

Jane Austen was only 20 when she began the first version of *Pride and Prejudice*, and the next year it had reached the stage where her father could offer it to a publisher, who refused it. It was not published for another 15 years, in 1812, by which time it had been abridged by Austen but not extensively rewritten.

So it is a book by a very young woman who, since early childhood, had amused her family and friends with burlesques on the people they met in Hampshire and Kent. Like Elizabeth, the main character, she had “a playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous”, and although strangers may have come to fear her wit, she was excellent company and a girl of unusual attractiveness.

The only full-face portrait we have of her is a watercolour by her sister, now in the National Portrait Gallery, which does no justice to her looks and high spirits. She looks prim and crumpled, but “sunny” and “sparkling” were contemporary descriptions of her.

She was not without vanity. Within a limited budget, she took great pains with her clothes. She could attract and flirt. She loved parties, play-acting, reading aloud and, above all, dancing, which was then one of the few permissible methods of courtship.

That is why dances play so prominent a part in the BBC’s dramatisation of the book. The dance-floors may have seemed cramped for such formal gyrations, and conversation difficult, but that is how it was. Carpets were rolled back, and one of the girls would play the pianoforte, and who can doubt that Austen’s portraits of people were derived from family post mortems of the evening’s entertainment when they returned to their father’s rectory?

One advantage of a television production is that it can show us what the book can only describe. England’s countryside was never more beautiful than in the 1790s, and lovely houses containing the heirlooms of several generations were maintained to perfection by troops of servants for the benefit of an indolent and decorative aristocracy and a rising middle class.

Enough of them survive to give the BBC a wide choice of locations, and they have chosen some of the best, providing settings for scenes as lovely as a Gainsborough, or for high-stepping horses drawing a carriage more elegant than even the sleekest Mercedes of a modern Darcy.

The visual treat is complemented by the acting. I find no fault with Mr and Mrs Bennet, and the two caricatures, Mr Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are exactly as I imagined them. The Bennet girls are less pleasing, and Mary and Kitty might well have been dropped from the cast to reduce the scrimmage in small rooms.

The strongest scene is the one where Elizabeth stands up to Lady Catherine’s bullying. However, Elizabeth’s character is flawed in one respect: a girl like her should never have forgiven Darcy so readily for his ill-treatment of Jane. This and other faults of an inexperienced novelist are an indication that *Pride and Prejudice* can never have been extensively revised. But they pale to insignificance in the brilliance of her depiction of men and girls moving towards and away from each other, as in a quadrille, in search of ideal companionship.

*Nigel Nicolson, The Sunday Telegraph,
December 17, 1995*

1 What do we learn about Jane Austen's first literary work?

- A It had to be substantially revised in order to be accepted
- B It had many forerunners which were never published
- C It was too long for her father to publish
- D It was shortened by the author herself

2 What was characteristic of Jane Austen?

- A She did not have many friends because of her short temper
- B She had a good sense of humour
- C She was gentle and shy
- D She did not care much about her appearance

3 Why was dancing so popular among young people in Jane Austen's days?

- A It was an accepted way of finding someone to marry
- B There was hardly any other public entertainment at that time
- C It gave them an opportunity to show off their personalities
- D There were many excellent dance-floors in the big halls

4 What is said about the BBC's dramatisation of the novel?

- A It was difficult to find suitable locations
- B The scenery is genuine and very picturesque
- C There are some modern elements in the settings
- D Some of the scenes are too spectacular

5 Why can *Pride and Prejudice* be criticized, according to the reviewer?

- A Elizabeth's behaviour is not quite consistent
- B There are too many people in some of the scenes
- C Some characters are grossly caricatured
- D Elizabeth is too much like Jane Austen herself

Balancing Act

This is an article about the situation in Malaysia in the mid 1990s.

Zaini Amran's skin is burned dark from years under the blazing Malaysian sun, building the roads that link the fast-growing country together. But Zaini, a 39-year-old ethnic Malay, doesn't spend his days swinging a pick or pouring tar. He's a civil engineer, and he heads a multi-million-dollar construction company.

Zaini's firm, Bumi Hiway, employs more than 100 engineers—mostly Malays—and has a fat book of pending orders worth more than \$277 million. Yet if it weren't for a bold social engineering project launched 25 years ago, Zaini might be no more than a government clerk or office worker.

The scholarships and racial quotas that were an integral part of the New Economic Policy (the NEP) have helped millions of Malays obtain places in schools and universities once dominated by ethnic Chinese and Indians. Zaini's choice, in the late 1970s, was the exacting engineering programme of the University of Malaya. "It was a slaughterhouse," he recalls. He had to take a year of pre-engineering before tackling the four-year course. "I suppose I wasn't that qualified, but I made it. I became a civil engineer."

Zaini has indeed made it. He has built a successful company that actually does hands-on work, unlike some Malay-owned firms that simply sublet jobs to Chinese contractors. He had help—his initial contracts came from the government—but he has parlayed opportunity into an enduring business.

The NEP, the country's overriding ideology since 1970, is aimed at turning out more Zainis. The businessman is a bumiputra, or "son of the soil."

These indigenous Malaysians, mainly Malays, comprise 62% of the population, but in 1970 three-fourths of them were living in poverty. The NEP, a sweeping affirmative-action programme, was designed to propel them into the economic mainstream.

Has it worked? In a word, yes. The chief aim of the policy was national unity, and it has brought about profound social and economic change amid a remarkable absence of strife.

It has worked mainly because it was premised on growth. Says State Assemblyman Datuk Sanusi Junid: "It was never about robbing Peter to pay Paul." Bumiputras would benefit, but not at the expense of the other races; redistribution would take place in a growing economy. And the economy has grown: Since 1970, real GDP growth has averaged close to 7.5% a year.

Clearly, however, it's a fragile equilibrium. A sharp recession in the mid-1980s caused a deterioration in race relations, and no one knows if Malaysia's social fabric would weather a prolonged recession in the future.

But there is reason for optimism. Increasing confidence among the Malays has allowed the government to be more pragmatic. When the NEP expired at the end of 1990, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad replaced it with the National Development Policy, a far less restrictive approach that puts creating wealth ahead of redistributing it.

S. Jayasankaran, Far Eastern Economic Review, December 21, 1995

6 What are we told about Zaini?

- A He belongs to an ethnic minority
- B He left his home country in order to get an education
- C He is an ordinary clerk who has made a fortune
- D He is a Malay in a leading position

7 Why does Zaini describe the engineering programme as “a slaughterhouse”?

- A Many students were forced by the government to attend it
- B The courses given were extremely demanding
- C Zaini felt he was often treated unfairly by the teachers
- D The university was a completely new world to Zaini

8 According to the text, what was one important purpose of the NEP?

- A To provide equal help for Malays and other ethnic groups
- B To make Malaysia less dependent on imports from its neighbours
- C To train Malays in order to help them get skilled jobs
- D To create a higher education system in Malaysia

9 What is meant by the statement “It was never about robbing Peter to pay Paul”?

- A The NEP had little to do with economy and finance
- B The NEP was not financed with taxpayers’ money
- C The NEP did not intend to make wealthy groups less wealthy
- D The NEP tried to encourage cooperation within each ethnic group

10 What was the chief aim of the new policy that replaced the NEP?

- A To make the economy grow faster
- B To improve democracy in Malaysia
- C To make rich and poor more equal
- D To set up a national industry

And here are some shorter texts:

A Territorial Animal

Man is a territorial animal, jealous of encroachments on the space around him. A telling example is travellers in a railway compartment moving up only reluctantly, and with the merest show of politeness, at the entrance of newcomers. With these in turn an uneasy solidarity is established, a precarious mutuality of resentment, when still others demand entrance.

11 What is the writer's example chiefly intended to illustrate?

- A The fellowship that gradually develops in a group
- B The tendency to defend an area one regards as one's own
- C An inherited longing to travel to far-away places
- D Natural shyness in the company of strangers

Vaccination

It is disturbing that some people denounce vaccination as a part of a public health policy. Their view is regrettably fashionable amongst the privileged who take for granted the relative freedom we enjoy from lethal childhood diseases as a result of successful immunization.

The idea that improved living standards are solely responsible for the decline of infectious disease is possibly true in the case of immunization for tuberculosis. It certainly does not apply to other illnesses.

12 What does the writer imply?

- A Vaccination is necessary to maintain a low death rate among children
- B Vaccination has had relatively little effect on public health
- C Vaccination is a waste of resources in the case of most diseases
- D Vaccination no longer gives protection against tuberculosis

Tax Demands

Undercover detectives from Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist squad are in uproar after receiving tax demands for the private use of their unmarked patrol cars.

The detectives are requested to take their vehicles home to prevent them from being identified at police stations by terrorist spotters, but the tax authorities regard cars that can be taken home at night as a perk.

13 What does the writer tell us?

- A Terrorists are using more and more sophisticated methods
- B The detectives in question think they are treated unjustly
- C British tax authorities are strict but inefficient
- D Police cars must be properly marked to stop them from being misused

Dinosaurs

The rehabilitation of dinosaurs continues apace. The latest quality we must now ascribe to them is devoted parents. This follows the discovery of the fossilised skeleton of a late Cretaceous dinosaur, *Oviraptor*, apparently overwhelmed 70 million years ago by a raging sandstorm as she brooded her nest of about 20 eggs. The rehabilitation is the more poignant since *Oviraptor* was originally named because its bones were found among fossilised eggs, some of which were thought to belong to a completely different dinosaur, *Protoceratops*. It was assumed the *Oviraptor* was up to no good. We now know better. The eggs were *Oviraptor's* all along.

14 What earlier assumption has proved wrong?

The assumption that...

- A *Oviraptor* could not lay eggs
- B *Oviraptor* did not protect its eggs from being stolen
- C *Oviraptor* stole eggs from the nests of other dinosaurs
- D *Oviraptor's* main food source was eggs

Brave New World

The communal sharing which brings people together, and necessitates direct social contacts between them, has been a feature of many diverse city neighbourhoods; services, skills and possessions that could be shared provided a focus for concrete communal activities. It is a hallmark of abundance that the need for such sharing disappears.

It may appear in the future the men of our era balanced their energies in a peculiar way, so that the enthusiasm with which they invented tools for conducting life in a complex society was balanced by a sluggish lassitude in applying tools for purposes like solidarity and friendship.

15 What basic problem in modern society is discussed here?

- A Unemployment
- B Laziness
- C Poverty
- D Isolation

In the following text there are gaps which indicate that something has been left out. Look at the four alternatives that correspond to each gap and decide which one best fits the gap. Then mark your choice on the answer sheet.

One Good Pest Deserves Another

At the turn of the century, Floridians introduced the melaleuca tree into the Everglades, hoping it would dry out the mosquito-infested wetlands. With no enemies in the U.S. the evergreen tree from Australia thrived. Now residents are once again turning to Australia for help: this time seeking insects that eat melaleucas.

The insects had to be called in because the melaleuca did its job too well. The tree crowded out native**16**..... and the altered ecosystem could not support the same diversity of indigenous wildlife as the natural system. To slow the prolific trees, workers have hacked, sprayed and uprooted. Nevertheless, the melaleuca spreads nearly 50 acres every day.

So in the late 1980's, scientists turned to biological-control programs, which reunite exotic species with their natural-born enemies, explains Gary Buckingham of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Buckingham leads the insect quarantine facility in Gainesville, where two Australian**17**..... are being screened for use against the melaleuca. These tests examine whether the insects feed or lay eggs on other plants found in Florida, as well as how well larvae survive on other hosts.**18**..... the insects work slowly, it can take years to assess whether biological control has succeeded.

The Florida program is slowed not only by nature but also by money which has steadily dried up since 1991—perhaps because people are wary of imported plants and animals. Recently there has been a flood of publicity about how unintended introductions of exotic species harm the environment. Although Buckingham calls such reports important, he feels that biological control is**19**..... , because “there is not enough money to spray, there are not enough safe chemicals to use and there is no way mechanically to control these widespread pests successfully.”

Robert F. Doren of the Everglades National Park points out that none of the numerous insects released by the USDA for biological control has ever harmed anything except the intended**20**..... . “When you test and evaluate species carefully,” he says, “you have no worries.”

Sasha Nemecek, Scientific American, September 1995

- 16** A birds
B pests
C insects
D plants

- 17** A scientists
B trees
C bugs
D systems

- 18** A Although
B Whereas
C Because
D Unless

- 19** A an ineffective method
B too expensive
C out of the question
D our only choice

- 20** A targets
B chemicals
C researchers
D diseases

That is the end of the test. If you have time left, go back and check your answers.