

A Timeline of Events from *Emma*, *Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

1799

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* begins in November of 1799. Jane is approximately 10 years old.

1800

Jane arrives in Lowood in January of 1800. Helen Burns dies in June of the same year.

1805

In *Emma*, this is approximately the date of Emma's mother's death, as Mr. Knightly observes that Emma has been mistress of the house since she was 12.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane becomes a teacher in Lowood in this year at approximately age 16. Miss Temple would have been about this age or a little older when Jane knew her in 1800.

1806

In *Emma*, this is the year that Isabella Woodhouse marries John Knightley.

1807

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane travels to Thornfield for the first time in October of this year. She is 18 years old.

1808

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane meets Edward Rochester for the first time in January. He is twenty years older than her, so approximately 38. He had married Bertha Mason in October of 1793 when he was 23. Mr. Rochester proposes to Jane in June, and the wedding date is set for July. Jane is taken into Moor House in August.

1809

In *Jane Eyre*, the events of the final third of the book occur during this year (except for the last chapter).

1810

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* begins on Christmas Eve in approximately 1810. Pip is seven at the beginning of the novel. Mrs. Joe is about twenty years older than him. Joe is approximately the same age. The convict is about forty-five when Pip encounters him.

1811

In *Emma*, Mr. Elton enters the neighborhood in December of this year.

1813

Jane Austen's *Emma* takes place over about a year from 1813 to 1814. Emma is 21 when the novel opens. Jane Fairfax is the same age. Frank Churchill is approximately the same age as both or slightly older. A line from the novel implies that Isabella is seven years older than Emma. Harriet is 17. Robert Martin is 24. George Knightly is 37. Mr. Woodhouse is over 60. The Taylor-Weston marriage referred to in the opening of the novel had taken place in late September or early October. Mr. Martin proposes to Harriet in December, and Mr. Elton proposes to Emma on December 25 and leaves for Bath on December 28.

1814

In *Emma*, Jane Fairfax arrives in late January or early February, not having visited since January 1812; she receives the pianoforte on Valentine's Day. Mr. Elton returns to Highbury in early March, and the dinner party that concludes Volume II takes place on April 7. The ball is planned for the second week of May, and the fallout from that event plays out between May and July. The wedding that concludes the novel takes place in the end of October.

1817

In *Great Expectations*, Pip would be approximately 14 when Miss Havisham pays for Pip to be Joe's apprentice. Miss Havisham is approximately 40 when Pip first meets her. Biddy and Estella are approximately the same age as Pip.

1819

In *Jane Eyre*, the last chapter of the novel is set at this date. Jane is approximately 30 years old.

1821

In *Great Expectations*, Pip is 18 when Jaggers takes him to London. Herbert is approximately the same age as Pip. Jaggers would be in his late 30s or early 40s, and Wemmick would be a few years younger than him.

1825

In *Great Expectations*, Magwitch reveals himself to Pip, having returned from Australia the previous year. He is about 60 years old. Pip is about 22.

1826

In *Great Expectations*, the events of the final third of the novel occur (except for the last chapter). During this time, Pip, Estella, Herbert, and Biddy would be about 23. Joe would be about twenty years older.

Miss Havisham is about 55. Jaggers and Wemmick would be in their 50s.

1837

In *Great Expectations*, the events of the last chapter occur. Pip is about 34.

1861

Charles Dickens publishes *Great Expectations*. The narrator of the novel is supposed to relating its events from approximately this time as well, so Pip would be about 58 looking back on events from his youth.

1873

The Great Depression (sometimes called the Long Depression, to distinguish it from the worldwide depression of the 1930s) begins in Great Britain. The depression was caused by the dramatic fall in grain prices following the opening up of the American prairies to cultivation in the 1870s and the advent of cheap transportation with the rise of steamships. It will last until 1896, though prices will not truly recover until after WWII. This is the most important historical context for *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (though the novel actually begins in 1884).

1881

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Angel Clare surrenders the

prospect of Cambridge during this year (at age 20).

1884

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* begins on May 30, 1884 when John Durbeyfield learns that he is "Sir John." Tess is 16 when the novel begins; Liza-Lu is 13; Angel Clare is 23; and Alec d'Urberville is 24. Tess takes a position at the d'Urberville farm on June 1, and flees after her rape on September 27.

1885

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Sorrow is born in June and dies in August.

1887

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Tess arrives at Talbothays Dairy in May. She is now 19 and Angel is 26. By October, the two are engaged, and they marry on December 31.

1888

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Angel sails for Brazil on January 28. The events of the final third of the novel occur over the next year and a half.

1889

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the events of the last two chapters occur in June and July of this year.