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Teachers' notes

Background

Jane Austen: biography and historical context (Pages 5–11)

These pages cover important aspects of Jane Austen's biography, her literary heritage and the historical and cultural period in which she lived (including a table of published novels alongside important political and historical events).

Summary of events: *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 18); *Emma* (Page 37)

Both novels contain many events and the plot and sub-plot are often intertwined. These pages give a chronological outline of the plots but do not include all the events. They may be retained by students for reference.

Recording key events: *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 19); *Emma* (Page 38)

The timelines can be used to record key events and other features, such as structural elements and examples of irony. More than one timeline may be used for each novel. Notes made on timelines should be brief.

Characters

Pride and Prejudice (Pages 12–15); *Emma* (Pages 37–38)

These sheets cover the main characters. In *Pride and Prejudice* these are Elizabeth Bennet, Darcy, Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley; in *Emma*, they are Emma Woodhouse, Mr Knightley, Harriet Smith, Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. The last two have been included because of their importance in the main plot, particularly in the second half of *Emma*. These sheets may also be retained by students for reference.

Who's who? – other characters: *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 16); *Emma* (Page 35)

These two reference sheets can be used as study aids. Some characters are more important than others. George Wickham, for example, is important in the main plot, acting as a catalyst in the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy. Very minor characters have not been included.

Who says?: *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 17); *Emma* (Page 36)

Students are asked to identify who is speaking to whom and what is being discussed.

Language and style

Irony in *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 24); *Emma* (Page 42)

Various kinds of irony are discussed: simple irony, the ironic narrative voice, dramatic irony and satire. Students are asked to identify the different

types and discuss whether each example contains more than one type of irony.

Satire in *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 25)

Here, students are asked to examine characters that are satirised in *Pride and Prejudice* and also to consider caricature.

Satire in *Emma* (Page 43)

Reference will need to be made to Pages 8 and 49, 'The romantic novel', before dealing with this topic. *Emma* is a good example of Jane Austen's satirical treatment of the romantic novel. Students are asked to explain examples of satire in the novel. You may wish to apply the ideas on each sheet to both novels. (You may also wish to discuss the satirical use of names, such as Augusta Hawkins, Mr Suckling and Mrs Bragge.)

The narrative voice in *Pride and Prejudice* (Page 26); *Emma* (Page 44)

The omniscient narrator is discussed and students are asked to identify some of its characteristics. In *Emma*, the main character's reflections are important and students are asked to distinguish between reflections expressed in the third and the first persons.

Key events and themes

Turning points in *Pride and Prejudice* (Pages 20–23)

These pages cover several key points in the main plot. Students are asked to understand and identify aspects of Wickham's story, Darcy's letter, the visit to Pemberley and Lydia's elopement. The visit of Lady Catherine De Bourgh to Elizabeth in Chapter 56 is not included, but students are asked to consider its implications in the activity sheet entitled 'Pemberley'.

Themes in *Pride and Prejudice* (Pages 27–30)

The main themes of *Pride and Prejudice* are discussed under the following headings: 'Marriage', 'Class, money and morals', 'Wife and daughter', and 'Pride and prejudice'. Students are asked to identify and write about a range of characters, events and ideas presented in the novel. As the main themes



Jane Austen: biography and historical context

Parents and early childhood

Jane Austen was born in the small parish of Steventon, near Basingstoke in Hampshire, on 16 December 1775, the seventh of eight children. Her father, the Reverend George Austen, was the local clergyman and, with his wife, also ran a school for boys. George Austen's parents died when he was young and he was raised by an aunt and educated at Oxford, but had no fortune. Jane's mother, born Cassandra Leigh, was proud of her aristocratic connections. Her family were descendants of a former Lord Mayor of London. However, she only had a small inheritance and the Austen family appears to have had financial difficulties, at least in the early years, and on several occasions had to borrow from relatives.

The huge extended family of cousins, aunts, uncles and others was very much part of Jane Austen's early and later life. An important factor in her childhood, suggested by Claire Tomalin (who questions the popular idea that Jane Austen's childhood was a happy one), was Mrs Austen's unusual method of child rearing. After a few months, she would 'hand the child over to a woman in the village to be looked after for another year or eighteen months until it was old enough to be managed at home'. Although the parents visited their children regularly, the bond is likely to have been damaged at an early age. This may well have affected Jane's relationship with her mother in particular. Furthermore, Jane was sent away to boarding school at the age of seven with her older sister, also named Cassandra, while their brothers stayed at home and it appears that Jane was more attached to her sister than to her mother.



1. Note down which aspects of *Pride and Prejudice* share similarities with the details of Jane's family life.

Education

The first boarding school Jane attended was not a happy experience. Such schools were often poor institutions, catering inadequately for the girls' physical, emotional and educational needs. Jane and Cassandra arrived in the spring of 1783 at Mrs Cawley's establishment in Oxford, which very soon relocated to Southampton. Here, both Jane and Cassandra became seriously ill from an infectious fever, and, once recovered, were brought home, where Jane seems to have spent the next year. During this time she became attached to a Madame Lefroy, wife of the Reverend George Lefroy, who had recently arrived in the area.

Madame Lefroy was a vivacious woman who loved literature and it is possible that she became Jane's mentor and the 'ideal parent to be preferred to the everyday one'. Jane was able to read the sophisticated books in her father's library and had learned some French. There were also plays or 'theatricals' performed by the Austen children in the rectory barn. But again she and Cassandra were sent away, this time to the Abbey School in Reading. The elderly Madame La Tournelle (her real name was Sarah Hackitt) ran the school in a shambolic fashion and while some lessons were taught, the girls were often left to their own devices. Whatever the reason, Jane and Cassandra were brought home in 1786. At home, Jane's talents were encouraged by her father. She read extensively and began writing at around the age of twelve.

2. In what ways is Elizabeth Bennet untypical as a romantic heroine? What links might these aspects of her character have with the young Jane Austen?

Chronology

- To look at the key events that took place during Jane Austen's literary career.

- Use this table to find out what important political and scientific events occurred during Jane Austen's lifetime. The table also includes key dates in Jane Austen's writing career, as well as the dates of her birth and death.

You should remember that, while Jane Austen did not concern herself with large-scale political events in her novels, it is likely that she was aware of them.

Key dates: Jane Austen

1775	Birth of Jane Austen
1791	<i>Catherine, or The Bower</i> (written)
1791	<i>The Three Sisters</i> (written)
1791/2	<i>Evelyn</i> (written)
1794/96	<i>Lady Susan</i> (written)
1795	<i>Elinor and Marianne</i> (later rewritten and published as <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>)
1805	<i>The Watsons</i> (written)
1811	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (published)
1813	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (published)
1814	<i>Mansfield Park</i> (published)
1816	<i>Emma</i> (published)
1817	<i>Sanditon</i> (unfinished)
1817	Death of Jane Austen
1818	<i>Northanger Abbey, Persuasion</i> (published)



Key dates: political and scientific events

1776	American Declaration of Independence
1780	Gordon Riots
1784	The steam engine invented by James Watt
1785	The power loom invented by Cartwright
1789	The French Revolution
1804	Bonaparte becomes Emperor
1805	Battle of Trafalgar
1807	Abolition of the slave trade
1811	Prince of Wales becomes Regent; Luddite riots
1814	Napoleon Bonaparte abdicates
1815	Battle of Waterloo: end of the Napoleonic Wars; Corn Laws passed



Elizabeth Bennet

FOCUS

- To explore Elizabeth's character.

- Make notes about Elizabeth under the following headings. Refer to relevant quotations and include page numbers. The notes can be used to write essays and assignments and are useful for revision.

Age, appearance, position in the family and social standing

How others regard her (this may vary)



Character traits: strengths and weaknesses. (How does she differ from the typical romantic heroine of the period?)

Important actions taken

What she learns by the end of the novel and how she changes

Summary of events

FOCUS

- To revise the main events of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Chapters 1–12: The novel opens at Longbourn, the Bennets' estate, where the talk is of marriage. Mrs Bennet is seeking husbands for her five daughters. Mr Bennet shows little interest. Mr Bingley has recently taken Netherfield, a nearby estate. His two sisters, brother-in-law and another eligible bachelor, Mr Darcy, are staying with him. At the subsequent ball, Mr Bingley and Jane Bennet fall in love. The scene is set for the main plot to begin: the attraction between Darcy and Elizabeth, despite the former's snobbish pride and the latter's apparent dislike of her potential suitor. At home, Elizabeth and Jane discuss the events. The Bennet's neighbours, Sir William and Lady Lucas, visit with their eldest daughter Charlotte, a close friend of Elizabeth's.

Chapters 13–23: A letter is received from Mr Bennet's cousin, the pompous Mr Collins. He will visit Longbourn to find a wife from among the Bennet daughters. (It is Mr Collins who will inherit the Bennet estate.) George Wickham, an army officer, is also introduced. Wickham's seeming good nature impresses Elizabeth. He speaks ill of Darcy. At a Netherfield ball, Elizabeth is disappointed at Wickham's absence and distressed by her family's embarrassing behaviour. Mr Collins proposes to Elizabeth but is refused. The Bingleys and Darcy suddenly leave Netherfield, with no intention of returning. Mr Collins, still in search of a wife, turns to Charlotte Lucas, who accepts his proposal, much to Elizabeth's amazement and Mrs Bennet's annoyance.

Chapters 24–38: Jane stays with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner in London. She fails to meet Bingley again and Caroline Bingley is uncivil to her. Elizabeth visits newly married Charlotte, who seems contented enough despite the arrogant Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is Mr Collins' mentor and Darcy's aunt. Darcy arrives, is smitten with Elizabeth and proposes to her, but in such an insulting manner that she refuses him. Elizabeth blames Darcy for severing links between Jane and Bingley and for mistreating Wickham. Darcy sends Elizabeth a letter in which he reveals Wickham's true character.

Chapters 39–52: On returning home, Elizabeth is further distressed to find that her sister Lydia is flirting unwisely with officers stationed locally. She takes a trip with the Gardiners to Derbyshire and, unaware of Darcy's presence, visits Pemberley, his estate. There she sees how well he is respected and how pleasant he can be. Suddenly, word comes that Lydia has eloped with Wickham. She feels the family is disgraced and doubts that Wickham's intentions are honourable. Mr Gardiner intervenes and Lydia and Wickham are married. Elizabeth discovers that it is actually Darcy's intervention that has brought about the marriage.

Chapters 53–61: Bingley and Darcy arrive at Netherfield. Darcy seems to avoid Elizabeth. He leaves for London to return later. Meanwhile, Bingley proposes to Jane and is accepted. Lady Catherine arrives unannounced and demands that Elizabeth quash all rumours of an engagement with Darcy. Elizabeth refuses to be intimidated. Darcy, learning of her actions and undeterred by Lady Catherine, proposes. Elizabeth accepts. They discuss the 'pride' and 'prejudice' involved in the development of their relationship. In the last chapter there is a double wedding and the subsequent lives of the characters are outlined.