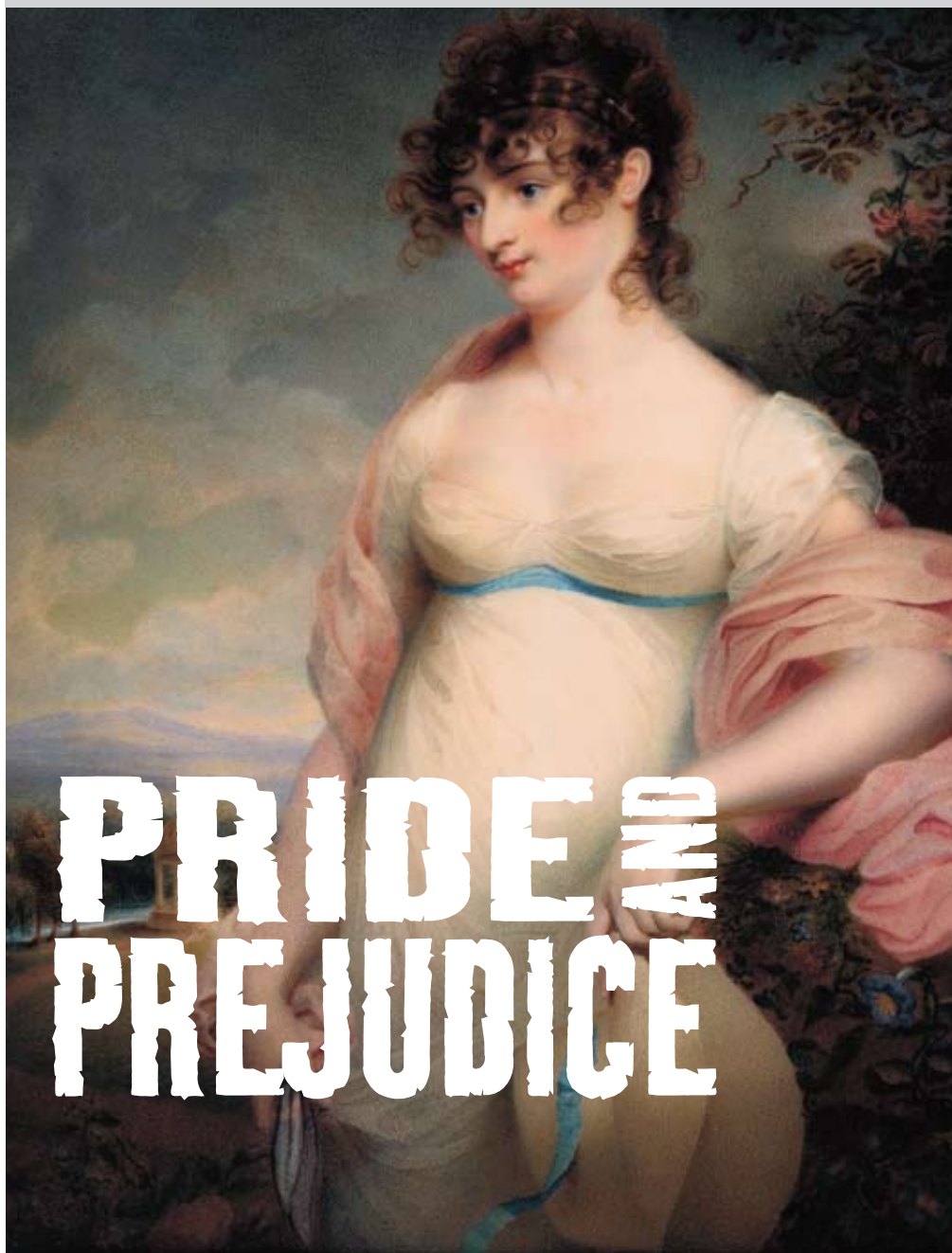


Inside & OUT

PRODUCED BY THE DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

November 2007



By Jon Jory

Based upon the novel by
Jane Austen

Directed by Bruce K. Sevy

Nov 16- Dec 15

The Stage Theatre

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Mary Green, née Byrnes, *A Young Lady*, early nineteenth century. Berger Collection at the Denver Art Museum. Photograph © Denver Art Museum.

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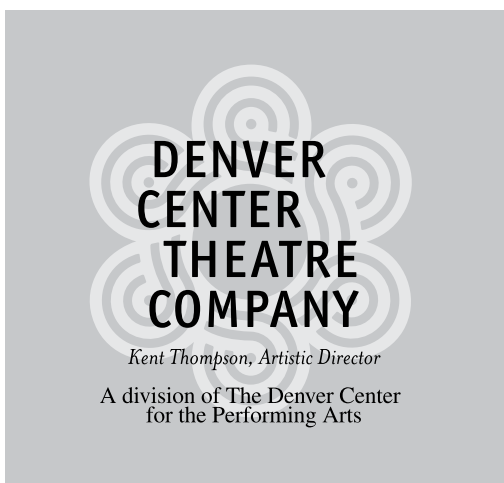
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THEATRE

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Synopsis

The five daughters of the Bennet family – Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia – are excited to hear of the arrival in their neighborhood of the eligible young bachelor Mr. Bingley, who is renting the Netherfield estate near their own Longbourn home. Mrs. Bennet immediately begins scheming to have him fall in love with her eldest daughter Jane; after all, “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” Mr. Bingley is accompanied to the next ball by his even richer friend Mr. Darcy, whom Elizabeth Bennet instantly dislikes for his proud manner.

Because Mr. Bennet had no sons, his estate is willed to his nearest male relative, the parson Mr. Collins, who soon arrives for a visit. In order to please his patroness Lady Catherine de Bourgh (Mr. Darcy’s aunt), he has determined to marry, and he has chosen Longbourn in which to find a wife. When Elizabeth disappoints him, he turns to her friend Charlotte Lucas.

A handsome young officer Mr. Wickham soon joins the militia stationed in the nearby town Meryton and thrills Elizabeth with his tales of Mr. Darcy’s past wickedness. When Mr. Darcy surprises Elizabeth with a reluctant but passionate marriage proposal, she vehemently refuses him. The rest of the story follows Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy as they confront their feelings and try to reconcile their pride and prejudice.

While Elizabeth is touring England with her uncle and aunt Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, a chance encounter with Mr. Darcy renews their acquaintance. A rash action by the impetuous Lydia Bennet could destroy all the hopes of her elder sisters to marry and avoid destitution, but a mysterious benefactor comes to the rescue. Thanks to Lady Catherine’s interference, a happy ending might be possible.

The Accomplished Woman

While staying at Netherfield, Elizabeth Bennet is part of a conversation regarding the “accomplished” woman. Caroline Bingley declares: “A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions.”¹

In fact, Miss Bingley and her sister Mrs. Hurst had attended a prestigious boarding school in London to acquire these very accomplishments. However, Mr. Darcy then adds to Miss Bingley’s definition something beyond her range of experience: “And to all this she must add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.”²

The various abilities of a lady reflected well on her family’s social standing by revealing that they could afford the various masters to teach her such skills. Some ladies considered these skills merely as a means to an end (i.e. catching a husband), while others enjoyed their abilities in and of themselves. In the words of Maggie Lane, author of *Jane Austen’s World*, “Contributing to the sum of happiness of those about them was the most worthy of motivations for women to acquire accomplishments.”³

Jane Austen herself was a proficient piano player. In those days without recording capabilities, and when few people had access to live professional performances, each social gathering was dependent on its own members for music. Jane’s sister Cassandra was not as musical as Jane but a more accomplished visual artist. Her incomplete drawing of Jane, arms crossed as if in protest of sitting for yet another sketch, is the only contemporary picture we have of the novelist.

In *Flirting with Pride and Prejudice*, Beth Kendrick’s article “Does This Petticoat Make Me Look Fat?” draws parallels between the accomplished lady of Jane Austen’s time and the working woman/soccer mom of the 21st century.

“Mothers today are expected to work, raise children, fit into those pre-pregnancy jeans *plus* have a beautiful home and a wonderfully fulfilling personal life . . . or else.”⁴ Women put a lot of pressure on each other to have it all, do it all, and look good at the same time. “If we can’t figure out a way to do it all and be happy about it, we’re not living up to our potential.”⁵

Elizabeth Bennet responds to Miss Bingley and Mr. Darcy’s description of the accomplished woman, “I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united.”⁶ Perhaps she was right to declare that no one woman can do and be all that society expects of her.

Adaptations

Jane Austen’s life and works, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, have inspired myriad adaptations to the stage and screen. Most recently *Becoming Jane*, with Anne Hathaway starring as the young Jane Austen, explores the possibilities of the author’s love life with Tom Lefroy. Jon Spence, author of *Becoming Jane Austen: A Life*, says of the film, “I envy readers of my book who come to it with Anne Hathaway’s image of Jane in their mind’s eye. You will not have to struggle [. . .] to see the Jane Austen who was young and pretty, lively and in love. Anne Hathaway’s skilful portrayal of Jane Austen in *Becoming Jane* shows that art can have as much power to bring us closer to the truth as facts themselves can.”⁷ The upcoming *The Jane Austen Book Club* (to be released in 2008) depicts a group of modern women (and men) reading Jane Austen and discovering startling parallels between their own lives and those of the characters in the novels.

¹ Austen, *Annotated* 70.

² Austen, *Annotated* 70.

³ Lane 49.

⁴ Crusie 9.

⁵ Crusie 9.

⁶ Austen, *Annotated* 70.

⁷ Spence x.

In 1940, a *Pride and Prejudice* film starred Greer Garson as Elizabeth Bennet and Laurence Olivier as Mr. Darcy. The 1959 Broadway musical *First Impressions* is based on *Pride and Prejudice* and takes the novel's original title. The BBC has created a TV-movie adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* multiple times. The 1995 version, starring Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet and Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy, made quite the impression on the authors included in *Flirting with Pride and Prejudice: Fresh Perspectives on the Original Chick-Lit Masterpiece*, especially Lani Diane Rich, author of "My Firth Love." *Pride and Prejudice* has inspired modern tales including 2001's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* and the 2004 Bollywood film *Bride and Prejudice*, which transposes the story from London and the surrounding English countryside to modern-day India, England and America. The 2005 Hollywood film starring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew Macfadyen as Mr. Darcy introduced a new generation of American movie-goers to Jane Austen's tale.

Jon Jory's Adaptation

Literally, if I could have, there would not be a word of my writing in it.

—Jon Jory

Jon Jory served for 31 years as Producing Director at Actors Theatre of Louisville, where he founded the prestigious Humana Festival of New American Plays in 1976. His books include *Tips: Ideas for Actors* and *Tips: Ideas for Directors*. The world premiere of Jon Jory's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* was a co-production between Arizona Theatre Company (where it played in both Tucson and Phoenix), San Jose Repertory Theatre and Alliance Theatre in Atlanta. It opened in Tucson on September 10, 2005.

A fan of Jane Austen since he was a teenager, Jon Jory faced the formidable task of boiling down one of the most beloved novels of all time from 350 pages to under 90. Happily for him, Jane Austen wrote incredible dialogue. "What I'm most proud of is that 97% of the words are Jane Austen's," he told a reviewer after Tucson's opening night.⁹ In fact, for the scene of Lady Catherine's visit to Elizabeth Bennet, Jon Jory confessed, "I tried to include as close to every damn word of it as I could."¹⁰

The play focuses on the novel's main story line: the reluctant affections of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, the role their own pride and prejudice play in their initial impressions of each other and how they recognize their mistakes and eventually come to love each other. In a review of the Arizona Theatre Company production, Kyle Lawson wrote, "Jory, who also directs, stages the affair in the manner of a country reel, with the rest of the story swirling around them in lively counterpart to their spats and misunderstandings."¹¹

⁸ Messina, "Austen" 1.

⁹ Turvin 1.

¹⁰ Messina, "Austen" 1.

¹¹ Lawson, "ATC" 1.

England at War

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, at the beginning of the American Revolutionary War and the birth of the United States of America; the French Revolution occurred when she was a teenager. With the subsequent French Wars and then the Napoleonic Wars, England was at war with France for almost all of her adult life, from age 17 in 1793 to age 40 in 1815. Yet without today's instantaneous mass communication, many communities were fairly isolated and unconnected with world affairs. Travel was limited to the speed of a horse; news spread usually by word of mouth, occasionally by outdated newspapers from the cities that were circulated among several families in a rural community. Jane Austen's family was actually better informed than most due to her brothers' military careers – Henry in the militia, Frank and Charles in the navy.

Although affairs abroad are not explicitly mentioned in Jane Austen's novels, the presence of the militia in Meryton in *Pride and Prejudice* is

telling. England's militia was only active when the main army was engaged abroad. During wartime, each county was required to provide men to the militia for home defense. During winter, with little chance of invasion by France, the militias were housed in towns and soldiers became part of the community's social fabric.

Theoretically, England's military was staffed entirely by volunteers; in reality many were poor men forced into service by naval press gangs or criminals released from prison to join the army. The Duke of Wellington called such soldiers "the scum of the earth."¹² Officers in the army, however, bought or sold their commissions, and included sons of the gentry ready to make their way in life through a military career. To become an army officer, therefore, required money or connections. Naval officers, likewise, achieved their promotions through the patronage of more influential men.

Fashion

Jane Austen's letters are full of references to the fashions of the day. In October 1798 Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra, "Next week [I] shall begin my operations on my hat, on which You know my principal hopes of happiness depend."¹³ Two months later she wrote again to her sister, "I have changed my mind, and changed the trimmings of my cap this morning; they are now such as you suggested; I felt as if I should not prosper if I strayed from your directions, and I think it makes me look more like Lady Conyngham now than it did before, which is all that one lives for now."¹⁴ The following summer from Bath, Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra regarding popular hat trimmings, "Flowers are very much worn, & Fruit is still more the thing. [. . .] I cannot decide on the fruit till I hear from you again. Besides, I cannot

help thinking that it is more natural to have flowers grow out of the head than fruit."¹⁵

Jane Austen's letters often included critique of the fashions of the people around her. "Miss Langley is like any other short girl, with a broad nose and wide mouth, fashionable dress and exposed bosom. Adm. Stanhope is a gentlemanlike man, but then his legs are too short, and his tail too long."¹⁶ Later she wrote of a ball she attended, "The melancholy part was to see so many dozen young women standing by without partners, and each of them with two ugly naked shoulders!"¹⁷ Jane Austen's nieces had their own fashion criticism of their Aunts Jane and Cassandra: they pointed out that their aunts began wearing spinsterish hats rather early in their lives.¹⁸

¹² Lane 72.

¹³ Newgarden 32.

¹⁴ Austen, *Illustrated* 27.

¹⁵ Spence 125.

¹⁶ Austen, *Illustrated* 45.

¹⁷ Austen, *Illustrated* 71.

¹⁸ Lane 12.

Inheritance Laws

Looming over the Bennet family of *Pride and Prejudice* is the entail, the inheritance law by which Mr. Bennet's estate in Longbourn will not be left to any of his daughters, but to his nearest male relative, the parson Mr. Collins. Early in their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet had not worried about the entail, as they intended to have a son (or several). However, only daughters were born, and eventually they had to give up the hope of a son. By that time it was rather too late to be prudent and save money for their daughters' dowries, so their main hope rested in an advantageous marriage for one or more of the girls, who could then provide for the other sisters and their mother after the death of Mr. Bennet. In the worst-case scenario, which was an all-too-real possibility, Mrs. Bennet and her five daughters would become both homeless and penniless at his death.

A typical will of the time would leave the bulk of the estate to the eldest son of the family, while leaving adequate money to each younger son to establish himself in a career and to each daughter for a dowry. The main goal of such laws was to leave the estate intact rather than partitioning it and having each generation become individually poorer than the last. Often, younger sons would marry into money; the same was the hope for daughters. Even the aristocratic and money-minded Lady Catherine De Bourgh of *Pride and Prejudice* concedes, "I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line."¹⁹

The Austen family had seen its share of inheritance laws' unfair and unequal treatment. Jane Austen's great-great grandfather John Austen was a clothier, but determined to leave his descendants (at least some of them) higher on the social ladder than his own status as a tradesman. He himself earned quite a lot of money in his lifetime, and left everything to his eldest grandson, Jack Austen (his son, also named John, had preceded him in death). The elder John Austen's will left only a few

pounds to each of his younger grandchildren – not nearly enough for dowries or establishment in life. To prevent his favored grandson Jack (age nine at his grandfather's death) from sharing with his family members his portion of the inheritance when he came of age, John Austen's will required that Jack be removed from his mother and siblings and raised separately to avoid any familial attachment or influence.²⁰ John Austen's plan succeeded, and his less fortunate grandchildren – among them Jane Austen's grandfather William – were left to make their own way in life.

William Austen had learned his lesson in inheritance laws well, and his will stipulated that his estate be sold at his death and the money divided equally among his three children without regard to gender or relative age. The only flaw in his plan was that his second wife retained the right to live off the estate during her lifetime; his son George (Jane Austen's father) and daughters Leonora and Philadelphia were turned out to be raised by relatives and did not receive the intended portions of their father's estate until their stepmother's death.²¹

George and Cassandra Austen named rich godfathers for each of their six sons, with varying results. Edward came into his inheritance from distant relation Thomas Knight rather early in his life; he moved to Kent when the Knights adopted him as their heir and changed his own last name to Knight upon their death. On the other hand, his eldest brother James never received a legacy from his uncle and godfather James Leigh Perrot (although Leigh Perrot's money did eventually reach James Austen's son after Mrs. Leigh Perrot's death).

In her own will, Jane Austen left small stipends to her favorite brother Henry and to his former housekeeper Madame Bigeon, who had become Jane's friend and correspondent. Everything else, including royalties from her published works, she left to her beloved sister Cassandra.²²

¹⁹ Austen, *Annotated* 300.

²⁰ Spence 1-2.

²¹ Spence 8.

²² Spence 242.

Jane Austen's Family

Jane Austen was the seventh of George and Cassandra Leigh Austen's eight children. The eldest, James, followed his father's path and became a country parson; he and his wife and children moved into the Steventon parsonage when George Austen retired. The second son, named George after his father, was mentally disabled and was for the most part raised away from the Austen home (with the same family as his disabled uncle). Edward was adopted by his rich but childless distant cousins Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Knight; he resettled in their native Kent, where he also married. The Austens' next son Henry married his older, rich, widowed cousin Eliza de Feuillide; Henry's career was first in the military, then in

banking, and finally with the Church of England. Jane's only sister Cassandra was engaged for two years, but her fiancé died of yellow fever in the West Indies, and she never married. Jane's elder brother Frank and younger brother Charles both established careers in the Navy. Only George, Cassandra, and Jane remained unmarried; Henry had no children, but the other four brothers provided "Aunt Jane" with almost thirty nieces and nephews.

When one of her nieces became an aunt herself, Jane Austen wrote to her, "I have always maintained the importance of aunts as much as possible."²³

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Jane Austen's Letters

Even if Jane Austen had no other claim to be remembered, her letters would be memorable. Read with attention, they yield a picture of the life of the upper middle class of that time which is surely without a rival.
—R. W. Chapman²⁴

As might be imagined of a novelist, Jane Austen was a copious writer of letters. About 150 of her letters remain, mostly to her sister Cassandra. It is suspected Cassandra destroyed many of her sister's letters; gaps in the surviving correspondence relate to sensitive times in Jane's life when her letters may have been too personal or too emotional for Cassandra to have considered them safe to be seen by others than herself.

In the late Wendy Wasserstein's final play *Third*, Professor Nancy Gordon refers to Jane Austen's letter-writing and declares her "a bitch, just like the rest of us." In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennet says to his daughter Elizabeth, "For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?"²⁵ The following quotes from Jane Austen's letters reveal her shrewd and blatant observations on the life and people around her.

*I was as civil to them as their bad breath would allow me.*²⁶

*If Miss Pearson should return with me, pray be careful not to expect too much Beauty.*²⁷

*Mrs. F. A. seldom either looks or appears quite well. Little Embryo is troublesome I suppose.*²⁸

*I do not want People to be very agreeable, as it saves me the trouble of liking them a great deal.*²⁹

*How horrible it is to have so many people killed!—And what a blessing that one cares for none of them!*³⁰

*I give you joy of our new nephew, & hope if he ever comes to be hanged, it will not be till we are too old to care about it.*³¹

*We saw a countless number of post-chaises full of boys pass by yesterday morning.—full of future heroes, legislators, fools and villains.*³²

*Mrs. Blount [. . .] appeared exactly as she did in September, with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, and fat neck.*³³

*Even the concert will have more than its usual charm with me, as the gardens are large enough for me to get pretty well beyond the reach of its sound.*³⁴

*Good M^{rs} Deedes!—I hope she will get the better of this Marianne [her eighteenth child], & then I w^d recommend to her and M^r D. the simple regimen of separate rooms.*³⁵

*I began to reproach myself for not having liked them better, but since the Waggons have disappeared, my Conscience has been closed again, & I am excessively glad they are gone.*³⁶

*[Our mother] would tell you herself that she has a very dreadful cold in her head at present; but I have not much compassion for colds in the head without fever or sore throat.*³⁷

*M^{rs} Hall, of Sherbourn was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright.—I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband.*³⁸

*[We] met a Gentleman in a Buggy, who on a minute examination turned out to be Dr Hall — & Dr Hall in such very deep mourning that either his Mother, his Wife, or himself must be dead.*³⁹

*We plan having a steady cook, and a young giddy housemaid, with a sedate, middle-aged man, who is to undertake the double office of husband to the former and sweetheart to the latter. No children of course to be allowed on either side.*⁴⁰

²³ Austen, *Illustrated* 127.

²⁴ Lane 19.

²⁵ Austen, *Annotated* 662.

²⁶ Newgarden 55.

²⁷ Newgarden 57.

²⁸ Austen, *Illustrated* 140.

²⁹ Newgarden 185.

³⁰ Newgarden 187.

³¹ Newgarden 10.

³² Austen, *Illustrated* 139.

³³ Austen, *Illustrated* 36.

³⁴ Austen, *Illustrated* 32-33.

³⁵ Newgarden 55.

³⁶ Spence 184.

³⁷ Spence, 117.

³⁸ Newgarden 59-60.

³⁹ Spence 166.

⁴⁰ Austen, *Illustrated*, 37.

Love & Marriage

I consider everybody as having a right to marry once in their lives for love if they can.

— Jane Austen⁴¹

Jane Austen joked to her niece Fanny Knight, “Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor, which is one very strong argument in favor of matrimony.”⁴² However, throughout her personal life and her fiction, Jane Austen maintained the opinion that “Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection.”⁴³ She herself is known to have received at least one marriage proposal (from Harris Bigg-Wither in November 1802), which she accepted, only to reconsider and revoke her acceptance the following morning. A few years later, she may have again turned down a proposal, this time from Edward Bridges, a relative of her brother Edward’s wife.⁴⁴ Both men would have offered her a good establishment in life, but she preferred spinsterhood to marriage without love.

The recent movie *Becoming Jane* offers a delightful story of love between Jane Austen and her neighbor’s nephew Tom Lefroy and the reasons for their ultimate separation, although it is not known how much may have actually passed between them. Her earliest extant letters are from January 1796, the time of Tom Lefroy’s visit to his aunt and the flirtation between him and Jane. Of their meeting at a ball, Jane writes to her sister Cassandra, “Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together.”⁴⁵ Later in her letter she mentions a visit from “Mr. Tom Lefroy and his cousin George” and notes that Tom “has but *one* fault, which time will, I trust, entirely remove – it is that his morning coat is a great deal too light. He is a very great admirer of *Tom Jones* [a novel by Henry Fielding], and therefore wears the same

coloured clothes, I imagine, which *he* did when he was wounded.”⁴⁶

Soon thereafter, Tom Lefroy disappears from Jane Austen’s life, leaving generations after them to debate whether they were indeed in love. Very few of Jane Austen’s letters survive from this period, leading many to believe that her sister Cassandra considered them too delicate for public viewing and destroyed them.

Late in his life, Tom Lefroy was asked by a nephew whether he had once been in love with Jane Austen; he replied that it had been “a boyish love.”⁴⁷ How much such a love influenced her life and writings is unsure, but two actions of Jane Austen are notable. Only *Persuasion*, her final novel, does not have any characters named after those in Tom Lefroy’s favorite novel *Tom Jones*;⁴⁸ and Jane Austen carefully warns her niece Fanny Knight against entering an uncertain engagement: “I am at present more impressed with the possible Evil that may arise to *You* from engaging yourself to him – in word or mind – than with anything else.”⁴⁹ “I should dread the continuance of this sort of tacit engagement, with such an uncertainty as there is, of *when* it may be completed.”⁵⁰

I would rather be a Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a man I did not like.

— From Jane Austen’s unfinished novel *The Watsons*

⁴¹ Austen, *Illustrated* 73.

⁴² Austen, *Illustrated* 11.

⁴³ Austen, *Illustrated* 122.

⁴⁴ Spence 152.

⁴⁵ Austen, *Illustrated* 18.

⁴⁶ Austen, *Illustrated* 19.

⁴⁷ Spence 112.

⁴⁸ Spence 223.

⁴⁹ Spence 209.

⁵⁰ Austen, *Illustrated* 125.

Publication

Jane Austen collected her youthful writings (now referred to as her *Juvenilia*) in books she labeled *Volume the First*, *Volume the Second*, and *Volume the Third*. In the last, her father George Austen wrote, “Effusions of Fancy by a very Young Lady consisting of Tales in a Style entirely new.”⁵¹ This may have been her first review, but it would be decades before any of her work was published. In 1803 she sold her manuscript of *Susan* (later re-titled *Northanger Abbey*) to a publisher, but they never printed the book; in 1809 she wrote them threatening to take her work elsewhere if they did not publish soon.⁵² Her brother Henry later purchased *Susan* from this publisher, pointing out that the manuscript they’d so long ignored was by the author of the immensely popular *Pride and Prejudice*.

Finally in 1811, Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* was published; an edition of the book cost 15 shillings.⁵³ The title page did not name the author, but said simply “By a Lady.” The following year Jane Austen sold the copyright of *Pride and Prejudice* for £110; the novel was first published in 1813 with “By the Author of *Sense and Sensibility*” on the title page. Upon receipt of

Pride and Prejudice’s first edition, Jane wrote to her sister Cassandra, “I want to tell you that I have got my own darling Child from London.”⁵⁴ Having sold the copyright precluded Jane Austen from earning royalties from the sales of her most popular novel; however, the widespread popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* became a selling point for all her future novels’ sales, as well as boosting *Sense and Sensibility* to a second edition.

Mansfield Park and *Emma* were published in 1814 and 1815, respectively; shortly after Jane Austen’s death in 1817, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published with a foreword by Henry Austen identifying his sister as the author. Jane Austen earned approximately £630 from her published work in her lifetime; her sister Cassandra earned about £1000 in royalties after her death.⁵⁵

The Regency

Jane Austen lived toward the end of the reign of England’s King George III; however, “mad King George” was replaced on the throne by his son, later George IV, when the Regency Act of 1811 declared him Prince Regent. All of Jane Austen’s novels were published during the Regency Era.

The Prince Regent was a great fan of Jane Austen, and kept copies of her novels in each of his residences. However, she did not return his esteem. Upon the publication in 1813 of Prince George’s separated wife’s grievances, Jane Austen wrote, “Poor Woman, I shall support her as long as I can, because she is a Woman, and because I hate her Husband.”⁵⁶ Two years later, after learning the identity of the authoress whose novels he admired, the Prince Regent requested/commanded her next novel be dedicated to him. Jane Austen obliged, and *Emma* was soon published with the requisite dedication.

⁵¹ Spence 74.

⁵² Austen, *Illustrated* 77.

⁵³ Spence 185.

⁵⁴ Newgarden 176.

⁵⁵ Lane 15.

⁵⁶ Lane 67.

Social Classes

English society at the turn of the 19th century was very stratified. Highest on the social order of course were the king and the royal family; next in line was the aristocracy, about 200 families holding a title of duke, marquess, earl, or viscount.⁵⁷ The characters peopling Jane Austen's novels are almost exclusively of the next class—the gentry—as was the Austen family itself. At the higher end of the gentry were those who possessed land; some of these gentlemen held the title of baronet or knight.

Still of the gentry but on a slightly lower rung of the social ladder were those disinherited younger brothers who made their income by their professions; the only occupations considered gentlemanly were the clergy, the military and the law. Growing in number in Jane Austen's day was the new middle class; the majority of the population comprised the lower social order including “labourers, servants and the poor.”⁵⁸

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh represent the upper crust of the gentry. Mr. Darcy's £10,000 annual income made him one of the 200 or so richest men in all of England.⁵⁹ The *nouveau riche*, Mr. Bingley and his sisters are aspiring to such high status. The Bennets are of the landed gentry; however, because of the entail, the girls will be disinherited at their father's death. Their cousin Mr. Collins is lower in the gentry class, but will climb the social ladder upon inheriting the Longbourn estate from Mr. Bennet.

Tom & Jane as Elizabeth & Darcy

Shortly after the publication of *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen said of her creation, Elizabeth Bennet, “I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least, I do not know.”⁶⁰ Many readers have speculated that the witty Elizabeth must be a reflection of Jane Austen herself. However, her recent biographer Jon Spence in *Becoming Jane Austen* argues that the authoress was more akin to the novel's hero Mr. Darcy, and that Elizabeth Bennet may be based on the love of her youth Tom Lefroy: “By an imaginative squint she created a woman who might have been Tom's

sister, a woman with his charm and liveliness and intelligence transformed into a feminine mode.”⁶¹

Jane Austen's brother Frank later wrote of her that she was “rather reserved to strangers so as to have been by some accused of hautiness [sic] of manner, yet in the company of those she loved the native benevolence of her heart and kindness of her disposition were forcibly displayed.”⁶²

Nearly the same is said of Mr. Darcy after the first ball he attends with the Bennets: “‘Miss Bingley told me,’ said Jane, ‘that he never speaks much unless he is among his intimate acquaintances. With *them* he is remarkably agreeable.’”⁶³

⁵⁷ Lane 68.

⁵⁸ Lane 69.

⁵⁹ Austen, Annotated 17.

⁶⁰ Austen, Illustrated 93.

⁶¹ Spence 102.

⁶² Spence 102.

⁶³ Austen, Annotated 32.

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Pride and Prejudice

Activities and Questions for Educators

Change Three Things

Materials: None

1. Students line up in two lines facing each other so that each person has a partner who is standing across from them. One row is A and the other is B.
2. Tell the group that they will have 30 seconds to observe their partners. At the signal, they will turn their backs to each other.
3. While their backs are turned, each person must change three things about their appearance. All changes must be visible. This can be simple; taking off a shoe, switching their hair style or more difficult removing an earring.
4. At the signal, the two rows turn back and face each other. They have two minutes to figure out what their partner changed.
5. Discuss which were easy changes to spot and which were more difficult. How many people caught all three changes?
6. Discuss how the perceptions of some of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* change from their first impressions.

CO Theatre 1: Students develop interpersonal skills and problem-solving capabilities through group interaction and artistic collaboration.

CO Science 1: Students understand the process of scientific investigation and design, conduct, communicate about, and evaluate such investigations.

Pride and Prejudice

Activities and Questions for Educators

Adapting Pride and Prejudice

Materials: Pen and paper

1. Start by picking a scene from the play *Pride and Prejudice*. After reading the scene, find some key themes and character choices that you can adapt from the script to a paragraph.
2. From this scene, transform what transpires on stage into a couple of paragraphs describing what happens and what the characters do actively on the stage. If you have seen the play, describe what the actors did on stage.
3. Once the first draft is written, find some areas that you can embellish. Look for moments where you can expound upon what each character is feeling or thinking in your adaptation. Are there other areas from the play that you could build upon?
4. Discuss how it was to adapt what you read or saw in the play to paragraphs. What were some of the obstacles that you faced? Why do you think it would be easier or more difficult to adapt the novel into a play?

CO Reading and Writing 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

CO Reading and Writing 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

CO Theatre 2: Students understand and apply the creative process to skills of storytelling, playwriting, acting, and directing.

Pride and Prejudice

Activities and Questions for Educators

Contemporizing *Pride and Prejudice*

Material Needed: Pen and paper

1. Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* takes place in the early 1800s. Either individually or in a small group, pick a scene from the adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* to contemporize.
2. By utilizing stage directions and dialogue, adapt a scene from the play or novel that sets the scene in the 21st Century.
 - a. Discuss what changes from Jane Austen's novel would need to be made. How do the costumes change? How do the underlying themes of sexism and classism change in your version? How does the way your characters speak differ from Austen's?
 - b. How does your scene differ from the scene from the play? From the novel?
3. After writing the scene, have different students read the parts of the scene.
 - a. How can you improve the scene to make it easier to understand?
 - b. How does the scene change by updating the scene?
 - c. Explain what the adapters did to contemporize the scene without changing Jane Austen's idea.

CO Reading and Writing 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

CO Reading and Writing 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

CO Theatre 2: Students understand and apply the creative process to skills of storytelling, playwriting, acting, and directing.

Pride and Prejudice

Activities and Questions for Educators

Status Card Game

Material needed: Deck of cards

1. Choose five students and have them stand in a line in front of the class. Without looking at the card, each student receives a card that they are to place face out on their forehead. Explain that the card's ranking is equal to the student's status in relation to the other students. For example, a student with a queen would have high status, but a king or an ace would have more and a two would have the least amount of status.
2. Students must determine their status in relation to the other students through an improvisation game. Because the students are not able to see their cards, they must behave in the position that the other students might treat them.
3. After the exploration, have the students line-up in the order where they think their card would place them.

Discuss the activity: How does it feel to be treated well or poorly by your peers?

What are some of the ways that you were treated to indicate what your status was?

How could you tell if it was a high card or low card?

What about a middle card?

Discuss the play: Who are the characters in *Pride and Prejudice* that have more status than others?

How do the characters interact and display that they have more or less status than the other characters?

Which characters use status for their own gain?

CO History 3.2: Students understand the history of social organization in various societies.

Pride and Prejudice

Activities and Questions for Educators

Discussion Questions Pertaining to the Play

- 1) *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel that was written a long time ago. Why do you think the novel has stood the test of time? Why has the novel been adapted many times for television, film or the stage?
- 2) Universal themes are topics or ideas that have endured over time and across cultures. Create a list of universal themes that are found in *Pride and Prejudice*.
- 3) List how each character shows their pride? Their prejudice?
- 4) Why does Mr. Collins want to marry Jane and then Elizabeth? What purpose does his character serve? Why does Elizabeth deny Mr. Collins?
- 5) Why does Mr. Darcy dislike Wickham? What did Mr. Wickham do to Mr. Darcy to be treated in such a way?
- 6) Why does Jane go to London? What does she hope to achieve by doing so?
- 7) Why is Lydia and Wickham's flight to London and marriage scandalous?
- 8) Why does Mr. Darcy solve the problem of Lydia and Wickham's marriage?
- 9) Why is Lady Catherine displeased with Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth? What does she try to do to stop their impending marriage?
- 10) How does Elizabeth's regard of Mr. Darcy change during the course of the play?
- 11) How would you like to have Mr. and Mrs. Bennet as your parents? If you had to make a choice, which parent would you rather have as yours? Explain.