

**Jane Austen:**  
**Mini e-book Resource:**

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## **Introduction and Brief Biography:**

Jane Austen (16 December 1775 – 18 July 1817) remains to this day one of the most popular of English authors of all time.

Jane Austen's father, George Austen (1731-1805), served as the rector of the Anglican parish of Steventon, Hampshire from 1765 until 1801 - and together with his wife, Cassandra (1739-1827), raised a family of six boys James (1765–1819), George (1766–1838), Edward (1767–1852), Henry Thomas (1771–1850), Francis William (Frank) (1774-1865), Charles John (1779–1852) together with two girls, Cassandra Elizabeth (1773–1845) and Jane.



Jane's upbringing was comfortable with both of her parents having come from minor landed gentry families. In addition to these legacies and the income from being a rector, Jane's father also supplemented the family income by farming and educating three to four boys at a time who boarded within his family.

Jane Austen only lived to the age of relatively young age of forty two; Jane Austen never married and lived all of her life living with her immediate family. Her early education was largely based at home - being in the most part taught by her father and elder brothers, although in 1783-1786 she attended boarding school along with her sister Cassandra.

Jane Austen in total wrote six major novels: (*Sense and Sensibility* – 1811, *Pride and Prejudice* - 1813, *Mansfield Park* – 1814, *Emma* - 1815, *Northanger Abbey* - 1817 *Persuasion* - 1817) - and started a seventh novel *Sanditon*, which sadly was never completed due to her untimely death in 1817 (possibly due to Hodgkin's lymphoma). Jane Austen also authored a number of shorter works.

During her life-time Jane Austen's work did not receive much literary acclaim and it was not until 1869 that following her nephew's publication of: 'A memoir of Jane Austen' - some fifty two years after her death, that her works gained widespread popularity.

Jane Austen's works are set in the mid to late seventeen hundreds and in a humorous manner reflect the widely held view of the time that women needed to become married in order to gain financial security and attain a certain level of social standing. Indeed in this context, Jane Austen's works can largely be viewed as social commentaries (and indeed comedies) of the day – mixed with a discussion of a number of moral issues and dilemmas. It is perhaps ironic therefore that Jane Austen was herself to remain single all her life.

Most of what we know of Jane Austen and her life comes from what her relatives (such as her nephew) wrote about her together with a few letters that have survived, mostly written to her sister Cassandra. It is believed that many of the artefacts and letters that were passed on to her brother Admiral Francis Austen were later destroyed or disposed of by his decedents.

Jane Austen's closest friend and confidant throughout her life was her sister Cassandra who also was never to marry.

Her bother Henry acted as literary agent; in his early career he was a banker and later an Anglican vicar following in his father's footsteps. George suffered from epilepsy and went to live with his nephew so as to receive extra care. Edward was brought up by his second cousin. Frank and Charles both entered the Navy and both ultimately became admirals.

Throughout her childhood Jane Austen along with her bothers and sisters and a few local friends performed a number of comedies and other plays – and it is possible that this influenced the strand of comedy that runs throughout her own books.

Jane Austen during her teenage years wrote a number of poems, stories, and plays; three volumes of these works survived and collectively became known as the 'Juvenilia'.

Between 1793 and 1795, Austen wrote *Lady Susan*, her first full novel based around a series of letters.

In 1796 Austen began work on a second novel, 'First Impressions' which was later to become 'Pride and Prejudice'.

In 1798, Jane Austen began writing a third entitled 'Susan' which was later to become 'Northanger Abbey'. This copyright to this work was purchased by Benjamin Crosby, a publisher in London – the work was never published by Crosby and Jane Austen re-purchased the copyright from him in 1816.

In December of 1800, Jane Austen's father retired from his position as Rector of Steventon - so causing the family to move to Bath. It is recorded that Jane was shocked at the thought of a move from her childhood home – with suggestions that this might have affected her literary output.

In December 1802, Jane Austen received a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg Wither, whom she has known since she was young. Harris possessed few social graces and was known to be sometimes aggressive in his manner, was tactless and possessed a stammer. Jane having had no previous offers of marriage accepted – only to retract the acceptance the next day after further thought.

Following the death of her father Jane, Cassandra, and their mother were left in a financially vulnerable position and James's brothers – Edward, James, Henry and Francis all contributed to their sisters' and mother's maintenance. During the next few years, the family lived in rented accommodation in Bath – later moving in with Frank Austen and his new wife in Southampton in 1806.

In 1809, Jane's brother Edward provided the use of a cottage in Chawton and this provided a more comfortable home for herself, sister and mother. This cottage in which Jane Austen lived during the last eight years of her life, is now maintained as Jane Austen's House Museum.

Jane Austen successfully published four novels: 'Sense and Sensibility', 'Pride and Prejudice', 'Mansfield Park' and 'Emma' whilst living at Chawton.

In 1816 Jane Austen started to write a new novel originally to be entitled, 'The Elliots' which was later to become 'Persuasion'.

In early 1816, Jane Austen began to suffer from ill health and she died the following year. From the description of her symptoms it has been suggested that she suffered from either Addison's disease or Hodgkin's lymphoma – although of course this cannot be verified.

Jane Austen is buried in the north aisle of the nave of Winchester Cathedral with a memorial that can be found today.

## **List of Works:**

### **Novels:**

- Sense and Sensibility (1811)
- Pride and Prejudice (1813)
- Mansfield Park (1814)
- Emma (1815)
- Northanger Abbey (1817) (published posthumously)
- Persuasion (1817) (posthumously)

**‘Juvenilia’ and Early Works:**

- Lady Susan
- Love and Freindship
- Catharine, or the Bower
- The Beautifull Cassandra
- The History of England

**Unfinished Works:**

- The Watsons, and
- Sanditon



## **Jane Austen Museums and Other Resources:**

### **1) Jane Austen's House Museum:**

This is Jane Austen's house in Chawton, Hampshire, UK – in which she spent the last eight years of her life and wrote: 'Sense and Sensibility', 'Pride and Prejudice', 'Mansfield Park' and 'Emma'

<http://www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk/>

### **2) Jane Austen Centre:**

The Jane Austen Centre in Bath UK houses a permanent exhibition which tells the story of Jane's experience in the city between 1801 and 1806.

<http://www.janeausten.co.uk/thecentre.ihtml>

### **3) The Fashion Museum:**

The fashion museum, Bath, UK is located in Bath's Assembly Rooms, next to the Royal Crescent and Circus.

<http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk/index.cfm?alias=home>

**4) The Jane Austen Society of the United Kingdom:**

This is a general interest society which organises a range of events throughout the UK.

<http://www.janeausten.co.uk/thecentre.ihtml>

**5) The Jane Austen Society of Buenos Aires:**

The Jane Austen Society of Buenos Aires, Argentina, is a Latin American association for those sharing an appreciation of Jane Austen

[http://www.janeaustenba.org/info\\_page3.htm](http://www.janeaustenba.org/info_page3.htm)

## **Online Resources to Becoming Published:**

- 1) **Novel Writing Made Easy:** Professional Authors Step-by-step System (manual & Workbook Included) For Planning A Novel.

<http://snipurl.com/3g5rg>

- 2) **Newnovelist:** This software provides a Step-By-Step Guide to Writing and Publishing Your First Novel.

<http://snipurl.com/3g5cm>

- 3) **Advanced Fiction Writing:** Writing a Novel is Easy! Writing a Great Novel Is Hard: Award-winning Novelist And Acclaimed Fiction Teacher Randy Ingermanson Tells You His Secrets. Learn The Three Things You Must Have To Sell A Novel.

<http://snipurl.com/3g5bz>