

Jane Austen: Iconic Literary Figure [B1]

È l'autrice di lingua inglese più letta al mondo e la sua opera ha ispirato innumerevoli adattamenti. Maestra nell'arte del dialogo e acuta osservatrice delle relazioni umane, ha contribuito a fare del romanzo uno dei generi di intrattenimento più popolari.



Jane Austen is one of the most important writers in the world. She wrote just six books in her brief life — she died aged forty-one — but it was enough to [ensure](#) her worldwide fame. The English novel as an art form had arrived just a few decades before her birth in 1775, with works by writers such as Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, but novels only became modern with her books, with [their](#) realistic treatment of normal people living [ordinary](#) lives.

MIDDLE-CLASS LIFE

In her novels she [depicted](#) in superb prose for the first time the [ordinary](#) life of England's middle classes. Austen's funny, [cleverly](#)-observed novels have remained critical and popular successes for over two hundred years. The daughter of a [rector](#), she shared her childhood in Steventon, Hampshire, with seven [siblings](#). She was born into the world of the minor landed gentry

and country clergy living in villages and local towns, with visits to [sociable](#) Bath and the capital London. She used these [settings](#) and characters to talk about society, [social manners](#) and [matchmaking](#) — fundamental in those days.

UNKNOWN LIFE

We know very little about Austen. Did she ever find love, for example? Society dictated marriage for women of her class. She was almost married to a rich [heir](#) but [called it off](#). After Austen died in 1817, from unknown causes, dying with her head in the [lap](#) of her beloved sister Cassandra, her letters were censored or destroyed.

ANONYMOUS GENIUS

Austen was a literary genius but she had to publish her novels anonymously in those days because she was a woman. Her brother Henry announced her [authorship](#) late in her life. Austen did however receive favourable [reviews](#) for her works, with critics emphasizing her morality, entertaining dialogues and character description. More importantly, some [praised](#) her concentration on domestic realism rather than the [then-current](#) obsession with romantic melodrama. The public loved her literary satire and comic descriptions.

It is a truth universally [acknowledged](#), that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must [be in want of](#) a wife.

COMEDIES OF MANNERS

Jane Austen is famous for her literary style. Her books were comedies of manners with [sharply](#)-written [insights](#). She wrote about young women's journeys of self-discovery through love to marriage. [Witty](#), realistic, with an [effortless](#) prose style, she combined brilliant construction with [astonishing](#) empathy and [storytelling](#) skills.

UNRECOGNISED LOSS

When Austen died, she was still unknown to much of the country. There was no recognition that England had lost one of its sharpest observers and analysts of society and culture. Now the world knows her [achievements](#). Jane Austen made women the centre of her books, and she brought the modern, [ordinary](#) world into the reading lives of millions of people around the globe.

Glossary

- **Witty** = ingegnosa
- **effortless** = naturale
- **rector** = parroco
- **lap** = grembo
- **reviews** = recensioni
- **then-current** = allora in voga
- **be in want of** = bisognoso di
- **sharply** = acutamente
- **achievements** = successi
- **astonishing** = straordinaria
- **cleverly** = brillantemente
- **settings** = scenari
- **social manners** = costumi sociali, usanze
- **heir** = erede
- **called it off** = cancellare
- **acknowledged** = ammettere
- **authorship** = paternità (di opere letterarie)
- **ensure** = garantire
- **ordinary** = comuni
- **depicted** = descrivere
- **siblings** = fratelli (e sorelle)
- **sociable** = socievole, piacevole
- **matchmaking** = combinare matrimoni
- **praised** = lodare
- **insights** = riflessioni
- **storytelling** = narrativa