

An Outline Of
Jane Austen and the State of the Nation
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Sense and Sensibility

- Written between 1795 and 1810.
- Originally titled *Elinor and Marianne*.
- Published October 1811.
- **Poor Law Reform:** First financial crisis of Jane's lifetime. Harvest failure doubled the price of food while wages remained stagnant. The majority of members of Parliament, represented by John Dashwood, doing nothing to help those in need.
- **Placement of John and Fanny Dashwood represent Radical Whigs in Norland in Sussex, where there were no private charities.**
- **Placement of Sir John Middleton in Devon, where land was not enclosed, land owners were generous.**
- **Colonel Brandon in Dorset, where land was not enclosed.**
- Jane showed herself to side with Radical Tories, led by Prime Minister William Pitt and with Moderate Whigs.

Pride and Prejudice

- Written between October 1796 and August 1797.
- Originally titled *First Impressions*.
- Published January 1813.
- Jane took a stand in favor of the extension of the Elizabethan Poor Law, more liberal welfare benefits, supported by PM William Pitt and moderate Whigs.
- Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley are moderate Whigs who favor generosity to the poor.
- Radical Whigs represented by Lady Catherine de Bourgh. She felt she was authorized to lecture and dispense wisdom. She did nothing for the poor, but spent lavishly on herself.
- **Placement of Lady Catherine in Kent, where the poor were not cared for.**
- **Placement of Darcy's Pemberley in Derbyshire, where wages were higher and many private charities existed.**

Northanger Abbey

- Written between 1798 and 1799.
- Originally titled *Susan*.

- Published December 1817.
- **Everyone questioned the value of paper money and Jane used her fiction to calm the anxiety.** People knew that Bank of England did not have enough gold to honor the promise on the bills.
- Fears are compared to Catherine Morland's fears, which prove to be groundless. Catherine's parents had a good income, but they had 10 children. Mr. Morland remarked that if they all married at once, he would not be able to provide for them all—a comparison to bank rushes.
- People were poring over newspapers to keep abreast of developments.

Mansfield Park

- Written between 1811 and 1813.
- Published July 1814.
- **Written as an accusation against members of Parliament from both parties.**
- **Primary concern was the troubled economy.** Prime Minister assassinated. Rioters hung or transported.
- The play was reminiscent of the speeches made in Parliament—very dramatic, but producing no results.
- Fanny was told to be judge and critic of the play, but if she made a critique, she was scolded or ignored. British public in that position. Edmond Burke, Whig MP said, “the cry of the people should not be attended to, for citizens are in a state of utter ignorance. Sir Thomas assumes that in bringing Fanny Price into the household, they must prepare for gross ignorance, some meanness of opinions and very distressing vulgarity of manner—the assumption that those who have money are superior. He believed that Fanny had to be kept in a subservient position. Mrs. Norris was a willing agent in that endeavor.
- Sir Thomas, located in Northampton shire was a good squire. He did not allow enclosures and the poor house provided good food for the residents.
- Henry Crawford, located in Norfolk, did not provide for the poor. The poor house in his parish was filthy and food was inadequate. Mary Crawford was completely ignorant regarding the needs of rural people.
- Mr. Rushford's pleasure garden and mansion were impressive, but the cottages on his estate were in tatters.
- **Slave trade:** Slave trade made illegal in England in 1772, but not in the colonies. Much of the wealth that came into England was from sugar cane in Antigua.
- While Sir Thomas is away, things go awry in his household. Members of parliament are not tending to their tasks as MP's while they are away.
- To sum it up, Jane is saying that the members of the House of Commons was populated with men of privilege who went out to their estates in Fall to hunt birds, then went to London. Unlike Tom Bertram, ultra-conservative Tories and radical Whigs were not going to renounce their wicked ways. Selfishness would continue to motivate them and adultery to divert them.

Emma

- Written in between January 1814 and March 1815.
- Published December 1815.
- British public appalled by national debt. Adam Smith advises that men and women have responsibility to behave morally and sensibly for the good of the nation.
- **Location of Highbury in Surrey County**, where wages were highest in the nation. Poor rates were doubled in response to higher prices.
- The gentry of Surrey had voluntarily put into practice Pitt's welfare reform proposals: support for poor, no enclosures and helping those in need (Mr Knightley and Mr. Woodhouse).
- Mr, Elton, a clergyman saw no need to provide for those in need.
- The Eltons and the Coles personified Radical Whigs in Parliament.

Persuasion

- Written between August 1815 and August 1816.
- Published 1817, title page dated 1818.
- Jane's last completed book.
- **Post Waterloo crash.**
- England suffering from worst economic crash in British history.
- The industries devoted to providing merchandise need for army and navy collapsed.
- Many banks failed.
- The House of Commons voted in a tax break for the wealthy, increasing the national debt.
- Lady Russell represents the "Ultras", radical Tories who were too cautious to take any action.
- Sir Walter Elliot embraces an imprudent way of living. He represents the Radical Whigs, who deny that anything needs to be done.
- The Crofts, who rented Sir Walter's house, have a fortune, but conserve their money and live sensibly.
- Lady Russell says that Sir William would have lived more sensibly if his wife had not died, a reference to the lack of Prime Minister William Pitt's leadership, as he is no longer living.
- Jane is calling for moderation and reform.