

Discussion Questions for Jane Austen's Juvenilia: "Wicked Funny"

9/20/20 JASNA Eastern WA/Northern ID Region

Questions for all three stories considered:

1. Do any of the characters in the stories strike you as precursors to characters in the novels?
2. Part of the humor in the stories occurs through exaggeration, role reversal, or even slapstick violence—that's why we called our play "Wicked Funny." What are your thoughts about how this connects with Jane Austen's age when she wrote these pieces?
3. Were there any words, images, or phrases that made you glimpse the genius who will go on to write our beloved six novels? Do you have a favorite quotation from the three stories we read? **Please bring a favorite quotation or character to share at the discussion.**

"The Three Sisters"

1. If we think about this story as an early precursor to *Pride and Prejudice*, what commentary is Jane Austen making about the marriage plot?
2. The materialism of Mary is funny—what she wants for her carriage, etc. She is also easily manipulated by Georgianna and to a lesser extent by Sophy. Does there seem to be any moral point of view about Georgianna's manipulations?

"Jack and Alice"

1. Have you read *Sir Charles Grandison* by Samuel Richardson? He is a model for Charles Adams (Sabor 383). How are we supposed to react to this perfect being?
2. The drunken Alice and the man-chasing Lucy are behaving against standards of appropriate female behavior in the late 1700s. Do their exploits point to anything about the behavior of men?

"Love and Freindship"

1. Peter Sabor (lxv) called "Love and Freindship" a "mock-sentimental fiction" and Austen plays with several of the literary conventions of sentimental fiction in this story. What are some of Austen's setting conventions on their ears that strike you as especially funny?
2. Laura is oblivious to how her actions are perceived by other people. Because she is telling the story, we see only her point of view. Does this "novel in a series of letters" (Austen 102) point to any limitations that made Jane Austen switch to a narrative form for her novels?

References: Austen, Jane. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen: Juvenilia*, edited by Peter Sabor (2006) Cambridge, UK: CUP. If referencing his comments, listed as Sabor, if referencing Austen's words, listed as Austen above.