

1. Play a Popular Regency Word Game

One of the many ways Regency ladies and gentlemen amused themselves at home was through playing games that involved wit or word play. In *Emma*, there is a dramatic scene where a jumble-like word game serves as a metaphor for all the strategic game-playing going on among the characters in the novel. As an Austen-style ice-breaker at your first book club meeting, have members try this activity:

1. Think of something interesting or quirky about yourself that the group does not already know (perhaps you can ride a unicycle or cook a soufflé).
2. Think of one word that represents that quirky or interesting fact (e.g., “unicycle” or “soufflé”).
3. Without revealing your word, write it down on a small sheet of paper and then cut out each of its letters into individual word tiles.
4. Place your jumbled word tiles in an envelope with your name written on it.
5. Exchange your envelope with another book club member.
6. Have each book club member attempt to unscramble his or her partner’s word, reveal the word to the group, and then have members take turns elaborating upon the full facts represented by the jumbles.

2. Play a Game with Regency-Era Vocabulary

Materials:

each word written on a separate slip of paper • 15 sheets of paper for each player • pencils • hat

Play the game Dictionary with some Regency-era words you'll need to know as you read Jane Austen. To begin, distribute 15 pieces of paper and a pencil to every person who is playing. To play, choose one person to be the Reader. That person picks one of the 15 words listed below out of a hat. He or she then reads it aloud, spelling it if necessary, but avoiding giving a definition or using it in a sentence. All players should write down a plausible definition for the word, crafting it as much like a dictionary definition as possible. (Where words may have more than one meaning, players should concoct a definition that they believe will best fit the context of a Jane Austen novel.) The Reader then mixes up and reads aloud all definitions, including the correct one, and players guess which one is the actual definition of the word. Points are awarded as follows: 2 points for anyone who guesses the right definition; 2 points to the Reader if no one guesses the correct definition; 1 point to anyone whose definition was chosen as correct. Play continues after each round with a new person acting as Reader. At the end, the person with the most points wins.

Barouche (n): A four-wheeled carriage with an overhead covering behind, which can be raised or let down, having a seat in front for the driver, and seats inside for two couples to sit facing each other.

Come out (v): To make a formal entry into "society" upon reaching marriageable age.

Coxcomb (n): A cap worn by a professional fool, or jester, like a cock's comb in shape and color. A foolish, conceited, showy person, vain of his accomplishments, appearance, or dress; a fop.

Curate (n): A clergyman who has the spiritual charge of a parish.

Dowry (n): The money or property a wife brings her husband; the portion given with the wife.

Entail (v): to settle an estate (land, money, etc.) on a number of persons in succession, so that it cannot be bequeathed at pleasure by any one possessor.

Fortnight (n): A period of fourteen nights; two weeks.

Michaelmas (n): The feast of St. Michael on September 29. Also: a period or season around this date.

Parsonage (n): The church house provided for a rector as living quarters.

Quadrille (n): A cardgame played by four persons with forty cards. Also, a square dance, of French origin, usually performed by four couples.

Reticule (n): A small bag carried on the arm or in the hand, used by ladies as a pocket or workbag.

Suet (n): The solid fat round the loins and kidneys of certain animals, especially that of the ox and sheep, used in cooking.

Tambour (n): A circular frame formed of one hoop fitting within another, in which silk, muslin, or other material is stretched for embroidering.

Vellum (n): A fine kind of parchment prepared from the skins of calves, lambs, or kids and used especially for writing, painting, or binding.

Whist: A game of cards played (ordinarily) by four persons, of whom each two sitting opposite each other are partners.

(These definitions are adapted from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Note that where words have more than one meaning, the meaning chosen is that most commonly used in Austen's work.)

3. Play a Card Game from *Pride and Prejudice*

Vingt-et-un is the French precursor to the popular American card game Twenty-One (sometimes called “Blackjack”) and was Napoleon’s favorite game. The goal is simple—to beat the dealer and have your cards add up to 21 points without “going bust” by exceeding 21.

How to Play

To start, the dealer gives each player two cards face-up; the dealer then gives him or herself one card face-down and one face-up. Each player may then ask for another card, dealt face-down, or may pass. In *vingt-et-un*, this is the point at which players bet, before looking at their cards. (Aces count as 11 or 1, whichever is more beneficial to the players, while court cards are ten, and all other cards count as their face value.)

How to win

The hand with the highest total wins as long as it doesn’t exceed 21. If both the player and the dealer have the same point value, it is called a “push” and neither wins the hand. (Each player has an independent game with the dealer, so it is possible for the dealer to lose to one player but still beat the other players in the same round.) If a player receives a 21 total on his or her first two cards (an ace plus a ten-value card), that person wins automatically (unless the dealer has 21 as well, in which case the hand is a push).

4. Play “Bullet Pudding”

This game was a kind of bobbing for apples, except instead of water and apples players used flour with—you guessed it—a bullet buried in it. Here is the description from a letter Jane’s niece Fanny wrote in 1808. (You might choose to substitute another small object instead of the bullet.)

“I was surprised that you did not know what a Bullet Pudding is but as you don’t I will endeavor to describe it as follows: You must have a large pewter dish filled with flour which you must pile up into a sort of pudding with a peak at the top, you must then lay a Bullet at the top & everybody cuts a slice of it & the person that is cutting it when the Bullet falls must poke about with their nose & chins till they find it & then take it out with their mouths which makes them strange figures a covered with flour but the worst is that you must not laugh for fear of the flour getting up your nose & mouth & choking you. You must not use your hands in taking the bullet out.”

~Fanny Austen Knight to Miss Chapman 1808.

The Jane Austen Book & Film Club

5. Compare Courting Rituals Then and Now

The etiquette for courtship and marriage was, of course, highly circumscribed in Jane Austen's time, but has it changed that much today? Together with your book group, write down some of the unwritten courtship and/or marriage rules that seem to guide your own social milieu today. Then discuss the similarities and differences.

Courtship Guidelines from the Regency Era:

- ♦ Unmarried men and women must always be chaperoned.
- ♦ A lady never knows more than a gentleman about a subject; if she does, she keeps it to herself.
- ♦ Marriage is an economic arrangement to preserve or increase wealth in families
- ♦ Parents have a strong voice in the choice of marriage partners. (Until 1823, a man or woman under the age of twenty-one could not marry without parental permission.)

Courtship Guidelines in Your World:

- ♦ _____
- ♦ _____
- ♦ _____
- ♦ _____
- ♦ _____
- ♦ _____

6. Dance (or Watch) an English Country Dance, while Listening to Regency-style Music

English country dance was at the height of its popularity during Jane Austen's time, and she uses it frequently in her novels, often as a metaphor for marriage. (In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney says, "I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage. Fidelity and complaisance are the principal duties of both; and those men who do not choose to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours.") The following Web sites offer a glimpse into the dances of the Regency era.

Learn the quadrille

memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/divideos.html#vc021

(See Video Clip 20, and click on the version best suited to your computer.)

Though learning the steps of the complex group dances may be beyond you without taking lessons, you and a partner can easily teach yourself the simple steps of an early nineteenth-century quadrille. This Library of Congress Web site shows a video of the simple step combinations for a pair of dancers.

Watch a demonstration of English country dancing

<http://lahacal.org/austen/index.html>

For those who would prefer to simply admire English country dancing as it would have appeared at a Regency ball, you can visit the "Jane Austen Evening" Web site and view participants dressed in period costumes as they dance, eat, and make merry. Click on the "gallery" to see videos of the dances.

Listen to Regency-style dance music

www.lexingtonvintagedance.org/regency.shtml

To sample some Regency-style dance music (minus the dancing), visit this Web site that advertises the CD "Lady Caroline's Regency Romp: Dance Music of the Early 19th Century." You can click on each song's title to hear a sample of the tune. You can also enjoy the music that Austen's characters would have played or heard by listening to the work of composers such as Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart, and Handel.

7. Draw a Silhouette

Drawing and having an appreciation of art come up again and again in Jane Austen's novels. Drawing—like playing the piano or reciting poetry—was one of the most prized skills for a Regency-era woman. The following activity can get you into the spirit without requiring any actual skill!

1. Have your subject sit sideways in front of a large piece of blank drawing paper taped to an easel or to the wall.
2. Darken the room and shine a desk lamp (preferably halogen) at your subject so that his or her shadow is sharply depicted on the drawing paper.
3. Direct your subject to sit motionless as you draw an outline onto the paper of his or her head, neck, and shoulders. (Think of a cameo's image as you decide how to shape the bottom of your drawing.)
4. Now that you have successfully drawn your silhouette, you can cut it out and use it as a pattern. You can then affix the pattern to a sheet of black paper, cut around its outline, and your result is a black silhouette image that you can later display on a light-colored background.

8. Place a Regency-Style “Personal Ad”

This fun post-reading guessing game can be used in conjunction with any of Jane Austen’s novels. It highlights the cultural differences between how modern-day singles tend to promote themselves and how Regency-era singles tried to attract suitable mates.

1. Bring in the “Personals” section of a local newspaper, magazine, or Internet site. (Be careful to avoid pornography sites when searching for a personal ad online.) Choose several ads that feature men or women who have listed some of the attributes or qualities that they feel are essential in a compatible mate or romantic companion. As a group, share some of the ads aloud and discuss what qualities are emphasized as “attractive” in modern times (e.g., athleticism, career success, humor, etc.).
2. Shift the focus of the discussion to the upper class Regency setting of Jane Austen’s novels. Brainstorm the skills or qualities were valued in Jane Austen’s novels as “attractive” (wit, class standing, musical talent, artistic talent, familiarity with poetry and literature, etc.).
3. Write a brief Regency-era personal ad for one of the main “eligible” characters from the novel your book group is currently discussing. For example, Jane Fairfax in *Emma* would highlight her ability to play the pianoforte and sing well, while Sir Walter Elliot of *Persuasion* would pompously emphasize his noble rank and ancestry.
4. Read aloud your Regency-style personal ad and have the group guess the identity of the character behind the ad. The first group member to guess the character’s identity correctly takes the next turn and reads aloud his or her ad.

The Jane Austen Book & Film Club

9. Indulge in a Regency Makeover

Discuss what book club members have noticed about Regency-era fashion through viewing any of the Jane Austen films. For example, members will have most likely noted that men often wore cravats tied around their necks and that women tended to wear dresses with wide and low necklines, high waistlines, and fitted bodices. If possible, visit some Web sites that display images of Regency fashion, such as *Cathy Decker's Regency Fashion* page (locutus.ucr.edu/~cathy/reg3.html) or The Jane Austen Centre's *Regency Fashion* page (www.janeausten.co.uk/magazine/section.ihtml?id=6&step=2).

Choose a Regency fashion statement that you can adopt for your next book club meeting. You could choose to wear your hair in a "Regency updo" or wear white silk stockings underneath your Regency-style gown.

The Jane Austen Book & Film Club

10. Take a Jane Austen Quiz

There are many Jane Austen trivia quizzes and games to choose from. Try one of the following:

- ♦ A Jane Austen trivia game at www.janeausten.co.uk/quiz/index2.ihtml.
- ♦ A game called “Which Jane Austen character are you?” at <http://quizilla.teennick.com/quizzes/114849/which-jane-austen-character-are-you>.
- ♦ A quiz titled “Are you a Regency catch?” at <http://mp.channel4.com/history/microsites/R/regencyhouse/catch/index.html>.
- ♦ A crossword based on one of Austen’s novels from The Jane Austen Society of Australia at www.jasa.net.au/pp/xwrdpp.htm.
- ♦ Pick your favorite suitor from the MASTERPIECE Web site feature, *Men of Austen* at pbs.org/masterpiece/austen/menofausten.

You might print out these quizzes and have your book & film club do them while sipping the perfect cup of tea. (See the Recipes section of the Jane Austen Book & Film Club).

MASTERPIECE, MASTERPIECE THEATRE, AND MYSTERY! ARE TRADEMARKS OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF WGBH EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION. FUNDING FOR MASTERPIECE IS PROVIDED BY THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC TELEVISION VIEWERS. © 2007 WGBH EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.

MASTERPIECE™



cpb Corporation for
Public Broadcasting
A private corporation funded by the American people

PBS pbs.org/masterpiece