

Jane Austen



DIRECTIONS: Read the passage. Answer the questions.

Jane Austen was born in England on 16th December 1775. She was one of the youngest of eight children. Her family was not rich, but it was not poor either. Jane was close with her brothers and sisters, especially her sister Cassandra. In fact, most of what we know about Jane Austen today comes from the letters that she and Cassandra exchanged throughout their lives.

Jane did most of her writing at her brother's estate at Chawton. Jane did not have many close friends outside of her family, and most of the people that she did know lived a life very much like her own. This narrow outlook on the world is reflected in her novels, each of which focus on two or three upper middle class families living in idyllic rural country houses. Her novels also focus on marriage. When Jane was writing her novels in the early 1800s, marrying well was the primary concern of both men and women, and money figured very much into the decision. Jane sometimes used the financial considerations that went on in arranging marriages as a subject of satire—she made fun of it. Jane herself never got married, and it is supposed that she was not particularly interested in marriage herself.

Jane's novels are respected and admired because she wrote with such insight into character and the nature of human relationships. Though the environment from which she drew her inspiration was fairly limited, her novels display a great variety of personalities. Through her work, Jane played a pivotal role in helping to redefine what a woman should and could do with her life. Her novels were fairly popular during her lifetime, but like every other writer of all times (even present day), there were people who loved them and people who hated them. One of her admirers was the novelist Walter Scott, who said that Jane had a great talent for describing the feelings of ordinary life. One of her detractors was another novelist, Mark Twain, who quipped, "*Jane Austen? Why, I go so far as to say that any library is a good library that does not contain a volume by Jane Austen. Even if it contains no other book.*"

Jane only lived to be 41. She suffered from Addison's disease, which is a disorder of the adrenal glands. She is buried in England at Winchester Cathedral.

1. Which of the following adjectives describes Jane Austen?

A. funny

B. independent

C. powerful

2. What do you think that Jane Austen felt about the options available to women during her time? Cite lines from the text to support your answer.
