# Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen, 1813

How does Austen present attitudes to marriage and social ambition in this extract? In your response, analyse how Austen reflects attitudes towards relationships and class in Regency England.

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

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families that he is considered as the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters.

'My dear Mr. Bennet,' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

'But it is,' returned she; 'for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.'

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

'Do not you want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife impatiently.

'You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.'

This was invitation enough.

'Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.'

'What is his name?'

'Bingley.'

'Is he married or single?'

'Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!'

'How so? how can it affect them?'

'My dear Mr. Bennet,' replied his wife, 'how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.'

# Oliver Twist – Charles Dickens, 1837

How does Dickens use language and imagery to create a vivid portrayal of poverty and social decay in Victorian London?

A dirtier or more wretched place [London] he had never seen. The street was narrow and muddy, and the air thick with foul odours. The buildings were old and decayed; many of the windows were broken or patched with paper. Heaps of filth lay in the road, and pools of stagnant water reflected the flickering light of the lamps. The footpaths were uneven, and the drains overflowed with the waste of the city.

There were small, dark shops set into the crooked line of houses, though few seemed open. The most visible signs of life came from the public-houses, where ragged men and women loitered under the lamps or staggered out with flushed faces and stumbling feet.

Children, thin and barefoot, sat huddled on doorsteps or played noisily in the gutter, shouting in rough, broken voices. Even at that hour, there were groups of women arguing in the streets or leaning out of windows to hurl insults at passers-by.

Oliver, small and clean among such filth and noise, clung closer to the Artful Dodger, who was leading him through this confusion with great confidence. The Dodger whistled as he walked, nodding now and then to men who grinned back at him in the darkness.

As they passed a row of tenements, a sudden cry rose from an upper window, followed by loud weeping. No one looked up. A man lying drunk in a doorway gave a snore and turned over. The stink of smoke, gin, and refuse made Oliver's head swim.

"This here's where we're a'most home," said the Dodger cheerfully, jerking his thumb at a side street even darker than the one they were in.

Oliver's heart sank. Every step took him deeper into this maze of squalor. The buildings leaned towards each other like weary old men. He had never seen such misery — and yet the people here moved through it as if it were ordinary.

"Ain't so bad, once you're used to it," said the Dodger, seeming to read his thoughts. "Plenty o' company. You'll get along."

But Oliver was silent. He could find no words to describe the dreadful contrast between the noisy horror around him and the countryside he had left behind. He felt as if he had fallen into some great dark pit from which there would be no escape.

# Jane Eyre – Charlotte Bronte, 1847

How does Brontë use language and setting to explore Jane's experience of fear and injustice? In your response, analyse how Jane's emotions and perspective are conveyed, and how the Red Room becomes a symbol of her oppression.

I resisted all the way: a new thing for me; and a circumstance which greatly strengthened the bad opinion Bessie and Miss Abbot were disposed to entertain of me.

“Hold her arms, Miss Abbot: she’s like a mad cat.”

“For shame! for shame!” cried the lady’s-maid. “What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress’s son! Your young master.”

“Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?”

“No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down, and think over your wickedness.”

They had got me by this time into the apartment indicated by Mrs. Reed and shut the door and bolted it.

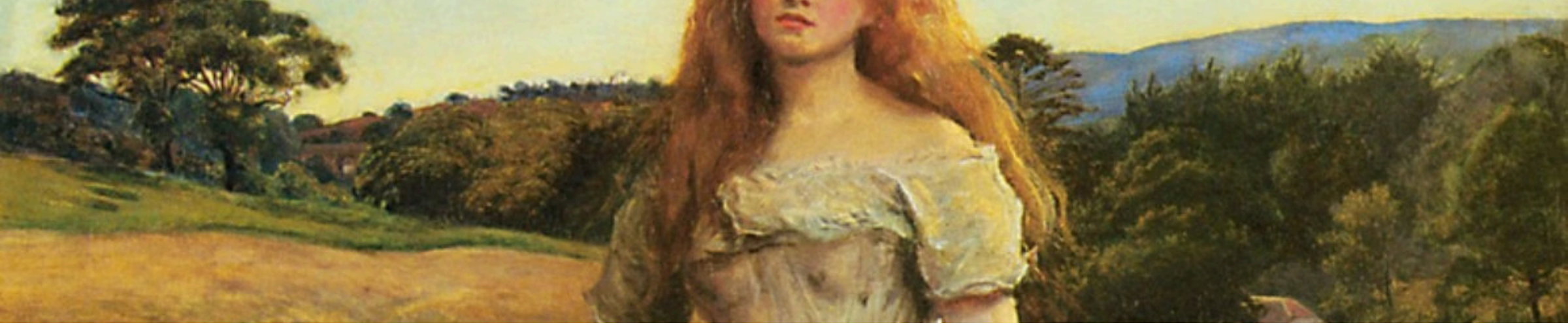
I was a precocious actress in her eyes; she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity.

The red room was a spare chamber, very seldom slept in, and yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion. A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre; the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of darkly polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane.

This room was chill, silent, and solemn. It was in this chamber that my uncle had breathed his last. My soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if I had made a stand — as if I had repelled something repugnant to me with energy and with success.

But then my courage sank. My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire. All said I was wicked, and perhaps I might be so. What thought had I been but just conceiving? Frightened by the stillness around me and the ghostly possibility of my uncle’s spirit, I began to remember hearing that he had made Mrs. Reed promise to care for me as her own child.

I was a trifle beside myself — or rather *out* of myself. Unconsciousness closed the scene.



# Tess of the D'Urbervilles – Thomas Hardy, 1891

How does Hardy use language and imagery in this extract to explore the relationship between nature and human activity? Consider how the descriptions of the landscape and the work of the labourers.

Thus steadied by a command from the only person in the world who had any shadow of right to control her action, Tess grew calmer. The responsibility was shifted, and her heart was lighter than it had been for weeks. The days of declining autumn which followed her assent, beginning with the month of October, formed a season through which she lived in spiritual altitudes more nearly approaching ecstasy than any other period of her life.

Thus, during this October month of wonderful afternoons they roved along the meads by creeping paths which followed the brinks of trickling tributary brooks, hopping across by little wooden bridges to the other side, and back again. They were never out of the sound of some purling weir, whose buzz accompanied their own murmuring, while the beams of the sun, almost as horizontal as the mead itself, formed a pollen of radiance over the landscape. They saw tiny blue fogs in the shadows of trees and hedges, all the time that there was bright sunshine elsewhere. The sun was so near the ground, and the sward so flat, that the shadows of Clare and Tess would stretch a quarter of a mile ahead of them, like two long fingers pointing afar to where the green alluvial reaches abutted against the sloping sides of the vale.

Men were at work here and there—for it was the season for "taking up" the meadows, or digging the little waterways clear for the winter irrigation, and mending their banks where trodden down by the cows. The shovelfuls of loam, black as jet, brought there by the river when it was as wide as the whole valley, were an essence of soils, pounded champaigns of the past, steeped, refined, and subtilized to extraordinary richness, out of which came all the fertility of the mead, and of the cattle grazing there.

Clare hardily kept his arm round her waist in sight of these watermen, with the air of a man who was accustomed to public dalliance, though actually as shy as she who, with lips parted and eyes askance on the labourers, wore the look of a wary animal the while.

"You are not ashamed of owning me as yours before them!" she said gladly.

"O no!"

"But if it should reach the ears of your friends at Emminster that you are walking about like this with me, a milkmaid —"

"The most bewitching milkmaid ever seen."

"They might feel it a hurt to their dignity."

"My dear girl—a d'Urberville hurt the dignity of a Clare! It is a grand card to play—that of your belonging to such a family, and I am reserving it for a grand effect when we are married... What does it matter how people regard us here?"

She could answer no more than a bare affirmative, so great was the emotion aroused in her at the thought of going through the world with him as his own familiar friend.

# The Great Gatsby – F. Scott. Fitzgerald, 1925

How does Fitzgerald use language and imagery to capture the atmosphere of Jay Gatsby's parties and to reflect the social and cultural dynamics of 1920s America?

> At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby’s enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d’oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold.
>
> In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.
>
> By seven o’clock the orchestra has arrived—no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors and hair shorn in strange new ways and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile.
>
> The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music and the opera voices are singing and the piano’s clicking with delight.
>
> All the lights in the house were bright, and, as if to give a more delicate burst of melody, a pianist was playing in the garden. People were coming and going like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars.
>
> At least once a fortnight, these lavish parties would be thrown, full of glitter and excitement, bringing together a crowd from all over. Guests arrived without invitation and came and went as they pleased. It was a place of music and laughter, the hum of conversations rising above the delicate notes of the music. The air was thick with the scent of flowers, cigars, and expensive perfumes, creating a heady atmosphere that seemed suspended in time.
>
> The opulence was dazzling: glittering chandeliers, shining glassware, and fine china filled every room. The guests were dressed in their finest clothes — women in shimmering gowns and men in sharp tuxedos — all caught up in the glamorous illusion. Yet beneath the dazzling surface, there was a restless energy, a sense that this beauty was fleeting and that the parties themselves were a distraction from something deeper and more troubling.

# To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee, 1960

How does Harper Lee use Atticus's courtroom speech to explore the themes of racial injustice and moral responsibility, and what does this reveal about the values and attitudes to race in American society?

"The state has not produced one iota of medical evidence to the effect that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever took place. It has relied instead upon the testimony of two witnesses whose evidence has not only been called into serious question on cross-examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant. The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is.

"I have nothing to but pity in my heart for the chief witness for the state, but my pity does not extend so far as to her putting a man's life at stake, which she has done in an effort to get rid of her own guilt.

"I say guilt, gentlemen, because it was guilt that motivated her. She has committed no crime, she has merely broken a rigid and time-honoured code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with. She is the victim of cruel poverty and ignorance, but I cannot pity her: she is white. She knew full well the enormity of her offense, but because her desires were stronger than the code she was breaking, she persisted in breaking it. She persisted, and her subsequent reaction is something that all of us have known at one time or another. She did something every child has done—she tried to put the evidence of her offense away from her. But in this case she was no child hiding stolen contraband: she struck out at her victim—of necessity she must put him away from her—he must be removed from her presence, from this world. She must destroy the evidence of her offence.

"What was the evidence of her offence? Tom Robinson, a human being. She must put Tom Robinson away from her. Tom Robinson was her daily reminder of what she did. What did she do? She tempted a Negro.

"She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man. Not an old Uncle, but a strong young Negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards.

"Her father saw it, and the defendant has testified as to his remarks. What did her father do? We don't know, but there is circumstantial evidence to indicate that Mayella Ewell was beaten savagely by someone who led most exclusively with his left. We do know in part what Mr. Ewell did: he did what any God-fearing, preserving, respectable white man would do under circumstances—he swore a warrant, no doubt signing with his left hand, and Tom Robinson now sits before you, having taken the oath with the only good hand he possesses—his right hand.

"And so a quiet, respectable, humble Negro who had the unmitigated temerity to 'feel sorry' for a white woman has had to put his word against two white people. I need not to remind of their appearance and conduct on the stand—you saw them for yourselves. The witness for the state, with the exception of the sheriff of Maycomb County, have presented themselves to you gentlemen, to this court, in the cynical confidence that their testimony would not be doubted, confident that you gentlemen would go along with them on the assumption—the evil assumption—that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption that one associates with minds of their calibre.

"Which, gentlemen, we know is in itself a lie as black as Tom Robinson's skin, a lie I do not have to point out to you. You know the truth, and the truth is this: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women—black or white. But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. There is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman without desire."

Atticus paused and took out his handkerchief. Then he took of his glasses and wiped them, and we saw another "first": we had never seen him sweat—he was one of those men whose faces never perspired, but now it was shining tan.

"One more thing, gentlemen, before I quit. Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal, a phrase that the Yankees and the distaff side of the Executive branch in Washington are fond of hurling at us. There is a tendency in this year of grace, 1935, for certain people to use this phrase of context, to satisfy all conditions. The most ridiculous example I can think of is that people who run public education promote the stupid and idle along with the industrious—because all men are created equal, educators will gravely tell you, the children left behind suffer terrible feelings of inferiority. We know all men are not created equal in the sense some people would have us believe—some people are smarter than others, some people have more opportunity because they're born with it, some men make more money than others, some ladies make better cake than others—some people are born gifted beyond the normal scope of men.

"But there is one way in this country which all men are created equal—there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man equal of an Einstein, and an ignorant man equal of any college president. That institution, gentlemen, is a court. It can be the Supreme Court of the United States or the humblest J.P. court in the land, or this honourable court which you serve. Our courts have their faults, as does any human constitution, but in this country our courts are the great levellers, and in our courts all men are created equal.

"I'm no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system—that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality. Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. I am confident that you gentlemen will review without passion the evidence you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this defendant to his family. In the name of God, do your duty."

# Beloved – Toni Morrison, 1987

How does Morrison use language and supernatural imagery to explore the theme of trauma and its lasting impact on individuals and families?

> 124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old—as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard). Neither boy waited to see more; another kettleful of chickpeas smoking in a heap on the floor; soda crackers crumbled and strewn in a line next to the doorsill. And nobody knocked or waited for the door to open before stepping in.
>
> The baby ghost had plans, they all knew that, but nobody knew what they were. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, didn't even raise her head. From her sickbed she heard them all. One after another, and never said a word. The mother, Sethe, had refused to live at 124 for a long time. She had walked into the woodshed, told herself, "Today I am all right," and walked back in. Then Denver was born, and Sethe decided that she didn't care. Whatever was in that house was hers and belonged to her.
>
> The sons crept away from the house like startled rats. They scrambled in separate directions, the only part of the past they shared was the way they left it. Sethe and Denver stayed. The baby's fury was incredible. Feed her? Certainly. But the appetite of the ghost was for something else. Something larger than the food she needed or the clothing she wore. It was for a claim: a stake in the living world, a reminder of the pain still pulsing at the edges of memory.
>
> By the time Sethe and Denver received a sign, they had long since stopped expecting one. So when gravel tore from the driveway and landed all over the porch, they jumped. Denver opened the door, but there was nobody there. Outside, the air was heavy and still. They stood together in the doorway, waiting. Nothing. Then, with a sudden crash, the sideboard in the kitchen turned over, the jelly jars shattering in a splatter of glass and red. The house had something to say, and it would not be ignored.
>
> "Jesus," Denver whispered.
>
> Sethe said nothing. She picked up a broom and swept the glass into the corner. "It's not evil," she said. "Just sad. Come on, help me clean up."
>
> Denver didn't move. She was staring at the floor, where the jam had seeped under the table like blood. Her face was tight, her arms crossed.
>
> "It's not right," she said finally. "It's not right for it to be like this."
>
> Sethe sighed and leaned against the counter. "No, it ain't right. But it's what we've got."

# Never Let Me Go – Kazuo Ishiguro, 2005

How does Ishiguro use language and narrative voice to explore the characters' gradual understanding of their purpose and identity?

"If no one else will talk to you," she said, "then I will. It's no good pretending. I can't listen to you any more and keep silent."

It was a bit unexpected. She'd been standing out there by herself when we came past to sit on the grass. It was warm that day, and there was a soft breeze, and a few of us had taken our shoes and socks off and were just lying around chatting. We were talking about what we'd do after Hailsham—Ruth had been going on about how she'd work in an office somewhere, wearing smart clothes and talking on a phone. Someone else had said they were going to be an actor, maybe even go to America.

Then Miss Lucy came walking over from across the field, quite suddenly, with a strange look on her face. I remember thinking something was up by the way she walked, not quite like her usual self—too stiff and deliberate. She stood there a few feet away from us, arms folded, looking at us one by one.

"None of you will go to America. None of you will be film stars. And none of you will be working in supermarkets as I heard some of you planning the other day. Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults—then before you're old, before you're even middle-aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs. That's what each of you was created to do."

There was silence. A kind of shame or confusion passed over us. Some of us looked down at the grass. Others just stared at her.

"You're not like the actors you watch on your videos, you're not even like me. You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided. You have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you. It's the only chance you'll have to lead decent lives. You have to understand."

Her voice had been trembling at first, but as she spoke it got firmer. She looked straight at us, as if willing us to take in every word.

"We sometimes joked about it," Ruth said afterwards. "But I didn't think anyone would actually say it like that. Like it was a rule written down somewhere."

I remember that afternoon clearly—the way the breeze moved the grass, the way Miss Lucy's shadow fell across our feet. We were thirteen, maybe fourteen. We'd heard words like "donation", "completion", "carer" before. They were in the air, half-whispered, never quite explained. But that day, Miss Lucy had said it plainly. We were not normal. We were different.