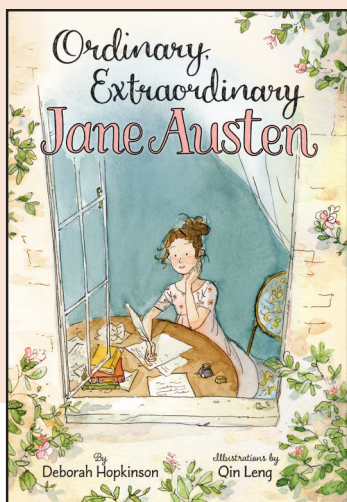


I will write about
the ordinary world
in the most
extraordinary way.



Author *Jane Austen*



Ordinary Extraordinary Jane Austen

By Deborah Hopkinson

Illustrations by Qin Leng

About the Book

Jane Austen grew up in a large, boisterous family. No matter who she was with or what she was doing, Jane always listened and closely watched others around her. When she grew older and decided to become a writer, Jane's observations inspired her to write about ordinary people living ordinary lives, an unusual topic in the early nineteenth century. It took perseverance for Jane to get her novels published, but over two hundred years later Jane's books are still loved by readers all over the world.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ What was Jane's childhood like? How did families spend their time? Was Jane's childhood similar to yours? Why or why not?
- ❖ What was young Jane like? How did this affect her writing when she became an author?
- ❖ Describe Jane's schooling. How did she become a great reader?
- ❖ Jane first began writing for her family. What did she write for them? Why?
- ❖ How did Jane's father support her talent for writing?
- ❖ The author writes that Jane wanted her books to "hold up a mirror to the ordinary world so readers could recognize (and laugh at) themselves." What does she mean by this? How was Jane's writing unique?
- ❖ Did Jane get her novels published right away? What did she have to do to get them published?
- ❖ Why did Jane's published novels say they were written "by a lady"?
- ❖ How did Jane feel about others knowing that she had published books?
- ❖ Why do you think Jane's novels are still enjoyed by so many people today?



Extension Activities

Look and Listen. Jane listened closely and watched people's behaviors so that she could create characters that were believable and real. Have students observe someone closely in school or at home, paying attention to small details about their appearance, behavior, or speech. Then have them write a description of that person. Have students read their description to a partner and ask them for feedback. Did the person seem real? Did the writing include details that brought the person to life? Based on the feedback, students should revise their writing as necessary.

All in Good Time. Show students the timeline of Jane Austen's life toward the back of the book. Discuss what a timeline is and how it focuses on the most important events in a person's lifetime. Then ask the students to research an author and design a timeline that represents the important

milestones in that author's life. Younger students can make a simple timeline of their own life by including milestones such as when they were born, when they started school, when they got their pet, and when siblings were born.

Same or Different? As a whole class or in pairs, have students complete a Venn diagram that compares the lives of Jane Austen and Nelle Harper Lee. For example, both were renowned writers, both were inspired by their fathers, both loved to read, and both had happy childhoods. However, Nelle was a tomboy, while Jane behaved as young ladies did at that time. When the women became successful writers, Jane loved the recognition while Nelle shied away from it. After the students complete the Venn diagram, ask them to decide which writer they identify with more and why.