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## The Role of Women in the Works of Jane Austen

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### ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to analyze and discuss the female character in the works of Jana Austin, one of the most talented works of English authors. For the first time in the history of English literature, Austen wrote all her works under her real name. Unlike other authors, she did not use any nickname. Jane Austen expressed her ideas about the roles and expectations of women in the 18th and 19th centuries. In this article, we will discuss the role of women and the sense of duty in terms of family, education and marriage in novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park*. The main point here is that Austen encourages his readers to learn and illustrate in their own lives. This study concludes how Austen emphasizes the importance of his novel in the society of his time. Moreover, its main characters are mostly women.

**KEYWORDS:** Jane Austen, the role of women, duty, 18-19th century, women's expectations, female character, novel.

Jane Austen was the first writer to write her works under her own name, rather than under a pseudonym like others. Austen's novels depict the roles of women in the 18th and 19th centuries. During this period, society expected women to perform a wide range of duties as a wife and mother. The main characters of Austen's works are women, financially independent, able to express their own opinions and have the right to choose, despite the fact that they are under the control of the other sex. The main character of *Pride and Prejudice*, named Bennet, refused to get married for reasons of financial security, instead she chooses a marriage for love, that is, she can express her emotions. Another female character, Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, believes education and self-improvement are important. She loves to read, study and enjoys improving herself. She also uses her knowledge to solve social problems. Apparently in *Emma*, Emma Woodhouse is highly educated and knowledgeable, and she can make friends with her intelligence.

Even though women have so many strengths in society, in Austen's works they also have weaknesses related to the people around them. By getting married, the heroines of Austen's

novels can gain their status in society and ensure financial stability. Choosing the right partner is important in Austen's novels because the chosen partner lives forever together: sharing love, respect, values, money - that's all. Women in Austen's works such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are described as free to choose a suitable husband for themselves. Moreover, they are not the passive object of novels.

In her novels, Austen emphasizes that women have limited opportunities in society. The woman was expected to be flexible in every branch, namely modest, obedient and homely. Austen's female characters break the strict rules that existed at the time. For example, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* prefers to marry for love, so she refused to marry for money. So, Austen illustrates the importance of women being isolated from male-dominated spheres. Austen's novels also feature female leaders in society. Austen herself has leadership abilities, so she wants to see her own character and abilities in her female characters. Austen wanted to show her leadership abilities through the example of her heroines such as Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, Anne Eliot, Elinor Dashwood and Catherine Morland. Another important point here is that Austen was very keen to show everyone the women leaders of the 18th century, and her work still plays a big role today. This article concludes that Austen was a womanist writer: she always wrote about women and the capable, leadership, knowledgeable, and active women of the 18th century. Moreover, these heroines can be an example for our young ladies.

Jane Austen shows the importance of women's financial independence. Austen's heroines deeply want and try to successfully marry someone who can give them an independent life. Living with a partner who is supportive in all areas, including financially and mentally, can help women become enriched both mentally and financially. With love, you will learn about some of the female characters such as Elizabeth Bennet, Anne Eliot, Emma and Catherine Morland. Each heroine has its own characteristics. There is a great struggle between love and hate, marriage for love and marriage for financial independence. Social norms and family play a large role in the lives of Austen's heroines. For example, in *Mansfield Park*, marrying for love is preferred over wealth for the Fanny Price, even though this does not conform to the social norms of the time.

Austen said societal expectations also impact women's mental health. You can take the example of Anne Elliot from *Persuasion*, she can reject all the decisions made in adolescence and the man she loves due to social pressure. First, she regrets those decisions, but she was glad that she was able to make the decision herself. Austen describes her female characters as subject to different double standards than her male characters. For example, Lydia Bennet runs away with a boy named Mr. Wickham, which brings shame to her family, but her partner is free of shame, but unfortunately social expectations prevent them from achieving their goals. For example, in *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland is negatively affected by society's expectations and family pressure, but she asserts her independence and autonomy. Austen describes love, marriage, and relationships in her novels and discusses their impact on the lives of her heroines. Even though marriage was a great goal for women at that time. Austen's heroines struggle with the tension between love and social expectations. Moreover, Austen often criticizes the social pressure placed on women to achieve financial security. Society does not support marriage for love and communication. Social class also played a large role in women's lives and education in Austen's time.

Austen portrays her heroine Elizabeth Bennet as a proud woman. Because we may come across some idioms while reading her novel. For example, Elizabeth always thinks about her family and parents, so she does not show her emotions to Mr. Darcy, although she loves him. But she never gives up her personal desires for the sake of her parents' desires. We see that Elizabeth lives in the midst of her individual life and the desires of others, namely social norms and the desires of her parents. The other heroine, Anne Eliot, is a different person who puts the wishes of others first. Therefore, she lives among difficulties. But she helps others in difficult times thanks to her beautiful and kind heart. She is also well educated and loves literature. Another heroine named Emma differs significantly from other Austen heroines. She is initially rich and

can fight for her love. Through her works, Austen emphasized the importance of inner strength and confidence. Austen wants to show that if women are mentally rich and strong, it can make it easier for our society to prosper.

Jane Austen was a female leader of the 18th century. She influences our current society through her female characters and their status in society through her novels. The influence of wealth and social class on women's lives was shown in her novels. Austen shows what society expects from a woman. Austen shows the strengths women have. The inner strength of a woman is the most important theme in Austen's work. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet is described as a beautiful and strong woman. Through the characters Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, Austen wants to show his strong desire to love. She fights against society, social class and even her own intentions. Because of her deep love for her family, Elizabeth renounces her own love for Mr. Darcy. On the contrary, Lizzie can easily give up marriage in order to live on her own, although she also loves her family and parents. She never changes her mind because she enjoys her surroundings. Elizabeth and Lizzie are the heart of the novel.

Most writers use pseudonyms in their literary works and cast male or female characters in the main roles. But Jane Austen did not use any nickname and, unlike other writers, she mainly chose women as the main characters of her novels. The woman was expected to be flexible in every branch, namely modest, obedient and homely. Austen's female characters break the strict rules that existed at the time. For example, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* prefers to marry for love, so she refused to marry for money. So, Austen illustrates the importance of women being isolated from male-dominated spheres. Her heroines are active and never tire of striving for a happy life, getting an education, loving their soulmate and taking their rightful place in society. In this article, the comparative method is widely used to reveal the essence of the study. All of Austen's works were compared, such as "*Sense and Sensibility*", "*Pride and Prejudice*", "*Northanger Abbey*" and others, as well as the main characters from the above: Elizabeth Bennet, Katherine Morland and others. Because female characters in Austen's works are women, they cannot be more educated than men. Elizabeth, Emma, Catherine and Eliot are compared to each other based on their various characteristics.

If women in one society are not educated enough, how can they impart knowledge to the younger generation? Austen's goal was to solve this problem. She really wanted women to be well educated so that they could try to find their future happiness. In addition, she wanted women to choose their future mates themselves. Because women live together all their lives. Neither society nor family members should choose a husband for their daughters, this is Austen's agenda. One of the key aspects of the role of ladies in Austen's works is that they have the ability to choose their own destinies. However, financial security in Austen's novels can be achieved through marriage. In addition, all of Austen's novels were written during a time of changing worldviews. We see that Austen did not use a pseudonym for his works. She used her real name instead.

Women's hearts were opened thanks to Austen's novels. financial and social status. Romance may seem lackluster when it is However, Austen's heroines are not without problems. The prospects of their marriage depend on them having to find a balance between both, as well as overcome family crises, personal affairs and the dangers of an unequal society. Despite such adversity, the heroines go through the trials and tribulations of dating. Amid the unwanted attention from suitors, unrequited love, and the dangers of infatuation, there's one thing Austen gets right: the ups and downs of courtship.

The dating landscape has changed a bit over the past few centuries. Instead of meeting your partner during a waltz at a village ball, it is easier to meet over a cup of coffee in a cafe or at a performance at the Theater. And Austen would probably be shocked by today's online dating culture.

But perhaps she would be happy to see her heroines, unhampered by the social standards of their

time, take greater control over their futures. Men would no longer have “the privilege of choice, women only the right of refusal,” as Austen wrote in *Northanger Abbey*.

Anne Elliot is rich and polite and certainly subservient to her family's wishes, which is why she turned down the captain's original marriage proposal many years ago. However, many would consider Anna too old to make a good bride. You could be in society and looking for a husband from the age of 15, and by the age of 26 you were seen as on a shelf. Most Austen heroines get married at 19.

Next to the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*. Catherine Morland is the youngest heroine to get married, but despite her youth, Catherine is far from an ideal woman, since she reads primarily novels! This put ideas into her head that eventually led to her belief that General Tilney was some sort of crazy wife-killer. *Northanger Abbey* highlights the dangers of reading too many of the gothic novels popular at the time, satirizing the genre and showing how much trouble they got Catherine Morland into. Thus, Katherine is too naive and reads too much to be considered an ideal woman.

In conclusion, Jane Austen portrays the role of unique, capable and intelligent women. The lifestyle of the main characters encourages readers to be self-confident and encourages them to be able to make their own choices rather than being pressured by society and family. Themes of love, marriage, education, intelligence, freedom, sisterhood were explored in the context of a society that greatly limited women's opportunities. Various social norms have tried to prevent women from achieving their goals. Austen's heroines are mostly women - well-educated, active, capable and intelligent ladies.

In general, in his novels, Austen describes the complexity of the role of women in the society of his time. Despite the fact that society expected women to be under a different social center and do what the norms said. Austen's female characters tried to achieve their destiny. Because they are able to make decisions themselves. All the female characters described above are mentally rich and educated, self-confident and kind-hearted ladies. Each of them has their own thought. Austen's works can motivate our young generation to study hard, live with their own ideas, and through these characters, our young generation can also help improve our society.

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