



## All About Austen

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a young librarian with eclectic reading taste will gravitate to the works of Jane Austen again and again. Well, maybe not the case for everyone, but definitely for me! I read *Pride and Prejudice* for the first time in 11th grade English class; while the rest of the class grumbled over the language and the aloofness of Mr. Darcy, I became enamoured, to the point that I immediately begged my parents for a copy of my own, as well as copies of her other works. Many years and several copies of *Pride and Prejudice* later, I'm a confirmed Janeite, one who loves studying and reading all things Jane Austen and her life.

Though she passed away over 200 years ago, her wit and critiques of the British class system still spark inspiration and humor. There are so many resources available about Jane and so many adaptations of her works and her characters, it is impossible to list everything. Here are a few of my favorites, and hopefully they will become your favorites too!

### Book Recommendations:

Jane wrote 6 novels during her lifetime, with two novels in progress. Most of her completed novels are available through [cloudLibrary](#). In addition, [Project Gutenberg](#) has available for download onto devices for a majority of her writings. [LibriVox](#) provides many audio files of her works, all read by volunteers throughout the world.

Other books to consider (available through [cloudLibrary](#)):

*All Roads Lead to Austen* by Amy Smith - Smith writes of her yearlong journey teaching Jane throughout the world. I read this years ago and loved the lessons Smith learns along the way. She also battles love and making friends in parts of the world she had never visited. It's fun to read this, to hear what people think about Jane's words and lessons learned from her books.

*Ayesha at Last* by Uzma Jalaluddin (available on audio) - Jalaluddin writes a Pride & Prejudice-like story set in a Muslim community in Canada. This is a fun novel. I loved learning about the culture, and the characters are fun and at times have rather cringeworthy moments of awkwardness.

*Death Comes to Pemberley* by P.D. James - James, a very well-known mystery author, decided to write a mystery scene with the characters from Pride & Prejudice. Elizabeth and Darcy are enjoying time at Pemberley, but an unexpected visitor brings deadly consequences. I really enjoyed this one - while there are so many adaptations featuring Jane's characters that do not quite meet up to expectations, I felt this one does. James crafts a great mystery, and everything just felt right.

*Pride & Preju-knits* by Trixie von Purl - For those who are crafty and love Jane's books, this is the perfect book! Filled with patterns based on the storyline of each of her novels, knitters can create characters and "re-enact" memorable scenes.

*The Real Jane Austen* by Paula Byrne - Just when you thought everything about Jane's life has been documented, Byrne examines Jane's life in a very refreshingly new way. Using objects accumulated by Jane and her family, Byrne looks at 18th and 19th century English culture. She places Jane in her time period and uses these pieces to write a history of Jane, her family, and her inspirations for her novels.

Links to Explore:

[Death Comes to Pemberley](#) (PBS) - In 2014, PBS debuted a two part episode based on P.D. James' mystery by the same title. Following this link, viewers can watch the two part episode, along with various videos about the actors and their impressions on Jane and her works.

[Emma \(2020\) Movie](#) - When movie theaters across the world closed their doors, the makers of the latest Emma adaptation decided to release the movie on demand. For a 48-hour rental fee of \$19.99, viewers can see the film from the comfort of their own homes.

[Jane Austen: Myth, Reality and Global Celebrity](#) - FutureLearn, based in the United Kingdom, offers hundreds of online courses for people around the world. Participants can sign up for free for courses (there is a fee if participants wish for more coursework and a certificate at the end). This is a fun, interactive and highly informative look at Jane and her impact on culture over the last 200 years.

[Jane Austen Summer Symposium](#) - Every summer, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill hosts a Jane Austen Summer Symposium. This link provides videos and other resources from prior years' discussions.

[Jane Austen Society of North America](#) - The official "fan club" of Jane Austen in the United States. Chapters throughout the country host events and programs, and

there is a requirement to join a specific Jane Austen theme. There is a fee to become a member, but most resources on the website are free.

[Jane Austen's House New Acquisitions](#) - Jane Austen's last home in Chawton presents a virtual tour of their latest acquisitions, including a portrait of a woman thought to be the inspiration behind Austen's rambunctious character Lydia.

[Jennifer Ehle Reading Pride and Prejudice](#) - Starting on her Instagram handle, Jennifer Ehle (Elizabeth Bennet in the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* production) chose to read a chapter a day from *Pride and Prejudice* as a live video. Word caught on quickly, and now Ehle has her own YouTube Channel with every day's readings.

[Literature of the English Country House](#) - Another FutureLearn course (see information above from *Jane Austen: Myth, Reality and Global Celebrity*), this course focuses on the importance of the English country house in a variety of classic novels, including the novels of Jane Austen. Very informative class.

[Sanditon](#) - Debuting on PBS in January 2020, *Sanditon* is based on Jane's last novel, *Sanditon*, left unfinished upon her death. Visiting this site will give behind-the-scenes features about this miniseries and the ability to watch the whole miniseries.

[Victoria and Albert Museum - Design a Wig](#) - For those who want to exercise creativity, The Victoria and Albert Museum has an interactive website for visitors to virtually design a late 18th century wig.

Please join me in celebrating Jane Austen. Perhaps you will discover something new in one of the above resources.

Stay healthy. Stay safe.

Jess

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