

TEACHER'S GUIDE

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

# EMMA

BY JANE AUSTEN



BY LAURA REIS MAYER

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2004, *People Magazine* declared that we are living in a “Jane Austen Moment.” Almost a decade later, that moment is still very much alive. Visit any of her many fan pages and you’ll see (according to t-shirts, bumper stickers, and buttons) that “Jane Austen Rocks!” Evidently, the world agrees. Austen wrote only six novels before her death at age 42, yet she is more popular today than ever before. Jane Austen fan clubs, weekends, sequels, films, feeds, blogs, and chat rooms are all testaments to the sustained popularity of this beloved author’s work. While many credit Austen for being the mother of “chic lit,” her followers, known as “Janeites,” would argue that she is much, much more.

Austen’s *Emma* is a fan favorite. With her focus on society, money, and relationships, Emma Woodhouse would fit right in with the popular “Gossip Girl” book and television series. It would be a mistake, however, to brand *Emma* a simple romance. *Emma* is acutely aware of the subservient role of married women in her society. Vowing to maintain her independence, Emma concentrates

instead on the love lives of her friends and neighbors. Though she is somewhat of a blind Cupid with her misplaced matchmaking, Emma’s wit and wisdom reveal her to be a deeply introspective social observer. Through her, the reader is invited into the everyday yet extraordinary lives of the inhabitants of Highbury, England.

In the classroom, *Emma* will engage students in the timeless themes of class, gender, and self-awareness while introducing them to the manners and morals of Regency England. This edition, with its hot-pink cover and an afterward written by contemporary romance author Sabrina Jeffries, will resonate with today’s students, proving that indeed, everything old is new again.

The instructional strategies in this guide can be used in any combination as teachers design their individual goals and lessons. A focus on technology and literacy skills challenges students to actively engage in reading. Activities are differentiated and are easily adaptable to the leveled lessons today’s educators are looking for.

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

### Main Characters

**Emma Woodhouse**—intelligent, youngest daughter of wealthy family

**Mr. Woodhouse**—Emma’s widowed father, owner of Hartfield

**George Knightley**—friend of the Woodhouses, owner of Donwell Abbey

**Ann Taylor Weston**—recently married friend, previous nanny to the Woodhouse family

**Captain Weston**—neighbor of the Woodhouses, owner of Randalls Estate

**Harriet Smith**—young border at Mrs. Goddard’s; Emma’s protégée

**Jane Fairfax**—orphaned niece/granddaughter of Miss and Mrs. Bates

**Frank Churchill**—Cpt. Weston’s son, raised by the Churchills

### Highbury Residents

**Miss Bates**—impoverished spinster friend of the Woodhouses

**Mrs. Bates**—widow of the former vicar; lives with her daughter

**Mrs. Goddard**—school mistress

**Robert Martin**—farmer and friend of George Knightley

**Elizabeth Martin**—Robert’s sister; friend of Harriet

**Phillip Elton**—Highbury Vicar

**Augusta Hawkins Elton**—Mr. Elton’s wealthy, social-climbing wife

**Mr. and Mrs. Perry**—Highbury Apothecary and wife

**Mr. and Mrs. Cole**—sociable, wealthy merchants

## Some Minor Characters

**John Knightley**—George's younger brother; married to Emma's sister; owns Brunswick Square

**Isabella Woodhouse Knightley**—Emma's older sister; married to John, mother of five children

**Mr. and Mrs. Churchill**—Frank's aunt and uncle from Yorkshire; owners of Enscombe

## SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

### Volume I

The novel opens in the small village of Highbury, England after the happy occasion of the Westons' marriage. Twenty-one year old Emma Woodhouse is consoling her father because the bride is their friend and previous nanny, Anne Taylor. Neighbor George Knightley stops by to see how Mr. Woodhouse and Emma are surviving. Emma gaily reminds the two men that she had predicted the match between Anne and Mr. Weston. Frank Churchill, Mr. Weston's son who has been raised by his aunt and uncle, was unable to attend the wedding, but he has written the new Mrs. Weston a letter promising to visit soon. Highbury residents are anxious to meet him.

Mr. Woodhouse, a hypochondriac who prefers to be at home, enjoys the company of friends and neighbors. One evening a card game is held at Hartfield, the Woodhouse home. Among those in attendance are school mistress Mrs. Goddard and her boarder, Harriet Smith, a pretty young lady with "questionable" parentage. Emma immediately sees Harriet as a project. When Harriet reveals her interest in Mr. Robert Martin, a successful young farmer, Emma dissuades her, commenting on Mr. Martin's low "station." Emma persuades Harriet to consider the eligible Mr. Elton, instead. Mr. Knightley disapproves of Miss Woodhouse's relationship with Harriet, knowing that Harriet's adoration will only encourage Emma's reckless behavior. While sketching a portrait of Harriet, Emma arranges for her protégée and Mr. Elton to spend time with one another. Mr. Elton volunteers to take the portrait to London to have it framed, a gesture both Emma and Harriet find encouraging. Soon after, Harriet confides that Mr. Martin has written a letter proposing marriage. Emma

manipulates Miss Smith into refusing. Mr. Knightley is furious with Emma's interference, believing she is harming Harriet by implanting in her a misplaced sense of superiority. While walking with Miss Smith, Emma professes her desire to remain unmarried. She is unconcerned about becoming an old maid like impoverished family friend Miss Bates because Emma is fortunate to be wealthy. The Woodhouses prepare Hartfield for a visit from older sister Isabella and her family, who live in London for the holidays. On Christmas Eve, the Woodhouses and the Knightleys visit the Westons' home, Randalls. John Knightley, her brother-in-law, warns Emma that Mr. Elton is interested in her. Emma disagrees, but later that evening, Phillip Elton seizes the opportunity to profess his love for her while scoffing at the idea of a match with Harriet. Insulted by Emma's refusal, Mr. Elton leaves town for a visit to Bath. Realizing the harm she has done to Harriet, Emma changes her assessment of Mr. Elton, realizing he is pursuing money rather than love.

### Volume II

When Emma and Harriet visit their poor neighbors, Miss and Mrs. Bates, Miss Bates shares a letter from her niece, Jane Fairfax. Like Frank, Jane was raised by guardians after being orphaned. Jane is an accomplished, educated young lady, and Emma has always resented hearing about her. Jane has been ill, and rather than travel to Ireland with her guardians, the Campbells, she plans to stay for a while with the Bates. Emma, letting her imagination carry her away, creates a scenario in which Jane has feelings for the Campbell's new son-in-law Mr. Dixon and hence has chosen to remain in England. Emma feels

some sympathy for Miss Fairfax, who due to lack of fortune is destined to become a governess, but her sympathy is overridden by ungracious feelings towards Jane, for which Mr. Knightley expresses his disappointment.

Highbury receives news that Mr. Elton is marrying a wealthy young woman from Bath, Miss Augusta Hawkins. Emma is unimpressed by the new Mrs. Elton, perceiving her to have “no name, no blood, no alliance. (p. 156).” Emma breaks the news to Harriet, who is already shaken from seeing Mr. Martin and his sister in town. Emma takes Harriet to visit the Martins, but still disapproves of a match between Robert and Harriet. When Frank Churchill arrives at Hartfield the next morning, he flirts with Emma and soon Mr. Weston hopes for a match between the two. However, Emma, without realizing it, finds herself comparing Frank Churchill and the more ideal, Mr. Knightley.

Newly wealthy merchants the Coles send out invitations to a dinner party which Emma plans to boycott until it seems she is the only Highbury resident not invited. When the invitation arrives, Emma accepts. Dinner gossip at the party focuses on a new piano that has arrived for Jane. When Mr. Knightley shows concern for Jane's health, Mrs. Weston tells Emma she suspects George and Jane may become a couple. Frank seizes upon an idea for the Westons to host a dance at the Crown Inn, but he is called home before it can be held. When he comes to say goodbye, Emma believes Frank has fallen in love with her. Though she wonders if she, too, may be attracted, Emma ultimately decides she feels only friendship. When Emma and Harriet visit the newly wed Mrs. Elton, Emma is struck by the woman's coarse behavior. But as social graces dictate, she is compelled to host a dinner party in the bride's honor.

### Volume III

When Frank Churchill returns to the area with his ill aunt, plans resume for a dance at the Crown. Mr. and Mrs. Elton purposely humiliate Miss Smith at the dance, and Mr. Knightley steps in and asks Harriet to dance.

Emma is struck by his gracious behavior. The next morning, Frank arrives at Hartfield carrying Harriet, who has fainted after being surrounded by gypsies. Now Emma plots a match between Mr. Churchill and Miss Smith. Later, when Harriet confides to Emma she is over Elton and now admires a more superior man, Emma assumes she refers to Frank. Meanwhile, George Knightley sees signs that Frank is attracted to Jane Fairfax and is using Emma unfairly.

When a proposed trip to Box Hill at the sea is postponed, Mr. Knightley suggests strawberry picking at his home instead. During the outing, Mrs. Elton announces that she has secured a position for Jane Fairfax. The Box Hill trip is rescheduled for the next day, but the group seems to lack spirit. Frank and Emma monopolize the conversation with rude chatter, and in the midst of it, Emma insults Miss Bates. Mr. Knightley once again admonishes Emma, who he says should model gracious behavior, particularly in dealing with friends in challenging circumstances. Ashamed of her behavior, Emma visits Miss Bates early the next morning. While there, Emma learns Jane has suddenly accepted the governess position arranged by Mrs. Elton. George announces he is leaving for London to visit John and Isabella. He is heartened to hear of Emma's visit to Miss Bates. When news arrives that Mrs. Churchill has died, Emma resumes her plan to match Frank and Harriet. She also feels remorse over her treatment of Jane Fairfax and attempts to make amends on multiple occasions, only to be refused. Several days later, Mrs. Weston, who is expecting a baby, confides to Emma the news that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax have been secretly engaged for several months. Emma realizes that once again, as with Mr. Elton, she has misjudged a man's character. She has also injured Harriet, who has been overlooked now by two would-be suitors. However, Harriet explains that it is not Frank she admires, but George Knightley. In an instant, Emma realizes that she herself has loved Mr. Knightley all along. Emma spends the next weeks attempting to “under-

stand her own heart,” ashamed of her behavior towards Harriet and Jane, and fearful of how she may have lost the esteem of Mr. Knightly. Emma regrets that she did not befriend Jane, rather than Harriet, and recognizes her vanity and arrogance in attempting to “arrange everybody’s destiny.” George returns, and Emma confesses her “blindness.” Assuring him she has never loved Frank, Emma admits her character defects. Mr. Knightley professes that despite any flaws, he has loved her since she was thirteen. Emma and George become engaged, even though Emma realizes that she cannot leave her father. Mrs. Weston shares a letter from

Frank, explaining the trickery and admitting his fault. Emma feels genial towards Frank again and shares the letter with George. Mr. Knightley offers a solution to the issue with Mr. Woodhouse by suggesting he live at Hartfield with both Emma and her father. Emma agrees, but is still concerned about Harriet, whom she arranges to have visit Isabella and John in London. There Harriet again meets and accepts Robert Martin. After multiple neighborhood robberies, Mr. Woodhouse sees the benefit of Mr. Knightley’s residence at Hartfield, and finally, Miss Emma Woodhouse and Mr. George Knightley are united in “perfect happiness.”

## PREREADING ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to deepen students’ background knowledge of literary devices and traditions, and to introduce them to the novel’s major themes. (Note: Consult other Teacher’s Guides to Signet Classics; they contain ideas that can be adapted to prepare students to read and enjoy this text).

### I. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN HISTORY, CULTURE, AND LITERATURE

#### REGENCY ENGLAND AND THE WORLD OF JANE AUSTEN

England’s Regency Era (approximately 1793-1830) spans the time from the beginning of the war with France to the death of George IV, who was named “Regent” when his father became mentally ill in 1811. The period serves as transition between England’s Georgian and Victorian Eras. Though for part of the period England was heavily embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars, the Regency Era is known as a time of aristocratic excess and achievement in the arts, architecture, and technology.

The following activities will engage students in exploring the life and manners of this period and the world of Jane Austen. Online sites for the suggested activities include:

- *Bath Travel and Tourism* (website) <http://www.bath.co.uk/>
- *Jane Austen* (website) <http://www.janeausten.org/>
- *Jane Austen Today* (blog) <http://janitesonthejames.blogspot.com/>
- *Jane Austen’s World* (website) <http://www.freewebs.com/janeaustenworld/index.htm>
- *The Jane Austen Centre Online* (magazine) <http://www.janeausten.co.uk/online-magazine/>
- *Official London City Guide* (travel guide) <http://www.Visitlondon.com>
- *Victoriana Magazine* <http://www.victoriana.com/Regency-Era/>

#### Pinterest Board

Pinterest is a digital cork board community currently captivating all ages. By organizing web sources into thematic files and folders, users become engaged in their research. Using a free Pinterest.com account, students can view and create boards that are visual representations of the Regency era. (Search “Jane Austen” in Pinterest for sample Regency boards). Students might collect images of Regency clothes, flowers, homes, or book covers. By sharing boards with each other, individually or as a group, the class is provided with a fun, visual introduction to the time of Jane Austen.

## Travel Video

Setting in *Emma* plays a significant role. With two class periods, a green screen, and the aid of iMovie, Photostory, or other digital movie software, students can research and introduce Jane Austen's England to the rest of the class in a recorded travel show format. Assuming the role of travel journalists, students use sound and video clips as backdrops while they lead the class on a short, narrated video tour of Hampshire (Austen's birthplace), or a locale from *Emma* such as London, Bath, or Box Hill. Show videos as locales come up in the reading.

## Interactive Timeline

Ask students to research the life of Jane Austen and create a digital timeline. In addition to the online resources listed above, students might also reference the film *Becoming Jane* (Miramax, 2007), which depicts Austen's early life and pieces together facts derived from the author's books and letters. Timelines can include images and links and may be printed, posted, or embedded into a blog or webpage for viewing and assessment. One student-friendly timeline template can be found at <http://www.ClassTools.net>.

## NOVEL OF MANNERS

### Accessible Text

Examining a parallel, contemporary text prior to reading can introduce and prepare students for complex literary genres. One link between Austen's novel and current young adult fiction is the novel of manners, a literary genre, usually satirical, that paints a picture of the customs, morals, and behaviors of a specific group of people in a specific period of time. While Jane Austen's novels are the most famous of this genre, a growing number of contemporary authors are writing novels of manners today. One example students might be familiar with, especially since it has spawned a popular television series, is Cecily Von Ziegesar's *Gossip Girl* (Little,

Brown & CO.-Poppy, 2002). Ask students to read the first four paragraphs from chapter one of *Gossip Girl* (Chapter one can be read online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). In the first column of a double-column chart, ask students to record text evidence of Gossip Girl's characteristics and behaviors. Then ask students to read the first four paragraphs from chapter one of *Emma*, recording text evidence of her characteristics and behaviors in column two. Ask students to write a summary at the bottom of each column, explaining how each book is a novel of manners. Alternatively, students might watch and analyze clips from contemporary films based on novels of manners, such as the 2001 Miramax film *Bridget Jones's Diary* (often called a modern day *Pride and Prejudice*) or *Clueless* (modern remake of *Emma*—Paramount, 1995).

## Book Cover Analysis

Tell students they are going to break the rules and “judge a book by its cover.” Using a document camera, display for students the 2008 Signet Classics edition of *Emma*. Ask students: Judging by the cover alone, in which section of a bookstore would you expect to find this novel? To whom would this book appeal? Why? What do you think this story is about? Alternatively, ask students to study the cover art of the current Signet Classic edition, to describe what they see and what genre they feel this depiction implies, and why. Students' answers might touch on the hot pink color, the feminine font, the large size and prominent placement of the author's name, the lady's glove, and the marquee-style frame. Next, display the cover of a popular young adult novel such as Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries* (HarperTeen, 2008) or Sarah Dessen's *Someone Like You* (Puffin, 2004). (Covers can be found on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)). Ask students to turn and share with one another the similarities they see to the cover of *Emma*. Introduce the term “chick lit” and how Jane Austen is often credited with introducing this genre. Direct students to the novel's “Afterword,” where modern romance author Sabrina Jeffries concludes, “What more can we ask from

a romantic comedy?” (p. 426). Discuss how the classics are very often quite relevant to contemporary audiences.

## II. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

### MATCHMAKING, MARRIAGE, AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

#### Jigsaw Reading: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

In 1792 Jane Austen's contemporary, Mary Wollstonecraft, published a feminist treatise, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The text details the lack of rights, property, opportunity, and respect afforded females in the patriarchal culture of the late 18th century. Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group one chapter of the text to read and summarize. Chapters with particular focus on gender stereotypes include: II-V, IX, and XIII. Discuss clues for identifying main ideas, such as repetition, restatement, and transitional language. After reading and summarizing, students split up into new groups composed of one representative from each chapter assigned. Each student shares his learning. The essay can be found at <http://www.bartleby.com/144/>.

#### Song Study

Match-making has a long tradition, but is it relevant today? The growing list of online match-making services would indicate yes. Introduce students to the match-maker motif with the following songs, both old and new. As students read the lyrics, listen to the songs, or watch the videos, ask them to list the generalizations the songs make about marriage and relationships. Remind students to keep these generalizations in mind for comparison as they read Austen's *Emma*. All lyrics can be found at [www.elyricsworld.com](http://www.elyricsworld.com) and several are available on video at <http://www.youtube.com>.

Song	Artist
<i>Cupid</i>	Sam Cooke
<i>Stupid Cupid</i>	Mandy Moore
<i>Matchmaker, Matchmaker</i>	from <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i>
<i>If Cupid had a Heart</i>	Selena Gomez

#### Cartoon Analysis

On the whiteboard or overhead, display the “Love is Blind” cartoon from cartoonbuddy.blog.com. The image depicts young Cupid failing an eye-test. After covering the caption, give students an opportunity to struggle with the meaning of the illustration. After the class has identified the famous adage, ask: What is Cupid's traditional role? What does it mean for love to be blind? Why has Cupid often been depicted in this manner? Students can turn and talk or record their thoughts in a quick-write.

#### Four Corners Film Clip

Pixar's 2012 animated film *Brave* centers on a female protagonist who is expected by society to wed according to custom and class rather than love. But like Austen's *Emma*, the rebellious Scottish princess is not interested in marriage. Show students the scene where Merida proclaims she will enter the archery contest to win “her own hand.” Ask students: To whom does Merida owe her loyalty? Her family? Her society? Herself? Students indicate their answers by moving to a designated corner in the room, where they can prepare a defense statement with like-minded classmates. After teams present their reasoning, students might choose to change corners and discuss the arguments that are causing them to revise their point of view about a woman's choices and loyalties. After reading *Emma*, students can return to this activity and see if their thinking has changed about the expectations often imposed on women.

## Old Maid

Activate or build prior knowledge in the Regency class system by engaging students in a game of “Old Maid.” Using the document camera, digital projector, and a pack of playing cards, lead the class through the game. Show students various images of Old Maid cards, available at Google Images. Ask students to reflect on these images and the meaning of the game’s title. Ask students:

- Why is the game called “Old Maid?” “What is the implication for single females?” How might the title reflect cultural and historical norms of the past?
- Why is it difficult today to find “Old Maid” games in print or online? Why are there similar games, but with different titles?

Now ask students to read the following excerpt from Harriet and Emma’s discussion on pages 73-74:

...you will be an old maid!  
And that’s so dreadful!

Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid . . . . A single woman with a very narrow income must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman of good fortune is always respectable....

Ask these additional questions:

- Why does Harriet say that being an “old maid” would be “dreadful?” How does her view provide insight into the regard given single women of the Regency period? Were they respected? Why or why not?
- To what is Emma referring when she calls old maids the “proper sport of boys and girls?” How does this connect to our card game?
- How are older, single females regarded in our society today? Why?

## POVERTY VERSUS PROSPERITY

### Online Notice Board

To generate thinking about the themes of wealth and social status, ask students to reflect and respond to a recent news article on the topic. After reading, ask students to share their thinking via wallwisher.com, an online notice board where students write, post, and view each other’s short responses. Prompts might include: What do you consider wealthy? Do the wealthy have a responsibility to take care of the poor? Does America have a class system? If so, what constitutes “class”? Possible articles that can be found online include:

- Sorkin, Andrew. “Rich and Sort of Rich.” *NY Times*. 15 May 2011.
- Uchitelle, Louis. “American Dream is Elusive for New Generation.” *NY Times*. 7 July 2010.

### Close Reading

In her introduction to the Signet Classics Edition of *Emma*, Margaret Drabble makes much of the fact that the novel’s protagonist, Emma Woodhouse, “is rich. She is, in fact, very rich. . . . She is much the richest of Jane Austen’s heroines, and far richer than Austen herself had ever dreamed of being” (p. vi). Due to her wealth, Drabble maintains, Emma is “intentionally elevated above the fears and mercenary ambitions that torment and distort the lives of so many of Austen’s female characters” (p. vi). Prior to beginning *Emma*, have students read and analyze the novel’s first paragraph:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence, and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her” (p. 3).

Pose the following questions to students, who might answer in writing, in partners, or in a group:

- Why does Austen use the word “seemed” in the first sentence of the novel?
- Are the wealthy truly without a care?
- Can you think of a wealthy person who may not be happy despite his/her money? (Students might mention the Kardashians or Hiltons as examples).

## SELF-AWARENESS

### Regency Games

Several scenes in *Emma* involve characters masking their feelings behind riddles, games or subterfuge. Introduce students to this theme by engaging them in Regency Era games. Simultaneous games might be located in centers around the classroom. Students might:

1. Create words, sentences, or poetry with “magnetic letters” (like the wooden alphabet game Frank uses to spell “bungle” for Jane’s benefit).
2. Write riddles and trade with classmates to solve (such as Mr. Elton’s “Charade” poem).
3. Play “What am I thinking of?” by offering either one “clever,” two “moderately clever,” or three “dull” things. The idea is to avoid revealing one’s actual thoughts (like the group at Box Hill). One student can play judge.

After playing the games, ask students:

- What did the Regency games have in common?  
(Students might answer “they all involve thinking,” or “all the games are puzzles.”)
- Why might players from this era mask their feelings behind riddles?
- Can you think of similar games we play today?

(Answers might include the magnetic letters popular today, or Akinator, the web genie).

### Literary Walkabout

“Walkabouts” generate interest in new books by providing students with a kinesthetic opportunity to predict and discuss the storyline. Without telling students the theme, copy and cut out lines from *Emma* focusing on role-playing, “blindness,” or self-awareness. Students travel around the classroom, reading these lines and listening to one another, predicting possible themes and plotlines. Examples include:

1. “I had always a part to act. It was a life of deceit!” (p. 397—Jane to Emma).
2. “While I, to blind the world to our engagement, was behaving one hour with objectionable particularity to another woman” (p. 380—Frank to Mrs. Weston).
3. “His own mind full of intrigue, that he should suspect it in others. Mystery, finesse—how they pervert the understanding!” (pp. 384-85—Mr. Knightley to Emma).
4. “It was his object to blind all about him” (p. 368—Emma to Mr. Knightley).
5. “My blindness to what was going on led me to act by them in a way that I must always be ashamed of” (p. 367—Emma to Mr. Knightley).
6. “How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practicing on herself and living under! The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart!” (p. 355—narrator about Emma).
7. “To understand, thoroughly understand, her own heart, was the first endeavor” (p. 355—narrator about Emma).

### LIMITATIONS OF SMALL TOWN LIFE

#### Dialectic Journals

In *Emma*’s fictional town of Highbury, gossip plays a significant part. Characters who have not been raised in the village are discussed before ever stepping foot in town. In charac-

terizing gossip as both an innocent means of entertainment as well as a harmful pastime, Austen calls into question the role of rumors in the confines of a small town. Ask students to read and respond in writing to an article about contemporary small-town gossip. While reading “In Small Towns, Gossip Moves to the Web,” ask students to keep a dialectic journal. On a piece of paper folded into four vertical sections, students label the columns “from the text,” “from me,” “from my classmates,” and “my new thinking.” In the first column, students record quotes or passages from the article to which they’d like to respond. In column two, students explain their reflections, connections, and questions about the excerpt. After students finish reading and reflecting, they switch journals with classmates and respond to each other’s thoughts and excerpts in column three. Column four is for students to illustrate their thoughts after taking classmates’ ideas into consideration. The article, which discusses the ramifications of social media website Topix.com, can be found at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/us/small-town-gossip-moves-to-the-web-anonymous-and-vicious.html?pagewanted=all>.

As a follow-up discussion, ask students:

- What does the article tell us about what happens in isolated or insular communities?
- Is such public conversation positive or negative? Explain.
- Is high school an insular community? Do high schools function in the same fashion regarding rumors and gossip? How so?

## DURING READING ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to utilize research-based comprehension strategies such as questioning, predicting, connecting, summarizing, and determining main ideas while reading *Emma*. Whether the novel is read in class or at home, teachers can choose appropriate assignments from the ideas below.

## Photo Analysis

In *Emma*, the protagonist reveals that she has never left her hometown of Highbury. Both a comfort and a confinement, the village is a significant factor in Emma’s character. Garrison Keillor, best known for his radio show “A Prairie Home Companion,” explores this same topic in a book of small-town photos entitled *In Search of Lake Wobegone*. A study in the landscapes and values of rural America, the book is a tribute to the power of place. A digital slide show of the photo book, narrated by the author, can be found at: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0012/feature5/media2.html>.

After showing one or more of the pictures to the class on a document camera or LCD projector, ask students to choose a photo and complete the following response:

1. Draw a quick thumbnail sketch of the photo.
2. Write a brief description of the picture. What is the most dominant image? What is on the periphery? Include discussion of color, light, and mood.
3. Write a brief analysis of the photo based on your description above. Why does the photographer choose to make certain images dominant and others marginal? Does the picture evoke a certain mood or theme? How? Why? What might be the significance of the title? Of Keillor’s commentary? What is Keillor expressing about small-town living?

## I. ANALYZING THROUGH GROUP RESPONSE

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussion questions encourage students to deepen their individual analysis of the novel by sharing their reactions with classmates. Students generally feel more comfortable

sharing their ideas with a small group of peers first. When group discussions are complete, student spokespersons can discuss their findings with the class as a whole.

Discussion questions on *Emma* ask students to analyze the author's purpose, themes, and literary techniques, and to take a second look at the text.

## Volume I: Chapters 1-18

1. How is Emma Woodhouse characterized in the novel's opening sentence?
2. Mr. Woodhouse says, "Emma never thinks of herself if she can do good to others..." (p.10). Does Emma's father intend this as a positive or negative characterization? How might Mr. Knightley interpret it? What is significant in Austen's word choice here?
3. What is Emma's purpose in befriending Miss Smith? What might Harriet represent to her? Discuss.
4. Mr. Knightley says, "Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family" (p. 31). What does he mean? In what ways might Emma's intelligence be a hindrance?
5. Mr. Knightley admits, "I have a very sincere interest in Emma. . . . There is an anxiety, a curiosity in what one feels for Emma" (p. 34). What might the reader be led to believe about Knightley's feelings toward Emma?
6. Compare Robert Martin's letter (p. 43) to Phillip Elton's riddle (p. 61). Why might Emma prefer the "Charade"?
7. Harriet is astonished by Emma's vow to remain single (p. 74). How is her reaction a reflection of the time and society in which they live?
8. What might be the cause of Mr. Woodhouse's hypochondria and fears? Explain.
9. What is the nature of Mrs. Churchill's power over Frank?
10. Why are the villagers so fascinated with Frank Churchill?

## Volume II: Chapters 1-18

1. Is Emma self-aware? List evidence for both sides.
2. How is Jane Fairfax a character foil to Emma Woodhouse?
3. Why does Mrs. Weston warn Emma, "You get upon delicate subjects, Emma. . . . Mr. Frank Churchill hardly knows what to say when you speak of Miss Fairfax's situation in life. I will move a little farther off" (p. 171). Why might Mrs. Weston feel a connection to Jane?
4. Mr. Weston refers to Miss Bates as "a standing lesson of how to be happy" (p. 218). What does he mean? How might Mr. Weston's comment reflect Austen's purpose?
5. Mrs. Elton characterizes Emma as having "lived so secluded a life" (p. 235). Is there truth to her insult? Explain.
6. Emma takes great offense at Mrs. Elton's reference to George as "Knightley" (p. 238). What is the implied reason for Emma's reaction? What might be an inferred reason?
7. Mrs. Elton officiously professes that she will help advance Jane Fairfax, to "bring her forward" (p. 241). How different is her motivation, if at all, from Emma's vow to "improve" Harriet Smith? (p. 19). Explain.
8. In describing Jane, Mr. Knightley reflects, "She is reserved; more reserved, I think, than she used to be; and I love an open temper" (p. 247). What deeper comparison might Mr. Knightley be making here? Is he a bit "clueless," too?
9. What does Mr. Weston mean when he says of Mrs. Churchill, "She was nobody when he married her, barely the daughter of a gentleman; but ever since her being turned into a Churchill, she has out-Churchilled them all . . ." (p. 265). How might Mr. Weston's description give a voice to Austen's ideas about class?

10. Explain the irony in Mrs. Elton's statement: "I have quite a horror of upstarts.... giving themselves immense airs and expecting to be on a footing with the old established families" (pp. 265-66).

### Volume III: Chapters 1-19

1. Explain the irony in Mrs. Elton's sending the carriage after Jane and Miss Bates, then assuring Mrs. Weston that she'll "always take care of *them*" (p. 277).
2. Both Mrs. Elton (p. 276) and Miss Bates (p. 278) talk non-stop to other characters upon arriving at the Crown Inn. What is a marked difference in the nature of their chatter? What purpose does Austen intend in these contrasting monologues?
3. In what ways is the ball at the Crown Inn a turning point for Emma?
4. How might Austen feel about Regency Era gypsies? What evidence supports your answer?
5. What is the significance in Harriet's and Emma's differing recollections of the spruce beer conversation (p. 292)? Why does Austen draw this contrast?
6. Emma characterizes Mr. Knightley's Donwell home as "just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was" (pp. 308-09). Is this also a fitting characterization of the home's owner? Explain.
7. Explain the meaning of Frank's exclamation: "*I* sick of prosperity and indulgence! You are quite mistaken. I do not look upon myself as either prosperous or indulged. I am thwarted in everything material. I do not consider myself at all a fortunate person" (p. 315). Why is Frank so frustrated? Who or what is the cause of his dissatisfaction?
8. Mr. Knightley lectures Emma (p. 324), telling her she should model proper behavior for others. Why? Is Mr. Knightley a model? Explain.

9. Mr. Knightley proclaims to Emma "the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings with each other" (p. 385). Can his words be applied to characters other than their own? Might Mr. Knightley serve as Jane Austen's voice here? Explain.

10. To "thoroughly understand, her own heart" becomes Emma's "first endeavor" (p. 355). How has she changed since the beginning of the novel? What actions support this change?

### REGENCY LANGUAGE

Jane Austen's formal, Regency language can be daunting for 21st century students. Even recognizable words are often used in unfamiliar contexts. One method for deconstructing the vocabulary is a strategy called "Say What?" In this activity, students focus on a short piece of text which they may or may not have read. An example from *Emma* can be found in Volume II, chapter seven, where Frank's trip to a London barber is discussed. Ask students to skim the excerpt, writing down any words that are unfamiliar or that cause confusion in this specific context. If students claim to have no confusion, ask them to write down words their classmates might struggle with. Students might choose archaic terms such as "fancy," "foppery," and "coxcomb." They might also choose formal vocabulary like "indifference," "disposition," and "regard" (p. 175). Next, students compare words and help each other mark words off their lists. In this way, students practice assisting their classmates and trusting their own analysis before asking the teacher, which they often avoid. Any words left on the list after students converse can be recorded on the white board and directly taught by the teacher. This strategy provides a more realistic list than one that is teacher-made, and it takes the stigma out of vocabulary struggles.

### Annotated Notes

Ask students to illustrate their thinking by annotating the novel. For instance, they might take notes as they read on character

motivation or significance of setting. Annotations can be in the form of marginal notes or can be shared with classmates through a free, online “sticky-note” service such as linoit.com. Students post their annotations on a “canvas” and choose color, size, font, and icons for their digital stickies. Teachers may create several class canvasses, such as one for each minor character from *Emma*. Students may upload files to support the annotations, such as video clips, images, or maps. The class can work on the canvas in school or at home, or teachers can share it on their teacher computer with a digital projector. The linoit canvas serves as an updated and visually engaging blog, where students can record thinking and communicate with classmates all throughout the reading of the novel.

## Literature Circles

In order to teach inferencing and self-regulation of comprehension, assign small groups of students individual strategies to use as they read an excerpt of *Emma*:

- Summarizer: summarizes the assigned section of text
- Themester: connects action in novel to themes discussed in class
- Texter: finds specific location of text support
- Visualizer: creates a visual depicting the discussed themes and inferences

## “Fakebook” Wall

Students can create “Fakebook” profiles for Emma, Mr. Knightley, Mrs. Elton, even Jane Austen. This wall generator allows students to analyze characters, make modern connections, and engage with their classmates in a safe environment. Students can each choose a different character from *Emma* and create a profile complete with marital status, favorite songs, quotes, television shows, books, movies, and causes. For example, Emma might select “I’m Only Me when I’m with You,” by Taylor Swift, for her song, and post

photos of Cupid on her wall. She may list “Match.Com” as her “cause” and invite others to join. As students progress through the novel, they can post messages and respond to each other’s posts in character. For example, Mr. Elton might post, “Sorry, Harriet . . . I’m just not that into you,” and Frank might post, “Anyone up for a game of charades? How about you, Jane?” See samples and create fake walls for free at <http://ClassTools.net>.

## Avatars

Students love creating avatars such as the players in Wii games and the “WeeMees” in WeeWorld.com. A free site where avatars can serve as a learning tool for *Emma* is voki.com. Ask groups to create avatars whose dress and background are clear indicators of the Austen character they represent. For instance, students might dress Emma’s avatar in diamonds to represent wealth and sunglasses to symbolize her “mask.” They can choose a background of the London Bridge and a British voice to narrate their script. Written by students and voiced by microphone, telephone, or keyboard (text to voice), the script reveals the character’s inner thoughts, inferred or paraphrased by the students. An advanced assignment might be to create two avatars, one for the character as society sees him/her, and one representing his/her true identity. Because they are complex and multi-layered, one of Austen’s characters with conflicting motives would work well here, such as Emma, Jane, or Frank. Teacher tips, lesson plans, and student samples of avatars are available at <http://voki.com>.

## II. ANALYZING THROUGH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

### ONE BITE AT A TIME: VIRTUAL BOOKS

By breaking up long pieces of prose into smaller “chunks,” teachers can facilitate more successful student analysis at school and at home. Choose significant excerpts from *Emma* for student response, and copy/paste

them into an online “virtual book.” Ask students to use the “add text” function to write a response to a chapter or scene in Austen’s *Emma*. One template for virtual books can be found under “Animated Book” at <http://ClassTools.net>. A free *Emma* ebook to use for copying is provided by Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/158>.

## Student Generated Questions

Student-created questions that lead to interpretation and analysis are more effective comprehension tools than traditional end of chapter questions. Discuss with the class the different levels of questions and how more critical questions lead to interpretation and analysis. A good resource is Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (BRT) with accompanying question starters: [http://www.uni.edu/stdteach/TWS/BloomRevisedTaxonomy\\_KeyWords-1-1.pdf](http://www.uni.edu/stdteach/TWS/BloomRevisedTaxonomy_KeyWords-1-1.pdf). Ask students to generate one or two questions per chapter and to jot questions down on post-it notes, one per note. At least one question in each chapter must be from the higher end of BRT. Post-its are affixed to the page of text they reference. In class, students can categorize these questions on the board or on a concept chart, and discuss possible answers with their peers.

## Backchanneling

Another strategy for encouraging student questions is a live stream such as [todaysmeet.com](http://todaysmeet.com). Model for students how to use this free tool to ask questions, make comments, provide feedback, and provide assessment in real time. Teachers can use the comments to adjust instruction immediately. Students can use cell phones, ipads, or the traveling laptop lab to access the stream via networked computers. This tool is especially helpful with reticent students who are unlikely to ask questions out loud during class. Since more than one student can comment (or “back-channel”) at a time, more student voices can be heard, all while the teacher is instructing. For example, the teacher might be leading a discussion on Harriet’s role in *Emma*. One

student might think of and post a connection between Harriet and other literary characters covered recently, such as Pygmalion and Galatea. At the same time, another student might ask, “Doesn’t Harriet also serve as a foil to Emma?” In response, the teacher might decide to turn the discussion in a new direction, clarify an issue, or make a note to adjust upcoming instruction.

## Text to Text Comparison

Many film adaptations have been made of Jane Austen’s *Emma*. While teachers do not have time to show multiple versions in their entirety, comparing significant scenes is an engaging use of visual media for literary analysis. After reading Volume I, Chapter Eight, where Emma and Mr. Knightley argue over her matchmaking efforts, show students the same scene from the Gwyneth Paltrow film version, available on Youtube at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8k\\_gzuVqZmk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8k_gzuVqZmk). Model for the class how to create a double-column chart, with the two columns labeled “novel” and “film.” Ask students to take notes on setting, props, dialogue, and action in both texts. Afterwards, ask students to write a summary statement analyzing specific differences. For instance, in the 1996 film, Emma is at target-practice with her bow and arrow. But in Austen’s novel, the protagonist was never associated with this sport. Students might comment on this major difference. Ask the class: Why did the director choose to depict Emma in this way, even if not historically accurate? Is Emma (as the Gwyneth Paltrow movie cover suggests) “armed and dangerous”? What are her armaments? How does the bow and arrow reflect a significant part of her character?

## Character-Foils

Robert Marzano’s first essential teaching strategy is the study of similarities and differences. In *Emma*, both Harriet and Jane serve as foils to Emma. To help students compare and contrast Emma with one of these characters, ask students to create Venn Diagrams,

Double-Bubble Maps, or Double-Column Charts. Students should record similarities and differences. For instance, students might note that both Emma and Jane are 21, but where one is liberated by wealth, the other is restricted by poverty. After students fill in and consider their evidence, they can write a summary statement illustrating the significance of the comparison. Students might also turn and share with a classmate or the class, adding to their work as the discussion ensues. Possible character foils from *Emma* include the following:

1. Emma and Harriet
2. Emma and Jane
3. Robert Martin and Mr. Elton
4. Frank and Mr. Knightley
5. Miss Bates and Mrs. Elton

Diagrams of double-bubble and other thinking maps are online at:

[http://drb.lifestreamcenter.net/Lessons/process\\_maps/](http://drb.lifestreamcenter.net/Lessons/process_maps/)

## Multi-Flow Map

The act of hiding their engagement results in a myriad of effects for Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, as well as the other characters in the novel. Emma's decision to "adopt" Harriet results in similar chaos. Ask students to choose a character such as Emma, Frank, or Jane, and "map" the effects of their actions. In the middle box of the multi-flow map, ask students to write the event, such as "Emma talks Harriet out of marrying Robert." In boxes to the left, students identify the causes of this act and connect to the middle box with arrows. In the boxes to the right, students identify the effects of the act and connect them to the middle box with arrows. The multi-flow map activity is a study in character motivation and author's purpose. Students might write the following in their boxes:

### Action

- Emma interferes with Harriet and Robert.

### Causes

- Robert is a farmer.
- Emma wants to match Harriet with Mr. Elton.
- Harriet may be the daughter of a gentleman.

### Effects

- Harriet aspires above her social class.
- The Martins lose Harriet's friendship.
- Mr. Elton insults and humiliates Harriet.

## Six Word Stories

Summarizing is a key strategy for assessing student comprehension and analysis. All the rage on Twitter, the "six word story" is a creative, engaging method to get students to summarize significant chapters or scenes in *Emma*. For instance, Emma's ill treatment of Miss Bates at Boxhill might read, "Baited Bates. Party foul. So sorry." Samples from literary giants and everyday folks may be found at <http://sixwordstories.net>. Caution: teachers will want to choose appropriate examples prior to class.

## Character Tweets

Another tool for student summary is Twitter. Ask students to "tweet" the most important developments from certain chapters. Because they are restricted to 140 characters, students must analyze and choose only the most significant points. Give students a paper template that looks like a twitter interface, and tweets can be developed on paper or in cyberspace. A tweet summary of Frank's lengthy letter in chapter fourteen might read, "Quite sorry. Good intentions mixed with charades often end in damaged friendships. Jane is a goddess; Emma the ultimate friend; I am a fool."

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to deepen their interpretation of *Emma* by making connections between themes and issues in the novel, in other works, and in the outside world.

### I. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

Now that students have read the entire novel, they can return to the text for a deeper understanding of its significant themes. The following topics and questions can be used for whole class and small group discussion or as essay topics.

1. Is Austen critical or admiring of small town life? Is Highbury's insulation a help or a hindrance? Discuss the roles that setting and gossip play in *Emma*.
2. As Mr. Knightley points out, Emma is often vain, thoughtless, and irresponsible with her wit. Who or what is to blame for Emma's cluelessness? Can she be the hero of her self-titled story? Discuss.
3. Though seemingly a minor character, Miss Bates is part of every storyline in the novel. Is she simply a comic figure? Is she a moral compass? Explain. Alternatively, discuss the significance of another minor character, such as Augusta Elton or Isabella Knightley.
4. Is Frank better off for having been adopted by the Churchills? Explain the purpose and residual effects of his being removed from his father.
5. Mr. Knightley is, without doubt, a romantic hero. But are there other purposes he serves in the novel? Compare Mr. Knightley with Frank Churchill. What behaviors are expected of a gentleman in this society? Which of the two men best fits these expectations?
6. Why does Frank choose to keep secret his relationship to Jane? Is he at fault for putting Jane in this difficult position, or is society to blame? What do his actions indicate about Frank's character?
7. In *Emma*, several characters are "acting a part" (p. 168) that masks their motivations or desires. Select one such character and trace the role-playing motif throughout the novel. What impact does the part have on the character and story as a whole?
8. Compare Emma to one of the novel's other female characters, such as Harriet or Jane. Do the other women represent a part of Emma that she is unable or unwilling to recognize? Why at the end does Emma realize she should have been drawn to Jane, not Harriet, from the beginning? How do the other females help Emma grow?
9. On multiple occasions, Emma is referred to as "blind." What is the nature of her blindness? Why does Jane Austen choose this particular metaphor? What other characters in the novel are "blind"? What must they do to "see" each other? Why is "cluelessness" so often an element of romance?
10. None of Jane Austen's other novels are named for their protagonists. Why does she name this one *Emma*? What is the connection between the novel's title and themes?
11. At the beginning of the novel, Emma declares her independence. Yet she marries by the story's end. Is Emma still playing a role? Or has she found a way to maintain her sense of self within the confines of Regency marriage? Is Austen ironic in her depiction of Emma? Or does the author see the possibilities of compromise?
12. What about George Knightley suggests this marriage will not be the traditional relationship Emma fears in the beginning? Will Emma be good for Knightley? How do the two complement one another? What does the ending suggest about Austen's sense of gender roles and marriage?

## II. GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

### Second Thoughts

Revisit one of your discussion questions, your annotated notes, or your “4 Corners” choice.

Now that you have completed the novel, what further commentary can you add? Do you see your topic differently now? Why or why not? Students can show their new thinking in journals or class discussion. Alternatively, the class can post their thoughts on digital exit slips at <http://www.wallwisher.com>. The post-its might read, “First I thought . . . but now I believe . . .”

### Film Festival

After watching an excerpt or the entirety of one or more of the following films based on *Emma* (or another of Austen's works), ask students to write a film critique discussing one or more of the cinematic choices of casting, characterization, costuming, set, screen play, and theme development. If appropriate, critiques should include comparative discussion on watching the film versus reading the novel and the effectiveness of those differences. Ask students:

1. Some of Austen's novels have been set in modern times on film. Describe the setting of this video production. Where and when does it take place? Does the setting seem authentic? Why or why not? What specific direction and production choices add to the atmosphere? Discuss costuming and prop choices.
2. Discuss the use of special effects. Consider lighting, music, and sound. How do these elements add to your understanding of the novel? What differences exist between the film's interpretation and your own while reading? Do these differences add to or change your analysis of Austen's work? Explain.

3. Discuss the production's casting. Do the actors provide effective portrayals of Austen's characters? Why were these actors cast? Consider the time period in which the film was produced.
4. What were the strengths of this film production? Use specific evidence from the film. Were there any weaknesses? If so, discuss specific issues.
5. What is your overall impression of this film? Would your impression be different had you not read the novel first?

*Aisha*. Dir. Rajshree Ojha. Anil Kapoor Films, 2010. (Bollywood remake)

*Clueless*. Dir. Amy Heckerling. Paramount, 1995. (Alicia Silverstone, Paul Rudd remake)

*Emma*. Dir. Douglas McGrath. Miramax, 1996. (Gwyneth Paltrow, Ewan MacGregor)

*Emma*. Dir. Jim O'Hanlon. BBC, 2009. (Romola Garai, Johnny Lee Miller)

*Emma*. Dir. Diarmuid Lawrence. A&E, 1996. (Kate Beckinsale, Mark Strong)

Student writers are often unfamiliar with critical writing. For sample reviews, direct students to [www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com). This site compiles critiques of both current and older movies, written by professional reviewers that model style and voice for student writers.

### Literary Criticism Summaries

Literary criticisms provide additional insight and development of themes discussed throughout the reading of *Emma*. Students further benefit from reading criticisms when they incorporate them in literary research papers. Criticisms can be found in the “Introduction” (pp. v-xx) and “Afterword” (pp. 419-426) of the Signet Classic Edition of *Emma*, in school libraries, and in online subscription services. So that students can illustrate their comprehension and synthesis of these criticisms, ask them to write short (one to three page) responses that summarize the critic's main ideas. Summary helps stu-

dents understand that literary research is a multi-stepped process, and that literary dialogue can only happen effectively if readers first understand what the critic is saying.

A discussion of research strategies and source validity is helpful in order to discourage online searches of Internet work that has never been pre-published or vetted before an editorial board. Ask students to highlight main ideas and summarize paragraphs in the margin, either by hand or with digital highlighters. This note-taking step discourages summaries that are simple translation and instead encourages comprehension of global concepts prior to writing the summary. Ask students to write a summary which introduces the author, title, and focus of the article before presenting an explanation of the critic's main ideas. Along with the summary, students should include a works-cited entry that includes the criticism's original and reprint publication information. After summaries are submitted, ask students to present their critic's ideas to the class for discussion. When other students react or follow up with a similar or opposing criticism, a natural, student-led discussion often ensues. Online criticisms can be found through *The Jane Austen Journal Online* at <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/index.html>. Other criticisms include:

Austen, Glyn. "Jane Austen's comedy in *Emma*: High art or mere triviality? Is a novel only worth study if it engages with big issues? Glyn Austen reconsiders a classic tale of '3 or 4 families in a country village'." *The English Review*, Sept. 2005: 2+. *Student Edition*. Web. 5 Aug. 2012.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Jane Austen. (Bloom's Modern Critical Views Series)*. Chelsea House, 2003.

Harbus, Antonina. "Reading embodied consciousness in *Emma*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 51.4 (2011): 765+. *Student Edition*. Web. 5 Aug. 2012.

Waldron, Mary. "Men of sense and silly wives: The confusions of Mr. Knightley." *Studies in the Novel*, 28.2 (1996): 141+. *Student Edition*. Web. 5 Aug. 2012.

White, Laura Mooneyham. "Beyond the romantic gypsy: Narrative disruptions and ironies in Austen's *Emma*." *Papers on Language & Literature*, 44.3 (2008): 305+. *Student Edition*. Web. 5 Aug. 2012.

## Voice Threads

Ask students to work individually or in groups to craft a digital criticism, book review, or book talk on *Emma*. Using [voicethread.com](http://voicethread.com), a free, collaborative presentation platform, students can add digital images, video, music, and voice narration to bring their writing to life. The voicethread is similar to a student podcast, with background images and audio added. For example, a group might choose to write and produce a presentation on the theme of class in *Emma*. The group might choose to use images of Regency England, including elaborate estates invocative of Hartfield or Donwell. Group members can take turns writing and voicing their assigned components, weaving classical music and quotations from the novel throughout the narrated presentation. Alternatively, the group could analyze Austen's ideas about wealth but might give the images and music a modern spin in order to illustrate contemporary relevance. Very user-friendly, voicethread components can be written in different locations, each student contributing his piece using a telephone, microphone, webcam, keyboard, or digital upload. Groups can plan to "meet" online at a specified time, and can talk to one another using one of the tools above. However, the work can be done at different times, members leaving audio or visual "post-it" notes for each other, collaborating on the presentation before submitting it for assessment.

Provide formative assessment for students throughout the process, leaving voice or text notes for group members. Post the presentations on the class website or save on [voicethread.com](http://voicethread.com), allowing students who worked on other topics to view and reflect on each other's works. Sample student voicethreads and tutorials are available at <http://voicethread.com>.

## Documentaries

An alternative use for voice threads is the digital documentary. Ask students to produce a documentary on the life of Jane Austen, the manners and morals of Regency England, or even the popularity of Austen remakes, fan pages, and gatherings. Students can research and embed into a voice thread primary documents and art, film clips, and web pages. As with the literary presentations, group members and classmates can post comments and suggestions and the teacher can post suggestions and assessment.

## Chalk-Talk

In this cooperative learning activity, divide students into groups of four or five. Assign each group one of the major themes that have been addressed throughout the reading of *Emma*, such as gender, class, marriage, and self-awareness. In front of large sheets of paper posted around the room, groups meet at one of the posters, which are pre-labeled with the names of the themes. Students brainstorm and write down all textual evidence and commentary they can think of about the theme. When the teacher says, “switch,” students move to the next poster and read what the previous groups have written before adding their own “chalk-talk.” The activity continues until the groups have seen and contributed to all themes and have returned to their original poster to discuss what has been added by classmates.

## Literary Mash-Ups

Mash-Ups (made popular on the hit television series “Glee”), are combinations of two or more songs, stories, or even computer applications. Literary mash-ups provide students with a real audience for their writing and if they wish, feedback from both peers and professionals. Also known as fan fiction, mash-ups are one writer’s spin on someone else’s story. Set in the fictional universe of students’ favorite TV shows, films, or books, mash-ups and fan fiction stories are based on

a published author’s characters or plot. For instance, Serena from *Gossip Girl* might encounter Mr. Elton from *Emma* at Starbuck’s, and from there, they might plot to expose Frank Churchill in *Gossip Girl*’s newspaper column. Ask students to choose one or two characters from another play, novel, movie, or T.V. show and create a story based on Jane Austen’s *Emma*. To provide opportunity for publication as well as feedback, invite students to post their stories on one of several web-based fan fiction sites, like <http://Fanfiction.net> or <http://Fictionalley.org>.

## Parody: The Inner Dialogue

*Emma* is full of long, introspective sections (such as pp. 355-57) that invite the reader into the protagonist’s mind, yet may distance young readers who prefer action to reflection. However, a careful read of such text provides an excellent source of Austen’s characterization, narrative style, and purpose. Explaining that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, assign students the task of parodying Jane Austen for the purpose of understanding author’s voice. Allow students to choose a character other than Emma (such as Mr. Knightley, Mrs. Weston, or Robert Martin) and adapting the style of Jane Austen, write an inner dialogue that reveals character motivation and author intent by the novel’s end. When the assignment is written, ask students to journal on the following questions:

- How has my thinking about this character changed or deepened since writing the inner dialogue?
- How did writing in the style of the author help me understand Austen’s purpose?

One way to engage students in this project is to have them create “flipbooks,” which are free, digital books whose pages can be virtually turned, or “flipped,” on the computer screen. Students can compose and add images online, then integrate them into the class website as a Flash widget. Sample flip books and tutorials are available at [www.flipsnack.com](http://www.flipsnack.com).

### III. EXTENDED READING

The following classic and young adult titles focus on themes of gender, class, place, and self-awareness and are appropriate for both independent reading or literature circles where each group of students reads/views a different work on the same theme. Ask students for their own additions to the list.

#### Match-Making, Marriage, and the Role of Women

*Brave*. Dirs. Mark Andrews and Brenda Chapman. Pixar, 2012.

*Clueless*. Dir. Amy Heckerling. Paramount, 1995.

Condie, Ally. *Matched*. NY: Speak, 2011.

Green, John. *An Abundance of Katherines*. NY: Dutton Juvenile, 2006.

*Hitch*. Dir. Andy Tennant. Sony, 2005.

McCahan, Erin. *I Now Pronounce You Someone Else*. NY: Levine, 2010.

Springer, Kristina. *The Espressologist*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Stuart, Julia. *The Matchmaker of Perigord*. NY: Harper, 2008.

#### Class, Wealth, and Society

Dean, Zoey. *The A-List*. NY: Poppy, 2008.

De la Cruz, Melissa. *The Au Pairs*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 2005.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. NY: Scribner, 2003.

Forster, E.M. *Howards End*. NY: Signet Classics, 2012.

Hinton, S.E. *The Outsiders*. NY: Speak, 2006.

Segal, Francesca. *The Innocents*. NY: Hyperion, 2012.

Sittenfeld, Curtis. *Prep*. NY: Random House, 2005.

Von Ziegesar, Cecily. *Gossip Girl*. NY: Poppy, 2002.

Wharton, Edith. *The Age of Innocence*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1997.

#### Life in a Small Town

Keillor, Garrison. *Lake Wobegone Days*. NY: Penguin, 1990.

Letts, Billie. *Where the Heart Is*. NY: Grand Central Publishing, 1998.

Metalious, Grace. *Peyton Place*. Lebanon, NH: UP of New England, 1999.

Qualey, Marsha. *Hometown*. NY: HarperCollins, 1997.

Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town*. NY: HarperCollins, 2003.

Wolfe, Thomas. *Look Homeward, Angel*. NY: Scribner, 2006.

#### Self-Awareness

Bray, Libba. *A Great and Terrible Beauty*. NY: Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2003.

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. NY: Signet, 1976.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. NY: Scholastic, 2010.

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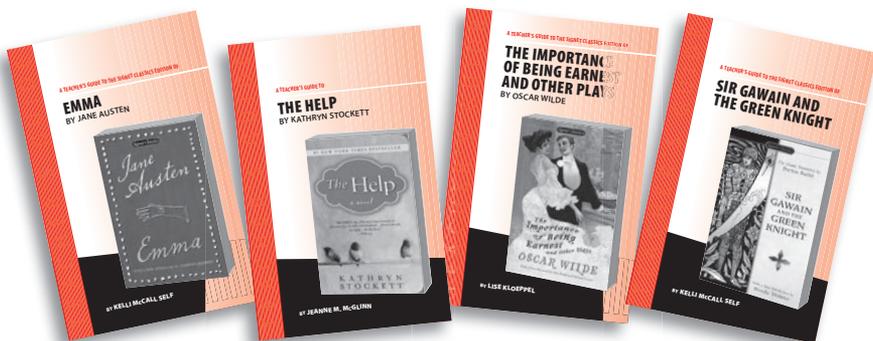
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