UNIT 7: JANE AUSTEN: *MANSFIELD PARK* (PART I)

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7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the life and works of Jane Austen
- explain Jane Austen as a major English novelist with reference to her novel *Mansfield Park*.
- trace the storyline of the novel *Mansfield Park*.
- examine how Jane Austen had been critically received as a novelist.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Jane Austen (1775-1817) and her novel *Mansfield Park.* Along with Walter Scott (1771-1832), Austen inaugurated the great age of English novel. To Jane Austen's credit, there are six novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Austen's work may be roughly divided into two parts—the first associated with her birthplace Steventon, and the second, with Chawton where her family had to finally move in 1801 after the death of her father.

Mansfield Park was written at a particularly important point in her literary career and it also marks a dramatic change of direction. Written at Chawton Cottage between 1812 and 1814, the novel was first published by Thomas Egerton in July, 1814. It can be assumed that *Mansfield Park* is a counter statement of *Pride and Prejudice*. In this unit, you will be able to learn why Jane Austen is regarded as one of the greatest novelists in the English language.

7.3 JANE AUSTEN: THE NOVELIST

7.3.1 Her Life

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775. Her father, George Austen, was a country rector of latitudinarian or liberal views in the Southern English county of Hampshire, and her mother Cassandra (also called N´ee Leigh) had aristocratic linkages. Both George and Cassandra Austen were cultivated people. It is known that George, with his library of over 500 books, was 'a profound scholar', and Cassandra composed comic verse on local people and events, a common pastime of her community. The pair had eight children and Jane was one of the two sisters. Unlike her brothers, the two girls–Jane and Cassandra had little professional opportunities, and subsequently, failed to find a proper source of income. In the same period, Mary Wollstonecraft was writing on the restricted lives of women in her society. All that society sanctioned for the women was the gaining of a husband, and as the reasonably educated girls remained single, they were meant only to nurture their married relatives. It is important to note that Austen voiced her concerns over the dependency of women on men. She also seemed to have accepted the intellectual pursuits



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of Wollstonecraft, although they are not openly expressed in her novels.

In 1783, the Austen sisters were sent to Oxford to be tutored by Mrs Ann Cawley, who then took them to Southampton. However, their stay was interrupted by an outbreak of typhus from which Jane nearly died. This was followed by formal education at Abbey House School in Reading. By the end of 1786, the sisters had returned to Steventon, where they were casually instructed within the family by their own relatives. Although Jane appreciated a well-stocked mind, she had very little respect for formal education and for boys. Their financial dependency on their father led the two Austen sisters to contemplate on a prospective future through marriage. Even as none of them achieved it, Cassandra was engaged to a clergyman who died in Jamaica and this had also brought much sisterly grief to Jane Austen. On the other hand, Jane's relationship with Tom Lefroy, the nephew of her much loved neighbour Madam Lefroy, abruptly broke. Instead of helping Jane, Madame Lefroy made sure that her nephew left before his relationship with a penniless girl became serious.



LET US KNOW

Napoleonic War:

Through almost all Jane Austen's adult life, Britain and France were at war with each other. In the 1790s, when hostilities first began, the country was facing the danger of the superior Revolutionary armies of France under Napoleon who assumed control of France in 1799. Two of Austen's brothers—Charles and Francis were in the Royal Navy, fighting the French. Letters and newspapers kept Jane Austen in close contact with their equally energetic wartime activities. Austen very often in her novels allowed characters to feel pride in a new maritime power and, even more, to revel in

the entrepreneurial aspect of naval service, the possibility of prize money and advancement for the enterprising (officer) class: 'the glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance', as Henry Crawford imagines it in *Mansfield Park*.

Jane Austen began her career as a writer in her childhood when she started to write *Juvenilia* in 1787. Subsequently, she wrote some great novels. She realised that she should not marry for worldly motives. Her family shifted from Hampshire to Bath in 1801. Her father died in 1801. Jane, her ailing mother and her sister Cassandra found themselves without a permanent home, and subsequently, they had to move from one house to another in Bath. It was in Chawton, when her brother had inherited a large estate that she left aside her frustration and started working seriously. The mood of Jane Austen in these last years of her life was pleasant. She turned to the three manuscripts that she had laid aside in Steventon. The first of these was *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) (Initially *Elinor and Marianne*). Then she revised and published *First Impressions* as *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). It was followed by *Mansfield Park* (1814). After the publication of *Mansfield Park*, Sir Walter Scott reviewed *Emma* in 'Quarterly' appreciating Austen's merit as a novelist. Such inspiration made her also revise and rename *Susan* as *Northanger Abbey* (1818). In July 1816, she finished another novel called *Persuasion*. Two decades of experimentation and revision went into the publication of these major novels.

During the spring in 1816, Jane Austen felt unwell. At that time, she was working on *Sanditon*, but it was unfinished. On 27th April of 1817, she made her will and she died early on the morning of 18 July. She was buried in Winchester Cathedral, 24 July.

From the six novels that she wrote, we learn much about the political, spiritual, and intellectual attitudes available in Jane Austen's time. However, instead of advocating positions, she

explores issues rather than resolving them. Although she remains an ardent observer of the beginnings of the capitalist and industrial transformation of Britain in rural Hampshire as well as the cities of London, Southampton, and Bath, she does not discuss society and politics at length. Her novels are experimental as each presents a different sort of heroine a different take on society and the relationship of behaviour and personality according to environment.



LET US KNOW

Jane Austen entered the literary market place at a favourable time. Women novelists had been increasing in number throughout the 18th century and they actually formed a majority towards the end. Peter Garside has argued that, by the 1810, 'the *publication* of Jane Austen's novels was achieved not against the grain but during a period of female ascendancy'; only in the 1820 did male novelists become numerically dominant again – and then dominant in the culture. Austen was a voracious reader of contemporary fiction by men and women. She wanted to be an author who was bought, read, and reread, whose books became both an experience and a challenge to experience, not simply once-consumed items.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In what ways did Mary Wollstonecraft influence Jane Austen?

Q 2: What, according to you, are the distinctions of Austen as a novelist?

Q 3: What significance does Jane Austen bear as a woman novelist?

7.3.2 Her Works

Sir Walter Scott praised Jane Austen for her exquisite touch in her novels, which makes the ordinary look very interesting. This feature can be traced in almost all her novels. The environment at her home, however, stirred Austen to perceive certain things right from her childhood. From an early age religious texts like the *Book of Common Prayer*, *The Bible*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* formed part of her interests. However, she was equally acquainted with fiction, non-fictional works, plays, poems and along with her sister Cassandra, she started reading all kinds of novels, and it influenced her to write certain burlesque in those days. She began to write *Juvenilia* such as *Love and Friendship* in 1787. She completed this novel in 1793. However, Thomas Powel, the fiancé of Cassandra, suddenly died in 1797 and Austen was much moved by the grief of her sister. Thus, Cassandra's sadness is echoed in Elionor's attitude in *Elinor and Marianne* (later *Sense and Sensibility).*

First Impression, the earlier form of *Pride and Prejudice,* was begun in October 1796 and completed in 1797. The novel was given to a publisher in London, but it was left unpublished. In 1797, she started working on *Elinor and Marianne*. During the period of 1797-98, she wrote *Susan.* Though she wrote all rough drafts of the novels, they were not published until the second decade of the 19th century. You will note that the period between 1803-1809 was rather barren. After the death of her father, Austen's family moved to Chawton in 1809 and from this date began the most fertile period of her literary career. *Sense and Sensibility* was published in 1811, and it was followed by her masterpiece *Pride and Prejudice* in1813. The immense popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* inspired Austen to write and publish her other novels–*Mansfield Park* in 1814, *Emma* in 1815, *Northanger Abbey* (initially *Susan*) in 1817, and *Persuasion* in 1817. At that time, Austen gained reputation as an important novelist and

writers like Walter Scott praised her worth. Austen started another novel called *Sanditon* on 27 January 1817. However, due to her illness she ceased to work on it. Like *Sanditon*, she attempted *The Watsons* in her early days, which, however, was also left unfinished.

You must note that Austen absorbed various genres including children's literature—nursery rhymes, Gay's *Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*. She began writing delicious, sometimes surreal, stories and parodies to amuse her family from an early age of eleven. These stories are filled with anarchic fantasies of female power, licence, illicit behaviour, and general high spirits. Drunkenness, incest, and serial killings routinely occur in these stories, revealing Jane Austen's youthful awareness of the comic possibilities of language to address the absurdities of life even at this early stage. Works like "Jack and Alice" and "Love & Friendship" are examples of such early works. These juvenile productions physically mimic the grown-up book: they are written out carefully in notebooks and provided with dedications to Martha Lloyd, to 'Madame La Comtesse De Feuillide', and, of course, to her sister Cassandra. At fourteen, Jane Austen wrote the longest of these juvenile productions "Love & Friendship", taking two girls through a series of absurd adventures. "Love & Friendship" was followed by "Catharine", and a preparation for *Susan*, which would in time become *Northanger Abbey*. In "Catharine" Austen developed the character of a principled, unsophisticated heroine of ordinary achievements. "Catharine" was succeeded by "Lady Susan", a work rooted in the 18th century novel in letters, which suited the subject matter of a heroine manoeuvring within a world in which men control property. For *Mansfield Park* she made striking improvements on Maria Edgeworth's at least three novels and even wrote to her niece Anna on 28th September 1814: "I have made up my mind to like no novels really, but Miss Edgeworth's, Yours and my own."

Throughout her literary career, Jane Austen adhered to plain writing and consequential plots. The new 'style of fiction', with which Walter Scott credited her in his review of her mature novel *Emma,* is implied by the high-spirited burlesques and parodies of her Steventon days. She wrote only forty pages of *The Watsons* that graphically portrays humiliations faced by common people in a closed insular society. The story concerned four unmarried daughters of an ailing father with a small income: two are desperate husband seekers, the third would be happy to remain single if she had an income, and the fourth, the more genteel Emma, claims she would rather be a teacher than marry for money. However, Austen decided to quit from this project and there are several possible reasons for her quitting. She might have realised that just like "First Impressions" and "Susan" it was not readily going to be published, and she might have felt demoralised. However, her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, who gave the novel its title, claimed she stopped because the subject matter was 'unfavourable to the refinement of a lady', being set in too lowly a rank of life where 'poverty and obscurity' may easily degenerate into 'vulgarity'. The plot of *The Watsons*– a delicately brought-up girl returning to her poorer family and facing the threat of economic hardship–would recur in *Mansfield Park*. However, it was in Chawton, to which Jane Austen moved after 1809, that she began to write like a professional writer. Her works beautifully exemplify the relations of individual talent to tradition.



LET US KNOW

A writer during Jane Austen's period could publish in four ways:

(1) Sell the copyright and avoid further anxiety over production and sales.

(2) Persuade a publisher to underwrite costs and share profits.

(3) Get a subscription list to pay for publication, relying on friends, relatives, and patrons.

(4) Publish on commission, so paying for the book production, receiving profits minus a commission, and accepting any loss.

It is important to note that in 1803, when 'Susan' had been offered to a publisher, Austen had tried the first option and had received the modest but usual sum of £10. In 1811, she tried the fourth when she sent *Sense and Sensibility* to Thomas Egerton, a London publisher, to be published on commission.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Which are the major novels by Jane Austen?

Q 5: What were the four conditions while publishing a book during Austen's time?

7.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL [Adapted from Wikipedia]

Mansfield Park was the first to be started after Jane Austen had settled in Chawton. This novel was named after an estate that established her as a professional writer. It was printed by Egerton and then Murray, and the move to this fashionable publisher confirmed that its author was aiming less for circulating libraries than for buyers intending to keep and reread copies. "I have something in hand– which I hope on the credit of P. & P. will sell well, tho' not half so entertaining", wrote Jane Austen in September 1813. Her decision not to repeat the 'entertaining' formula of her most successful novels suggests that, in *Mansfield Park*, she was aiming at something beyond general approval. The following is the storyline of the novel *Mansfield Park*.

Fanny Price, a poor young girl of 10, is to be raised by her rich uncle Sir Thomas, a patriarch, and aunt Lady Bertram of Mansfield Park.

Previously she had lived with her own parents, Lieut. Price, and his wife, Frances, Lady Bertram's sister. Fanny has firm attachment to her elder brother, William, who, at the age of 12, joined the navy. With very little income to rear her own children, Fanny's mother Frances is thankful to her sister for agreeing to keep Fanny with them. At Mansfield Park, Fanny grows up with her four elder cousins: Tom, Edmund, Maria and Julia. But only Edmund, the most good-natured of the siblings, shows her real kindness. Maria and Julia are spoiled and Tom becomes an irresponsible gambler. Over time, Fanny's gratitude for Edmund's thoughtfulness secretly grows into romantic love. Her other maternal aunt, Mrs. Norris, who is also the local parson's wife, showers care and affection on her Bertram nieces, particularly Maria, but is frequently mean-spirited toward Fanny.

When Fanny is 16, Sir Thomas leaves for a year to deal with problems with his plantation. He takes Tom along with the hope that he will gain some experience of his father's business. Meanwhile, Mrs. Norris, who is out to find a husband for Maria introduces her to Mr. Rushworth, a very rich but stupid man. Maria accepts his marriage proposal, subject to Sir Thomas's approval on his return. At the same time, the fashionable and wealthy Henry Crawford and his sister Mary Crawford, arrive at the Personage (A church house provided for a parson or a clergyman) to stay with Mrs. Grant, their half-sister. After a year in Antigua, Sir Thomas sends Tom back home while himself continuing business. Sir Thomas is confident that Edmund will be able to keep life in Mansfield Park running in the right order.

The sudden arrival of the Crawfords disrupts the grave world of Mansfield Park and sparks a series of romantic entanglements. Mary and Edmund begin to form an attachment despite her original preference for Tom who is the supposed heir of Mansfield Park. Although Edmund finds out that she lacks firm principle, and Mary too is unhappy with Edmund's willingness to become a clergyman, their mutual attraction grows. Fanny fears that Mary has enchanted Edmund, and that love has blinded him to

her flaws. Meanwhile, during a visit to Mr. Rushworth's ancestral estate in Sotherton, Henry Crawford deliberately plays with the affections of both Maria and Julia, finally driving them apart. Maria believes that Henry is falling in love with her and treats Mr. Rushworth dismissively which provokes his jealousy. Fanny, on the other hand, is highly observant and witnesses Maria and Henry in compromising situations.

The young generation in the household decide to put on Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows.* Initially, both Edmund and Fanny object, believing Sir Thomas would never approve of such activities, mainly because the subject matter of the play includes adultery. Eventually, Edmund agrees reluctantly to play the role of Anhalt, the lover of the character to be played by Mary Crawford. Besides giving Mary and Edmund plenty of scope for talking about love and marriage, the play also provides a pretext for Henry and Maria to flirt publicly. However, with the sudden and abrupt arrival of Sir Thomas the rehearsal of the theatricals comes to an abrupt halt. Henry, whom Maria had expected to marry, leaves and she feels crushed, realising that he does not love her. Although she neither likes nor respects Mr. Rushworth, she goes ahead and marries him, and both leave for Brighton, taking Julia with them. Meanwhile, Fanny's improved appearance and gentle disposition motivates Sir Thomas not to treat her as distantly as he did earlier. With Maria and Julia gone, Fanny and Mary Crawford naturally come closer to each other.

Henry returns to Mansfield Park and decides to amuse himself by making Fanny fall in love with him without knowing that Fanny is in love with Edmund. To further his suit, even he proposes to raise Fanny's brother William to the rank of naval lieutenant by making use of his family connections. Fanny is happy; however, when he proposes marriage, Fanny rejects him as she disapproves of his immoral character. Sir Thomas is dismayed and startled by her refusal to marry Henry, since it is an extremely advantageous match for a poor girl like Fanny. He reproaches her for ingratitude, and believing it is all female timidity on

Fanny's part, encourages Henry to persevere. To bring Fanny back to her senses, Sir Thomas sends her to Portsmouth, hoping that the lack of comforts at her original home will help her set a higher value on Henry's offer. At Portsmouth, she develops a firm bond with her younger sister Susan, but is taken aback by the contrast between her dissolute surroundings and the environment at Mansfield. Henry visits her to try to convince her that he has changed and is worthy of her affection. Although Fanny still maintains that she cannot marry him, her attitude begins to soften, as Edmund and Mary seem to be moving toward an engagement.

Henry leaves for London, and shortly afterward, Fanny comes of know about the scandal that has enveloped between him and Maria. Maria is exposed as an adulterous wife, Mr. Rushworth sues for divorce, and the proud Bertram family is devastated. To make matters worse, Tom becomes ill, and Julia, fearing that her father will essentially lock her up, elopes with Tom's flighty friend Mr. Yates.

In the midst of this crisis, Fanny returns to Mansfield Park with her sister, Susan, now joyfully welcomed by all in Mansfield Park. A repentant Sir Thomas realises that Fanny was right to reject Henry's proposal and starts regarding her as his own daughter. During an emotional meeting with Mary Crawford, Edmund discovers that Mary does not condemn Henry and Maria's adultery, only that it was discovered. Her main concern is covering it up, and she implies that if Fanny had only accepted Henry, there would have been no affair. Edmund, who had idolised Mary, feels that her true nature has been revealed to him. He returns to Mansfield, and goes ahead with plans to be ordained as a minister.

While he is despairing of ever getting over Mary, Edmund comes to realise how important Fanny is to him. He declares his love for her, and they marry. Eventually, they move to the Mansfield Park parsonage, where they live close to those they love best. Tom recovers from his illness, a steadier and better man for it, and Julia's husband, Mr. Yates, turns out to be not so empty-headed after all. Henry Crawford refuses to marry Maria, who is banished by her family to live "in another country,"

where she is joined by her aunt Norris. Finally, Fanny becomes the mistress of Mansfield Park.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What ideas can you derive regarding the story of the novel *Mansfield Park* from your reading of the chapter?

7.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF AUSTEN

Although many critics have hailed this novel as a remarkable achievement of Jane Austen, it has rarely been anyone's favourite. In 1917, Reginald Farrer wrote: "None of her books is quite so brilliant in parts, none shows a greater technical mastery, a more audacious facing of realities, a more certain touch with character. Yet, alone of her books, *Mansfield Park* is vitiated throughout by a radical dishonesty." With various modulations, later critics declare that here the moralist and creator are at odds, and that this troubling and challenging work defies satisfactory or 'comfortable' interpretation, however remarkable its achievements are.

Until the late 19th century, Jane Austen was not widely read, especially compared to her contemporary like Walter Scott. Her readership was largely confined to some among the titled gentry, and upper-middle classes and to a few discerning literary people. For example Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth B. Browning, found her to be limited. However, positive reception of Austen's work began with James Edward Austen-Leigh's book *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (published in 1870) in which he presented his aunt as a modest, lady like Christian spinster. Together with the novels' portrayal of the last and lost pre-industrial era of England, attractive to a new railway and suburban readership, this work brought a new image of Austen as national treasure, beloved by 'Janeites'. The image became associated with 'heritage', with pastoral Englishness; as the novelist Henry James

remarked, the public found 'our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purposes'.

The 20th century brought a change. Austen received many intellectual readers The 'dear Jane' of cultural England became by the mid-twentieth century also F. R. Leavis's mother of the morally serious 'Great Tradition' of fiction, the exclusive canon of writers worthy of study in a newly established university departments of literature. Critics like Reginald Farrer, D. W. Harding, and Marvin Mudrick, proceeded to rescue Austen from the 'Janeites'. In this context, Ian Watt in his *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), tried to locate a new modernity in Austen, whose novels achieved an 'authenticity without diffuseness or trickery'. Feminist criticism of the late 1960s and 1970s saw matters differently. Viewing Jane Austen through the lens of Victorian and modern literature and rebelling against a notion of a masculine-inflected foremother, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) argued that the novels 'explore[d] the tensions between the freedom of her art and the dependency of her characters: while they stutter and sputter and lapse into silence and even hasten to perfect felicity', Austen herself attains a 'woman's language that is magnificently duplicitous'. Building on this foundation, later versions of feminist criticism saw Austen as symptomatic of the gender conflict of her time: some understood her as voicing not answering questions, others accused her of colluding with patriarchy by advocating heterosexual romance over female relationships.

Another recent trend in Austen studies is the particular focus on one area of interest alone, such as her reception in anon-European context, her relationship to Romanticism or the Enlightenment, religion, education, the theatre, or food. One significant study, John Wiltshire's *Jane Austen and the Body* (1992), reflects a contemporary interest in the gendered and sexualised body, and its ability to manifest cultural constructions physiologically. As a result of all this activity, now in the 21st century, Austen's critical reputation has never stood higher. Her popularity

outside the academy of course derives in large part from adaptations, especially of *Pride and Prejudice*: the BBC's 1995 and Hollywood's 2005 versions and the Bollywood-inspired *Bride and Prejudice* of 2004.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Do you think that the novel is a replica of England's middle class society during Austen's time?

Q 8: Mention the various shifts in the reception of the novel *Mansfield Park* in the 20th century.



7.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have gone through the life and works of Jane Austen who is supposed to have inaugurated the great age of English novel. To Jane Austen's credit, there are six successful novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818). She wrote the novel *Mansfield Park* at a particularly important point in her literary career, and it also marks a dramatic change of direction in her writerly career. Although many critics have hailed this novel as a remarkable achievement of Jane Austen, it has rarely been anyone's favourite. Until the late 19th century, Jane Austen was not widely read, especially compared to her contemporary like Walter Scott. Besides, some of her other contemporaries like Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth B. Browning, found her to be limited. However, positive reception of Austen's work began with James Edward Austen-Leigh's book *A Memoir of Jane Austen.* Together with the novels' portrayal of the last and lost pre-industrial era of England, attractive to a new railway and suburban readership, this work brought a new image of Austen as national treasure, beloved by 'Janeites'. The image became associated with 'heritage', with pastoral Englishness; as the novelist Henry James

remarked, the public found 'our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purposes'.



7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Mary Wollstonecraft was concerned with the restricted lives of women… …she argued that the only purpose of women was to gain a husband and the duty of the reasonably educated girls was to nurture their married relatives… …It seems that Jane Austen accepted both the female dependency on men and the intellectual pursuits of Wollstonecraft.

Ans to Q No 2: All of her novels deal with themes related to women… …being a realist, she brings together rural folk and the middle class of the towns… …from the six novels that she wrote, we learn much about the political, spiritual, and intellectual attitudes of her time… …her novels are experimental as each presents a different take on society and the relationship of behaviour and personality to environment.

Ans to Q No 3: Jane Austen entered the literary marketplace at a propitious time when the number of the women novelists had been increasing… …Peter Garside argued that Jane Austen's novels symbolised female ascendancy… …Austen's books finally became both an experience and a challenge to experience.

Ans to Q No 4: *Juvenilia… …Sense and Sensibility… …Pride and Prejudice… …Susan… …Mansfield Park… …Emma… … Persuasion… …Northanger Abbey*.

Ans to Q No 5: Sell the copyright and avoid further anxiety over production and sales… … Persuade a publisher to underwrite costs and share profits… …Get a subscription list to pay for publication, relying on friends, relatives, and patrons…. …Publish on commission.

Ans to Q No 6: The novelist contextualises the story of one family, i.e, of Bertram family with the social reality of the middle class during her time in England… …Themes such as love, matrimony, colony, and so on are gradually incorporated to the plot… …The nature of the characters and then their function lead to the climax into the plot.

Ans to Q No 7: Both yes and no… … yes, because the characters greatly reveal the attitude and conduct of the middle class people of the time, their ways of living/thinking typifying the mentality of the bourgeoisie class… … no, because some major socio-political incidents during the time in England like the Napleonic War are absent in the novel.

Ans to Q No 8: Edward Said condemned Austen's omission to mention that the estate of Mansfield Park was made possible only through slave labour… … Gabrielle White, however, opposed Said's condemnation of Austen and western culture… …some find faults in Austen's indifference to the Napoleonic War.



7.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Trace the life and works of Jane Austen to discuss the development of Jane Austen as a novelist in the 19th century.

Q 2: "Jane Austen's range of vision in her novels is confined to matrimony and gatherings." Justify your response with reference to *Mansfield Park.*

Q 3: What significance does Jane Austen bear as a woman novelist of her times? Discuss.

Q 4: Do you think that the novel is a replica of England's middle class society during Austen's time? Justify your views.

Q 5: Discuss how the novelist Austen develops the plot in *Mansfield Park?*

Q 6: What evidence from the novel *Mansfield Park* can you give for or against the critical statement that Jane Austen's point of view is feminine?

Q 7: Mention the various shifts in the reception of the novel *Mansfield Park* in the 20th century with special reference to Edward Said.

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