

MINI ASSESSMENT

Read the article "Jane Austen: Pioneer" before answering questions 1-9.

Jane Austen: Pioneer

Jane Austen has often been called the first modern novelist. She wrote books about real people living ordinary lives at a time when most popular novels featured impossibly dashing heroes and sentimentalized heroines. In contrast, Austen's social comedies are realistic, yet so full of wit and romance that they are still read and loved by millions of people today.

The seventh of eight children, Jane was born in the village of Steventon, England, to a moderately prosperous middle-class family. Her father was a well-educated clergyman who passed his love of books on to his daughter. Jane read voraciously, and through her father's collection, she became acquainted with a wide range of good literature.

Jane Austen led a very quiet life. She never married, although she had several offers. Perhaps she remained single because she was never really in love. But she also seems to have made a conscious decision to remain independent, free to manage her time without the demands of husband and children. After her father died, she lived with her mother and sister Cassandra keeping house, seeing friends, and visiting the other members of her large family. Her brothers all married, and Austen had many nieces and nephews to keep her company.

Most important, Austen wrote. Her earliest poems, plays, and novels date from her teenage

years. Even those works poke fun at the society around her, for Austen was a natural satirist.

The novels of Austen's maturity all center around young women—intelligent, perceptive, often witty who still have much to learn about themselves and their world. Marianne Dashwood of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Elizabeth Bennett of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and Emma Woodhouse of *Emma* (1815) all

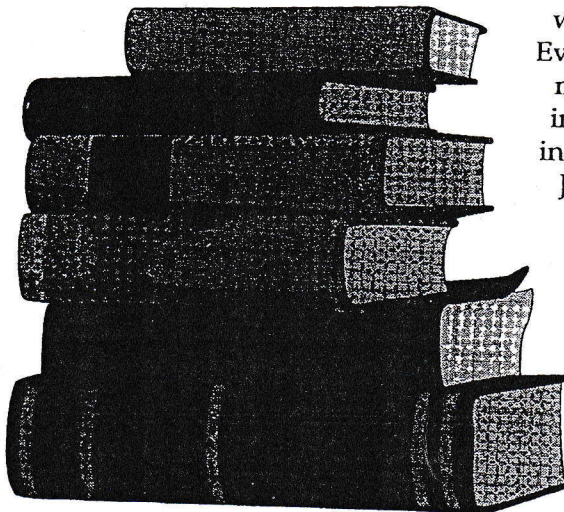
misjudge their own feelings and those of the young men with whom they are involved. Eventually, these heroines all make the right commitment in love, and the novels end in happiness and harmony.

Jane Austen completed just six novels before her early death at age forty-two. She signed her works By a

Lady, and few outside her immediate family knew she was an author. She took pains to keep her writing a secret. Her nephew later

recalled that she used to rely on the creaky door of her sitting room to warn her when visitors were arriving. At the first sound, she would slide her manuscript underneath the blotter of her writing desk.

Jane Austen's books were not very popular when they were first published. Contemporary audiences wanted more drama and sensation in their novels. Austen's reputation grew steadily over the course of the nineteenth century as more and more readers discovered her. Today, Jane Austen is considered one of the greatest novelists of all time.



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Answer Numbers 1 through 9. Base your answers on the article "Jane Austen: Pioneer."

1. Which of the following BEST describes Jane Austen's family background?

- A. a working-class family
- B. a family of intellectuals
- C. a lonely childhood
- D. a middle-class family

2. What can you infer the word "voraciously" means in the following excerpt?

Jane read voraciously, and through her father's collection, she became acquainted with a wide range of good literature?

- F. in a bored manner
- G. regretfully
- H. in a very eager way
- I. stubbornly

3. What does the word "satirist" mean in the passage?

- A. a person who writes sarcastically
- B. a person who writes with irony and humor
- C. a person who is satisfied
- D. a person with a natural talent

4. What caused Jane Austen to become interested in writing?

- F. the influence of her father's love of books
- G. her school teachers
- H. boredom
- I. her need for money

5. According to the passage, how did Jane Austen treat her writing?

- A. as if it were spiritual
- B. in a secretive manner
- C. carelessly
- D. as something she enjoyed sharing openly

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6. Why was Jane Austen often called the first modern novelist?

- F. She wrote about dashing heroes.
- G. Her heroines were very sentimental.
- H. She wrote about real people.
- I. Her novels were popular.

7. Which book did Jane Austen write *before Pride and Prejudice*?

- A. her autobiography
- B. *Sense and Sensibility*
- C. a novel about dashing heroes
- D. *Emma*

8.

READ
THINK
EXPLAIN

What is another good title for the passage about Jane Austen? Support your answer with details and information from the passage.

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