

English 345: English Novel II  
Spring 2014  
Professor Jason Tougaw

Jane Austen,  
*Emma* (1816)



“She was very fond of Emma, but did not reckon on her being a general favourite; for, when commencing that work, she said, ‘I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like.’”

--James E. Austen-Leigh, *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869), Chapter 10

Portrait of Jane Austen, by her sister Cassandra (ca. 1810), pencil and watercolor

- 1775 Jane Austen born at village of Steventon, England, to George and Cassandra Austen.
- 1795-98 Writes original versions of *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Pride and Prejudice*.
- 1797 "First Impressions" (original version of *Pride and Prejudice*) rejected by a London publisher.
- 1801 Father retires and moves to Bath with his wife and daughters.
- 1805 Death of father, George.
- 1808 Moves to Southampton with mother and sister.
- 1809-17 Lives with her mother and sister in a small house provided by her wealthy brother Edward in the village of Chawton, in southern England. Begins revising original versions of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*.
- 1811 *Sense and Sensibility* published.
- 1813 *Pride and Prejudice* published.
- 1814 *Mansfield Park* published. Austen begins work on *Emma*.
- 1816 *Emma* is published and is dedicated to the Prince Regent (future George IV) at his request. Austen completes *Persuasion*.
- 1817 Composes the fragment "Sanditon"; abandons it because of incapacitating illness. Austen is moved to Winchester for medical care in May and dies there on 18 July. Buried in Winchester Cathedral on 24 July.
- 1818 *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* published jointly in a four-volume edition, with a biographical preface of Austen by her brother Henry.
- 1869 James E. Austen-Leigh (son of Austen's eldest brother James) publishes *Memoir of Jane Austen* to wide acclaim.

# Social Class in Jane Austen's Britain

Map of English Society in 1814,

*In Everyday Life in Regency and Victorian England: From  
1811 – 1901*

by Kristine Hughes (University of Ohio Press 1998)

<http://janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2008/01/20/social-classes-in-england-1814/>

# Jane Austen's England

Map of Britain (Maps of the World):

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/united-kingdom/thematic-maps/uk-counties-map.html>

Map of locations in *Emma*,

Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA):

<http://www.jasna.org/info/images/map-emma-1200.jpg>

Map of England showing

significant places in Jane Austen's life (JASNA):

<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/ppengmap.gif>

I have likewise read one of Miss Austen's works, "Emma"- read it with interest and just the degree of admiration which Miss Austen herself would have thought sensible and suitable- anything like warmth or enthusiasm; anything energetic, poignant, heart-felt is utterly out of place in commending these works: all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, would have been scorned as outré and extravagant. She does her business of delineating people seriously well; there is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting: she ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound: the Passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy Sisterhood; even to the Feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasionally graceful but distant recognition; too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet; what she sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study, but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of Life and the sentient target of Death- this Miss Austen ignores; she no more, with her mind's eye, beholds the heart of her race than each man, with bodily vision sees the heart in his heaving breast. Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete, and rather insensible ( not senseless) woman; if this is heresy- I cannot help it. If I said it to some people (Lewes for instance) they would directly accuse me of advocating exaggerated heroics, but I am not afraid of you falling into any such vulgar error.

--Charlotte Brontë, Letter to W.S. Williams (1869), Chapter 10

They were a family of the name of Martin, whom Emma well knew by character, as renting a large farm of Mr. Knightley, and residing in the parish of Donwell—very creditably she believed—she knew Mr. Knightley thought highly of them—but they must be coarse and unpolished, and very unfit to be the intimates of a girl who wanted only a little more knowledge and elegance to be quite perfect. *She* would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers.

**--Emma (18)**

## Quoted (or direct) speech:

“Well done, Mrs. Martin!’ thought Emma. ‘You know what you are about’.”

## Reported speech:

**“She knew that at times she must be missed; she could not think, without pain, of Emma’s losing a single pleasure, or suffering an hours ennui, from the want of her companionableness: but dear Emma was of no feeble character; she was more equal to her situation than most girls would have been, and had sense and energy and spirits that might be hoped would bear her well and happily through its little difficulties and privations.”** (14)

## Free indirect speech (also known as free indirect style or free indirect discourse):

**“There was a strange rumour in Highbury of all the little Perrys being seen with a slice of Mrs. Weston’s wedding-cake in their hands: but Mr. Woodhouse would never believe it.”**

# Group Activity: Jane Austen on Life

1. Choose a passage from the first two volumes of *Emma*—one you find interesting, for whatever reasons.

2. Prepare a presentation for the rest of us:

a. What happens in this passage? Why did you choose it?

b. What language stands out in the scene? Why?

c. What narrative techniques does Austen use in the passage?

d. How do these narrative techniques shape the meaning—or your interpretation of the passages?

e. Based on this passage—and the novel so far—make a claim about Austen's distinctive representation of ways that at least two of the following shape each other: language, meaning, psychology, or social relations. In other words, what might Austen teach somebody like Emma (or your best friend or parent or sibling) about life?