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A. Synopsis of the Novel

Emma Woodhouse is Highbury's most eligible young woman. But possessing fortune, entertainment and consequence and professing it against her nature to fall in love Emma has neither inducement nor inclination to marry. Her romantic fantasies and attentions are, and attentions are instead directed towards matchmaking. After claiming as a personal success, the marriage of her governess, Miss Taylor, to Mr. Weston, Emma fixes upon making a match between her friend Harriet Smith and Highbury's handsome vicar, Mr. Elton despite stern warnings from her trusted friend and brother-in-law Mr. Knightley. Emma feeds Harriet's infatuation and is so blinded by her own plan that she misinterprets Mr. Elton's behavior. She is surprised and insulted when Mr. Elton proposes to Emma herself and she resolves against further matchmaking.

When Frank Churchill arrives, Emma's imagines ways are given a fresh outlet. Despite Mr. Knightley's suspicions about Frank's character, Emma finds the young man charming and handsome. His attentions are flattering, and she soon imagines herself in love with him. Emma is less enthused about Jane Fairfax's return to Highbury. Mr. Knightley, however, sees much to admire in the elegant and accomplished Miss Fairfax and reproves Emma for her lack of attention to her. Mrs. Weston sees Mr. Knightley's regard and concern for Jane as evidence of an attachment, a suggestion Emma treats with scorn and alarm. While Highbury's gentry,

including Mr. Elton's brash new wife socialize at balls, dinners and picnics, Frank and Emma continue to flirt.

Mr. Knightley, still suspicious of Frank and worried by exchanges he has witnessed between he and Jane, warns Emma of Frank's possible duplicity. Emma laughs off this suggestion. She has already dismissed him as suitor and instead marked him as a desirable match for Harriet. Emma's continued flirtation with Mr. Frank annoys Knightley and he is incensed when Emma publicly insults Miss Bates, a well-respected and kind-hearted spinster. Emma weeps after Mr. Knightley's reprimand. Mrs. Churchill, Frank's demanding aunt, dies. Free now to marry as he wishes, an unexpected announcement is made: Frank and Jane are secretly engaged. Emma is worried for Harriet, whom she believes to be in love with Frank, and is appalled to learn that Mr. Knightley is Harriet's object. Emma is shocked by Harriet's presumption in looking so high as Mr. Knightley and distressed by Harriet's conviction that her affections are returned. She quickly realizes that this distress is because she herself loves Mr. Knightley. After some torturous days believing he might love Harriet.

Mr. Knightley declares he loves her, not Harriet. Mr. Knightley is delighted and surprised to learn that Emma returns the affection. After a short period of secrecy to protect Emma's frail and stubborn father, Emma and Mr. Knightley's engagement is announced. Harriet accepts a second proposal from Robert Martin, a respectable farmer whom Emma made Harriet refuse months earlier. The novel ends with three weddings: that of

Harriet to Robert Martin, Jane to Frank and Emma to Mr. Knightley. Taken from: Ruth Thomas, Jane Austen Emma.

B. Biography of the Author

Jane Austen was a Georgian era author, best known for her social commentary in novels including *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*. The seventh child and second daughter of Cassandra and George Austen, Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, in Steventon, Hampshire, England. Jane's parents were well-respected community members. Her father served as the Oxford-educated rector for a nearby Anglican parish. The family was close, and the children grew up in an environment that stressed learning and creative thinking.

When Jane was young, she and her siblings were encouraged to read from their father's extensive library. The children also authored and put on plays and charades. Over the span of her life, Jane would become especially close to her father and older sister, Cassandra. Indeed, she and Cassandra would one day collaborate on a published work. In order to acquire a more formal education, Jane and Cassandra were sent to boarding schools during Jane's pre-adolescence. During this time, Jane and her sister caught typhus, with Jane nearly succumbing to the illness

In the 1790s, during her adolescence, she started to craft her own novels and wrote *Love and Friendships*, a parody of romantic fiction organized as a series of love letters. Using that framework, she unveiled her wit and dislike

of sensibility, or romantic hysteria, a distinct perspective that would eventually characterize much of her later writing. The next year she wrote *The History of England*, a 34-page parody of historical writing that included illustrations drawn by Cassandra. These notebooks, encompassing the novels as well as short stories, poems and plays, are now referred to as *Jane's Juvenilia*.

Jane spent much of her early adulthood helping run the family home, playing piano, attending church, and socializing with neighbors. Her nights and weekends often involved cotillions, and as a result, she became an accomplished dancer. On other evenings, she would choose a novel from the shelf and read it aloud to her family, occasionally one she had written herself. She continued to write, developing her style in more ambitious works such as *Lady Susan*, another epistolary story about a manipulative woman who uses her sexuality, intelligence and charm to have her way with others. Jane also started to write some of her future major works, the first called *Elinor and Marianne*, another story told as a series of letters, which would eventually be published as *Sense and Sensibility*. She began drafts of *First Impressions*, which would later be published as *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Susan*, later published as *Northanger Abbey* by Jane's brother, Henry, following Jane's death.

In 1801, Jane moved to Bath with her father, mother and Cassandra. Then, in 1805, her father died after a short illness. As a result, the family was thrust into financial straits; the three women moved from place to place, skipping between the homes of various family members to rented flats. It was not until 1809 that they were able to settle into a stable living situation at Jane's brother Edward's cottage in Chawton.

In the period spanning 1811-16, she pseudonymously published *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* (a work she referred to as her "darling child," which also received critical acclaim), *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. In 1816, at the age of 41, Jane started to become ill with what some say might have been Addison's disease. She made impressive efforts to continue working at a normal pace, editing older works as well as starting a new novel called *The Brothers*, which would be published after her death as *Sanditon*. At some point, Jane's condition deteriorated to such a degree that she ceased writing. She died on July 18 1817 in Winchester, Hampshire England. While Austen received some accolades for her works while still alive, with her first three novels garnering critical attention and increasing financial reward, it was not until after her death that her brother Henry revealed to the public that she was an author.

Today, Austen is considered one of the greatest writers in English history, both by academics and the general public. In 2002, as part of a BBC poll, the British public voted her No. 70 on a list of "100 Most Famous Britons of All Time." Austen's transformation from little-known to

internationally renowned author began in the 1920s, when scholars began to recognize her works as masterpieces, thus increasing her general popularity. The Janeites, a Jane Austen fan club, eventually began to take on wider significance, like the Trekkie phenomenon that characterizes the fans of the Star Trek franchise. The popularity of her work is also evident in the many film and TV adaptations of *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*, as well as the TV series and film *Clueless*, which was based on *Emma*. Austen was in the worldwide news in 2007, when author David Lassman submitted to several publishing houses a few of her manuscripts with slight revisions under a different name, and they were routinely rejected. He chronicled the experience in an article titled "Rejecting Jane".