

Name _____

Date _____

Jane Austen

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. A novel of manners is a work of fiction that concerns itself with the everyday traditions and values of a real-life society. Jane Austen was an innovator of this style, penning novels that depicted 19th-century English gentry families like her own. In such a novel, the society's customs provide the backdrop of all conflict. Characters are distinguished as either living up to the expectations of their surroundings or clashing with them. Notably in Austen's work, the central characters were often women being evaluated against the institution of marriage.

Which of the following best describes a situation that could be the setup for a novel of manners?

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| A. A family hosts a young suitor hoping to marry their eldest daughter | B. A young man from the country enlists in the army to fight in World War I |
| C. A government employee begins planning a revolt against an oppressive regime | D. The eccentric millionaire next door keeps hosting parties to attract the attention of his lost love |

2. **Pride and Prejudice,** Austen's best-known novel, was published in three volumes in 1813. The relationship between Elizabeth Bennet, daughter of a well-to-do country family, and the wealthy suitor Mr. Darcy lies at the center of the novel. Although it is set contemporary to Austen's life, the exact time period covered in the novel is ambiguous. In keeping with the society in which she lived, Austen's characters' everyday lives are uninfluenced by politics and world events. Austen depicts the concerns of wealthy landowners with satire and wit, while Elizabeth, an educated and self-assured woman, pokes fun at all around her. However, Austen does not forsake the power of romantic love, as the novel concludes with the joyous union of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy.

Based on the passage, with which of these statements would Jane Austen most likely agree?

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| A. Women should find a wealthy husband early in life to avoid heartache. | B. There is humor to be found in the everyday concerns of wealthy people. |
| C. True love is rarely found between people of different social classes. | D. In times of war, traditions like marriage are more important than ever. |

3. Jane Austen was one of the first novelists to write about common people—that is, civilians of middle-class or upper-middle-class standing, rather than nobility or soldiers. She remained anonymous during her lifetime. But her name has become synonymous with plots of ordinary women rising through social ranks and finding true love through the power of their intuition and grace. (If this story sounds familiar, you may recognize it from the massive number of romantic comedies in books, film, and television that use similar plots.) The heroines of Jane Austen's novels possess wit and worldliness that outmatches the relatively sheltered lives they lived in the English countryside, making for some of the most enduring portraits of complex young women in classic literature.

What is the main idea of this passage?

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| A. Jane Austen's novels were mostly considered popular entertainment during her lifetime, and not serious literature. | B. Jane Austen believed the difference between ordinary people and nobility is too vast for civilians to fully grasp. |
| C. Jane Austen was a pioneer of stories about ordinary people, especially for her depictions of intelligent young women. | D. Romantic comedy as we know it today derives entirely from the plots of Jane Austen's novels. |