



# Jane AUSTEN

(1775 - 1817)

Jane Austen was an English author who wrote about the lives of the British upper class in the 19th Century.

Her novels famously poke fun at how people at the time expected women to behave.

Today, she is one of the most popular authors in the English language.

## Jane's childhood

Jane was born December 16, 1775 in the county of Hampshire, England.

Both her father, George, and mother, Cassandra, came from fairly wealthy families. They provided Jane and her seven brothers and sisters with a home that encouraged creativity.

Her father owned a large library, which Jane would often use for her studies. From an early age, Jane began writing and putting on plays with her sister. Her father bought her expensive paper and quill pens to encourage her writing.

In 1785, Jane was sent to boarding school, where she studied foreign languages, music and dance. After returning from boarding school, Jane never moved away from her family again.



Jane's childhood home, Steventon rectory, was in a valley and surrounded by meadows.

## Early writings

Between 1787-1793, Jane began collecting her own stories and plays in notebooks, now know as Jane's 'Juvenilia'. In these stories, Jane made fun of the writing styles popular at the time.



In those days, novels were expected to teach the reader ways of how to live their life. One way of living that was encouraged at the time was to be very sensitive and aware of your emotions. This is known as sensibility.

Jane thought this was ridiculous! She felt that characters in such stories didn't have common sense and were too emotional.

In the story, 'Love and Friendship', Jane pokes fun of sensibility by making her characters cry and hug every time they meet each other!

This story gives early an indication of the funny and intelligent writer Jane would become.

### Jane the Socialite

In her early twenties, Jane went to many dances and parties in Hampshire. She also travelled to social events in London and Southampton.

These parties and events taught her about the lives of the upper class. These sorts of social events became a major focus of her writing.

These events also taught Jane a lot about the role of women in society. People seemed to think that women needed a husband. These parties often seemed set-up mainly for men and women to pair up. Jane would go on to make fun of this idea in her novel 'Pride and Prejudice'.

Jane herself was proposed to when she stayed with a family near Steventon. She said yes, but regretted it straight away and left for the town of Bath.

This was the closest Jane ever got to getting married.

### Jane gets published

Jane's first book, called 'Sense and Sensibility', was published in 1811. Only Jane's family knew she had written the book; instead of her name, the author was simply credited as 'a lady'.

Jane was very private about her work, but she didn't have her own space to write. She wrote in the living room and would hide her papers whenever the door creaked, letting her know someone was coming!

'Sense and Sensibility' earned Jane £140, which was a lot of money at the time.



The Austens needed the money because Jane’s father had died in 1805 and the inheritance didn’t amount to much due to taxes.

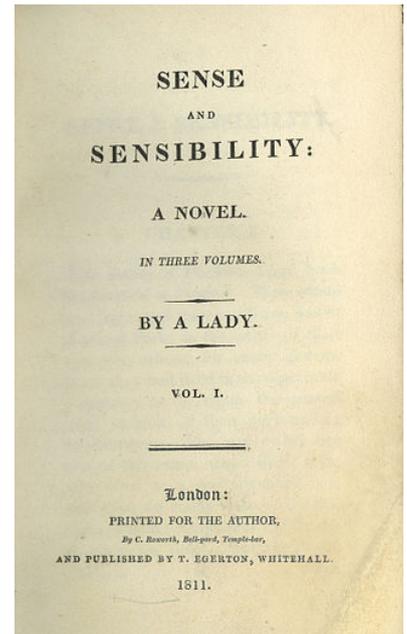
The money encouraged Jane to keep writing. In 1813, she published the novel ‘Pride and Prejudice’, which she described as her “own darling child”.

‘Pride and Prejudice’ is Jane’s most famous book. The novel’s funny and critical look at marriage and money still has a huge influence on romantic comedies over 200 years later. The main male character, Mr Darcy, has become one of the most famous romantic heroes in fiction.

The next year, Jane published ‘Mansfield Park’, which sold out in six months. In 1816, she published ‘Emma’, the final book published in her lifetime.

In 1817, Jane became very ill. She tried to keep going to family events and writing, but eventually she had to abandon her work. She died on July 18, 1817 at age 41.

Jane Austen’s books helped changed the way authors write novels. She rejected sensational stories for tales closer to real life. Her influence helped the Victorian writers who followed to write important books about what it was like to live in those hard times.



First edition title page from Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen’s first published novel (1811)

A dashed-line rectangular box containing a line drawing of a young girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a dress with a bow and a flower. To the right of the drawing is the text 'Want more Great Women Biographies for kids?' with a large question mark. Below this is the text 'go to www.lottie.com/blogs/great-women-and-girls'.

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