler.asp)

<http://www.exploratorium.edu/ronh/secret/secret.html>

<http://listverse.com/2012/03/13/10-codes-and-ciphers/>