'I wonder what will become of her!' So speculate the friends and neighbours of Emma Woodhouse, the lovely, lively, wilful, and fallible heroine of Jane Austen’s fourth published novel. Confident that she knows best, Emma schemes to find a suitable husband for her pliant friend Harriet, only to discover that she understands the feelings of others as little as she does her own heart. As Emma puzzles and blunders her way through the mysteries of her social world, Austen evokes for her readers a cast of unforgettable characters and a detailed portrait of a small town undergoing historical transition. Written with matchless wit and irony, judged by many to be her finest novel, Emma has been adapted many times for film and television. This new edition shows how Austen brilliantly turns the everyday into the exceptional.

‘Me!’ cried Fanny … ‘Indeed you must excuse me. I could not act any thing if you were to give me the world. No, indeed, I cannot act.’ At the age of ten, Fanny Price leaves the poverty of her Portsmouth home to be brought up among the family of her wealthy uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram, in the chilly grandeur of Mansfield Park. There she accepts her lowly status, and gradually falls in love with her cousin Edmund. When the dazzling and sophisticated Henry and Mary Crawford arrive, Fanny watches as her cousins become embroiled in rivalry and sexual jealousy. As the company starts to rehearse a play by way of entertainment, Fanny struggles to retain her independence in the face of the Crawfords’
dangerous attractions; and when Henry turns his attentions to her, the drama really begins…

This new edition does full justice to Austen’s complex and subtle story, placing it in its Regency context and elucidating the theatrical background that pervades the novel.

Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon

Jane Austen, and Claudia L. Johnson

John Davie (ed.), and James Kinsley (ed.)

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Format: book

‘… in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty.’ Northanger Abbey is about the misadventures of Catherine Morland, young, ingenuous, and mettlesome, and an indefatigable reader of gothic novels. Their romantic excess and dark overstatement feed her imagination, as tyrannical fathers and diabolical villains work their evil on forlorn heroines in isolated settings. What could be more remote from the uneventful securities of life in the midland counties of England? Yet as Austen brilliantly contrasts fiction with reality, ordinary life takes a more sinister turn, and edginess and circumspection are reaffirmed alongside comedy and literary burlesque. Also including Austen's other short fictions, Lady Susan, The Watsons, and Sanditon, this valuable new edition examines the ambitious and innovative works with which she inaugurated as well as closed her career.

Persuasion

Jane Austen, and Deidre Shauna Lynch

James Kinsley (ed.)

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‘She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older - the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning.’ Anne Elliot seems to have given up on present happiness and has resigned herself to living off her memories. More than seven years earlier she complied with duty: persuaded to view the match as imprudent and improper, she broke off her engagement to a naval captain with neither fortune, ancestry, nor prospects. However, when peacetime arrives and brings the Navy home, and Anne encounters Captain Wentworth once more, she starts to believe in second chances. Persuasion celebrates romantic constancy in an era of turbulent change. Written as the Napoleonic Wars were ending, the novel examines how a woman can at once remain faithful to her past and still move forward into the future.
'He began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention'. Pride and Prejudice, one of the most famous love stories of all time, has also proven itself as a treasured mainstay of the English literary canon. With the arrival of eligible young men in their neighbourhood, the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters are turned inside out and upside down. Pride encounters prejudice, upward-mobility confronts social disdain, and quick-wittedness challenges sagacity. Misconceptions and hasty judgements bring heartache and scandal, but eventually lead to true understanding, self-knowledge, and love. It’s almost impossible to open Pride and Prejudice without feeling the pressure of so many readers having known and loved this novel already. Will you fail the test - or will you love it too? As a story that celebrates more unflinchingly than any of Austen’s other novels the happy meeting-of-true-minds, and one that has attracted the most fans over the centuries, Pride and Prejudice sets up an echo chamber of good feelings in which romantic love and the love of reading amplify each other.

Sanditon

Jane Austen

Kathryn Sutherland (ed.)

‘No person could be really well … without spending at least six weeks by the sea every year’ In Sanditon, Jane Austen writes what may well be the first seaside novel: a novel, that is, that explores the mysterious and startling transformations that a stay by the sea can work on individuals and relationships. Sanditon is a fictitious place on England’s south coast and the obsession of local landowner Mr Thomas Parker. He means to transform this humble fishing village into a fashionable health resort to rival its famous neighbours of Brighton and Eastbourne. In this, her final, unfinished work, the writer sets aside her familiar subject matter, the country village with its settled community, for the transient and eccentric assortment of people who drift to the new resort, the town built upon sand. If the ground beneath her characters’ feet appears less secure, Austen’s own vision is opening out. Light and funny, Sanditon is her most experimental and poignant work.
‘Pray, pray be composed,’ cried Elinor, ‘and do not betray what you feel to everybody present. Perhaps he has not observed you yet.’ For Elinor Dashwood, sensible and sensitive, and her romantic, impetuous younger sister Marianne, the prospect of marrying the men they love appears remote. In a world ruled by money and self-interest, the Dashwood sisters have neither fortune nor connections. Concerned for others and for social proprieties, Elinor is ill-equipped to compete with self-centred fortune-hunters like Lucy Steele, whilst Marianne’s unswerving belief in the truth of her own feelings makes her more dangerously susceptible to the designs of unscrupulous men. Through her heroines’ parallel experiences of love, loss, and hope, Jane Austen offers a powerful analysis of the ways in which women’s lives were shaped by the claustrophobic society in which they had to survive.