

Task 1 Work in pairs. **Discuss:**

- How do people communicate with each other nowadays?
- Are you on Twitter and/or on Facebook? Do you use any other social media?
- Do you use email every day? What for?
- Have you ever written a letter on paper?

In Jane Austen's time, letters were the only way people had to communicate with others far away from them. People also wrote to other people near them if they preferred to express their feelings in writing instead of speaking about them. In many of her novels, letters play a very important role in the story.

Task 2 **Vocabulary** – What is the meaning of the expressions below?

	Meaning
For want of asking	
Upon my word!	
Connect yourself well	
Pray do.	
Be left quite to your own powers	

Task 3 **Reading – An extract from Jane Austen’s novel *Emma***

Jane Austen’s *Emma* – Chapter VII

... She had heard, as soon as she got back to Mrs Goddard's, that Mr Martin had been there an hour before, and finding she was not at home, nor particularly expected, had left a little parcel for her from one of his sisters, and gone away; and on opening this parcel, she had actually found, besides the two songs which she had lent Elizabeth to copy, a letter to herself; and this letter was from him, from Mr. Martin, and contained a direct proposal of marriage. "Who could have thought it? She was so surprised she did not know what to do. Yes, quite a proposal of marriage; and a very good letter, at least she thought so. And he wrote as if he really loved her very much—but she did not know—and so, she was come as fast as she could to ask Miss Woodhouse what she should do.—" Emma was half-ashamed of her friend for seeming so pleased and so doubtful.

"Upon my word," she cried, "the young man is determined not to lose any thing for want of asking. He will connect himself well if he can."

"Will you read the letter?" cried Harriet. "Pray do. I'd rather you would."

Emma was not sorry to be pressed. She read, and was surprised. The style of the letter was much above her expectation. There were not merely no grammatical errors, but as a composition it would not have disgraced a gentleman; the language, though plain, was strong and unaffected, and the sentiments it conveyed very much to the credit of the writer. It was short, but expressed good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, even delicacy of feeling. She paused over it, while Harriet stood anxiously watching for her opinion, with a "Well, well," and was at last forced to add, "Is it a good letter? or is it too short?"

"Yes, indeed, a very good letter," replied Emma rather slowly—"so good a letter, Harriet, that every thing considered, I think one of his sisters must have helped him. I can hardly imagine the young man whom I saw talking with you the other day could express himself so well, if left quite to his own powers, and yet it is not the style of a woman; no, certainly, it is too strong and concise; not diffuse enough for a woman. No doubt he is a sensible man, and I suppose may have a natural talent for—thinks strongly and clearly—and when he takes a pen in hand, his thoughts naturally find proper words. It is so with some men. Yes, I understand the sort of mind. Vigorous, decided, with sentiments to a certain point, not coarse. A better written letter, Harriet (returning it,) than I had expected."

Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/158/158-h/158-h.htm>

Task 3 **Read** the extract of *Emma* in which Harriet, Emma Woodhouse’s friend, receives a letter. Answer the following questions:

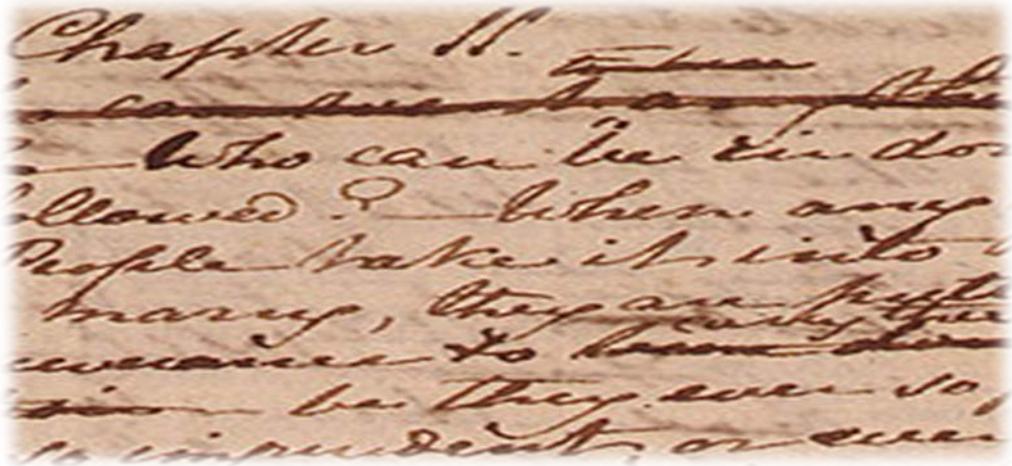
a. What is the main purpose of the letter?
.....
.....

b. What is Emma's opinion of the language and style of the letter?
.....
.....
.....
.....
c. What is Emma's opinion of the writer of the letter?
.....
.....
.....
.....

Now underline in the text the words and phrases that justify your answers above.

Task 4 In this passage, Emma makes statements about Mr Martin's personality and character based on his grammar and writing style. **Discuss:**

- How much does writing style reflect someone's personality?
- Does this apply to both formal and informal writing?
- Does a person's handwriting reveal his or her personality?
- Look at the picture of Jane Austen's handwriting below? What kind of person do you think she was?



Letters were not only prominent in Austen's novels but also in her real life. She wrote a number of letters to friends and family, especially to her beloved sister Cassandra.

Task 5 Listen to the Morgan Library & Museum's curators talk about how Austen's literary and historical manuscripts reveal the unique nature of her letter writing technique.

Write down as many key words and language chunks as you can understand in your first listening.

--

Now listen again. According to the recording, are the statements below True or False?

	True or False?
1. Jane Austen was already famous during her lifetime.	
2. The main objective of the exhibition is to show people how witty Austen was in real life.	
3. The letters reveal quite a lot of Austen's personality.	
4. Austen did a lot of cross-writing in her letters. This is when you change your mind and cross out what you wrote before.	
5. The letters directly influenced the novels.	
6. Some people Austen met in real life are similar to some characters that come out in the novels.	
7. Seeing the manuscripts helps you to get to know Austen as a person.	
8. The curators feel it is a privilege but also a great challenge to create an exhibition about Austen because she is such a well-known and loved writer.	

Task 6 Language work

Activity 1: Underline the verbs in the passage below.

She had heard, as soon as she got back to Mrs Goddard's, that Mr Martin had been there an hour before, and finding she was not at home, nor particularly expected, had left a little parcel for her from one of his sisters, and gone away; and on opening this parcel, she had actually found, besides the two songs which she had lent Elizabeth to copy, a letter to herself ...

- **Why are these verbs in the past perfect?**

Activity 2: These are the first paragraphs of *Emma*. Fill in the sentences using the verbs below in the past perfect in the correct form.

Allow

Cease

Die

Fall

Live (2)

Supply

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and

(1) nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

Her mother (2) too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place (3) by an excellent woman as governess, who (4) little short of a mother in affection.

Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse's family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. Between *them* it was more the intimacy of sisters. Even before Miss Taylor (5) to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper (6) hardly her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they (7) together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own.

Task 7 **Speaking** Discuss the questions below:

- If you could speak to Jane Austen herself, what would you tell her regarding your views of her books?
- Are there any questions you would like to ask her?

Homework

Write a letter to Jane Austen (200 – 250 words). Tell her your opinion/reactions when reading *Emma*. You may also want to comment on the language, plot and/or specific characters. Use the space below, or email your letter to your teacher.

