



Jane Austen: Life and Times

Teachers' Notes KS1 KS2



JANE AUSTEN'S
HOUSE MUSEUM



Jane Austen: Life and Times

Background Information for Teachers

Why should I teach my class about Jane Austen?



In 2017, Jane Austen became the first woman ever to feature on the £10 banknote (apart from the Queen). She is there because of her contribution to English Literature and her current status as a global literary icon. Austen was a woman who was born and lived for most of life in the county of Hampshire, where she died, in Winchester, at

the age of 41. Despite the fact that there were few opportunities available to women at the time (being a woman, Austen was not allowed to go to university), she became a professional writer who published four acclaimed novels during her lifetime.

The following notes are intended to provide teachers with some background information about Jane Austen's life and works. Please see separate packs which give advice on how you can link a study of Jane Austen to the National Curriculum, and ideas for teaching in the classroom.

Why is she so famous?

Jane Austen wrote six novels in her lifetime*, all of which are now classics of English Literature, and which have been adapted on a regular basis for film, television and theatre. She is a famous writer world-wide and her works have been translated into over forty languages. The house where she lived for the last eight years of her life (now Jane Austen's House Museum in the village of Chawton, Hampshire), and where she wrote the majority of her published works, is open to the public and receives over 40,000 visitors a year from all over the world.



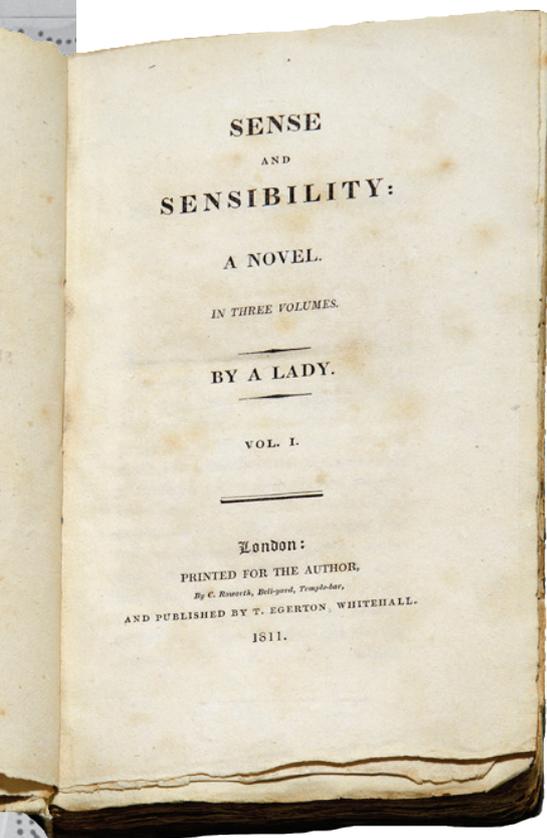
Jane Austen's House Museum



First edition of *Pride and Prejudice*

**Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (both published posthumously in 1818)





Title page, first edition of *Sense and Sensibility*

How is she different to other writers?

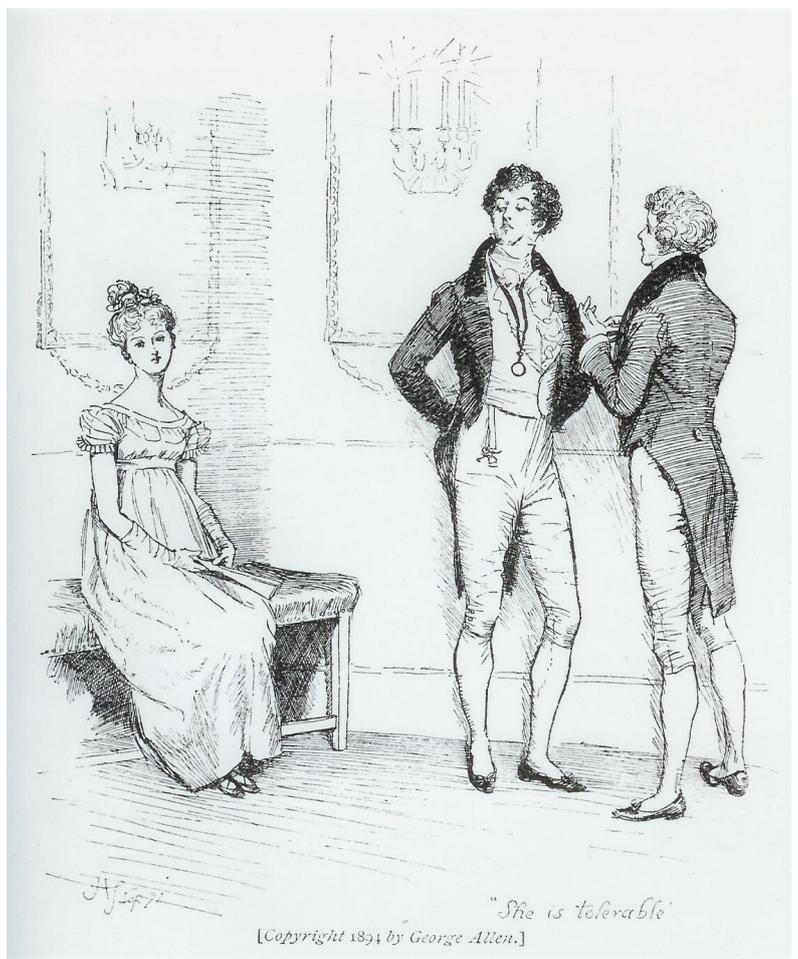
During Jane Austen's lifetime (1775-1817), there were few opportunities available to women, who were expected to marry and have children, rather than have a career.

Austen chose not to marry; instead she was a literary innovator who decided to write a new type of novel. She turned her back on the fantastical plots that were so popular in novels published during her lifetime and wrote instead about ordinary people, living in ordinary places and doing ordinary things.* Many reviewers commented on the naturalness of her stories; 'I really think it is the most probable fiction I have ever read' wrote one reader.

Austen's characters are true to life in that they are all flawed in some way, and her heroes and heroines learn from their faults as the stories unfold. For example, Elizabeth Bennet, from *Pride and Prejudice*, prides herself on her ability to judge others, but learns during the novel that her first impressions of people are not always correct.

Today's readers continue to appreciate the way in which Jane Austen portrays character in a realistic manner and the perceptive way in which she writes about people's feelings and relationships. She is also known for the way in which she uses humour and social satire in her stories.

*Jane Austen's works feature mainly middle class characters, as this was the world with which she was familiar. Books were expensive items during Austen's lifetime, and her contemporary readers were people of the same class (or above) who had money and the leisure time to read. The characters featured in Austen's novels were the sort of people they knew and recognised from their own daily lives.



A scene from *Pride and Prejudice*



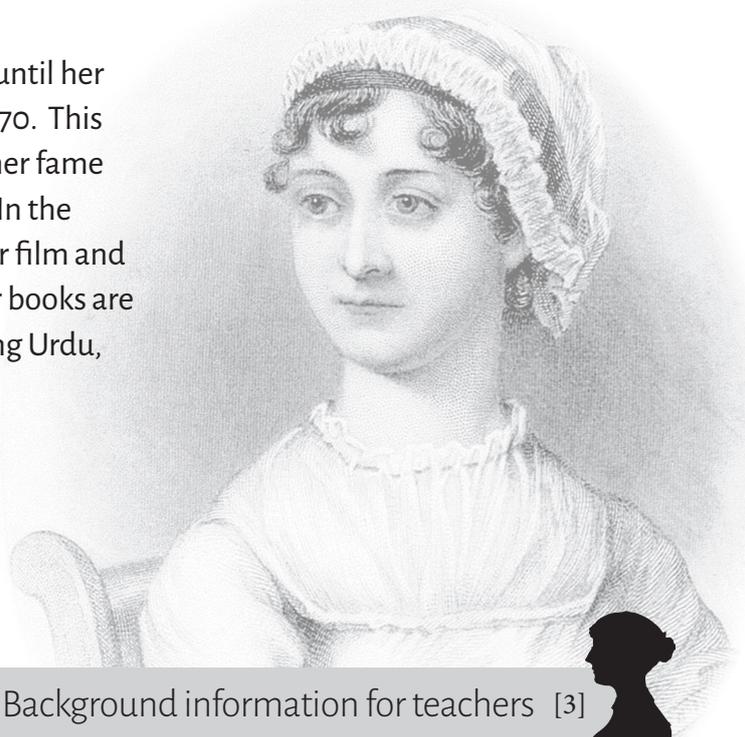


Was Jane Austen famous in her lifetime?

Although Jane Austen published four novels in her lifetime (two were published shortly after her death in 1817), and received favourable reviews for them, she was not famous. Although there were several famous women writers in Jane Austen's day, whose names did appear on their works, Austen preferred to publish anonymously; her first published novel stated that it was 'By a Lady'. She never actively sought publicity, although she did enjoy the small amount of financial independence the money from her books gave her. The money she earned was not a huge amount, however, compared with other, more successful, women writers of her time such as Frances Burney and Ann Radcliffe.

After her early death in 1817, following a period of illness (it is not known exactly from what she died), her books went out of print for a few years until the early 1830s when they were re-published. They have never been out of print since.

During the 19th century her fame slowly increased until her nephew published a biography about his aunt in 1870. This generated much interest in her life and works and her fame as a writer increased throughout the 20th century. In the 1990s, her works were adapted on a regular basis for film and television thus generating world-wide interest. Her books are now available to read in over 40 languages, including Urdu, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Hebrew.





Jane Austen

Historical background



Jane's brother, Francis Austen

A Wartime Writer

Jane Austen lived through a fascinating time in British history. For much of Austen's lifetime, Britain was at war. Although she does not write openly about conflict, war forms a backdrop to her stories, as characters wait to hear news about loved ones, or talk excitedly of a local regiment of soldiers who are based in a nearby town.

Several of her stories feature characters who are soldiers or sailors. Jane Austen had personal knowledge of these people; two of her brothers were sailors in the Navy and risked their lives at sea. In *Mansfield Park*, the heroine's much loved brother is also a sailor and Austen describes how brave he has been. One of Jane's brothers was a soldier in the militia (a volunteer army force), just like the soldiers (or 'redcoats') in her most famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*.

During the First World War, 100 years after Austen's death, her novels were recommended reading for soldiers recovering from their injuries. In the 20th century, British statesmen such as Winston Churchill and Harold Macmillan were fans of Austen's work, which, although written during a time of war, have the effect of depicting a safe world in which death and disaster seem far away.



Francis Austen's ship, HMS Canopus



How do Jane Austen's novels reflect trade and industry?

During Jane Austen's lifetime, Britain was a major trading force with links to many parts of the globe, including India. The industrial revolution was well underway by the latter half of the eighteenth century and lots of people were beginning to make money through trade and commerce.

Mr Bingley, a character in *Pride and Prejudice*, has money which has been acquired through trade in the North (most likely the cotton industry in Lancashire). However, there was a downside to this growth; the factories which have made Mr Bingley rich would have employed child labourers who worked a full week for low pay in dangerous conditions, often from the age of eight.

A lot of products were made or grown in Britain, but some were imported. These included products such as sugar and raw cotton. Sugar was grown in the Caribbean on plantations worked by slaves brought in by force from Africa. In Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park*, a character called Sir Thomas Bertram owns plantations in Antigua. Jane Austen does not comment openly on the slave trade, but we know she read texts by people who campaigned for the abolition of slavery, including Thomas Clarkson, and the poet William Cowper.

What was life like for poor children in Jane Austen's day?

There was no compulsory education for children during Jane Austen's lifetime. Children from poor families would be expected to work to support themselves and their family; for example, a child living in Jane Austen's village of Chawton in the early 19th century received no schooling as he worked to support his father who had been injured during the Battle of Waterloo.

Children living in rural areas such as Hampshire would be expected to work on the land, perhaps scaring birds, picking hops, or clearing the soil of stones prior to ploughing and sowing. Work days were long, and there was no protection from summer heat, or freezing temperatures in the winter. Young girls could also enter service and become maids. The Austens employed three servants at their home in Chawton; it is likely the maid was quite young and would have begun her working life at about the age of twelve.

Poor children living in the city were even worse off. Many of them worked in factories, in dangerous conditions, or were apprenticed to a trade. One of the worst of these was that of chimney sweep. Austen does not refer to this in her novels, but when the clergyman Mr Collins enthuses about Lady Catherine's magnificent fireplace in *Pride and Prejudice*, it is left to the reader's imagination to think of the boy (who could be as young as six) who had to clean it. It is, of course, ironic that a man representing the church can comment on an expensive fireplace without thinking of the associated suffering caused to a young child.



A contemporary of Austen's, poet William Blake, was more open in his condemnation of child labour and wrote a poem about a chimney sweep in which the sweep dreams of escaping his miserable job and running joyfully down a 'green plain' with his chimney sweeper friends, where they wash themselves clean in a river.



Steventon Rectory, Jane Austen's birthplace

What was life like for children of Jane Austen's class?

Jane Austen and her siblings were lucky in that they were not born into a 'poor' family. Although her father did not have a lot of money, he had a respected job as a clergyman. The Austen children were brought up in their father's rectory in the country village of Steventon near the

Hampshire town of Basingstoke. It is thought that Austen drew on memories of her own childhood in order to write about her heroine Catherine Morland in her novel *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine, like Austen, is one of many children (Austen had six brothers and one sister), and enjoys 'boys plays' such as cricket and baseball. She also enjoys rolling down the green slope at the back of her house (there was a green slope at the back of Austen's childhood home too). She and her siblings, like Austen and her siblings, are lucky in that they do not have to work in the fields, in factories, or up chimneys.

In order to supplement his income, Austen's father turned the family home into a school and worked as a tutor to local boys. Jane (along with her sister Cassandra) was sent away to a small school for girls for a short time (boys and girls were educated separately), but her formal schooling finished when she returned home at the age of eleven. From this age onwards, it is likely she received some tutoring from her parents.

Jane Austen was also lucky in that she had access to her father's library of books and was brought up in an environment which encouraged her gift for storytelling. Both her



The Merry Story, engraving by J.R.Smith, 1783



parents were great readers and writers; her mother, in particular was known for writing comic verse in order to entertain family and friends.

Jane followed her example and began writing short, funny stories from the age of eleven. These were much enjoyed by her family, and from about the age of 20, Austen started writing first versions of the novels which were later published as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*.

Fanny Knight, Jane Austen's niece



What opportunities were open to boys and girls of Jane Austen's class?

Boys and girls were taught different subjects in order to prepare them for their different roles in life. Boys were able to go to university and learned subjects such as Latin and Ancient Greek. After university, a young man might pursue a career in the church, and become a clergyman, like Jane Austen's father and her older brother, James. They might instead join the army, like her brother Henry, or attend a naval academy in order to train to become a sailor, like her brothers Francis and Charles. If they were really lucky, they might inherit a relative's money and estates, like Jane's brother Edward.

Girls were unable to go to university like their brothers and were tutored in subjects which would enable them to become attractive marriage partners. They learnt 'accomplishments' such as singing, dancing, music, drawing, foreign languages, and needlework.

Needlework, in particular, was an essential life skill for all women, whatever their class. It was a woman's duty to sew and whenever a female character is described as 'working' or 'at work' in Austen's novels, she is sewing. Austen herself was expected to fulfil this duty, and refers in her surviving letters to making shirts for her brothers and helping to make a patchwork bedcover (which is on display today at Jane Austen's House Museum).



Needlecase made by Jane Austen





Young women of Jane Austen's class were expected to marry and have children; the career opportunities open to young women of today did not exist. Unlike her contemporary, Mary Wollstonecraft, who campaigned for better education for women, Austen does not comment openly about women's rights, but in her portrayal of clever and spirited characters like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, she acknowledges that women were men's equals in many ways.

Although Jane Austen did not marry, she was lucky in that, following her father's death, her brother Edward was able to offer her a house, rent free for life, on the estate he had inherited in Chawton, Hampshire. She moved in to the cottage with her mother and sister (both called Cassandra) and friend Martha Lloyd, in 1809; her first novel was published two years later in 1811.

Many women would not have been so lucky and often ended up living in impoverished circumstances with little money to live on; one of Jane Austen's neighbours in Chawton, Miss Benn, was such a person. This is why it was considered so important for young women to marry



during Jane Austen's lifetime; marriage provided women with a secure home to live in when they could not afford one of their own. In *Pride and Prejudice*, a character called Charlotte Lucas accepts an offer of marriage from a man she does not love, because she knows her parents cannot afford to support her. However, this is unusual in Jane Austen's stories, which all feature heroines who do find love and live 'happily ever after'.



Top: Jane Austen's House
Above: Cassandra and Mrs Austen
Left: A scene from *Pride and Prejudice*





Cup and ball



Spillikins

What toys and games did children play with in Jane Austen's lifetime?

Toys in Jane Austen's lifetime were mostly made from wood and included skittles, dolls, whipping tops, wooden building bricks, pull-along wooden animals and hoops. Outdoor games such as cricket and baseball (rounders) were popular (in Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*, the heroine Catherine Morland is said to enjoy these 'boys' plays' during her childhood).

A toy called bilbo catch (cup and ball) was made from wood, bone or ivory, and spillikins (jack straws/pick-up sticks) were made from bone or ivory. Jane Austen's House Museum has an ivory cup and ball that was played with by members of the Austen family; there is also a set of spillikins on display. Children of the period also made paper ships, paper dolls and played with paper theatres.

Games were often designed to be educational, including board games, which were beginning to be popular during this period, and jigsaw puzzles, which often depicted maps and were designed to teach children geography. Children learnt the alphabet through the use of alphabet blocks and letters. Card games were produced in which children could change heads, bodies and feet to make multiple people. Many of these games are still available in an updated form today.

Riddles, puzzles and word games such as anagrams were also very popular, amongst adults as well as children. In Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, a game of anagrams is played in which a secret message is communicated between two characters. Riddles are also featured in *Emma*; members of Austen's family, including Austen herself, wrote riddles.

Jane Austen often played with her brothers' children at Chawton; they remembered her playing with a cup and ball, with spillikins, and with paper boats. She also enjoyed writing letters to them in secret code (a surviving letter to one of her nieces is written backwards). Although her published novels were not written for children, she enjoyed telling her young nephews and nieces stories 'of fairyland'



(probably traditional folk tales). Caroline Austen, her niece, remembered that the fairies all had characters of their own, and Anna, another niece, remembered her Aunt Jane lending clothes from her wardrobe, presumably for dressing up. She also recalled her Aunt playing 'make believe' with her and acting out short plays.

During Jane Austen's lifetime, books for children were designed to be educational; good children are rewarded and bad children are punished in stories of the day. As a child, Jane Austen owned a book called *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes*, which is about a young girl who is rewarded for performing good deeds. From the age of eleven, Jane Austen enjoyed writing short, funny stories which parodied popular fiction of the day. Austen's characters, in contrast to *Goody Two Shoes*, are badly behaved.



Bakehouse oven at Jane Austen's House Museum

What was daily life like at Jane Austen's home?

The Austen women were lucky in that they had just enough money to employ three servants (although this was a much lower number of servants than Jane's brother Edward, who would have employed many people to help run his estates).

The Austens employed a cook, a maid and a manservant. It is likely they may have hired a woman to do their washing, although the maid would have helped with this too. Each servant had allotted tasks; manservants would wind clocks and polish cutlery, look after the dogs and the donkeys, and do some of the harder tasks like drawing water from the well. Cook would prepare and cook meals, and shopped for food in the local town of Alton. The maid helped Cook, perhaps peeling and chopping vegetables; she also swept the floors, dusted furniture, scrubbed tables, cleaned and laid the fires, and emptied chamber pots. A servant's day was long; they would rise at about 5am and go to bed at about 9pm.



Jane Austen's writing table

Jane Austen's job was to prepare breakfast for the family; after this she was free to write, and her sister Cassandra managed the household. However, when Cassandra was away visiting family, Jane took over her housekeeping role. She once described how difficult it was to combine writing novels with managing a household: 'Composition seems to me impossible with a headful of joints of mutton and doses of rhubarb' she wrote in a letter to her sister (the 'doses of rhubarb' refer to the fact that her mother was often poorly; rhubarb was used as a medicine to ease indigestion and upset stomachs).





How did they heat and light their rooms?

There was no central heating in Jane Austen's lifetime. Rooms were heated with fires, either fuelled by coal or by wood. Fuel was expensive, so to save money the Austen women would all gather in the sitting room (known as the Drawing Room) in the evenings around one fire. Shutters were used at the windows to keep out drafts of cold air. Beds were hung with curtains so

that occupants could draw them when they went to sleep; again, to keep out cold drafts.

There was no electricity during Jane Austen's lifetime. Instead, people lit rooms with candles. Candles were made from beeswax (expensive) or tallow (animal fat; less expensive, but smelly). It is likely the Austens burnt beeswax candles in their drawing room (especially if visitors were present), but tallow candles in service areas such as the kitchen. Because candles were expensive, the women would light only one or two candles, and sit round the same table, sharing the light. Special candlesticks called chambersticks were used to light a person's way to bed (these were smaller in height and had a tray to catch drips of melted wax).



How did they keep clean?

There was no running hot or cold water at Jane Austen's home. Water was drawn from the well in the courtyard. It was then heated in a large metal vat set into bricks called a copper. The copper was heated from underneath using a fire. The copper in the bakehouse at Jane Austen's House Museum still exists, although it is likely there was another one in the back kitchen of the main house. Hot water would be transferred from this into bowls for washing dishes, and into jugs which the maid would carry to bedrooms for the Austen women to wash themselves. There was no bathroom in the house. Washing of bodies was performed in the bedrooms, standing up, or using, on occasion, a small hip bath. There was an outside toilet in the garden, but this did not flush and needed emptying on a regular basis. In the evenings, and at night, the Austens would use chamber pots, or pots set into a piece of furniture called a commode. These would be emptied in the morning by the maid.



The Well and Bakehouse Copper



Washing of clothes was a job performed by a hired woman, with help from the maid. The washing of dirty linen was done in hot water in the copper, and involved several stages of washing, scrubbing, rinsing and wringing; washing clothes was hard work. Laundry was hung out on bushes in the garden to dry and bleach in the sun, or hung up in the courtyard to dry. Small linen was the term used for articles of clothing worn next to the body, which needed washing on a regular basis. However, other articles of clothing and larger items such as sheets were only washed on occasion (a 'great wash'), perhaps every six to eight weeks, due to the length and arduous nature of the task. A great wash took several days.



The Kitchen at Jane Austen's House



The Bakehouse at Jane Austen's House

How did they cook their food?

Jane Austen's kitchen had an open fireplace with a range (the range in the kitchen at Jane Austen's House Museum today is a replica). Next to the range was a stew hearth, which was heated with charcoal. Charcoal provided a gentler heat than coal, and was ideal for simmering soups and sauces. However, charcoal fumes could be dangerous, and the cook needed to remember to open the window to stop herself fainting or becoming dizzy.

The preparation of food was done on a large table by the fire; roasting of meat was done on the open fire, but food was baked in an oven in a separate bakehouse (the oven was located away from the main house due to the risk of fire).

The oven was a wood-fired oven, which worked like an Italian pizza oven. Burning wood was put in, and once the oven had reached the desired temperature, the ashes were raked out. The bread was then put in to cook in the residual heat. As the oven lost heat, other foods were put in such as cakes, which required a cooler temperature to cook. Puddings, including savoury puddings, were boiled in linen bags in the copper. There were no fridges, so food was kept cool in the cellar, beneath the house. Dry foods were stored in earthenware jars and kept fresh with covers made from pigs bladders (used in the same way in which we would use cling film). The jars would have been stored in cupboards in the kitchen.



as Portsmouth Lodge half
the quantity of Sugar and
Lams rather more salt than
the Receipt states

each leg weighing about 15
over with two oz. of salt petre
lie a day and night then
in Sugar, one pound &
mix them together and rub
them lie three Weeks turn
able every Day.

et Jelly
fect boil them to a Strong
eggs five Oranges & two
namon two bay leaves &
ectem it to your taste
nges put five Lemons
ne of the Jelly boiling
u make them.

A Caraway Cake

11
Take 3 p^{d} of flour, 2 p^{d} of Butter rubbed
rubed into the flour an ounce & half of Caraway
seeds 12 spoonfuls of Milk, 12 spoonfuls of Yeast, 12
yolks of eggs 4 whites, beat all these well together
put them into your flour stirring it very well, let
it stand by the fire side a quarter of an hour to
rise. when the oven is hot strew in the carraways
stiring it all the time, then butter your pan and
put in your cake. an hour and half will bake it.

N.B. Put in a pound of Sugar

To bake a buttock of Beef

To a Buttock of Beef of 18 pounds take 2 h^{d} of common
Salt, half a p^{d} of coarse sugar, & two oz. of Salt petre
let them be well rubbed in, and ^{turn} the Beef every day
for a fortnight. then roll it up very tight with
beggars tape; put it into a deep pan and cover
it with equal parts of red wine and water. bake
it five hours take it out of the liquor when it is
cold. it will keep six or 8 weeks.

A household book of recipes used by the Austens

What did people eat?

Apart from products such as sugar and spices, most food was local. Meat and dairy products came from local farms. Vegetables and fruit were grown in the garden, but were only available in season, unlike today, when many foods are available all year round and imported from other countries. To lengthen the life of food, and to make food available for use during the winter months, it was preserved using a variety of methods, including pickling, bottling, jamming and salting. A household book which was used at Jane Austen's home has survived and gives us a fascinating insight into the food that the Austen women ate. We know that the Austen women kept chickens, for eggs and for meat, and they also kept bees, for honey. Some of the dishes they ate are familiar to us today, for example, macaroni cheese, chicken curry and sausages. However, some dishes are no longer popular now. These include calves feet jelly, mock turtle and seed cake!





Left: A scene from *Emma*

Above: Donkey cart in use

Travel and Transport

Most people in Jane Austen's lifetime travelled by foot or by horse (trains were introduced a few years after Austen's death). The main form of transport was horse-drawn carriage. There were different types

of carriage, just as there are different types of car today. Like the cars of today, the type of carriage a person owned signified their social status; Austen often uses them in her novels to indicate her characters' wealth and position.

Carriages were a great expenditure, as it cost money not only to buy one but to keep horses. People who could not afford to keep their own carriage could hire seats on public coaches known as stagecoaches, but women like Jane Austen were not allowed to travel alone, as it was considered dangerous. During Jane Austen's youth, highwaymen were familiar figures on public roads. Although her brother Edward could afford to keep a horse drawn carriage, Jane Austen couldn't. Instead, the Austen women kept a donkey carriage when they lived at Chawton, which Jane Austen used on occasion. This form of transport was much more economical; the carriage is on display today at Jane Austen's House Museum.

Short journeys were taken on foot. Jane Austen enjoyed walking, as do many of her female characters. However, walking in the countryside was not straightforward. Roads and pavements did not exist as they do today, and lanes were dirt tracks. After rain, these dirt tracks became very muddy, making walking difficult. Women were often confined indoors during bad weather, but Elizabeth Bennet, heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, defies muddy conditions when she goes walking. She arrives at Netherfield House with 'dirty stockings' and a petticoat 'six inches deep in mud'.





Holidays

Only people with money took holidays in Jane Austen's lifetime. Poor people could not afford to take time off work (there was no holiday pay in those days!) or pay the cost of transport or accommodation. People who could afford to go on holiday generally visited British coastal resorts. We know that Jane Austen visited resorts such as Lyme Regis in Dorset, Sidmouth in Devon and Ramsgate in Kent.

Seaside resorts were very fashionable during Jane Austen's lifetime as the air and sea water were thought to be very beneficial to people's health. People bathed in the sea by being wheeled out in a cart on wheels called a bathing machine; we know Jane Austen enjoyed bathing in the sea at Lyme Regis.

The Austen family would have travelled to the coast in a horse drawn carriage, with their trunks (used instead of suitcases) strapped on to the back. Because getting to the resorts was a costly and lengthy process (carriages travelled at a speed of about six miles an hour), families would usually spend a few weeks away. In her last, unfinished novel (written just before her death) Jane Austen wrote about a coastal resort and its visitors. The town she writes about is called Sanditon, which is a fictitious name. It is thought she may have based this on several resorts she visited in her lifetime, including Worthing in Sussex.

Most people did not holiday abroad during Jane Austen's lifetime. Travel would be by boat and carriage, and only people who were very rich could afford to go. Jane's brother Edward, who inherited money, did visit Europe during his youth. It was fashionable for rich young men to go on a 'Grand Tour' of countries such as Greece and Italy and the tour was considered part of their education. Jane Austen, however, being a woman with not much money, did not have this opportunity. Another reason why people did not go abroad to Europe during her lifetime is that Britain was often at war with France and it was not safe to go.



Edward Austen





He stopped to look the question.

What People Wore

Jane Austen's gowns were inspired by classical robes worn by the Ancient Greeks and Romans. Dresses were made from printed cotton for daytime wear, or silk or muslin (a very fine cotton) for evening wear. White was only worn by people with money. Wearing white showed that you didn't have to work for a living; it also meant that you could afford to have lots of clothes and employ servants to wash them! Jane Austen probably wore a white gown for special occasions. Women wore flat slip-on shoes indoors, and ankle boots outdoors. If the roads were muddy, women could also slip on an overshoe called a patten. The patten had a wooden sole with a metal ring underneath that lifted the woman's feet out of the mud. We know that Jane Austen and her sister wore pattens when they were young. To keep warm, women wore either long coats called pelisses or woollen cloaks. A popular style of jacket was a short jacket called a spencer. Women always wore a hat (or bonnet) when outdoors.

Jane Austen's brothers wore knee length trousers called breeches, with a long tailed coat called a frock coat. Underneath the coat they wore a linen shirt with a scarf tied round the neck called a cravat, and a waistcoat. Men wore boots during the daytime, but flat slip-on shoes for evening dances. Rich men wore top hats when outdoors.

Children

Up until the age of three or four, boys were dressed as girls (wearing a dress was the easy option for young children who were being toilet trained). After this, they wore an all-in-one trouser suit called a 'skeleton' suit. At about the age of ten or eleven, boys began to wear versions of adult male clothing.

Girls wore miniature versions of adult dresses – high waisted and of printed cotton for everyday wear, or white for best. White dresses were usually worn with a coloured sash at the waist. Shoes were slip-on pumps, a bit like ballet pumps. Bonnets were worn outdoors.

*Elizabeth and Marianne Knight,
Jane Austen's nieces*



Further Reading

- *Jane Austen: The World of her Novels*, Deirdre Le Faye (Frances Lincoln, 2002)
- *Jane Austen: A Brief Life*, Fiona Stafford (Yale University Press, 2017)
- *Jane Austen: A Life*, Claire Tomalin (Penguin, 1997)
- *Jane Austen: The Chawton Letters*, edited by Kathryn Sutherland (Bodleian Library, 2017)



Learning Centre at Jane Austen's House Museum, Chawton



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