

# Tracing the Reflection of Jane Austen's Life in her Novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*

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## Abstract

A good writer puts their soul into their writing and one such writer is Jane Austen, the most prominent author of the Georgian era. She is well known for her novels which talk about the dependence of women and their social ranking during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Her elegant usage of language along with humour and also easily connectable storyline of the novels had made her attract many readers even among the current generation. This essay depicts the real life aspects of Jane Austen which are shown in her novels, *Pride and Prejudice* as well as *Sense and Sensibility*. These two novels are very closely related to her personal life. The characters and incidents of the novels reflect her life in the same or in the other way. Her writings show how important is it to the writers to put their soul into their works which means the reflection of real life incidents of the writers is narrated in a fictional way. The social background of Austen's life has also influenced the settings of her novels. Jane Austen is a promising writer of all times she has dedicated her entire life to writing novels that depict the real life consequences of women. These aspects of writing can make the readers easily connect with the story and understand the situations following with the period in which the work was written. In that sense, a strong bond is built between the reader and the writer which is very rare in today's fictional works. Through this paper, we can know that how important is for a writer to put their soul into their work by analysing the two novels of Jane Austen.

**Keywords:** Jane Austen, personal experience, relationships, social background

## Introduction

Jane Austen is one of the most extensively read and well-known English novelists of all time. She was born in Hampshire, England, on December 16, 1775, at the rectory in the village

of Steventon. Jane Austen was the seventh child and second daughter of George Austen and his wife Cassandra Austen. Jane Austen received most of her education from her father and brothers, Henry and James, at home. Jane Austen had a good upbringing with her siblings, and she and her older sister, Cassandra, were nearly inseparable. She played the fortepiano and also went to church regularly, and visited with friends and neighbours frequently. Dancing was a common form of socialising, both impromptu and at the town hall's regularly organised balls. As she did with previous works, she read it aloud to her family in the evenings, and it quickly became an established favorite in the Austen household. Tom Lefroy and Jane Austen would have met at a dance or other neighbourhood social event, and Jane Austen's letters to Cassandra indicate that they spent a lot of time together. They didn't have any money, and he had to rely on a great-uncle in Ireland to help him pay for his school and start his legal profession. Austen never saw Tom Lefroy again. Thus, it is told that she remained unmarried.

In 1790 she produced her books, the first of which was *Love and Friendship*, a satire of romantic literature arranged as a series of love letters. *The History of England*, the second book, was a thirty-four-page parody of historical writing about England, with around thirteen watercolour miniatures painted by Cassandra, her older sister. Jane Austen later created three bound notebooks of fair copies of her early compositions. *Jane's Juvenilia* is the name given to these journals, which comprise novels, short tales, poetry, and plays. Jane Austen had just turned twenty-one at the time. *Pride and Prejudice* was the title of this work, which was later published. Jane's second most renowned work, *Sense and Sensibility*, began as another epistolary novella called Elinor and Marianne. Jane Austen began anonymously publishing her writings between 1811 and 1816. During this time, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* were all published. Jane Austen was diagnosed with Addison's illness in 1816, when she was forty-one years old. Jane Austen's health, on the other hand, worsened to the point that she had to quit writing entirely. On July 18, 1817, she passed away. Jane Austen's identity was not known to the world until after her death. Jane Austen's transition into one of English literature's finest writers did not begin until after her death.

Jane Austen's work *Sense and Sensibility* was released in 1811. It was published anonymously; the phrase *By A Lady* appears on the title page, possibly in place of the author's name. *Elinor and Marianne* was the beginning of Jane Austen's first full-length work. It was read to the family, before 1796 and told in a series of letters, according to her sister. There's no way of knowing how much of the initial version got it into the anonymously published novel *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811 without original manuscripts. It chronicles the narrative of Elinor and Marianne, the Dashwood sisters, as they grow up. They have a younger sister, Margaret, and an older half-brother, John. The story of the impoverished Dashwood family is told through the eyes of the sisters Elinor and Marianne, who represent good sense (common sense) and sensibility (emotionality), respectively. They become destitute upon the death of their father, who leaves his home, Norland Park, to their half-brother, John. Despite being told to look after his sisters, John is dissuaded from doing so by his greedy wife, Fanny. The family, which includes their mother and a younger sister in addition to Elinor and Marianne, relocates to Barton Cottage in Devonshire. Colonel Brandon, a staid and settled bachelor 20 years her senior, meets the open and enthusiastic Marianne there. They encounter love, passion, and heartache there. Edward and Elinor marry, while Marianne subsequently marries Colonel Brandon after falling in love with him over time. The two couples live next door to each other, with both sisters and spouses getting along. Willoughby regards Marianne as his ideal, but the narrator cautions the reader not to assume he has never been happy.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is a romantic book of manners published in 1813. Though it is commonly referred to as a love novel, it may also be classified as sarcastic. The story chronicles the character growth of Elizabeth Bennet, the book's lively protagonist, as she learns about the consequences of quick judgments and the distinction between superficial virtue and genuine goodness. Mr. Bennet of Longbourn estate has five daughters, but his property is entailed and can only be passed to a male heir. His wife also lacks an inheritance, so his family will be destitute upon his death. Thus, at least one of the girls must marry well to support the others, which is a motivation that drives the plot. The novel revolves around the importance of

marrying for love rather than money or social prestige, despite the communal pressure to make a wealthy match.

Her novels are derived from her experiences and life stories with some even happening in real life. Jane Austen wrote about them through three different novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*. She writes about her own experiences and her real life. She used her real life and fictionalized stories to reach the readers and create a great deal of interest in the lives of all the characters. Here the analysis is mainly made on Jane Austen's personal life, writing ideas and characters which had influenced her works. Jane Austen's personal life and real life also complement each other. By fictionalizing her life, she has achieved many readers even in the modern era. So that the modern writers should concentrate on this concept of writing novels. Jane Austen was a writer who taught moral values of life through her novels, especially, she concentrated on the women society.

### Reflection of Personal Life

Jane Austen grew up in a quiet and prosperous rural life in Steventon Township, Hampshire, England, where she was born into a priestly family. She is close to her family. Throughout Jane Austen's life, her sister Cassandra was her closest companion. They used to share all their personal secrets among each other. Her father George Austen, was a scholar who inspired in his children a passion of education. He was also a parent who allowed his children entire freedom and treated them all equal. But her mother, Cassandra Austen was a quick-witted lady famous for her spontaneous rhymes and tales. Jane Austen opted to put the manuscript on hold after her father's death on January 21, 1805. Jane, Cassandra, and their mother were in financial trouble after her father died unexpectedly. As a result, her mother had to play both the roles of father and mother. She was adamant about her two daughters marrying into a well-established family. However, due to the hand of fate, they both stayed single until their deaths. The family's living conditions mirrored their financial uncertainty over the following four years. They stayed in Stanford Cottage. Around early 1809, Austen's brother Edward gave his mother and sisters a more settled life the use of a big cottage in Chawton village. They had a quiet life over there. Austen released four novels during her time in Chawton, all of which were

favourably regarded. Through her brother Henry, the publisher Thomas Egerton consented to print *Sense and Sensibility*, which, like all of Jane Austen's works except *Pride and Prejudice*, was published on commission, that is, at the author's financial risk. *Sense and Sensibility* was published in October 1811 and was authored *By a Lady*. Jane Austen, like many other female authors of the time, printed her novels anonymously. Following the popularity of *Sense and Sensibility*, all of Jane Austen's future novels were labelled as, *By the author of Sense and Sensibility*, and Jane Austen's name never appeared on any of her publications during her lifetime. In January 1813, Egerton released *Pride and Prejudice*. He actively promoted the book, and it was an instant success, receiving three favourable reviews and selling rapidly. *Pride and Prejudice* appears to have been the season's most popular novel. Her popularity grew as a result of these two works.

As these two novels marks the beginning of Austen's literary career, the characters in the novel reflects more of her personal life. In the essence with the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, the lead character named, Elinor Dashwood and her sisters named Marianne and Margaret. Marianne Dashwood is very close to her elder sister Elinor Dashwood, as like Jane Austen with her sister Cassandra Austen. The sisterhood is also reflected in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, among Jane Bennet and Elizabeth Bennet. So Austen's relationship with her elder sister has been reflected in her novels as a stereotype of sisterhood, where the younger sister becomes the closest companion of the elder sister. Likewise, observing the father and the mother character in the two novels which also shows the same features of Austen's real life parents. Her love relationship with Tom Lefroy, which was a failure because of the financial status of their family. Austen had shown the grief of that broken relationship through the characters Marianne and John Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*. John Willoughby had to give upon Marianne because he financially dependent upon his aunt due to his debts. Marianne finds it very difficult to overcome his love. But she marries Colonel Brandon at the end of the novel. Though Austen had expressed her grief through the fictional character in her novel, she remained unmarried in her life. Austen even uses common name for her characters in the novel. So that the readers of her novel can easily get connected to the characters.



## Reflection of Social Background

The impact of society on a person is varied, and for a writer, all aspects of society, political, financial, and cultural, have a significant effect on their writings. Jane Austen's novels represent the pinnacle of nineteenth-century British society. She reflect the effect of society on the works continuously. She talks about the common life of the people during the Victorian era. Through her novels she enlightens the women society, who had to undergo many obstacles in their life. As she was educated, she can convey her sentiments and desires with her pen. Jane Austen started writing poems and stories for her own at the age of eleven. In 1800 George Austen retired and the family moved to Bath, England. Jane Austen found the atmosphere entirely different and it also affected in her writings. Her works also highlighted the sensation of leaving one's homeland. It demonstrates how Austen had to adjust to a new environment all of a sudden through the characters in her works. They will have a life-changing experience as a result of it. In Austen's work, the ball party is a regular occurrence where the hero meets the heroine for the first time. In her real life, she is likewise quite interested in ball parties and chatting with her neighbours.

Being born in a middle-class family, Austen portraits the life happenings of the middle-class family with three or four daughters. She tells about marriage and love relationship in women's life. Her two novels exactly reflect the women's position in the society during the Victorian era in Britain. She was aware of the inferior position of women in the countryside, as well as the snobbishness of the countryside. She seen several rural girls marrying men they do not love because of their wealth. Jane Austen, who was highly educated at home, does not want to become one of these individuals, thus she wants to fight. By mentioning about it in her novels, she wanted to bring a change in the society of women. She wanted the woman to make up their own decisions in their own life. Thus, Austen plays an important role among the women writers, as she had shown her own life experiences in a fictional way.

## Conclusion

Jane Austen became sick in 1816, at the age of 41, because of Addison's illness. Austen's health eventually worsened to the point that she could no longer write. On July 18, 1817, she died

in Winchester, Hampshire, England. Austen wrote six novels in her brief life, and two others were left unfinished. Her works, however, were not published until after her death. Following the release of her novels, she received several honours and recognition for her distinctive writing style. Austen became recognised for her natural narrative pattern, which she used to captivate a huge number of readers even during this age of literature. Current authors should adopt her notion of writing in which real-life experiences are fictionally told. The readers will gain much from this since they will learn or become acquainted with numerous circumstances in their life.

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