

**ENGS 143, Prof. Eric Lindstrom**  
**Jane Austen**  
**Sept 29, 2015**

**First Paper Assignment (due in class Tuesday, 10/13)**

So far in class, much of our discussion has circled around three areas of interest in Austen's novels: <sup>(1)</sup> her ability to create dynamic literary characters that are interesting in themselves and also serve as models for sharpening the reader's skill in comparing; <sup>(2)</sup> her expansion of the novel as a serious literary genre whose subject is the "introduction to life" in society; and <sup>(3)</sup> Austen's many nuances of narrative perspective and tone—including her pioneering experiments in the narrative style of "free-indirect discourse," which we are just now starting to discuss. You are asked for this assignment to develop an argument in one of these basic areas.

Select either a moment of possible free-indirect discourse (or other interesting effects of narrative voice) in one of the novels, or a moment that offers detailed insight into the background of a character or a complex and interesting social setting. Copy out the "moment" (it should be no more than a few sentences) in boldface at the very top of your paper, in the place of a title. Then, in the body and conclusion of your paper, I would like you to explain and explore the fuller significance of your highlighted text in the novel's larger context. To brainstorm how to structure the paper you might think about some of the following questions:

- \*What background in plot or characterization do I need simply to introduce my textual moment?
- \* What kind of argument makes fullest use of *all* the language I quote?
- \* Are there significant echoes—before or after—of other specific passages in my book? Where do they lead me?
- \*Are there any structural effects at work on the level of chapter or volume, or on some other level?
- \* In the case of a "free indirect" passage, how do I assess the overall work of irony on my interpretation—assuming some irony is present?
- \*In the case of reading a character, are any social facts presented in my passage that guide an interpretation? If so, are these facts explained/made use of within the book? Or would I have to do "outside" research in order to come to a better understanding? (This is research not asked of you here, except for maybe a look into the footnotes.)

You should not think of these questions as prompts to answer systematically in your paper. Treat them rather as brainstorming tools to lead to toward a better paper.

Despite the omission of a typical title, somewhere on its first page your paper should develop a thesis—or precise interpretive claim—that is both vivid and well developed enough to be contested (meaning that it is not obvious to everyone). The novel you work on should be cited by page number(s), since we all share the Norton Critical editions. **Please bring a page to class on Tuesday, Oct. 6, in which you have copied out your passage and begun developing your response to this passage into an opening paragraph that contains your main thesis and key supporting evidence. The final copy of the first paper should be 3-4 pages long, double spaced. It is due in class on Tues, Oct 13.**