

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



JOHN SUTHERLAND AND
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*So You Think You Know
Jane Austen?
A Literary Quizbook*



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INTRODUCTION

FOR most of the last century, Oxford University Press was the self-appointed custodian of the reputation of Jane Austen—a reputation which had some notable fluctuations before she became established as one of the two or three greatest novelists our literature has produced. R. W. Chapman's five-volume edition of the major fiction established a new standard of textual accuracy and discreet annotation when it first came out in 1923. Over the following decades Chapman edited and published the author's letters, her 'minor works', and those family materials that have formed the nucleus of all subsequent biographies of Austen. In the mid-1960s Chapman's edition was re-edited as *The Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen* by Mary Lascelles and Brian Southam (in six volumes). In 1995 OUP published Deirdre Le Faye's new and enlarged edition of Austen's letters.

For the general reader, OUP produced its handsome hardback 'World's Classics' editions which supplied generations of Janeites until the 1950s. Three decades later the paperback, annotated World's Classics (now Oxford World's Classics) editions of the novels were launched.

This small book will occupy a small corner in OUP's Austen library. It is derived from a teaching method which can conveniently be called 'Quiz and Questionnaire'. Essentially, it means approaching the text of a novel from two directions. The first assesses what one, as reader, knows factually (for example, 'how old is Catherine Morland when she makes her first entrance at the Upper Rooms at Bath?'). How well do you know, or remember, the narrative? The quiz will tell.

The second approach tests what one knows—or can plausibly construct—by deduction and hypothesis ('Has Catherine ever been to London?'). I have added to the mixture a few queries and quibbles and some interpretative problems. How deep can you get into the novel? Can you 'feel', seismographically, what is happening in the background of the novel, but not narrated? (Surely

Henry must know that the Morlands are not rich, and that his father is fooling himself?)

The pay-off from applying this two-pronged method to fiction like Jane Austen's is that she loads her stories with what Henry James called 'solidity of specification'. Real-world questions can legitimately be asked of realistic fiction. The advantage of Q & Q is, the authors contend, twofold: it is a pleasing way to read and, whatever its critical simple-mindedness, it brings the reader close to the text.

This book is primarily concerned with what can be discovered in the texts of the six novels, carefully read. Ideally, the reader should have at hand (in addition, of course, to the OWC annotated editions) Deirdre Le Faye's *Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels* (2002) which reconstructs the social and historical context to these richest of works.

So You Think You Know Jane Austen? originated in the pleasure which the authors take in the novels and their hope is that, in a small way, this challenge to reading expertise will enhance the pleasure that other readers take in *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion*. Would that the list were longer.

JOHN SUTHERLAND

Pride and Prejudice



Introductory Note on the Novel

Pride and Prejudice was written early (October 1796–August 1797) and published late, by Thomas Egerton (who paid £110 for the copyright, a price generated by the success of *Sense and Sensibility*) in January 1813. Initially entitled ‘First Impressions’, the text (a favourite with the Austen family) was probably revised (or as the author put it, ‘lop’t and crop’t’) a couple of years before its eventual acceptance. There are few historical markers in the text, but the narrative is probably set around the 1790s period of the initial composition. One of the principal markers is the billeting of militia troops in the Meryton area, among the civilian population. This practice ceased after 1795, with the construction of military barracks for such forces. Contemporary readers would probably have apprehended that the action of the novel was, therefore, antedated to an earlier wartime period.

Level One: Brass Tacks

1/1 Describe, with their Austenish epithet (or characteristic mark), the five Bennet girls, in order of age.

1/2 What does Mr Bingley wear on his first visit to the Bennets at Longbourn?

1/3 How many sisters does Mr Bingley have?

1/4 What is Mr Bennet's estate, Longbourn, worth, and who will eventually inherit it?

1/5 How old is Charlotte Lucas?

1/6 What first begins to attract Darcy to Elizabeth?

1/7 Who is the commanding officer of the militia regiment which has been posted in Meryton for the winter, and who is the regiment's second in command?

1/8 Where do the Bennet girls get their reading matter?

1/9 What relation is Mr Philips to Elizabeth, and what is his profession?

1/10 Who introduces Wickham to the Bennet young ladies, and what do we know of him?

1/11 How much did the chimney-piece in Lady Catherine's drawing-room cost?

1/12 How much does Wickham estimate that Pemberley is worth?

Level Two: Factual but Tricky

2/1 Lizzy is described as ‘trimming a hat’. What does this indicate?

2/2 How has Sir William Lucas enriched and ennobled himself?

2/3 What card-game do Jane and Bingley find they prefer?

2/4 Why does Elizabeth not play loo with the Bingley sisters?

2/5 Why is Miss Bingley so very keen to mend Darcy’s pen, as he is writing a letter to his sister?

2/6 What news do Lydia and Kitty bring Jane and Lizzy from Meryton, when the older sisters return from visiting Netherfield?

2/7 How long has Mr Collins been ordained, when he writes to Mr Bennet on 15 October?

2/8 How old is Georgiana Darcy?

2/9 What is the connection of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Lady Anne Darcy (deceased)?

2/10 How much money do we learn (from Mr Collins, who has taken care to find out) Elizabeth will bring to her marriage? And how much will Charlotte bring?

2/11 Why, as the narrator uncompromisingly informs us, does Charlotte accept Mr Collins, and what is Elizabeth’s one-word expletive on hearing that (three days after proposing to her, Miss Bennet) he has offered himself to Miss Lucas?

2/12 Why does Mr Gardiner, Mrs Bennet’s brother, come to Longbourn and what do we learn of him?

Level Three: Very Tricky—and Occasionally Deductive

3/1 Who informs Mrs Bennet that Netherfield Park is to be let, and what more do we learn of the lady subsequently in the narrative?

3/2 What should we read into the fact that Lydia is both the youngest and the tallest of the Bennet girls?

3/3 Why is Lizzy Mr Bennet's favourite and Mary his least favourite daughter?

3/4 What is Mrs Bennet's characteristic indisposition, and what do we deduce from it?

3/5 Why has Mr Bingley, who has been living in London, chosen to take a house in rural Hertfordshire?

3/6 How much annual income does Longbourn credit the eligible Mr Bingley with having, and where does it come from?

3/7 Why does Miss Bingley so abuse Elizabeth (about her dirty petticoat and 'country' manners, and so on)?

3/8 What are the implications of Darcy's remark, 'I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these'?

3/9 Where, cattily, does Miss Bingley suggest that the portrait of his future 'uncle and aunt Philips' (country attorney and his wife) be placed at Pemberley?

3/10 Why has Mr Collins offered his 'olive branch' to Mr Bennet?

3/11 What profession was Wickham first destined for, and what do we know of his back story?

Level Four: The Interpretative Zone

4/1 How long have Mr and Mrs Bennet been married (an easy question), and why on earth did he marry her (the most difficult question in the novel)?

4/2 What can we reconstruct of Mr and Mrs Bennet's 'back story'?

4/3 Why does Mr Bennet tease and tantalize his wife so?

4/4 When, at the Meryton ball that brings the principals together, Darcy makes his disagreeable remark that 'She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men', he is overheard by Elizabeth (and, as we apprehend, her mother). Does he mean to be overheard? Should we perhaps assume the music momentarily stopped? Is he, perhaps, a little deaf?

4/5 In conversation with Charlotte (who was at the Meryton ball), an exasperated Elizabeth says that Jane 'danced four dances with [Bingley]'. As the eagle-eyed Mrs Bennet notes (frequently), it was two dances only. What do we read into the error?

4/6 Why does Darcy, at the Netherfield ball, resolve to break up the romance between Bingley and Jane?

4/7 Why does Mr Collins ask Mrs Bennet's permission to propose to Elizabeth, but not Mr Bennet's? And why, three days later, does he propose to Charlotte without consulting either of the young lady's parents?

4/8 Why does not Mr Bennet encourage his heir, Mr Collins, in his addresses to his eligible daughters? If not Lizzy (whom he does not want to lose) then Mary?

John Sutherland, Deirdre Le Faye. How well do you really know your favourite author? Ace literary detective turned quizmaster John Sutherland and Austen buff Deirdre Le Faye challenge the reader to find out. Starting with easy, factual questions that test how well you remember a novel and its characters, the quiz progresses to a level of greater difficulty, demanding close reading and interpretative deduction. What really motivates the characters, and what is going on beneath the surface of the story? Designed to amuse and divert, the questions and answers take the reader on an imaginative journey. Get books you want. So You Think You Know Jane Austen? 2005. 3.7. 151 Ratings. 231 Pages. by John Sutherland. Deirdre Le Faye. Buy Add to Wishlist 0. What you seek is seeking you. Rumi. Authors' Books. Jane Austen's letters afford a unique insight into the daily life of the novelist: intimate and gossipy, observant and informative--they read much like the novels themselves. They bring alive her family and friends, her surroundings and contemporary events. Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels. by Deirdre Le Faye. 2003. 4.16. 1,607 Ratings. With a wealth of details about Jane Austen's life and times, this volume brings to life the world of her novels. Austen scholar Deirdre Le Faye first gives an overview of the period, from foreign affairs to social ranks, from fashion to sanitation.