

Name _____ Date _____

Jane Austen

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b”

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.

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Notes

2. b”

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.

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Notes

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.

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