

Jane Austen as a Novelist



B.A. II English Literature Paper Second

Jane Austen's Life

- One of the greatest novelists of 19th century, Jane Austen was born December 16, 1775 at Steventon Rectory in Hampshire, England.
- She was the daughter of the Reverend George Austen and Cassandra Leigh Austen.
- She was the seventh of eight children and the youngest of two daughters in the middle-class family.
- She received formal schooling, first at a boarding school at Oxford, then at the Abbey School in Reading.
- The household was lively and bookish. Her father kept a large collection of literature in his home library. Jane and her sister both had the permission to use the library and both got benefitted by it.
- Her family also enjoyed writing and performing plays for evening entertainment.
- In 1795, she fell in love with Thomas Langlois Lefroy but, she never married.
- She died on July 18th, 1817.



Jane Austen's Novels

▶ Sense and Sensibility

(Published in 1811)

▶ Pride and Prejudice

(Published in 1813)

▶ Mansfield Park

(Published in 1814)

▶ Emma

(Published in 1815)

▶ Northanger Abbey

(Published in 1818)

▶ Persuasion

(Published in 1818)

▶ Lady Susan

(Published in 1871)

Dominant Themes of Her Novels

- ▶ Loss of Illusions and Self-realization
- ▶ Morality and Manners
- ▶ Romance, Courtships and Marriages
- ▶ Property and Class
- ▶ Tangled Patriarchal Society
- ▶ Gender and Sexuality
- ▶ Economic Position of Women



“Two Inches of Ivory”: Her Limited Range

- ❖ Jane Austen is called a “Pure Novelist”.
- ❖ She presents an authentic criticism of rural society within the limits of art.
- ❖ The range of her novels is limited. She drew all her material from the society around her.
- ❖ Jane Austen defined her boundaries and never stepped beyond them. All her scenes belong to South England.
- ❖ Jane Austen herself referred to her work as “Two inches of ivory.”
- ❖ In a letter to her niece, she wrote, “Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on.”
- ❖ She chooses themes like property decorum, money and marriages, that were within the range of her experience.
- ❖ She was not interested in passions or great events, but was concerned with the everyday life in the English countryside.
- ❖ She focused on the values of provincial middle class and country gentry she knew very well.
- ❖ Her real concern was with people , and the analysis of character and conduct.

Comedy, Humor, Satire

- ▶ Austen's novels are the domestic comedies of a high order.
- ▶ She confines herself to the middle classes of society. Her comedy is confined to human beings in their personal relations.
- ▶ Her novels can be categorized as novels of manners also. It is because they deal with the manners, customs and follies of her limited social circle.
- ▶ We get an immense use of irony and humor in all her novels. Her attitude towards life is that of a gentle humorist.
- ▶ She has a keen sense of the absurdities of human beings. But she is never harsh or unkind.
- ▶ Her gentle strokes of irony are charming. Austen is seldom satirical. Her satire is always gentle. It is not severe and savage.

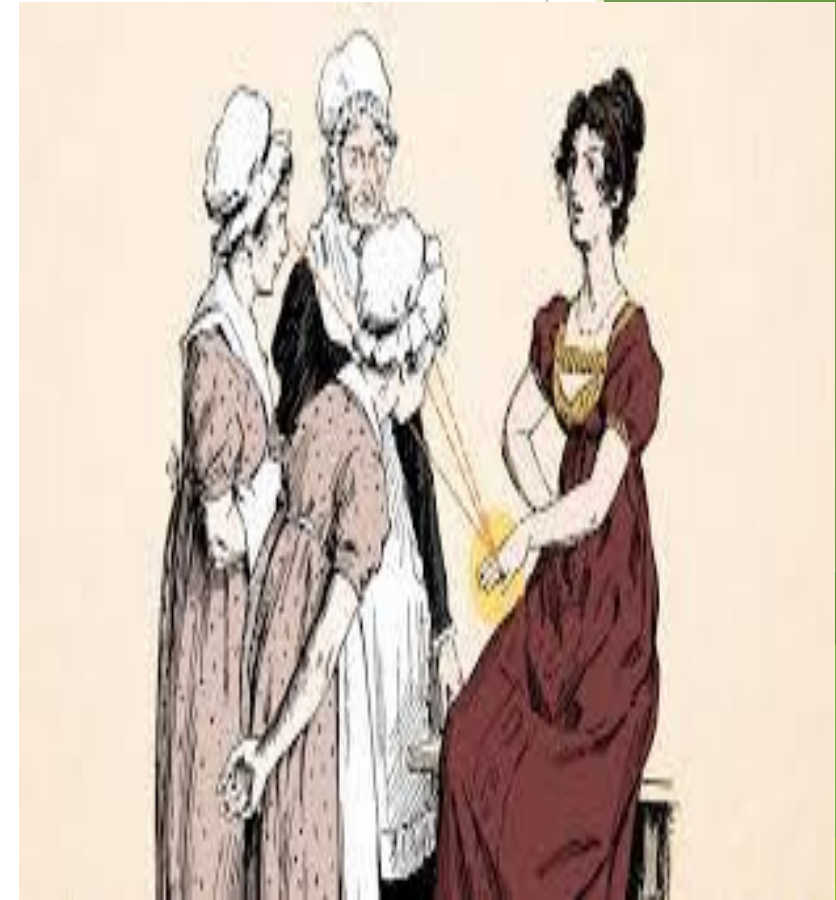
Characterization

- ▶ Austen's art of characterization is praiseworthy. Characters are presented truthfully and realistically.
- ▶ Her characters are minutely portrayed and well described.
- ▶ She creates living characters. They are the mixture of virtues and vices like real human beings. They are never idealized.
- ▶ They are not types but individuals. They are three-dimensional portraying strong individual traits.
- ▶ Her male characters have some softness of temper, but her female characters are the most perfect.
- ▶ That's why in her novel we find feminine atmosphere. Austen has created many memorable characters like Darcy, Elizabeth, Emma, Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine, and Bingley etc.



Plot Construction

- ▶ Austen's great skill lies in her plot construction.
- ▶ Her novels have an exactness of structure and symmetry of form.
- ▶ Her plots are simple but pervasive. All her stories are faultlessly constructed.
- ▶ They move in a way of natural growth.
- ▶ Every character and every incident is necessary for the development of plot.
- ▶ In 'Pride and Prejudice' plot is the chief interest.



Her Style of Writing Fiction

- ▶ Clarity, economy and skillful use of dialogues are the main features of Jane Austen's style.
- ▶ She constantly revised her novels for achieving a polished, detailed and clear style.
- ▶ Her stories are told by an omniscient narrator. They all have happy endings.
- ▶ She makes her characters lively through their skillful use of dialogues.
- ▶ She makes each character speak in a way suitable to her/his own class.
- ▶ Irony and wit are her main tools that she uses with precision in all her novel.
- ▶ She uses verbal and situational irony instead of open interpretation and comments on the action.



Conclusion

- ▶ Jane Austen has been brilliant in the realistic treatment of unremarkable people in the unremarkable situations of everyday life.
- ▶ In her six major novels, Austen has created the comedy of manners of middle-class life in the England of her time.
- ▶ Her repeated story of a young woman's voyage to self-discovery on the passage through love to marriage focuses upon easily recognizable aspects of life.
- ▶ Her main concentration has been upon character and personality.
- ▶ She focuses on the tensions between her heroines and their society.
- ▶ With the wit, realism, and exquisite prose style, her stories are skillfully told, beautifully constructed, and appeals to the readers of all kinds.

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Thank You!

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