

Jane Austen Essay Contest

Sponsored by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Grand Prize \$250
Runner-Up \$ 50

UPDATE - The below topics are **OPTIONAL** for UT Undergraduates. For the college level, feel free to submit on any topic related to Jane Austen's novels.

DIRECTIONS: Read the prompts below and write an essay on a selected topic. Prizes will be given at **BOTH** the high school and college levels.

Knox High School Deadline: Email your paper to your English teacher by February 27, 2017.

University of Tennessee Undergraduate Deadline: Email your submissions to austenfestessaycontest@gmail.com by March 15, 2017.

Winners will be announced during AustenFest at UT on April 6, 2017.

1. What does Jane Austen have to say about growing up? Focus on one of Austen's heroines and discuss three or four of the most important events which trigger her development, often from a flawed adolescent to a mature young woman. You may select any text by Jane Austen. Please use specific details to support your thesis.
2. Jane Austen's texts are celebrated for their romantic plots and their use of irony. But does she tend to link romance and irony together? Using any novel by Jane Austen, argue either for the connection of or the distance between romance and irony. Please use specific details to support your thesis.
3. The novel *Emma* takes place entirely in the quiet village of Highbury, among settled country neighbors; readers might naturally expect to find descriptions of "safety" and "security" throughout the narrative. Surprisingly, events and emotions featuring "danger," "pain," and "risk" actually occur more frequently in the novel. Discuss the ways in which a character or characters from *Emma* pose danger to each other, avoiding the obvious (Emma's relationship to Harriet Smith, for example) in favor of the unexpected. (Adapted from the JASNA 2007 Essay Contest)
4. The Victorian writers who followed Jane Austen later in the nineteenth century often depicted a dramatic range of social classes. In contrast, Austen's focus in *Emma* is more narrow, essentially only depicting the middle class since none of the characters are either extremely wealthy or extremely poor. Nevertheless like the larger outside world, the society is quite rigidly stratified. How is community depicted? What defines each group economically, culturally and socially? (Adapted from the Signet Classics 2012 Scholarship Contest)

5. *Pride and Prejudice* had the original, working title *First Impressions*. Why is *Pride and Prejudice* a better title? In what ways are Darcy and Elizabeth guilty of both pride and prejudice and how does this drive the action of the story? (Adapted from the One Book, One Chicago reading project)

6. Catherine's suspicions of Gothic evils in *Northanger Abbey* turn out to be in error, the fantasies of an inexperienced adolescent with an overactive imagination--or do they? Is there actual evil in the novel (or do the characters merely suffer from mutual illusions and misimpressions)? If there is real evil, what is its nature, where does it lie, and what, if anything, is its connection with Catherine's Gothic illusions?