



**Sample Pages from
Jane Austen, Completely Zoomed**

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JANE AUSTEN, COMPLETELY ZOOMED

ADAPTED BY
Treanor Baring

From Jane Austen's classic novels *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion*.



Jane Austen, Completely Zoomed
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General Notes for All Plays

FOR ONLINE VERSION WITH VIDEO: Each character is on their own in their home environment. Encourage actors to decorate their background, as much as they can, to fit their character and situation. Actors speak their lines directly to their camera. You can either present the show as a livestream, or prerecord actors individually and edit them together. Use whatever platform you have available. If you're using a platform where a student can change their profile name, make sure they use their character name!

SLIDES NOTE: There are two types of slides: Text (words are in "quotations") and Images (Images are described.) Slides can be done via a program such as PowerPoint, or handheld by the actor who speaks the line before the slide. Zoom screens switch based on sound, so you'll have to find clever ways of making sure the slide is shown. It's a great opportunity to give your tech crew an important theatrical task.

FOR ONLINE VERSION AS A RADIO PLAY: If the production is audio only, include a visual slide deck (such as PowerPoint). Include images or stills to go along with your actors' voices.

SOCIALLY-DISTANCED/IN-PERSON PERFORMANCE: This script is specifically written to be performed in an online environment. You may, however, adapt the stage directions to fit a socially-distanced live performance. Place each character in their own designated area of the stage that they do not leave. Use platforms of varying heights. You can give each character a piece of furniture or set piece (e.g. a type of chair) to help establish their character. The slides described in the script are part of the storytelling, so find a way to incorporate them into your performance. For example, use projections or have a crew member hold up large posters. If you are producing more than one of the plays, and the same actors are playing multiple roles, vary the color of their costumes using the color suggestions as rough guides.

SOUND EFFECTS: These are not necessary but will give your sound crew a great project. They can be used in a livestream or a recorded/edited production.

COSTUMES: If you have the ability to get students period costumes, great. Do the best you can with available resources. Use the suggested accessory pieces in each play or something similar. Have everyone wear modern clothes or T-shirts with the suggested color identifier for each character. Have your costume designer create their own character look book, share with your actors, and have them find something in their home that would work.

TIMING NOTE: This script is intended to be performed fast, breathlessly, giving the impression of "dashing" or "zooming" through the story. It should leave the impression of moving fast no matter the running time. You are

going to want to practice, practice, and practice some more the timing of actors turning their cameras and mics on and off.

TEXT NOTE: You can perform these plays as a whole or individually. If you're choosing to perform the play in the order written, include any lines that are in [brackets]. They make reference to other plays in the order.

TITLE NOTE: If performing all the plays in order call the play *Jane Austen, Completely Zoomed*. If performing any individual play as a stand-alone, use the specific title of that play, as in *Sense and Sensibility, Completely Zoomed*.

Sense and Sensibility

Casting

4W 4M + 1 Any Gender

- NARRATOR:** Appears in modern dress. Can be seated in a large comfy chair or at a desk in front of a bookshelf.
- HENRY DASHWOOD:** Has physical action, appears very briefly. Accessory: jacket or coat. Color Identifier: black.
- MRS. DASHWOOD:** Mother, sweet and kind, emotional. Accessory: bonnet or hat. Color Identifier: cream.
- ELINOR DASHWOOD:** Sense. No-nonsense, practical. Accessory: plain shawl or scarf. Color Identifier: light blue.
- MARIANNE DASHWOOD:** Sensibility. Emotional, dramatic. Accessory: lacy shawl. Color Identifier: pink.
- EDWARD:** Stodgy, serious, shy. Accessory: brown or blue coat. Color Identifier: blue.
- COLONEL BRANDON:** Distinguished, serious. Accessory: red uniform coat, brass buttons if possible. Color Identifier: red.
- WILLOUGHBY:** Charming rogue. Accessory: fancy period tie or cravat. Color Identifier: purple.
- LUCY STEELE:** Sugary sweet but vicious mean girl. Accessory: flashy, feathery shawl. Color Identifier: hot pink.

Running Time

10 minutes

NARRATOR: Welcome to *Jane Austen, Completely Zoomed*, where we will race through the English writer's six (or whatever number the group performs) great novels, written in the nineteenth century, but still popular. First up, naturally, is Miss Austen's first published novel from 1811. This is a no lace, no teacups, no frills, redux of Austen's masterpiece of sisters, secrets, and *Sense and Sensibility*.

SLIDE: "*Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen. Adapted by Treanor Baring."

SFX: Opening music. Can be classical. Or use current pop or rock with a theme of secrets.

Starting on page one: Meet Mr. Henry Dashwood.

HENRY DASHWOOD: I'm rich, but all the money came from my first wife.

NARRATOR: She passed away, we don't know how.

HENRY DASHWOOD: (*waves at camera in a friendly way*) I married again, though.

NARRATOR: Don't get too attached. He's gone by page three. But... first he makes his son promise to give his second wife and their daughters some of his inheritance. Because all the cash and Norland Park go to the son. (*flips through a large book*) Blah blah blah, surprise, surprise, son keeps it all and second Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters get zippo, nada, or in Brit-speak (*with exaggerated accent*) 'naught.' Introducing said second wife, Mrs. Dashwood.

MRS. DASHWOOD: Hi, there. Mrs. Dashwood here.

NARRATOR: She's over forty, which in Jane Austen's time makes her, like really old. So, kinda like an extra.

MRS. DASHWOOD: (*looks offended, then defiant*) I'll be back. You'll see.

NARRATOR: Now on to our title characters, Mrs. Dashwood's daughters. *Sense and Sensibility*, not their real names, although it's pretty clear by page four which is which. Meet Sense, or Elinor.

ELINOR: Keep calm and carry on, everyone!!

NARRATOR: And now *Sensibility*. Which doesn't mean sensible. It means in the feels. Total Emo. Marianne.

MARIANNE: (*putting the back of her hand to her forehead*) Woe is me!

NARRATOR: Now, introducing the eligible bachelors. Rule One for eligibility: large fortune, look good riding a horse, and have a ‘well informed mind.’

SLIDE: “RULE ONE: Rich and smart.”

Also quite importantly, Rule Two, eligible bachelors don’t drive “barouches,” which we gather from the text is some kind of fancy carriage that screams ‘stay away from this dude!’

SLIDE: Image of fancy carriage overlaid with a red circle and slash.

So... Man One: Edward. Elinor and Marianne’s half brother’s wife’s brother, which makes him something like a half-step-brother-brother-in-law or a step-half-brother in-law-once removed, or some other kind of relative you’re allowed to marry.

EDWARD: For the record: I have rejected every career my family wants for me. Basically, I do nothing. Also, in spite of appearing to be quite dull, I have a secret...

NARRATOR: No spoilers!

EDWARD: But mystery is all I’ve got going for me.

NARRATOR: That’s not true. You’re amiable. Which in Austen-speak means you can talk about subjects other than fox-hunting or shooting birds. (*counting off with fingers*) And, Elinor is a bit dull, too. And, you’re respectable. Which means something like “doesn’t pick his nose in public.” Or behave badly in private. Now on to Man Two: Colonel Brandon.

COLONEL BRANDON: (*stiffly and formally*) Pleased to make your acquaintance.

NARRATOR: He has an intriguing secret, too, even though he wears a flannel waistcoat, which is like some kind of fuzzy vest, and is yet another warning sign, at least for Marianne.

COLONEL BRANDON: At least I don’t drive a barouche.

SLIDE: Image of fancy carriage overlaid with a red circle and slash.

NARRATOR: And you’re respectable.

COLONEL BRANDON: Quite. (*pause*) Mmm... Depending on what my secret is. (*raises eyebrows*)

NARRATOR: Don’t go far, Colonel, we may need you later.

MARRIANE: What about... *(with a dreamy voice and sighing heavily)*
Willoughby.

NARRATOR: Yes, yes. Man Three. Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY: I'm Willoughby OF Allenham, actually.

NARRATOR: Which brings us to Rule 3 for eligibility, having an "of"
after your name. Enter Willoughby OF Allenham, and OF Combe
Magna

SLIDE: Image of a large house with a comb sitting on top of it.

the name of his large house somewhere else, which means something like OVERSIZED COMB. In Gaelic. Or Latin. Not sure. Anyway, not to be outdone by Man One or Man Two, Willoughby also has a secret.

WILLOUGHBY: Yes, but my secret is much more interesting. I should have my own book devoted just to me.

NARRATOR: I think it's time we moved on to the plot. Our story starts, finally, at Norland Park, which is, by the way, a house, not a picnic area,

SLIDE: Image of a large mansion with "Norland Park" caption.

where Edward has come to visit.

EDWARD: Miss Dashwood—Elinor—would you do me the honor of hanging out with me for days on end while I act like I'm totally into you one minute and then give you the cold shoulder the next?

ELINOR: Of course. I have nothing better to do. Edward doesn't talk about fox-hunting or shooting birds all the time. So I like him, and esteem him.

SLIDE: "TO ESTEEM = think he's hot."

MRS. DASHWOOD: I'm baaack! My half-step-daughter-in-law has kicked us out of Norland,

SLIDE: Image of Norland again, then, if handheld, it's tossed aside.

so off we go to a sweet little cottage someplace else. Owned by a cousin.

ELINOR: We are determined to be happy in our new state of poverty with only three servants, Marianne's pianoforte, and our noisy, nosy cousins inviting us to parties all the time.

MARIANNE: Is it my turn yet?

MRS. DASHWOOD: Yes, dear. Go for your long walk in the rain now, and tumble down a hill.

MARIANNE: (*falls out of view, then jumps back in frame and strikes a damsel in distress pose*) Help, help!

WILLOUGHBY: I save Marianne! Then I visit her every day, recite poetry by heart and act like I'm going to ask her to marry me.

MARIANNE: Oh, Willoughby. (*sigh*)

WILLOUGHBY: Oh, Marianne!

ELINOR: Oh, brother.

MRS. DASHWOOD: Everyone says Mr. Willoughby is respectable. He's handsome AND charming.

SLIDE: "Handsome + Charming = RED FLAG."

COLONEL BRANDON: I must be off. I have urgent business in London. Bring me my horse!

SFX: Fast-galloping horse hooves.

MARIANNE: Who was that again?

ELINOR: Colonel Brandon, dear. Man Two.

WILLOUGHBY: I must be off to London, too, on equally mysterious business. Have I proposed to Marianne yet? Nobody knows! It's a...

EVERYONE: Secret!

SFX: Fast-galloping horse hooves.

MARIANNE: (*weeping and wailing*) Oh, Willoughby!

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, enter Lucy Steele.

LUCY STEELE: Hello!! Look at me! Look at me!

NARRATOR: Another cousin of some sort. She also has something to hide.

LUCY STEELE: (*waving to get attention*) Oh, Miss Dashwood! Yoohoo, Miss Dashwood!

ELINOR: I've never met you in my life and now we're besties? Why me?

LUCY STEELE: Because I'm going to take great pleasure in telling you a secret that will make you miserable. Then I'll ask you not to tell a soul, just to torment you.

NARRATOR: The ladies now have secrets as well as the gentlemen.

LUCY STEELE: My dear Miss Dashwood, for five years I've been secretly engaged to Edward. And you thought he was YOUR boyfriend. HA!

ELINOR: Excuse me, I have to stop the play here. Why on earth would Edward like this... person?

LUCY STEELE: (*triumphantly flashing a letter signed "love, Edward"*) See!

ELINOR: And if he does, why would I like him?

NARRATOR: He's amiable? Respectable? No? All right. Because Jane Austen Said So.

SLIDE: "Because. Jane. Austen. Said. So."

ELINOR: He's not exactly the typical dashing hero of romance novels. Why him?

NARRATOR: Um, because you like and esteem him?

SLIDE: "TO ESTEEM = think he's hot."

LUCY STEELE: Come to think of it, why would I agree to get engaged to Edward?

NARRATOR: Money. He's rich.

LUCY STEELE: (*not sarcastically*) I'll get to drive a barouche!

NARRATOR: (*impatiently rolling eyes*) The heroes are not supposed to be perfect because these aren't actually romance novels, they're social commentary. Shall I give the Jane Austen as first realistic novelist lecture?

SLIDE: In small print and unreadable in the time allotted: "Women at this time did not have a high reputation in society and so they hardly had any rights. Most women were in the need to find the most riches marriage parcel—Sigrun Rolling, and This clarification

of Jane Austen's social vision, which I believe to be the main contribution of recent criticism, has derived from attempts to resolve the subversive-celebrant debate.—David Monaghan.”

EVERYONE ELSE: No!

NARRATOR: Ok, we've lost valuable time. We're going to bypass the whole 'girls go to London' bit and skip right to Marianne giving up her will to live.

MARIANNE: I find out Willoughby (*sigh*) is engaged to Miss Grey who has 30,000 pounds! Oh, oh, woe is me! (*sobs uncontrollably*)

NARRATOR: We need Colonel Brandon back to explain why he dashed off to London on his horse. And why Willoughby abandoned Marianne. Cue Colonel Brandon!

COLONEL BRANDON: I'm here!

NARRATOR: Make it quick. Time for your big revelation.

COLONEL BRANDON: My secret is...

SFX: Drum roll.

When I was young, the woman I loved was foisted off on my brother, who abused her. Then he divorced her, and she was forced into prostitution, had a baby and died...

LUCY STEELE: Wait a minute! This is getting way too dark. Bring back the teacups! And the lace! That's what Jane Austen is supposed to be about.

NARRATOR: Wrong. If you don't cooperate I'll have to repeat the realism lecture...

EVERYONE ELSE: No!

NARRATOR: Ok. Go on, Colonel, only you might want to condense a little.

COLONEL BRANDON: (*speaking even more quickly*) So, to make a long story short, Willoughby got a teenager pregnant, left her penniless, and his rich aunt kicked him out of Allenham. So he married Miss Grey for money.

NARRATOR: Suddenly as Marianne has lost her will to live, Willoughby turns up again.

Pride and Prejudice

Casting

5W 5M + 1 Any Gender

- NARRATOR:** Appears in modern dress. Can be seated in a large comfy chair or at a desk in front of a bookshelf.
- MRS. BENNET:** A very silly woman, voice can get hysterical. Accessory: a handkerchief she waves about. Color Identifier: bright, garish orange or yellow.
- MR. BENNET:** An EMPTY CHAIR, literally. (preferably a Windsor chair) next to the Narrator.
- JANE BENNET:** Eldest daughter. Very kind and sweet. Accessory: a pretty lace shawl or scarf. Color Identifier: a pretty pink. Set: may be seated at a desk or table to the side.
- ELIZABETH BENNET:** Middle daughter. Witty and lively. Accessory: a pretty flowered shawl or scarf. Color Identifier: a bold bright or royal blue.
- LYDIA BENNET:** Youngest daughter. Flirty and silly. Accessory: a fan can be homemade. Color Identifier: a bright red or violet.
- BINGLEY:** Nice looking and well-mannered gentleman. Accessory: a jacket possibly with a period cravat. Color Identifier: blue-grey or silver.
- MR. DARCY:** Stuck-up rich gentleman. Accessory: a dark jacket preferably with a period cravat. Color Identifier: gold. Set: may be seated at a desk or table to the side.
- CHARLOTTE:** Lizzie's best friend. Plain and dull. Accessory: a drab or ugly colored shawl or scarf. Color Identifier: brown.
- WICKHAM:** Handsome young army officer, quite charming. Accessory: a red coat. Color Identifier: scarlet or deep red.
- MR. COLLINS:** The stupidest most annoying man in England. Accessory: a black coat and priests collar. Color Identifier: a deep grey or black.

Running Time

10 minutes

Casting Note

If this play is done in conjunction with the others in the Jane Austen series, and the cast is an “ensemble,” with the same actors appearing in every play, one option would be for the actors to rotate the types of roles they play. This will give actors a challenge to create different characters. For instance, the actor playing MRS. DASHWOOD in *Sense and Sensibility* would not be cast as MRS. BENNET in *Pride and Prejudice*, but could play a very different type as LYDIA. The actor playing WILLOUGHBY in *Sense and Sensibility* would play BINGLEY for instance in *Pride and Prejudice*. Or, alternatively, the actors can be typecast and return as similar characters. In each case, they should still make each character unique and their accessories or props should vary to avoid confusion. Each play may also be individually cast to increase participation.

NARRATOR: Welcome to the completely zoomed version of Jane Austen's second novel, the 1813 literary smackdown between *Pride and Prejudice*.

SLIDE: "Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. Adapted by Treanor Baring."

SFX: Classical music. Or a pop or rock love/hate song.

We'll be zooming through the book at record speed, so we'll skip details and even major plot events. This won't spoil the book for you. Not totally. [Things got quite out of hand with the first play, so no questioning the author, or trying to rewrite the story as we go. Everybody got it? EVERYONE: Yes! Jane Austen has improved since her first book, *Sense and Sensibility*, and] *Pride and Prejudice* is considered one of the greatest novels ever written. In fact, it's the prototype...

EVERYONE: No lectures!

NARRATOR: All right. I promise no instructional speeches. (*aside*) But I didn't say no visuals.

SLIDE: "See LITERARY DEVICES here."

Let's dive in.

SLIDE: "REALLY FAMOUS OPENING LINE."

"It's a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife..."

In other words, unsuspecting rich bachelor, meet Mrs. Bennet, desperate mother of five girls with no inheritance. It's Little Boy Blue vs. Godzilla.

*SLIDE: "Single rich men = Little Boy Blue
Mrs. Bennet = Godzilla."*

MRS. BENNET: I'm going to find rich husbands for all my daughters. I don't care who I have to trample.

NARRATOR: Welcome to the 19th Century Marriage Sweepstakes! First contestant, Jane. The prettiest and the sweetest Bennet sister.

SLIDE: "Contestant #1 = Jane Bennet."

JANE: Dearest mother. I'm sure everything will work out. Well, almost sure.

SLIDE: “Contestant #2 = Elizabeth Bennet.”

ELIZABETH: Oh, Jane, you’re too nice, whereas I love to make fun of everybody.

MRS. BENNET: Typical Elizabeth. The snarky one. My favorite is Lydia because she’s just as silly as me!

SLIDE: “Contestant #3 = Lydia Bennet.”

LYDIA: Miss Austen says I have “high animal spirits.” Is that a compliment?

NARRATOR: That’s Austen-speak for a floozy. There are two other sisters, but they’re not really important. We’ve also written out Mr. Bennet, and replaced him with this empty chair, which sums up his contribution to his daughters’ future happiness.

MRS. BENNET: Oh, Mr. Bennet! Netherfield Park is let at last...

NARRATOR: That means a really rich man is moving into the neighborhood.

SFX: 19th century dance music.

SLIDE: “Grand Prize = Mr. Bingley.”

BINGLEY: That would be me, Mr. Bingley. Miss Bennet, would you care to dance?

JANE: Oh, yes. Say, you’re adorable.

NARRATOR: Enter Mr. Bingley’s really really rich friend, Mr. Darcy.

SLIDE: “Even Grander Prize #2 = Mr. Darcy.”

MR. DARCY: Bingley, really. How could you? The Bennets are soooo far below us.

BINGLEY: Seriously, Darcy? Jane is wonderful. There’s her sister, Elizabeth. She’s not bad.

MR. DARCY: (*sneering*) Eeewww.

SLIDE: “BOY HATES GIRL.”

NARRATOR: By now, you may have gotten the hint that Mr. Darcy represents Pride. But just in case you missed it, Mrs. Bennet says:

MRS. BENNET: He is a most disagreeable, horrid man. So high and so conceited.

SLIDE: “Mr. Darcy = Pride.”

NARRATOR: And on the off chance that wasn't clear enough, the girls talk for five, you got it, five pages about Mr. Darcy's Pride.

SLIDE: “GIRL HATES BOY.”

ELIZABETH: (*gets worked up*) I hate him! Despise him! Detest him! Loathe him!

SLIDE: “Elizabeth = Prejudice.”

CHARLOTTE: (*waves*) Hi, Lizzie!

ELIZABETH: (*cheerfully*) Oh, hi, Charlotte. (*Aside*) My best friend, Charlotte.

SLIDE: “Contestant #4: Charlotte Lucas.”

CHARLOTTE: I think Mr. Darcy likes you, Lizzie. Don't forget he's got 10,000 pounds a year.

SLIDE: “£10,000 = A LOT.”

ELIZABETH: (*getting worked up again*) I don't care how rich he is, I loathe the man. I'm positively repulsed by him. I dislike every fiber of his being with a passion.

CHARLOTTE: Ok, ok, we get the point. (*aside*) The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

ELIZABETH: I refuse to marry for money. But should a handsome charming man come my way...

NARRATOR: Enter Mr. Wickham!

SLIDE: “Consolation Prize = Mr. Wickham.”

WICKHAM: I also loathe Mr. Darcy, and am perfectly willing to trash him even though I say I would never do that. And I'm definitely handsome and charming.

SLIDE: “Handsome + Charming = RED FLAG.”

MRS. BENNET: Elizabeth, our cousin Mr. Collins is coming for a visit. He'll inherit all your father's money. You must marry him.

SLIDE: “Booby Prize = Mr. Collins.”

ELIZABETH: Eeewww.

MR. COLLINS: (*puffed up and obnoxiously*) I, the venerable Mr. Collins... am the stupidest most annoying man in England, but I'll be rich, or well, somewhat rich. So what if Elizabeth is out of my league? Marriage is a business transaction. Oh... Elizabeth... will you marry me?

ELIZABETH: (*smiling nicely, then rolling her eyes*) No, thank you.

MR. COLLINS: You're just saying that to tease me. You don't really mean it.

EVERYONE ELSE: No means no! Even in nineteenth century England!

CHARLOTTE: I'll marry you, Mr. Collins.

ELIZABETH: Charlotte, how could you?

CHARLOTTE: Because marriage is a business transaction.

SFX: *Wedding march.*

NARRATOR: We have our first winner. Sort of. Shall I explain the oppressive system...

EVERYONE: No!

JANE: Things were going very well between Mr. Bingley and me. But, where did he go?

MR. DARCY: Town.

NARRATOR: Which means London.

MRS. BENNET: (*wringing her hands*) And where has Wickham gone?

LYDIA: (*moping*) Brighton. With the army.

MRS. BENNET: Why are all the young men running away from us?

NARRATOR: Because you're Godzilla?

ELIZABETH: Come on, Jane, we're outta here. You go to London and I'll visit Charlotte and her stupid annoying husband.

LYDIA: I'll go to Brighton! To flirt with all the officers!

NARRATOR: (*pointing to the empty chair*) And Mr. Bennet does nothing to rein in Lydia's high animal spirits. Tsk, tsk.

SLIDE: "FORESHADOWING!"

Meanwhile...

CHARLOTTE: Say, Lizzie, guess who's visiting his aunt in my neighborhood?

SLIDE: "Coincidence?"

MR. DARCY: I've fallen in love with Lizzie's intelligence and easy playfulness. How mortifying to like someone so evidently beneath me.

SLIDE: "Still Pride."

ELIZABETH: Look, here's a letter from Jane. (*holding a pink letter*) It turns out Mr. Darcy kept Bingley from proposing to Jane. Oh, now I hate him more than ever.

SLIDE: "Still Prejudice"

SFX: A loud door knocker.

Who could that be?

MR. DARCY: Elizabeth, I should hate you. Your family behaves horribly, your sister is trying to snag my best friend, and yet... I like you. I love you in spite of myself. Will you marry me?

ELIZABETH: Never! I find you vile, despicable, loathsome, arrogant, and, and, and, (*building to final insult*) ungentlemanly.

MR. DARCY gasps loudly.

SLIDE: "BOY LOSES GIRL."

MR. DARCY: (*shocked*) Rejected? I'm the richest man in the book. I own a really big mansion up north, Pemberley. That's impossible. (*slumps*)

EVERYONE: No means no!

MR. DARCY: (*holding up a four page blue letter*) So I do what people in the 19th century did before texting.

SLIDE: "Email?"

MR. DARCY: I write a letter! I explain that Mr. Wickham is a villain, and that I was convinced Jane didn't really love Bingley. (*hands letter at camera*)

ELIZABETH: (*takes a blue letter "through" the camera*) This letter is four pages long. Do I really have to read all of it?

EVERYONE: Yes!

NARRATOR: (*holding a big book*) So while Elizabeth reads Mr. Darcy's letter, we'll take a short break to explain historical context...

EVERYONE: No!

NARRATOR: Oh, all right. (*flipping through pages of book*) Moving right along. Summer. Elizabeth goes on a tour of big houses in the north and ends up...

ELIZABETH: At Pemberley!

SLIDE: "Coincidence?"

By now, I realize my pride was hurt when Mr. Darcy said "eeewww," and that made me prejudiced against him.

SLIDE: "Elizabeth = Pride AND Prejudice."

MR. DARCY: And I realize that Elizabeth rejected me because I was snotty, and unfair to Jane.

SLIDE: "Mr. Darcy = Pride AND Prejudice."

ELIZABETH: I'm going to give him a chance.

MR. DARCY: I'm going to prove to her I'm not a snob.

NARRATOR: You may think that's the end, but it's not! Not even close. It's what's known as "The Turn."

SLIDE: "THE TURN = when the protagonist acquires self-knowledge."

In addition to being the first realistic novelist with social commentary thrown in, Jane Austen invented this story arc for novel plots. Next is the...

EVERYONE: No literary theory!

SLIDE: "PLOT COMPLICATION."

NARRATOR: (*whispers conspiratorially*) Plot complication.

ELIZABETH: (*reading a pink letter*) Oh, no! Jane writes that Lydia has run away with Wickham.

MR. DARCY: What? That scoundrel. I'm going back to London. Bye.

ELIZABETH: I'll never see him again. Just when I realize I don't despise, detest, abhor... oh drats!

Mansfield Park

Casting

4W 3M + 1 Any Gender

NARRATOR: Appears in modern dress. Can be seated in a large comfy chair or at a desk in front of a bookshelf.

FANNY PRICE: Kind and sweet goody two shoes.
Accessory: a plain scarf or shawl. Color Identifier: dark or rich red brown.

JULIA BERTRAM: A selfish younger sister, first appears in-person and then is represented by a doll on Henry Crawford's set. The doll should have close to the same accessory and color identifier as Julia. Accessory: a simple feather, in a hat or handheld that you can match for the doll. Color Identifier: hot pink.

MARIA BERTRAM : A stuck up, haughty snob. First appears in-person and then is represented by a doll on Henry Crawford's set. The doll should have close to the same accessory and color identifier as Maria. Accessory: any bright baubly jewelry that you can match for the doll. Color Identifier: bright purple.

EDMUND BERTRAM: A nice, regular dude. Accessory: a dark jacket or coat. Color Identifier: a medium brown or tan.

TOM BERTRAM: A man about town. More flashy and dramatic than Edmund. Entitled and selfish. Accessory: a jacket. Color Identifier: blue.

HENRY CRAWFORD: An independently wealthy rake (he says so himself). Quite charming and a little bit sleazy. Accessory: a fancy tie. Color Identifier: teal or turquoise.

MARY CRAWFORD: Charming and well-mannered, sophisticated, but scheming. Playful and witty. Accessory: a fancy patterned scarf. Color Identifier: teal or turquoise.

Casting Note

If this play is done in conjunction with the others in the Ten-Minute Jane Austen series, and the cast is an "ensemble," with the same actors appearing in every play, one option would be for the actors to rotate the types of roles they play. This will give actors a challenge to create different

characters. For instance, the actor playing LYDIA in P and P would be cast as FANNY in MP. Or, alternatively, the actors can be typecast and return as similar characters. In each case, they should still make each character unique and their accessories or costume colors if in modern dress should vary to avoid confusion. Each play may also be individually cast to increase participation.

Running Time

10 minutes.

Notes

For a socially-distanced/in-person performance, Julia and Maria can exit the stage when the Narrator indicates they've been replaced. For the dolls that replace Julia and Maria, have Henry Crawford pull them out from behind his platform on cue.

Costume Note

For the dolls that replace Julia and Maria, have some kind of link to the costume or outfits of the real characters, such as the same color feather or piece of jewelry that more or less matches the actors.

NARRATOR: Welcome to the completely zoomed version of Jane Austen's third novel, 1814's *Mansfield Park*. Long. Serious. Seriously ironic.

SFX: *Music, classical or a modern song about being an independent girl.*

SLIDE: *"Mansfield Park by Jane Austen. Adapted by Treanor Baring."*

But, not many people, except Jane Austen fanatics, have heard of it, much less read it. So, I'm actually thinking we can skip it.

EVERYONE: No! We've already rehearsed!!

NARRATOR: But it's 500 pages long! A little historical note, (*EVERYONE groans*) it was THE favorite book of Victorian gentlemen, who thought every woman should be just like the main character, Fanny Price. Sweet, shy, and excessively prim and proper. [Nothing like rebel warrior Elizabeth from *Pride and Prejudice*.] To help modern viewers understand the book, here's a step-by-step guide to being Fanny Price, the perfect heroine.

SLIDE: *"Beginner's Guide to Becoming Fanny."*

NARRATOR: To be just like Fanny Price, first you have to be kidnapped by a rich aunt from your "modest house," which in Austen-speak means seriously down and out. Then, arrive exhausted to Mansfield Park, the seat of your conveniently rich uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. Seat, as in mega-mall-sized mansion, not park bench. Meet the four Bertram kids, your cousins, two boys and two girls. Cry. A lot. For a long time.

SLIDE: *"Step 1: Be pitiful."*

FANNY: (*whimpers, sticks lower lip out, looks distressed in despair*) Hello, my name is Fanny Price, and I don't know the chronological order of all the kings of England. I must be stupid.

MARIA: (*snobbishly*) Hello, I'm Miss Bertram, Maria. Oldest girl cousin. Pronounced Marr—eye—ah. (*excitedly*) Ooooh, a dance! Let's go!! (*changing to a serious tone*) Not you, Fanny.

JULIA: (*giggling*) I'm Julia. The younger girl cousin. Just as stuck-up. (*glibly*) Time to flit off to London for "the season." (*seriously*) Not you, Fanny.

SLIDE: *"Step 2: Conquer your FOMO."*

NARRATOR: Step two in becoming Fanny, never complain about being left out.

FANNY: My cousins Maria and Julia are going to balls, even to London, riding about the countryside in barouches...

NARRATOR: [You will remember that in *Sense and Sensibility*, a barouche was a like flashing red light warning signal. Same in Mansfield Park.] Clearly, Jane Austen has a thing against barouches.

SLIDE: Image of a fancy carriage overlaid with a red circle and slash.

FANNY: If only a dashing hero would save the day!

NARRATOR: Unfortunately, there's a shortage of true heroes in this novel, so we'll have to settle for Edmund Bertram. First cousin. Second son of Sir Thomas Bertram, owner of Mansfield Park.

EDMUND: Fanny, here's a horse you can ride whenever you want.

SFX: Horse hooves trotting.

FANNY: Edmund is the only truly nice cousin! (*aside*) So, naturally, I fall in love with him.

NARRATOR: Don't think about the genetic implications of this, we don't have time.

EDMUND: I'm actually quite fond of Fanny, too.

NARRATOR: Awww. Spoiler alert: Edmund and Fanny are made for each other. So, that's a wrap, right? No need to introduce the Crawfords, a brother and sister pair who live nearby?

HENRY CRAWFORD: (*waves frantically*) Hold on! We're only 30 pages into a 500 page novel. (*proudly*) Henry Crawford at your service. Independently wealthy rake. The whole plot turns on the discovery of my true character.

MARY CRAWFORD: (*drippingly sweetly*) My dear brother, Henry. Wrong again. That would be me, Mary Crawford. The whole plot turns on *my character*. Am I good or am I bad? (*bats eyelashes sweetly, then raises eyebrows in a mischievous way*).

NARRATOR: [Not another insurrection! I thought you'd all learned your lesson in *Sense and Sensibility*]. (*reluctantly*) Meet Henry and Mary Crawford, the Bertram's next door neighbors. Satisfied? Can we skip to the end now?

MARY CRAWFORD: May I point out that Miss Austen wrote *us*? Who wrote *you* again, Narrator?

SLIDE: "Advantage: Jane Austen."

EDMUND: (*dreamily*) Mary Crawford certainly is beautiful. We should let them stay.

NARRATOR: Oh, all right. Don't blame me if this all gets a bit confusing. It took Jane Austen 500 pages, after all. But, zooming on, the Crawford siblings arrive for a visit at Mansfield Park.

HENRY CRAWFORD: I'm charming, I'm single. I'm ready for love. Where are Maria and Julia Bertram?

NARRATOR: We had to write them out to save time. Those dolls are stand-ins. Henry, I have to warn you, Maria is engaged to a very rich and stupid gentleman, and Julia drives around in a barouche.

SLIDE: Image of fancy carriage overlaid with a red circle and slash.

HENRY CRAWFORD: (*picks up dolls then tosses them aside*) Ah, fair enough. I'm not the marrying kind anyway.

EDMUND: (*waving a little shyly*) Yo, Mary, I'm Edmund Bertram. Are you the marrying kind?

MARY CRAWFORD: Well, it depends. Are you going to inherit Mansfield Park?

EDMUND: (*dejectedly*) That would be my older brother, Tom.

NARRATOR: Introducing Tom Bertram, first born son of a baronet.

SLIDE: Image of a complicated chart of English titles with a big arrow pointing at Baronet.

Which is not a musical instrument. It's an itsy bitsy baron. Meanwhile...

TOM: (*dancing disco with his arms*) I'm off to London to partttty and spend waaaay too much money.

MARY CRAWFORD: Oh, that's disappointing. (*brightening*) The second son, Edmund, will have to do. Woohoo, Edmund, can you teach me to ride a horse?

EDMUND: (*enthusiastically*) You won't mind, Fanny, if I give Mary your horse?

SFX: *Slow horse hooves.*

FANNY: (*frowns and crosses her arms*) I'm terribly hurt.

NARRATOR: Remember you are the perfect heroine. Squash that FOMO!

FANNY: (*rolls her eyes and fake-smiles, speaking through clenched teeth*) I don't mind really. Truly. Honestly.

TOM: I'm back!

EVERYONE: Already?

SLIDE: "*Ran out of money.*"

TOM: Let's put on a theatrical!

SLIDE: "*Theatrical = play.*"

FANNY: Oh, no! That would NOT be proper.

NARRATOR: Step three to being perfect heroine includes being a goody-two-shoes. Relentlessly. Like all the time.

SLIDE: "*Step 3: Be a killjoy.*"

FANNY: Excuse me, I have a question. Why does Fanny object? We're putting on a play here after all.

HENRY CRAWFORD: Not just any play! *Lover's Vows!* (*leering*) Miss Fanny Price, perhaps we can rehearse alone and I'll explain...

FANNY: There's something about Henry Crawford I don't like. Edmund would never act in a play.

MARY CRAWFORD: (*clasps hands together, pleading and batting eyelashes*) Oh, please, Edmund. Pretty please. With sugar on top?

EDMUND: Anything for you, Mary.

FANNY: (*aghast*) Edmund, how could you?

HENRY CRAWFORD: (*holding MARIA doll, smirking at it, adoringly and lecherously*) Oh, Miss Bertram! Marr-eye-ah! If Fanny won't rehearse with me, maybe you will.

FANNY: But she's engaged! The way Mr. Crawford looks at Maria is sooo wrong.

NARRATOR: (*flips through large book*) Ok, we gotta speed this up. Henry flirts with engaged Maria, and she flirts back. ... Blah blah

blah. Tom goes away, comes back, goes away again. More blah blah blah. Then, on page three hundred and something Henry Crawford does something unexpected...

HENRY CRAWFORD: Fanny, will you marry me?

SLIDE: "Check one:

___ Sincere

___ Not sincere"

FANNY: No, thank you.

NARRATOR: Yes! At last! Signs of life from Fanny Price. [She may be turning into Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice* after all.]

SFX: Cheering, bazooka sounds, applause.

FANNY: My uncle wants me to marry Henry Crawford. He sends me back to my family of origin's modest house. The food is slop. I miss my horse. I hate it.

SLIDE: "Modest = seriously down and out."

(holding up hands like a scale and shifting back and forth, weighing options) If I marry Henry Crawford, I could help my family with his money... But I love Edmund. But Edmund loves Mary. What would the perfect heroine do?

NARRATOR: Wait! More plot developments! (flipping through book) Things are getting interesting now.

FANNY: More interesting than me not getting to ride my horse?

NARRATOR: (savoring the excitement) Oh, yes. Welcome to Mansfield Parklandia, a theme park with wild rides through slavery, poverty, oppression, seduction, ruination...

SLIDE: Image of a roller coaster with Mansfield Parklandia logo and "Experience the real horrors of the 19th century."

FANNY: But this is a family show!

NARRATOR: Right. Skipping a boat ride through The Tunnel of Jane Austen's Dark Side, then? Cue Henry Crawford's next unexpected move.

HENRY CRAWFORD: (holding MARIA doll) I can't wait for our perfect heroine to make up her mind. Maria, will you run away with me? (puts doll up to ear and squeaks a little answer like a ventriloquist) That's a yes? Brilliant!

Emma

Casting

3W 4M + | Any Gender

- NARRATOR:** Appears in modern dress. Can be seated in a large comfy chair or at a desk in front of a bookshelf.
- EMMA WOODHOUSE:** Handsome, clever, and rich. Not your typical Jane Austen heroine. Even though she thinks she knows everything, she's kindhearted so she should not be played like a mean girl. She genuinely thinks she's helping. Accessory: a fancy scarf or hat. Color Identifier: gold.
- HARRIET SMITH:** Emma's less fortunate friend. She's lived in a boarding school her whole life and is very naïve and clueless. She speaks in an airy, empty-headed kind of way. She's very sweet and sincere, though. Accessory: a shawl or lace handkerchief. Color Identifier: pink.
- MR. KNIGHTLEY:** Emma's sister's husband's brother. Kind of like an older brother to Emma. He is full of advice all the time and just like Emma, thinks he knows everything. Only he does. Except when it comes to his own heart. Accessory: a tie or cravat, not fancy. Color Identifier: brown or beige.
- MR. WOODHOUSE:** Emma's elderly father. He seems sweet and a little dithering, but he is also anxious and controlling in his own way. Accessory: a winter scarf or blanket. Color Identifier: grey or light blue.
- MR. ELTON:** The local clergyman, a young, handsome bachelor. Friendly and hero-like, until he turns out to be a snob. Accessory: a black and white clergy collar. Color Identifier: black.
- FRANK CHURCHILL:** The son of a neighbor who comes back for the first time in years and years. Handsome and charming. Is he all that he seems? A big flirt. Smirks a lot. Accessory: a fancy jacket or tie. Color Identifier: peacock or teal.
- JANE FAIRFAX:** Elegant, accomplished (which means she's got talent), lovely in every way. Quite reserved and soft-spoken. Accessory: a

TREANOR BARING

pretty shawl or simple but elegant hat.
Color Identifier: turquoise or aqua.

Running Time

10 minutes.

NARRATOR: Welcome to the completely zoomed Emma, Jane Austen's fourth novel, first published in 1815.

SLIDE: "Emma, by Jane Austen. Adapted by Treanor Baring."

SFX: Pop music about being independent or classical music.

And still popular today with no less than five film adaptations. Don't get your hopes up, though, our version will be nothing like those. We're going to zoom right through the novel in record time. And it's a doozy. A tour de force of characterization and plot machinations...

EMMA: Excuse me, this is my book. NO lectures on literature. [The others warned me about you.]

HARRIET: I agree with Miss Woodhouse. I always agree with Miss Woodhouse, even when it hurts me, and is against my own true feelings.

EMMA: Thank you, Harriet. You're a sweet little friend.

NARRATOR: Hold on! I've got to give some background. No one will even know who you are.

EMMA: Well, get on with it then. Introduce us. Starting with Mr. Knightley.

MR. KNIGHTLEY: Typical Emma, trying to tell everyone what to do when. That's my job. Since I seem to have adopted the role of elder brother to Emma.

EMMA: Mr. Knightley, you are not my brother. You're merely my sister's husband's brother. Besides, you're late. We've already started.

NARRATOR: (*frustrated*) We have NOT started! I haven't even finished the introduction.

MR. WOODHOUSE: (*fretfully*) Oh, dear, this is a very worrying degree of chaos.

EMMA: I'm so sorry, Father. (*whispers*) That's my elderly father, Mr. Woodhouse. He's overly sensitive. And controlling. And quite determined to deny cake to wedding guests. But everyone thinks he's the sweetest man alive, even me.

NARRATOR: There, that proves that *Emma* is brilliant.

EMMA: Why, thank you.

NARRATOR: I meant the novel. As I was about to say, in *Emma*, Miss Austen creates such complex characters...

EMMA: No literary analysis. Please. Nobody cares. Not when Emma Woodhouse is nearby.

NARRATOR: ... that we don't who to trust, who to like, or even who is meant to marry who... or whom... or whomst.

HARRIET: Yes, it's so hard to know what to think.

EMMA: Only for you, dear Harriet, but never mind.

MR. WOODHOUSE: Excuse me, I'm hopelessly confused already, and I'm IN the book.

MR. KNIGHTLEY: I recommend we start over.

EMMA: But...

NARRATOR: Right. Mr. Knightley is right, as usual. Rebooting.

SLIDE: "Emma, by Jane Austen. Adapted by Treanor Baring."

SFX: Opening music.

Welcome to the completely zoomed *Emma*, Jane Austen's fourth novel, first published in 1815... blah blah blah... a tour de force of characterization and plot machinations all centered around one question: Who can you trust? What happens when cool people do uncool things? If you can't be trusted, are you cool?

MR. WOODHOUSE: (*fretting*) That was three questions. Oh, dear. I hope I can keep up.

NARRATOR: Well, [just like *Mansfield Park*,] this is a 500 page book, and we're condensing. So you'll just have to go with it.

MR. WOODHOUSE: As long as you don't serve cake...

SLIDE: "Kind-hearted = cool. Cake police = not cool."

NARRATOR: No time for cake! We'll start with Jane Austen's second best opening line [second only to *It's a truth... yada yada yada*], "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever and rich." Central question: Is Emma cool or not cool?

EMMA: I shipped my governess and a wealthy neighbor and they ended up married. Cool points for that!

SLIDE: "Setting two people up = cool."

NARRATOR: Remember, you're only as good as your next match. Meanwhile, on to Mr. Knightley. Older brother of Emma's older sister's husband, making him, well, not a genetic relative, [a great relief after *Mansfield Park*] and much older than Emma. He's an expert at advice ...

SLIDE: "Mansplaining = not cool."

MR. KNIGHTLEY: It's not easy being right all the time.

NARRATOR: Now, meet Harriet Smith. Someone important's illegitimate daughter, which we can't explain in a family show, but which means she has to grow up in a boarding school. She's definitely nice, even she's a little... well... clueless.

HARRIET: Hi, everybody! Harriet here. I may not be handsome, clever or rich, but I'm loyal, cheerful and honest.

SLIDE: "Sincerity = cool."

NARRATOR: Next, meet the clergyman, Mr. Elton. [Definitely not anything like Mr. Collins from *Pride and Prejudice*, this clergyman is actually] good-looking, and eligible, which means he has decorated his house and is looking for a housekeeper, um... I mean wife.

MR. ELTON: Good evening, I'm Mr. Elton. It's my role to be very friendly with Emma and Harriet. And attentive to Mr. Woodhouse.

SLIDE: "Treats women as friends = cool."

HARRIET: Ooh, I have news. A local farmer I like asked me to marry him!

SLIDE: "Mutual affection = cool."

What do you think I should do, Miss Woodhouse?

EMMA: Harriet, I can't tell you not to marry that farmer who is so obviously below you and would ruin your life. I won't say you should go for Mr. Elton instead.

SLIDE: "Manipulating friend = not cool."

MR. KNIGHTLEY: Emma, you talked Harriet into turning down the farmer? Sometimes you can be sooo misguided. If you think Mr. Elton is going to marry Harriet...

SLIDE: “Not reading the obvious signals = not cool.”

MR. ELTON: Oh, Miss Woodhouse, I adore you. Will you marry me?

EMMA: But, Mr. Elton, what about Miss Smith?

MR. ELTON: What? Why? Who cares about Harriet Smith? Everybody has their level, but I am not so much at a loss as to stoop to someone so obviously below me.

SLIDE: “Snob = not cool.”

MR. KNIGHTLEY: Told you so.

SLIDE: “Always being right = not cool.”

NARRATOR: (*flips through a big book*) Moving along... Blah blah blah... Many more pages of Emma foolishly applying her cleverness and Harriet mooning over Mr. Elton and her farmer, and then, along comes Frank Churchill.

FRANK CHURCHILL: After 21 years living with a wealthy aunt, I’m finally visiting my father, the Woodhouse’s neighbor. Everyone thinks I would make a very good match for Emma.

SLIDE: “Handsome prodigal son = cool.”

MR. KNIGHTLEY: I don’t trust Frank Churchill.

EMMA: But he’s handsome and clever just like me. I think I’m in love with him.

SLIDE: “Flirting shamelessly = not cool.”

JANE FAIRFAX: Excuse me, isn’t it time I appeared on the scene?

NARRATOR: Who do we have here? (*consulting notes*) Ah, Jane Fairfax. Visiting her nearby poor relations.

JANE FAIRFAX: (*shyly, not snobbishly*) I’m more beautiful than Emma, I play the piano better, I sing better. I’m also quite reserved. And terribly poor.

SLIDE: “Introverted = cool.” [“See Elinor and Fanny”]

NARRATOR: [Judging from *Sense and Sensibility*, or *Mansfield Park*, Jane Fairfax should be our heroine. But, Jane Austen wanted to mix it up, so no more quiet, dull heroines.]

EMMA: I just cannot like Jane Fairfax, no matter how perfect she is.

FRANK CHURCHILL: Jane Fairfax? Who could love Jane Fairfax? Come on, Emma. You're clever like me, let's make fun of everyone.

SLIDE: "Flirting with Emma = cool."

EMMA: Oooh, goodie, a game. I'm going to say mean things to all my friends. Especially the poor ones.

SLIDE: "Dissing those less fortunate = definitely not cool."

MR. KNIGHTLEY: Badly done, Emma!

SLIDE: "More mansplaining = not cool."

EMMA: Yes, that was wrong of me. However, I'm not in love with Frank Churchill after all, and I've decided to match Harriet with Frank. (*puts index finger to lips*) Shhhh... Don't tell Mr. Knightley.

SLIDE: "More misguided matchmaking = not cool."

MR. KNIGHTLEY: We know how well that went last time. Besides, something is up with Frank Churchill...

EMMA: Do be quiet, Mr. Knightley. Wooohooo, Harriet, I know who... whom... whomst... you should marry.

HARRIET: But he's so far above me. He's such a gentleman.

EMMA: That shouldn't matter. You're somebody's daughter. Go for it.

HARRIET: I think he likes me too.

NARRATOR: Now, if you notice, neither Harriet nor Emma actually said the name of the person they're talking about. Mmmm... Foreshadowing? But first, remember this novel is about trust, so Miss Austen reveals a secret we should have guessed many pages ago, if we had only listened to Mr. Knightley.

SLIDE: "Always being right = cool."

FRANK CHURCHILL: My rich aunt has died, and I am free to marry who... whom... whomst... I please. I'm actually secretly engaged to...

JANE FAIRFAX: Me! Jane Fairfax!

SLIDE: "Flirting with Emma in front of your fiancée = not cool."

MR. KNIGHTLEY: I told you so.

Northanger Abbey & Persuasion

Casting

4W 4M + | Any Gender

NARRATOR: Appears in modern dress. Can be seated in a large comfy chair or at a desk in front of a bookshelf. Holds index cards like an old timey game show host reading about contestants. Switches between a serious narrator voice and a game show host voice.

CATHERINE MORLAND: The heroine of *Northanger Abbey*. Seventeen years old and naïve. Reads a lot of Gothic romance novels, bodice ripper type things, and is always expecting melodrama. She is steady and loyal, though, and has a strong moral compass. Accessory: a romance novel. Color Identifier: a pale peach or pink.

ANNE ELLIOT: The heroine of *Persuasion*. Twenty eight when the novel begins. She was in love with a nobody when she was nineteen and her family and friends persuaded to break off her engagement to him. She's never loved anyone else. She's intelligent, wise, and calm. Not at all like the other vain snobs in her family. Accessory: a book of poetry. Color Identifier: a medium or light blue.

CAPTAIN WENTWORTH: Anne's former fiancée. A swashbuckling hero of the Navy. After Anne broke off her engagement, he made a fortune and returns to Anne's circle of family and friends (too complicated to explain here). Resentful at first, he soon realizes he's still in love with her. Accessory: a captain's spyglass made from paper towel cardboard and toilet paper cardboard in successive sizes wrapped with black paper or painted and striped with gold or a rolled up chart or map. Color Identifier: navy blue.

LADY RUSSELL: Stand-in mom to Anne Elliot. Elegant, haughty and competitive. Accessory: a flowery or elegant scarf. Color Identifier: deep yellow or gold.

MRS. ALLEN: Wealthy older neighbor of Catherine Morland's who invites her on a trip to Bath, England. Not as elegant as Lady Russell, and a bit silly. Into dresses and shopping and

girlie things more than books or reading. Can even be giggly. Accessory: a lacy, gaudy scarf or shawl. Color Identifier: a bright yellow or gold.

HENRY TILNEY: The witty hero of *Northanger Abbey*. He's not silly, but he is wry. Great off the wall sense of humor. Accessory: a priestly collar. Color Identifier: black, or a deep brown or blue.

MR. ELLIOT: Anne's cousin. The most villainous villain ever because he appears charming and soft-spoken. He's duplicitous and sneaky. Accessory: a fancy bow-tie or cravat. Color Identifier: mustard or brown-orange.

JOHN THORPE: Friend of Catherine's. A far more obvious villain. Loud and obnoxious. Accessory: a dark jacket or coat. Color Identifier: lime green or olive.

Running Time

15 minutes

Note on Scoreboard

In this play, there is a competition between Team Northanger Abbey and Team Persuasion, and a score is kept. This can be represented by a physical scoreboard that the Narrator marks, such as a chalkboard or a poster board and markers, or with an e-slide with changing numbers. If slides are used for the scoreboard, optional sound effects of score changes, such as a bell, a “ka-ching” or a flip-board scoreboard ratchet sound, can be added each time the score changes.

NARRATOR: (*holding a book*) Welcome to [the final installment of] *Jane Austen—Completely Zoomed, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, two books published together in 1817. Published posthumously, after Miss Austen was gone, so she couldn't object to them being lumped together. On the one hand we have *Northanger Abbey*, a mock-melodrama with a haunted mansion, written when Miss Austen was young and then stuffed in a drawer somewhere. Then there's *Persuasion*, written much later, a more mature tale of lost love. (*shaking head*) Vastly different storylines, opposite heroines, heroes, even opposite villains, leaving the reader with whiplash. Great compare and contrast essay topic. But, no homework here. Since this is not your great-great-great-great-great grandmother's Jane Austen, to help understand the two books, we're pitting them against each other in our very own Game. Of. Gowns. Welcome to *Northanger Abbey VERSUS Persuasion*.

SLIDE: "*Northanger Abbey vs Persuasion, by Jane Austen. Adapted by Treanor Baring.*"

SFX: *Hard rock music on the theme of rebellion.*

First, the rules of the competition. One, everybody stay in your own corner.

SLIDE: "*No Physical Contact.*"

Two, Stay by your camera. No ducking out for tea and crumpets, whatever they are. No cake breaks.

SLIDE: "*Stay Connected.*"

Three, turn your mic off when it's not your turn. No heavy breathing. No potato chip crunching. No slurping the last bit of milkshake loudly through a straw. Wherever you may actually be, you're on stage now.

SLIDE: "*All the World's a Stage.*"

Everybody ready?

EVERYONE: Yes, let's do this!

NARRATOR: That's the spirit! May the best book win! (*in game show host voice*) Introducing, Team *Northanger Abbey* captain, straight outta Bath, England, a town, not a bathtub... teen phenom, Gothic novel fan, and gullible sweetheart, clocking in at age 17, Catherine Mooooorland.

SFX: *Applause and fan horns tooting.*

(reading from an index card like introducing a contestant on a game show) Catherine lists her favorite pastimes as cricket, baseball, horseback riding, and running about the country with her nine brothers and sisters.

CATHERINE: I have an affectionate heart, and a cheerful, open disposition.

SLIDE: “Catherine Morland = young, sweet, naïve.”

NARRATOR: In the other corner, we have the skipper of Team Persuasion, straight outta, well, also Bath, England, 28-year-old Anne Elliot of Kellynch Hall, daughter of a baronet.

SLIDE: Image of a complicated chart of English titles with a big arrow pointing at Baronet.

So, Anne is kinda like royalty.

SFX: Applause.

ANNE: I’m intelligent and nice. But my bloom has faded according to my vain father, Sir Walter.

SLIDE: “Anne Elliot = smart and underappreciated.”

NARRATOR: Oh, dear, this competition is steeper than I thought. Youthful exuberance versus wise wordliness. I Point for each.

SLIDE: Running total: “Northanger Abbey I, Persuasion I.”

SFX: Score change.

Hmmmmm... Other team members?

CAPTAIN WENTWORTH: (wielding captain’s spyglass or rolled up map or chart) Captain Wentworth here! Navy man. Reporting for duty.

CATHERINE: (visibly clutching her romance novel) Oooh, he’s cute. Like a real romance novel hero. I hope he’s on my team!

NARRATOR: Sorry, Captain Wentworth is on Team Persuasion. Better luck next time, Catherine. You’ve got Henry Tilney on your team.

CATHERINE: What’s he like?

NARRATOR: (flipping through cards) Let’s see, [another] clergyman. [Dear, dear. If *Pride and Prejudice* is any guide, Team *Northanger Abbey* might be in trouble. But]... wait... could be good... Henry

is clever. Described as “if not handsome, very near it.” Mmmm. First point to *Persuasion* for naval hero.

SLIDE: “Clash of the Heroes : Team Persuasion 1 point.”

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 1 Persuasion 2.

SFX: Score change.

CATHERINE: But is this Henry Tilney nice? When do I get to meet him?

NARRATOR: Be patient. (*switching to a game show host voice*) Also on both teams, our heroines’ trusted advisors.

These women are sensible and kind, [nothing like the emoticon-extremes of Mrs. Bennet or Mrs. Dashwood].

On Team *Persuasion*’s squad, wealthy neighbor to the Elliots of Kellynch Hall, Lady Russell. (*looking down at cards*) a master at persuasion, hence the title of the book. (*big drawn out voice*) Here she is... Laaaaady Russell!

SFX: Applause.

LADY RUSSELL: I persuaded Anne, when she was younger, to break her engagement to Mr. Wentworth. When he was only a naval-officer-wannabee and... wait for it... penniless.

SLIDE: “Snobby Trusted Advisor = 1 point deduction, Team Persuasion.”

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 1 Persuasion 1.

SFX: Score change.

CATHERINE: Wait? What? Anne had a chance to marry a naval hero and she turned him down? Wow.

CAPTAIN WENTWORTH: Wow is right. I’m back, eight years later, but now I’ve made a fortune. I’m a man of action. I know my own mind. I still hold Anne’s persuasabilityyness, say, is that a word?—against her...

SLIDE: “Hero holding a grudge = 1 point deduction for Team Persuasion.”

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 1 Persuasion 0.

SFX: Score change.

ANNE: Oh, dear, I'm afraid Team Persuasion is falling behind.

CATHERINE: What about my Trusted Advisor? This could be a clincher for Team Northanger.

NARRATOR: Introducing Mrs. Allen, also a wealthy neighbor. (*Reading from cards. Game show host voice.*) Mrs. Allen has, according to Miss Austen, neither beauty, genius, accomplishment nor manner.

CATHERINE: Oh, dear. Not looking good.

NARRATOR: Without further ado, give it up for Northanger's very own... Mrs. Aaaallen.

MRS. ALLEN: Hello there! I pluck Catherine out of her country escapades and take her to Bath, where I accompany her to the Lower Rooms.

SLIDE: "Lower Rooms = some sort of crowded meeting place."

And, there, I engage Mr. Tilney in a deep conversation about dress fabrics and whether they are likely to fray. Take that, Lady Russell.

SLIDE: "Introducing heroine to love interest = 1 point Team Northanger."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 2 Persuasion 0.

SFX: Score change.

CATHERINE: Where is Mr. Tilney?

HENRY TILNEY: Here I am! Eager to chitchat and to make fun of chitchatting. I quip that Miss Morland will describe me to her diary as a half-witted man who distressed her with his nonsense when I would wish she would write that I am a most extraordinary genius that she should like to know more of. Miss Morland, would you care to dance?

CATHERINE: Ok, so he's a bit strange. But he does make me laugh.

NARRATOR: Let's see, Mr. Tilney can discuss muslin, which we're guessing is some sort of cottony-gauzy fabric, and has a good sense of humor. He's friendly to Mrs. Allen and Catherine. Maybe almost-handsome witty dude beats out swashbuckling navy officer after all...

SLIDE: "Oddball Hero = 1 originality point Team Northanger Abbey."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 3 Persuasion 0.

SFX: Score change.

ANNE: This is beginning to seem hopeless. (*then, as if a light bulb has gone off in head*) Except, wait! What about villains? [Jane Austen always has good villains, and she was at the height of her skills with *Persuasion*.]

NARRATOR: Ah, yes, this might be the game changer. (*switch to game show host voice*) Introducing the slimiest, most ingratiating, wickedest villainous villain ever, Team Persuasion's very own Mr. Elliot, not to be confused with Sir Walter, the vain *dad*, this is the vain *cousin*...

SFX: Applause.

MR. ELLIOT: I will inherit Sir Walter's title, the house, the fortune, everything... (*laughs a wickedly evil sneering villain laugh*)

CATHERINE: That's no fair. They get all the Gothic romance novel characters!

MR. ELLIOT: But wait. Something's not right here. Miss Austen describes me as "rational, discreet, polished." I am NOT a typical romance novel villain.

NARRATOR: Exactly!

SLIDE: "Deceptively charming villain = 2 points to Team Persuasion."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 3 Persuasion 2.

SFX: Score change.

LADY RUSSELL: I like him! I think he would make Anne a very good husband.

SLIDE: "Trusted advisor bad judgment = 1 point deduction to Persuasion."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 3 Persuasion 1.

MRS. ALLEN: What about us? Northanger Abbey must have a villainous villain, too. You would think.

NARRATOR: Yes! Coming out of left field to chase after naïve heroine thinking she'll inherit Mrs. Allen's fortune. Welcome newcomer to Team Northanger Abbey, John Thorpe!

SFX: Applause.

JOHN THORPE: (*sneeringly, dastardly*) Oh, Miss Morland?! Will you come for a ride with me in my barouche?

SFX: Alarm bells.

SLIDE: Fancy carriage overlaid with red circle and slash.

NARRATOR: [Apparently, because she was written before *Sense and Sensibility*, Catherine did not get the memo about staying away from men with barouches.]

CATHERINE: But I have a date with Mr. Tilney and his sister.

JOHN THORPE: I just saw them way on the other side of town somewhere...

NARRATOR: No! Catherine is taken in. She gets in the barouche!

SLIDE: "2 point deduction to Catherine of Northanger Abbey for believing obvious lie."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 1 Persuasion 1.

SFX: Score change.

CATHERINE: Look, there are Henry and his sister knocking at my door. I'm getting out of the barouche. Immediately.

SLIDE: "standing up for yourself = 1 point Team Northanger."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 2 Persuasion 1.

SFX: Score change.

JOHN THORPE: (*slurps on an almost empty milkshake or drink making a loud guzzling sound with straw*) Rules are meant to be broken.

NARRATOR: Immediate slurping noise banishment! John Thorpe is off the team!

SLIDE: "Villain disqualification = 1 point penalty for Team Northanger."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 1 Persuasion 1.

SFX: Score change.

HENRY TILNEY: Miss Morland, would you accompany me and my sister up north somewhere to our father's mansion, Northanger Abbey?

MRS. ALLEN: So that's what the book is named for, the Tilney's really big house. I kept expecting monks to show up. Catherine, you should accept Henry's invitation.

CATHERINE: (*gleefully beside herself with the anticipation of horrors*) I get to visit an ancient haunted abbey! A mysterious death in the past! A locked chest in my room! An off-limits wing of the mansion! Oh my! And witty, odd Mr. Tilney thrown in for good measure. Yes! Yes! Yes!

SLIDE: "Gothic atmosphere: 1 point Northanger Abbey."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 2 Persuasion 1.

SFX: Score change.

NARRATOR: In all fairness, we must give Team Persuasion a chance to catch up. Let's see what's up with Anne.

ANNE: I'm still in love with Captain Wentworth. No matter how much he flirts with my sister's sisters-in-law...

SLIDE: "Don't ask, no time."

MR. ELLIOT: Take solace, my dear cousin Anne, in my company.

NARRATOR: We're just going to ignore the genetic implications of cousins marrying cousins here... and hope Anne has better sense than to fall for Mr. Elliot.

ANNE: Mr. Elliot is indeed very attentive. (*holds up poetry book to camera*) But I prefer clever, well-informed people...

SLIDE: "Good judgment = 1 point for Team Persuasion."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 2 Persuasion 2.

SFX: Score change.

NARRATOR: (*like a horse race announcer*) Seems like Team Persuasion is making a comeback. On the homestretch, both books are headed toward their big climactic moments. Which one will win out? Back to *Northanger Abbey*, where Catherine has broken into the off-limits wing of the Abbey and is discovered by Henry Tilney who says...

HENRY TILNEY: Miss Morland?! You aren't *snooping*, are you?

CATHERINE: I suspect your father of murdering your mother! Like in a Gothic romance novel!

HENRY TILNEY: That's ridiculous. (*with a wink to audience*) This is real life.

LADY RUSSELL: *Persuasion's* Anne Elliot would never be so silly. What do you think of that, Mrs. Allen?

SLIDE: "Silly heroine = 1 point deduction for Team Northanger."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 1 Persuasion 2.

MRS. ALLEN: Ok, but Catherine experiences a rapid downfall—much more sensational than Anne's slow burn with Captain Wentworth.

CATHERINE: (*looking down at a note, then dramatically gasping*) What's this? I'm being shipped home! By post!

NARRATOR: Which does not mean they're stuffing her in an envelope and mailing her. It means she's got to travel alone, on public transportation. Which, in Jane Austen's time, involves being squeezed in some rickety stagecoach-thingsy with people who, like never ever brushed their teeth or used soap.

SLIDE: "Heroine's climactic downfall = 2 points Northanger Abbey."

SLIDE: Scoreboard, Northanger Abbey 3 Persuasion 2.

SFX: Score change.

CAPTAIN WENTWORTH: (*holding out arms and shouting*) Louisa! Don't jump!!

MRS. ALLEN: Who is Louisa?

NARRATOR: Anne's sister's sister-in-law—don't ask. Back to *Persuasion*. They're on a field trip in Lyme, a town on the seacoast of England, not a citrus fruit, and are walking out on the Cobb, which we gather is not about corn but a high seawall where Louisa, Anne's sister's sister-in-law, is playing a jump-and-catch game with Captain...

TEAM PERSUASION: (*horrified screams*) AHHHH!!!



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