

## Jane Austen

Jane Austen was born in Steventon, Hampshire (south central England) in 1775. She grew up among six brothers and a sister, Cassandra, who was two years older than she. Austen led a rather uneventful life: didn't travel far from her birthplace; never married; made few acquaintances beyond the circle of her immediate family. Yet her work reflects an astute awareness of universal human behavior. A few decades before Austen began writing (at the age of fourteen), Mary Wollstonecraft penned that the qualities of reason, virtue, and knowledge helped society function. Her observation applies to Austen's heroines, all of whom exude the middle class virtues. (Wollstonecraft also wrote that women couldn't achieve those three attributes since they lacked the appropriate training, but no one told Austen.)

Jane and Cassandra, who were quite close, attended the Abbey Boarding School in Reading. That seems to be the extent of their formal education, although learning was important in the Austen family. Their father, the Reverend George Austen, was a country parson who taught several students in his rectory.

When Jane Austen started writing novels, she also began to script plays that she and Cassandra performed before their family. She was betrothed once (an engagement Austen called off the day following its announcement), and entered into a few amorous relationships. Otherwise, we know very little of her personal life. (Speaking quite candidly, it's none of our business in the first place.) Jane Austen died of Addison's disease (a complicated illness characterized, among other things, by extreme weakness and loss of weight) at Winchester in 1817. Four of her novels - *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* - were published anonymously during her lifetime, but *Northanger Abbey* (written in 1798) and *Persuasion* (1816) were printed under Austen's name a few months after her death.

Essay by Bill Lounsbery

*KRL has all of the books referenced.*

**\*\* More \*\***

## Non-Fiction Book Recommendations from Your Friends

***Dark Matter & the Dinosaurs*** by Lisa Randall. Harvard cosmologist Randall delves into the history of collisions between the earth and space objects such as asteroids and comets and the effects of those collisions on earth's life forms - both destructive and creative. She develops some thoughts about the periodicity of these events and points out links to that and the concentration of dark matter in the plane of our Milky Way.

***What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions*** by Randall Munroe. This book teaches us important lessons -- like, don't go to a baseball game if the pitcher can throw a ball at speeds that approach the speed-of-light.

***Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution*** by Nathaniel Philbrick. The year that started the American Revolution was much more than dragging cannons across New England and up onto Dorchester Heights. It was friends and neighbors discovering that they were on opposite sides.

***Johnny Cash: The Life*** by Robert Hilburn. The story of the singer whose music ran through our homes since we were children. This work covers his difficult childhood, his early years at Chess Records (where Elvis got his start), covers in detail his early hard work that led to the legend that he has become. The book is unwavering in its look at the whole man, the good that he tried to do in the world, as well as the personal demons that haunted him throughout his lifetime. It also details the life of June Carter Cash. The moving ending points to Cash's final video work, 'Hurt' -- which is hauntingly beautiful, tragic and blazingly real all at the same time... a story about a life lived fully by someone who was fully, and often very regrettably, human.



The Plant Sale has begun, in front of the Library !

Library

## Why We Watch Birds

Gene Bullock of Kitsap Audubon Society will share fabulous photos, stories and fun facts about birds that might explain why one in every five Americans is a birdwatcher



Manchester Library

Monday

March 28, 6 pm