

Dear Educator:

As you know, summer reading is crucial to the continuity of student learning. It's also important that activities accompanying summer reading be fun and stimulating. To help you and your students achieve summer learning goals, the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired (YMI), in cooperation with Miramax Films, are pleased to provide you with this study guide and summer reading activities for *Becoming Jane*—a timeless romantic comedy imaginatively based on the life of the one of the most influential and revered novelists of the early 19th century, Jane Austen.

At the start of the movie, we are introduced to the young novelist on the eve of her introduction to the dashing Irish attorney Tom Lefroy. The film spins them into an invented tale of personal passion, family obligations, humor and social complications that also are central themes of the author's literary work, clearly suggesting that in the case of Jane Austen, "art imitates life."

Renowned for their social commentary, biting wit, and enthralling romance, Jane Austen's novels are widely read classics known the world over. Now fans everywhere will have a chance to discover the woman behind the pen when *Becoming Jane* opens in August 2007. This film provides a uniquely engaging introduction to Austen's novels for new readers, a revealing back-story for current fans, and can help you motivate your students to include Jane Austen's novels in their summer reading.

The activities in this study guide are designed to help you launch your summer reading program in class, and can be included in your summer reading assignment packet as well. Like *Becoming Jane*, the activities introduce students to Jane Austen and her world, setting the stage for enjoyment of her novels through hands-on lessons that reinforce language arts, literary analysis, and critical thinking skills.

Please share these materials with other teachers in your school. Although the materials are copyrighted, you may make copies for educational purposes. To ensure that you receive future mailings, please fill out and return the enclosed reply card. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,


Roberta Nusim,
Publisher and former teacher

Miramax Films
presents

BECOMING *Jane*



is the only company developing free, innovative classroom materials that is owned and directed by award-winning former teachers. Visit our website at www.yमितeacher.com to send feedback and download more free programs.



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- ❖ This teacher's resource guide
- ❖ Four reproducible activity masters
- ❖ A wall poster for your classroom
- ❖ A response card for your comments

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To generate student interest in Jane Austen and her work through the upcoming film *Becoming Jane*
- ❖ To motivate summer reading of Jane Austen's novels
- ❖ To help students recognize connections between Austen's world and their own experience
- ❖ To give students a better understanding of how Jane Austen's personal experiences may have translated into her works

TARGET AUDIENCE

This program has been designed as a supplement to the summer reading program for high school students.

NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH STANDARDS

Activity 1	TIMELESS	Applying Knowledge
Activity 2	BECOMING JANE	Understanding the Human Experience
Activity 3	MANNERS, MANNERS	Evaluation Strategies
Activity 4	SUMMER READING WITH JANE	Reading for Perspective

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- ❖ Photocopy the enclosed activity sheets to provide a set for every student in your class. At the same time, make a master copy of the complete program to share with other teachers in your school.
- ❖ Display the enclosed poster for *Becoming Jane* in your classroom to introduce the program and generate interest in Jane Austen.
- ❖ The student activities in this program have been designed for use in the order presented, but you can adjust the order to fit your teaching style and your students' needs.
- ❖ At the conclusion of the program, encourage students to see *Becoming Jane* when it comes to theaters in August, as a complement to their summer reading.

Activity One

TIMELESS

This introductory activity will show students that they already know more about Jane Austen than they might suspect, thanks to her success in Hollywood.

Begin the activity by asking students to name some recent hit movies that have been based on novels (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Devil Wears Prada*). Discuss with students how movies compare to novels. Ask: Which format do you prefer? Do you like to read a novel before you see the movie adaptation? Do the movies do justice to the novels? If you've read the novel first, how do your images of characters or scenes compare with their portrayal in the film? Why do some novels make good movies and others don't?

Refer to the poster for *Becoming Jane* and explain that this upcoming film fictionalizes the early life of a novelist whose works have been the basis for countless movies and television series. Invite students to identify Jane Austen and encourage them to name some films based on her novels.

Distribute the activity sheet and have students complete Part 1 individually. Review their answers in a class discussion that explores how Austen's stories and themes continue to be relevant after almost two centuries. Have students complete Part 2 of the activity as homework or as part of their summer reading.

Answers: 1-b, 2-a, 3-b, 4-c, 5-b

Extensions

- ❖ In *Becoming Jane*, Jane Austen is portrayed as experiencing many of the romantic complications that appear in her novels. Discuss in class whether it is necessary for an author to have experienced personally what he or she writes about. How does knowing that an author's life experience is reflected in a novel influence our response to the story?
- ❖ *Becoming Jane* portrays a meeting between the young Jane Austen and the novelist Ann Radcliffe, the most famous female author of her day. Share with students this exchange from that meeting and talk about whether they agree or disagree with Radcliffe's conclusion.

Ann Radcliffe: Of what do you wish to write?

Jane: The heart.

Ann Radcliffe: Do you know it?

Jane: Not all of it.

Ann Radcliffe: In time you will. If not...well, that situation is what imagination is for.

- ❖ Arrange for students to interview an author in your community to learn about his or her inspiration. If there is no one available locally, have students research the life of an author they admire and compare the details of that life to the subjects about which the author writes.



Activity Two

BECOMING JANE

This activity will help prepare students for their summer reading of Jane Austen (and enrich their viewing of *Becoming Jane*) by introducing them to her times and the society in which she lived.

Start by inviting students to share what they already know about England at the turn of the nineteenth century. Some points for discussion:

- ❖ It was a horse-powered world in which cities and villages were not yet linked by railroads.
- ❖ When people traveled, they usually stayed for weeks at a time, living with relatives or friends rather than lodging in a hotel.
- ❖ Family ties were very strong and extended far beyond the circle of immediate relatives to include even distant cousins.
- ❖ Social classes were close-knit and did not mingle—landowners, merchants, professionals, the working class all socialized among themselves.
- ❖ Strict rules of etiquette and propriety guided all aspects of social life.
- ❖ Most people married for economic reasons, not for love, and sought to improve their family's social rank through marriage.
- ❖ Many well-to-do people did not have daily jobs, living on the income from their lands or investments, but even people who had to work for a living usually had servants.

As you cover these points, encourage students to compare Austen's times with the world they live in today. How do the physical and social mobility of the modern world influence family and community life, as well as our economic and romantic expectations?

Distribute the activity sheet and have students complete Parts 1 and 2 individually or in small groups, then review their answers in a class discussion. Assign Part 3 of the activity as homework or as part of students' summer reading.

Extensions

- ❖ Have students mark important locations in Austen's life and fiction on a map of England. Discuss the scope and characteristics of her world (e.g., city/country, urbane/provincial, etc.). What comparable locations could students find on a map of their own world?
- ❖ Provide time for students to expand their descriptions of social customs in our times into a "rule book" they might give to a visitor from another era or another culture.
- ❖ Direct students to the online resources listed at the end of this guide for background on Austen's novels and facts about her

life. Have different members of the class report on her home life, her writing career, and her travels, and provide brief "previews" of her major novels.

Activity Three

MANNERS, MANNERS

This activity introduces students to Austen's writing style and her typically understated approach to satire, which explodes social pretensions and common assumptions with innocent-seeming wit.

As an example, share with students this paragraph from a letter Austen wrote to her sister, Cassandra, describing a dinner at the country home of her friend Harriet Moore and the relationship between Harriet and her husband:

We had a very pleasant dinner, at the lower end of the table at least; the merriment was chiefly between Edward, Louisa [Austen's wealthy brother and sister-in-law], Harriet, and myself. Mr. Moore did not talk so much as I expected, and I understand from Fanny [another of Austen's friends] that I did not see him at all as he is in general. Our being strangers made him so much more silent and quiet. Had I had no reason for observing what he said and did, I should scarcely have thought about him. His manners to her want tenderness, and he was a little violent at last about the impossibility of her going to Eastwell. I cannot see any unhappiness in her, however, and as to kind-heartedness, &c., she is quite unaltered.

From *The Republic of Pemberley*, (www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/brablet8.html#letter39)

To help students appreciate Austen's style of social criticism, ask what they suppose she really thinks about Harriet's husband, Mr. Moore. How, for example, does Austen's separation of Moore from the merry friends "at the lower end of the table" set him up for criticism? How does the gossip she's heard about him color her view of his character and his uncharacteristically reserved behavior in front of his wife's friends? When Austen says that Mr. Moore's manners toward his wife "want tenderness" and that his objection to her proposed trip "was a little violent," what is she really saying? Is this a happy marriage?

Remind students that they have probably made similar observations when socializing with their own family and friends. Although today's codes of conduct may be very different from those of Austen's times, they are not less subtle nor less powerful. Where people sit, how they talk, and how they react to others still give us signals about character and social relationships, though we are more likely to pick up these signals in a fast food restaurant than at a formal dinner. In short, even if she were living today, Austen would still find a wealth of revealing social situations to write about.

As a warm-up for the activity, invite students to brainstorm a list of today's unspoken social "rules," like the rules of etiquette between husband and wife that go unspoken in Austen's letter. What happens when such rules are broken today? Is the offender shunned or humiliated? Is there a confrontation or does society simply dole out the consequence? Suppose the offender is not aware of the code—does that excuse the indiscretion?

Distribute the activity sheet and explain to students that they will draw inspiration from several episodes in *Becoming Jane* that illustrate Jane Austen's satiric style to create their own incisive commentary on today's social customs. Students can work in small groups to generate ideas for their commentary, then complete the activity for homework or as part of their summer reading.

Extensions

- ❖ In Jane Austen's time, the art of letter writing was at its peak. Friends and family could not make phone calls and certainly could not e-mail or instant message, so they communicated news, thoughts, and feelings in letters. Encourage students to list the differences between writing a letter and sending an email—timeliness, ability to reflect on one's words, anticipation of response, tactile effects of stationary and handwriting, grammar and craft.
- ❖ Challenge students to spend a week (or even a day) only writing letters—no emails—for correspondence. Afterwards, have students reflect on what they have learned.

Activity Four

SUMMER READING WITH JANE

This activity sheet provides students with a mini-journal designed to enrich their reading of Jane Austen over the summer and their viewing of *Becoming Jane*. Review the sheet in class, pointing out how it draws on students' experience with email and filmmaking to foster analysis of plot, character, and theme. Invite students to suggest their own contemporary twists on the traditional ways of evaluating a novel and thinking critically about the story it tells.

List the titles of Jane Austen's novels on the chalkboard: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion*, and *Emma*. Invite students to share what they know about each novel, based on their reading, their familiarity with films based on the novels, or their research for Activity Two. If appropriate, have students campaign and vote for the novels they would like to read over the summer. Otherwise, assign one or more of Austen's novels as part of your summer reading program.

Extension

- ❖ Inform students that they will find that the pursuit of happiness is often a serious business in Jane Austen's novels. Life was difficult in her time, especially for women, and if one did not plan one's future wisely, poverty or shame ensued. Invite students to compare and contrast this aspect of Austen's society to our society today. Do people today make sacrifices to be happy? Do they sacrifice happiness to gain other things in life? Encourage students to write a letter to Miss Austen sharing their thoughts on this topic.



Resources

Websites

The Official *Becoming Jane* Website

www.becomingjane-the-movie.com

Jane Austen Society of North America

www.jasna.org

Jane Austen Society of the United Kingdom

www.janeaustensoci.freeuk.com

The Republic of Pemberley

www.pemberley.com/janeinfo

A comprehensive site collecting all things related to Jane Austen, including texts of her novels, notebooks, and letters.

Young Minds Inspired

www.ymiteacher.com to download copies of this and other free programs.

Books

So You Think You Know Jane Austen: A Literary Quizbook, by John Sutherland and Deidre La Faye, Oxford University Press, 2005.

The Annotated Pride and Prejudice, by Jane Austen and David M. Shapard, Anchor, 2007.

101 Things You Didn't Know About Jane Austen: The Truth About the World's Most Intriguing Romantic Literary Heroine, by Patrice Hannon, Adams Media Corporation, 2007.

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TIMELESS

Sure, you've heard the name Jane Austen, but you don't know anything about her or her novels, right? Wrong! In fact, you probably know more than you think, because Jane Austen's novels have been Hollywood favorites for the past 50 years. And now, Miramax Films takes you behind the scenes with *Becoming Jane*, a new film coming to theaters in August that will show you how Jane Austen became the author generations have come to know and love, starring Anne Hathaway as Jane and James McAvoy as Tom Lefroy.



Part 2

Now take a look at a portrait of Jane Austen—pleasant-looking but nowhere near as beautiful as most of the women who portray her or her characters on screen. Briefly describe whom you would cast in a film about her life and why.



Part 1

Here's a chance to find out how much you already know about Jane Austen and her stories of love, passion, self-awareness, duty, and family—thanks to her blockbuster Hollywood reputation.

- Which actress recently learned what Jane Austen always knew—that looks, clothing, and money are not all that make a woman desirable—in a recent award-winning movie from a best-selling novel?
 - Lindsay Lohan
 - Anne Hathaway
 - Kate Hudson
- Which former Batgirl and star of several Aerosmith music videos starred in the 1995 movie *Clueless*, which is a modern-day retelling of Jane Austen's novel, *Emma*, set in Beverly Hills?
 - Alicia Silverstone
 - Liv Tyler
 - Kate Winslet
- Which actress with a Coldplay husband and an "Apple" of a daughter starred in a 1996 version of Jane Austen's novel, *Emma*, about matchmaking and finding true love?
 - Keira Knightley
 - Gwyneth Paltrow
 - Alicia Silverstone
- Which swashbuckling star fought her way through the Caribbean in three movies, and starred in the 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice*, in which she struggled not with pirates, but with the complexities of love and social class?
 - Liv Tyler
 - Kate Winslet
 - Keira Knightley
- Which star knew "what a girl wants" in 2003 after starring in *Bridget Jones' Diary*, which is set in present-day London, but is based on the plot of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*?
 - Justin Timberlake
 - Colin Firth
 - Adam Sandler

Check out www.imdb.com, www.janeausten.co.uk (click on Films and Music in the right menu), and www.amazon.com (search Jane Austen to see which actresses have had roles in Jane Austen films).

Look for **BECOMING JANE** in a theater near you this August and visit Jane at www.becomingjane-themovie.com



BECOMING JANE

As you'll see this August in *Becoming Jane*, the revealing and romantic new film starring Anne Hathaway and James McAvoy, life in early nineteenth century England was quite different from today. You'll also see how the wonders of Jane Austen's novels were inspired by her own life. Understanding when, where, and how she lived will give you insight as to why her writing is still relevant today.

So let's get to know Jane Austen.

Part 1

Jane Austen often used words from the list below in her novels, many of them words that we rarely use today. In the spaces provided, write a definition for each word and a modern equivalent that Jane Austen might use if she were writing today.

	Definition	Modern Equivalent
Dispose	_____	_____
Propriety/ impropriety	_____	_____
Condescension	_____	_____
Melancholy	_____	_____
Insolent	_____	_____
Countenance	_____	_____
Impetuous	_____	_____
Vex	_____	_____
Folly	_____	_____
Reprehensible	_____	_____
Refute	_____	_____
Scruple	_____	_____
Lament	_____	_____

Part 2

Jane Austen's novels are set in a society with many customs that can seem peculiar to us today. For example:

Precedence

This was a set of unwritten rules that determined social ranking even at the family table. For example, elder daughters sat in a better position than younger ones, married daughters sat in a better position than unmarried ones, no matter their age, and sons sat in the best position of all.

Correspondence

Letters carried obligations and implications as well as information. For example, letters exchanged between two unmarried



people of the opposite sex implied that they were engaged.

Travel

Social propriety set rules for travelers. For example, young women were not to travel unescorted on carriages, and no woman could sit next to a man who was not a relative.

Now take a look at your society from this point of view and describe three social customs that determine how we live today.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Part 3

In all her novels, Jane Austen took a satiric view of manners and customs. With that in mind, describe how you think she might have viewed these practices of her own day.

1. Women's education consisted of practical and religious training for an assumed domestic role in the family.

2. "Genteel" women could only get money by marrying into it or inheriting it.

3. The only grounds for divorce was the sexual infidelity of the wife.

MANNERS, MANNERS

Jane Austen is famous for her satiric writing about everyday life at a time when that “just wasn’t done”—especially by a woman. As you’ll see this August in the enchanting new film *Becoming Jane*, starring Anne Hathaway and Tom McAvoy, Jane Austen was aware of the absurdities of some of the social mores and was not afraid to say so, much to the horror of her family.



Jane said...

Near the beginning of the film, Jane reads a poem she has written for her sister, describing the long courtship that led to her engagement:

The boundaries of propriety were vigorously assaulted, as was only right, but not quite breached, as was also right. Nevertheless, she was not pleased.

When questioned about her ambition to become a novelist, Jane replies:

Novels are poor insipid things, read by mere women, even—God forbid!—written by women.

Once her writing brings her a little extra spending cash, Jane has this to say about a letter she wrote to a upper-class acquaintance:

I sent my answer...which I wrote without much effort, for I was rich, and the rich are always respectable, whatever be their style of writing.



Write your own social commentary

Look at some of the contradictions in morals and manners today—people talking in restaurants on cell phones or people sending instant messages or text-messages instead of speaking, for example. Choose two examples, consider what Jane Austen might say about these situations, and write your own social commentary.

Example 1:

Example 2:

If you want to try your hand at imitating Jane Austen’s style, go to www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/brablets.html to find examples of her letters.

SUMMER READING WITH JANE

Miramax's revealing and romantic film *Becoming Jane*, coming to a theater near you this August, shows how "between sense and sensibility and pride and prejudice was a life worth writing about." And reading about.

Use this mini-journal page to help you analyze each Jane Austen novel you read this summer. Use a separate copy of this sheet for each novel.



Title:

Imagine that you are writing a gossipy email about the characters in this novel. What would you say about your favorite? your least favorite? the story's villain?

Imagine that you could IM with Jane Austen about this novel. What questions would you ask her? What answers do you think you'd receive?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Imagine that you are producing a new movie based on this novel. What changes would you make, if any? Who would be in your dream cast?

After you see *Becoming Jane*, explain how aspects of Jane's life are reflected in the novel you just read.