

# TIMELESS

**S**ure, 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.



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## 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](http://www.imdb.com), [www.janeausten.co.uk](http://www.janeausten.co.uk) (click on Films and Music in the right menu), and [www.amazon.com](http://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](http://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/<br>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:

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### Example 2:

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

# SUMMER READING WITH JANE

**M**iramax'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.