



Discussion guide developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Becoming Jane*, a Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. A Truly Moving Picture Award winner is a film that unlocks the vast potential of the human spirit and enables us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

www.TrulyMovingPictures.org





One Film Can

Heartland Truly Moving Pictures, a non-profit organization, recognizes and honors films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life. We believe that one film can move us to laughter, to tears, or to make a difference. *Becoming Jane* is a movie that demonstrates that **One Film Can**.

Synopsis

Becoming Jane is an imaginative romantic comedy in the spirit of Jane Austen, which places young Jane herself at the center of a witty, enchanting romance not unlike those that would later captivate millions in her celebrated works of literature. The film spins the few known facts surrounding Austen's real-life flirtation with the Irish lawyer Tom Lefroy into a tale about the kind of personal passion and social complications that could have inspired Jane to become the ingenious and utterly timeless observer of human relationships that she soon did.

The year is 1795 and young Jane Austen (Anne Hathaway) is a feisty 20-year-old and emerging writer who already sees a world beyond class and commerce, beyond pride and prejudice, and dreams of doing what was then nearly unthinkable – marrying for love. Naturally, her parents (Julie Walters and James Cromwell) are searching for a wealthy, well-appointed husband to assure their daughter's future social standing. They are eyeing Mr. Wisley (Laurence Fox), nephew to the very formidable, not to mention very rich, local aristocrat Lady Gresham (Maggie Smith), as a prospective match. But when Jane meets the roguish and decidedly non-aristocratic Tom Lefroy (James McAvoy), sparks soon fly along with the sharp repartee. His intellect and arrogance raise her ire – then knock her head over heels.

Now, the couple, whose flirtation flies in the face of the sense and sensibility of the age, is faced with a terrible dilemma. If they attempt to marry, they will risk everything that matters – family, friends and fortune. But navigating the stormy waters between romance and duty, heart and head, goodness and greatness is all a part of *Becoming Jane*.

BECOMING *Jane*



In late 18th century England, young women from the gentry class had little freedom to pursue a life that did not involve marriage and children. Marrying for love was discouraged while marrying for wealth and social status was admirable. Furthermore, the upholding of one's "reputation" through proper manners and acceptable relationships was of the utmost importance. Order and restraint were expected in all areas of life and it was dutiful for a woman to accept a marriage proposal from a rich, well-respected man.

Use the following discussion questions to explore these this further.

1. Why does Jane refuse to marry without affection?
2. Why does Mrs. Austen place so much pressure on Jane to accept Mr. Wisley's proposal?
3. How does this marriage debate relate to her own life choices?
4. If you were Jane, would you appease your family by marrying for money over happiness?
5. What would you tell Jane to console her during this troublesome situation?
6. Who else in the movie deals with unwanted restrictions on their lives?

Share your responses to the questions below with another individual and offer advice as to how to confront unwanted or unwarranted expectations.

1. What do family members and friends expect from you?
2. Do you feel pressure to look or behave in a certain way? Why?
3. What does society expect of you now? In the future?
4. How do you react to these expectations? Do you accept them or rebel against them?
5. What do you expect from others?
6. Do you ever pressure other people into doing things? Why?
7. What do you expect from your close family members and friends?
8. Do you feel your expectations are fair and realistic? Why or why not?
9. What do you expect out of yourself? What goals do you wish to attain in the near or distant future?

BECOMING *Jane*



The outcome of Jane's difficult choice is that she returns to her family in Hampshire. Jane demonstrates a clear devotion to her family, particularly towards her deaf brother George and her dearest friend and sister Cassandra. In weighing her options, Jane selects her family and the pursuit of her writing over marrying, with or without love's presence. Ironically, despite his early financial problems, Tom Lefroy eventually becomes the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench in Ireland.

1. Have you ever had to decide between two or more important choices? If so, describe them.
2. How did being stuck between options make you feel?
3. How did you decide? What factors contributed to your final decision? Was there a distinct event that triggered your choice?
4. What was the outcome of your decision?
5. Do you regret the choice you made? Why or why not?



Anne Hathaway is Jane Austen in *BECOMING JANE*. Photo credit: Colm Hogan/Courtesy of Miramax Films

BECOMING *Jane*



Activities to Share With Youth

Use your creativity and writing skills to develop an alternative ending to *Becoming Jane*. Make use of the following questions to get started. You can write your ending as a story or you may wish to write it as a script, with narration and dialogue between the characters. This gives you the opportunity to act it out for your peers once it is complete.

1. Who does Jane decide to wed? (Choose from Tom, Mr. Wisley or John)
2. How does Jane feel about this marriage?
3. What is the emotional and social impact on her family members? Is she accepted by her husband's family?
4. Where does the couple reside? Describe their occupations and daily routine. What social class do they occupy?
5. Does Jane have children? How does this affect her life?
6. Does Jane pursue her passion for writing? If so, describe her novels. If not, how is she remembered after her death at the age of 41?

As depicted through conversations in the movie and throughout her novels, Jane Austen employs a very sophisticated use of the English language. Her highly developed vocabulary is a reflection not only her intellectual capacity, but of the gentry's (the social class which Jane belonged) emphasis on displaying proper etiquette in all aspects of life. Jane Austen's inquisitive social commentary and excellent use of irony eventually made Austen one of the most influential novelists in English literature. In *Becoming Jane*, you may hear some vocabulary words throughout the film that are unfamiliar. Some may be listed below. Increase your vocabulary and find definitions for these using Merriam-Webster's online dictionary www.m-w.com.

Propriety
Irony
Impertinence
Decorum
Amiable
Prudence
Dissipation
Insolence
Provincial
Inspid

Effusion
Inure
Uncouth
Execrable
Anarchic
Impudent
Insufferable
Prodigious
Impecunious
Impugn



Additional Activities for Youth

In late 18th century England, letter writing with ink and paper was the primary means of communicating across distances. In the absence of modern inventions such as telephones, fax machines and computers, this was the only method of conversing with friends and family members outside of the community. When Jane's sister Cassandra leaves to live temporarily with their brother and sister-in-law, Jane resorts to letter writing to stay connected.

Old letters and diary entries serve as windows into the past and into the hearts and minds of human beings living in specific time periods. With the increasing use of email, online chatting and cell phone use, hand written letters may be going out of fashion.

What are the benefits of writing letters versus chatting through the computer? In the spirit of Jane Austen, write a hand written letter to a future generation. Specify as many details about your current lifestyle and surroundings as possible so future people can gain a comprehensive understanding of what it was like to live during the early 21st century. Date your letter and describe some of the following information:

- Family, community and close friends
- Interests and hobbies
- The latest technology (computer programs, video games, cell phones, music downloading, etc.)
- Favorite music, books, television programs and movies
- Favorite foods
- Significant political and current events
- Medical discoveries
- Current fashions and trends

Employ descriptive adjectives as Jane Austen does in her letters to bring your future readers into the sights, smells and sounds of your community and lifestyle in early 21st century America. You may also wish to include some personal artifacts such as:

- photographs of yourself, your family, your house or other important places in your community
- news articles, pictures and advertisements from magazines or newspapers
- personal artwork or creative writing pieces
- other personal items (i.e., baseball, pack of gum, deck of cards) that you are willing and allowed to give up

Often these artifacts provide the best insight into the social and cultural norms of a given era. Once you have written and signed your note, seal it in an envelope. On the front of the envelope, specify a date that you wish for it to be opened – (i.e., "Please open on May 15, 2087). Lastly, make sure the letter stays in a safe, dry place where it is unlikely to deteriorate over time. If you are including additional items, place everything in a box and seal it. Maybe someday a person will use this information to create a movie about you!

To read some of Jane Austen's actual letters, visit:

- etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/AusLett.htm
- www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/brablets.html

BECOMING *Jane*



Truly Moving Pictures

Becoming Jane has been honored as a Heartland Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. This award was created to honor films released theatrically that align with Heartland's mission to recognize and honor films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.

These award-winning movies are made up of moving and inspiring moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, and be inspired to do something. It's what makes the movie and its message remain with you well after you've left the theatre.

Think about *Becoming Jane*. What were the moments that stood out to you? How did they make you feel? How will they cause you to think about things differently in the future? Share these moments with others at **TrulyMovingPictures.org**. Simply create a membership or login if you already have one, and then search the movie list for *Becoming Jane*. Write your own review of the movie or share your thoughts about this Truly Moving Picture at **TrulyMovingPictures.org**.



In *BECOMING JANE*, James McAvoy (left) is Tom Lefroy and Anne Hathaway (center) is Jane Austen. Laurence Fox (right) plays Mr. Wisley. Photo credit: Colm Hogan/Courtesy of Miramax Films.