

# Love, Marriage, Gender Roles and Social Classes in the Select Works of Jane Austen

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**Abstract:** Jane Austen was an English novelist. Social commentary and realism are the hallmarks of her novels. Austen has written a total of six novels. Her novels describe how women were dependent on men for social and financial security settings in the Victorian era. Marriage and economic aspects can be studied in her works. This paper studies her critically acclaimed works.

**Keywords:** Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Sense and Sensibility.

## I. Introduction

Jane Austen was an English novelist. Social commentary and realism are the hallmarks of her novels. Austen has written a total of six novels. Her novels describe how women were dependent on men for social and financial security settings in the Victorian era. Marriage and economic aspects can be studied in her works.

## II. Pride and Prejudice

Pride and Prejudice is the second novel of Jane Austen, published in 1813. Elizabeth Bennett is the protagonist and is one of the five daughters of Mr Bennett, who owns the Longbourn estate. In the Victorian era, property could only be inherited by a male heir. Thus his wife focuses all her energies on getting her daughters married. Elizabeth represents prejudice, since she makes hasty judgements, while her suitor, Mr. Darcy represents pride. The themes of marriage, class and wealth permeate.

## III. Emma

Emma is a novel by Jane Austen, published in 1815. The setting of the novel is Highbury, a fictional village. It is a comedy of manners. Emma Woodhouse, the titular protagonist, considers herself to be a matchmaker. However, she commits a few mistakes in the process, and eventually learns her lessons. Marriage, class, love and plight of women are some of the themes.

## IV. Sense and Sensibility

Sense and Sensibility is the second novel of Jane Austen, published in 1811. Sense and Sensibility was published anonymously. It focuses on the life of Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood, two sisters. It is a romance novel and is set in 1792. The setting of the novel is London and Sussex. Both of the sisters end up in happy marriages. Marriage, gender roles, love and social classes are the main themes.

## V. Persuasion

Persuasion is the last novel of Jane Austen. Persuasion was published posthumously i.e., six months after the death of Jane Austen. The protagonist is Anna Elliot, a British woman who is twenty seven years of age. Her family, in a bid to reduce their debt, rent their home to Captain Wentworth and his wife to earn money. Captain Wentworth was previously engaged to Anne, but the engagement was called off. They have another chance at love now. Gender inequality and the rigidity of the classes are important themes.

## VI. Northanger Abbey

Northanger Abbey was published in 1818 and is a coming-of-age novel, i.e., it charts the development and growth of a character. The protagonist is Catherine Morland, a young and naive girl. Through the course of the novel, she understands the ways of the adult world. She likes to read gothic novels and is seventeen years of age. She falls in love with Mr. Tilney. Class, wealth, love, experience, growth, youth and friendship are important themes.

## VII. Mansfield Park

Mansfield Park is the third novel of Jane Austen, published in 1814. The protagonist is Fanny Price. When she is ten years old, her family sends her to live with her wealthy aunt. She experiences loneliness as a result. The novel charts for growth from adolescence to adulthood. Morality and marriage are frequently spoken about. Family, love and social mobility are important themes as well.

## VIII. Sanditon

Sanditon is an unfinished novel by Jane Austen. The protagonist is Charlotte Heywood. She is the eldest daughter of the family and the novel was published posthumously in 1925. The novel was unfinished by Austen due to an illness, and the setting is a seaside resort. Power and economic classes are the main themes.

### **IX. Lady Susan**

Lady Susan is an epistolary novella by Jane Austen, published in 1871. An epistolary novel is a novel that is written the form of a series of letters. Lady Susan is a charismatic and beautiful widow. She is in her thirties, and has an affair with a married man. She is described as being of a flirtatious nature and is quite manipulative. She has a daughter named Frederica who is very shy. Friendship, appearance versus reality and love are the important themes.

### **X. Love & Freindship**

Love & Freindship is a Juvenile story written by Jane Austen and published in 1790. It is written in an epistolary form. The story is dedicated to Eliza de Feuillide, her cousin. The protagonist is Laura, and she writes letters to her friend's daughter, Marianne. The story seems to be a parody on romance novels. Quick and sudden friendships is the theme. Thefts and marriages against parents' wishes are the main themes.

### **XI. The Watsons**

The Watsons is an abandoned novel by Jane Austen. It was continued by the author's niece and was published in 1850. The setting of the novel is Surrey, and Mr. Watson is a clergyman. His wife had passed away, leaving him with two sons and four daughters. His youngest daughter, Emma was brought up by her wealthy aunt. Family and love are the predominant themes.

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