Jane Austen Society of North America
Southwest Region’s
Definitive Guide to Austen Adaptations
from the traditional to the modern
Emma

The mid-1990s brought a flurry of Emma adaptations, beginning with Amy Heckerling's hit 1995 film Clueless — which, in turn, sparked a wave of other Austen modernizations and was followed by two, more traditional, versions of Emma in 1996. The novel finally got the full miniseries treatment in 2009 and a sparkling new feature film in 2020. Several live television broadcasts from the 1940s to the 1960s are now lost for posterity, including a BBC version from 1960 with a young David McCallum as Frank Churchill and an NBC Kraft Theatre version from 1954 with Roddy McDowall as Mr. Elton.

Traditional Adaptations

Emma (2020)—This theatrical release by first-time director Autumn De Wilde and a screenplay by Booker Prize winner Eleanor Catton stars Anya Taylor-Joy and Johnny Flynn (left) with Bill Nighy as Mr. Woodhouse and Miranda Hart as Miss Bates. With lavish costumes and beautiful cinematography, the story unfolds faithfully while adding some modern touches to engage new audiences.

Emma (2009)—This four-part miniseries is perhaps the most faithful adaptation, with even minor characters fleshed out. It stars Romola Garai and Jonny Lee Miller (right), with screenplay by Sandy Welch.

Emma (1996)—The A&E TV movie stars Kate Beckinsale and Mark Strong in Andrew Davies' first Austen adaptation following the 1995 Pride and Prejudice miniseries.

Emma (1996)—The first theatrically released production of the novel stars Gwyneth Paltrow and Jeremy Northam, with screenplay/direction by Douglas McGrath.

Emma (1972)—This four-hour, six-part BBC miniseries stars Doran Godwin and John Carson.

Modern/Loose Adaptations

Paramount Pictures announced a Clueless remake in October 2018.

Thug Notes: Emma (2017)—A hilarious take on Emma, this short is less than 10 minutes long.

The Emma Agenda (2017)—This 60-episode web series approaches the novel through a feminist/LGBT+ lens.
**Emma Approved (2013)**—The Emmy-winning 72-episode web series produced by Pemberley Digital stars Joanna Sotomura and Brent Bailey.

**Aisha (2010)**—The Bollywood version of *Emma* throws in a bit of *Clueless* for good measure.

**Clueless (1995)**—By seamlessly translating the characters into late 20th century Beverly Hills, Amy Heckerling’s take on *Emma* launched a new era in Austen adaptation — the modernization. It stars Paul Rudd and Alicia Silverstone (left).
Translating Austen’s “problem” novel to the screen has proven challenging for filmmakers attempting to make Fanny Price more relatable to a modern audience while remaining true to Austen. Yet we still have four traditional versions (including a little-known, 2003 full-cast radio production), a recent modernization and a loose adaptation of Mansfield Park to explore.

Traditional Adaptations

**Mansfield Park (2007)**—With a running time of two hours, this TV movie omits numerous characters and most settings other than the titular Mansfield Park. It also changes the personality of several key characters, making it a less-than-faithful version. It stars Billie Piper and Blake Ritson, with a screenplay by Maggie Wadley. Ritson played Mr. Elton in the 2009 *Emma*.

**Mansfield Park (2003)**—This 10-episode, full-cast dramatization for BBC Radio features a particularly strong cast who would soon go on to greater fame, including Benedict Cumberbatch, Felicity Jones and David Tennant. It also is narrated by Amanda Root, Anne Elliot in the 1995 *Persuasion*. Jones went on to portray another Austen heroine, Catherine Morland, in the 2007 *Northanger Abbey*.

**Mansfield Park (1999)**—Clocking in at 112 minutes, the only theatrically released version to date of Austen’s longest novel features most of the characters from the novel (with a notable exception, William Price). While still Regency-set, it presents a more modern version of Fanny Price, played by Frances O’Connor, with Jonny Lee Miller as Edmund (right). Miller starred as Mr. Knightley in the 2009 *Emma* and appeared in the 1983 version of *Mansfield Park* as one of the young Price children.

**Mansfield Park (1983)**—This 261-minute, six-part miniseries is a relatively faithful dramatization and stars Sylvestra Le Touzel and Nicholas Farrell, who played Mr. Musgrove in the 2007 *Persuasion*.

Modern/Loose Adaptations

**From Mansfield With Love (2014)**—This contemporary, multimedia, 100-episode series based on *Mansfield Park* is presented by Foot in the Door Theatre.

**Metropolitan (1990)**—Set in 1980s Manhattan, this debut film by auteur Whit Stillman is widely considered a loose adaptation of *Mansfield Park*, with its focus on questions of class differences and morality.
Northanger Abbey

Northanger Abbey has rarely been produced, despite its wonderfully satiric appeal. It has not yet had a theatrical release nor a miniseries treatment but has inspired some modern takes, including Ruby in Paradise and two web series, as well as an episode of the PBS children’s show Wishbone and two television movies produced 20 years apart.

Traditional Adaptations

Northanger Abbey (2007)—This 84-minute TV movie scripted by Andrew Davies amps up Catherine Morland's gothic imaginings with dramatic dream sequences while taking a few liberties with other additional scenes not in the novel. It stars Felicity Jones as Catherine and JJ Feild as Henry Tilney (right), with Carey Mulligan as Isabella Thorpe. Feild later played Keri Russell's love interest in Austenland (2013). Mulligan portrayed Kitty in the 2005 Pride and Prejudice while Jones starred as Fanny Price in the BBC Radio version of Mansfield Park (2003).

Northanger Abbey (1987)—This 88-minute BBC version misses much of Austen's satire but includes location filming in Bath. Katharine Schlesinger (left) and Peter Firth star. Robert Hardy, who played Sir John Middleton in the 1995 film Sense and Sensibility, portrays General Tilney.

Modern/Loose Adaptations

The Cate Morland Chronicles (2016)—This 40-episode multimedia recounting of Northanger Abbey tells the story of a fan-culture-obsessed journalism graduate who lands a job at an entertainment publication in Los Angeles.

Northland (2015)—Produced by Oh For Cute! Productions, this 38-part web series follows college student Catherine Morland on her adventures at North College.

Wishbone, “Pup Fiction” (1998)—A Jack Russell terrier imagines himself as the lead in a different story from classic literature in each episode of the PBS series. Here, he portrays Henry Tilney.

Ruby in Paradise (1993)—Loosely based on Northanger Abbey, Ruby in Paradise tracks the story of a young woman seeking a fresh start and a chance to establish her own identity in a Florida resort town. The film stars Ashley Judd (right).
**Persuasion**

Austen’s last complete and most mature novel has rarely been produced in comparison with *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma* but that may be about to change. Many consider the 1995 film to be the definitive version. The uncharacteristic running at the end of the 2007 version notwithstanding, the more recent update also has its merits. The 1971 miniseries is heartfelt and faithful to the original, while a 1960 BBC miniseries is now considered lost. A feature film version starring Sarah Snook was announced in September 2020 (directed by Mahalia Belo with a screenplay by Jessica Swale), and a contemporary update, *Modern Persuasion*, starring Alicia Witt was released in December 2020. In addition, the novel has inspired a few loose adaptations, including a web series.

**Traditional Adaptations**

*Persuasion (2007)*—Because of its 93-minute length, this version by Clerkenwell Films and WGBH Boston eliminates or changes some key story elements and has the characters occasionally behaving in uncharacteristic ways, but the adaptation has its devotees. It stars Rupert Penry-Jones and Sally Hawkins (right).

*Persuasion (1995)*—This well-cast feature film is a faithful dramatization of the novel that captures Austen’s tone and never feels rushed, despite the running time of only 1 hour, 47 minutes. It is widely considered the definitive adaptation of the novel. With direction by Roger Michell and screenplay by Nick Dear, it stars Amanda Root and Ciarán Hinds (left).

*Persuasion (1971)*—This five-hour miniseries is a faithful adaptation, shot mostly in studio, on videotape, as was the practice during the era. It stars Ann Firbank and Bryan Marshall and Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth. Howard Baker directed the script by Julian Mitchell.

*Persuasion* (1960)—This four-part, two-hour version starring Daphne Slater and Paul Daneman is now considered lost. Campbell Logan directed, with screenplays by Barbara Burnham and Michael Voysey.
Modern/Loose Adaptations

*Modern Persuasion* (2020)—In the first feature film modernization of *Persuasion*, Alicia Witt (right) fills the Anne Elliot role as Wren Cosgrove, a New York workaholic who finds herself coming home every night to her cat. When her firm is hired by Owen Jasper (Shane McRae), the “man who got away,” long-lost feelings are stirred.

*Persuasion (2015)*—This 10-episode scripted web series is a dramedy about millennials that borrows from Austen’s novel, beginning with the heroine’s rejection of a marriage proposal from her longtime boyfriend for complicated reasons.

*The Lake House (2006)*—While the plot has little similarity with *Persuasion*, the heroine’s copy of the novel — her favorite and a gift from her father — plays a pivotal role in the action, letters are exchanged by the leads, and Austen’s description of Anne and Capt. Wentworth’s compatibility is directly referenced. The film stars Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves.

*Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason (2004)*—Helen Fielding’s novel, on which this followup to her *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is based, shares numerous parallels with (or homages to) Austen’s *Persuasion*. 
Pride and Prejudice

From classic to contemporary, *Pride and Prejudice* has been revisited on film more often than any other work in the Austen canon. Sadly, some — including the 1952 television version starting Peter Cushing as Mr. Darcy and a 1958 version with Patrick Macnee — are now lost to posterity. But fortunately we have a wealth of adaptations — from the faithful to the modern to the “inspired by” — to turn to in between rereading the novel.

*Traditional Adaptations*

**Pride & Prejudice (2005)** — The first big-screen adaptation of the novel in 65 years, the 2005 version was set in 1797, when Austen wrote the first draft, rather than 1813, when she revised the novel. It also features a grittier Longbourn, a more tomboyish Elizabeth and a shyer version of Darcy, and is a bit more Brontë than Austen at times. It stars Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen (right), with Judi Dench as Lady Catherine. Directed by Joe Wright, its screenplay is credited to Deborah Moggach, although Emma Thompson performed uncredited script doctoring.

**Pride and Prejudice (1995)** — The six-hour BBC/A&E miniseries is generally considered the gold standard, thanks to Andrew Davies’ prowess as an adapter of classic literature and the strength of Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle (left) as leads. The extended run time also allowed the filmmakers to feature more of the novel’s characters and follow the plot more closely than in a feature film.

You also might want to explore this video from some of the creative team on the 15th anniversary of the miniseries. This [Mental Floss article](http://www.mentalfloss.com) also features some fun facts about the production.

**Pride and Prejudice (1980)** — A faithful adaptation, staying close to the original dialogue and plot, this videotaped version by the BBC was mostly shot in studio and feels a bit more like watching a play, as is true of most productions of the era. At 4 hours and 25 minutes, it’s shorter than the 1995 update. It stars Elizabeth Garvie and David Rintoul (right).
Modern/Loose Adaptations

_Pride and Prejudice (1940)_—Based primarily on the Helen Jerome stage adaptation, this loose version of the novel starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier (left) uses costumes that are more Victorian than Regency in style. It is the first feature film adaptation of _Pride and Prejudice_.

_Wishbone: “Furst Impressions” (1995)_—A Jack Russell terrier imagines himself as the lead character in a different story from classic literature in each episode of the PBS series. He portrayed Mr. Darcy in episode 25, season one.

_You’ve Got Mail (1998)_—A modernization of _The Shop Around the Corner_, this film starring Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks includes several nods to _Pride and Prejudice_.

_Bridget Jones’s Diary (2001)_—Helen Fielding’s novel and the film on which it’s based borrow different _Pride and Prejudice_ plot points (more Darcy-to-the-rescue in the book, and more Darcy/Wickham backstory in the film) but the homage remains the same. Renee Zellweger (right) and Colin Firth star, along with Hugh Grant as Daniel Cleaver (Wickham). Andrew Davies and Richard Curtis took turns at the screenplay along with Fielding.

_Pride and Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy (2003)_—This Mormon version transplants the novel’s action to a college in modern-day Utah.

_Bride and Prejudice (2004)_—Amritsar, India, London and Los Angeles fill in for Hertfordshire, Kent and Derbyshire in this quite-faithful, Bollywood-meets-Hollywood version of _Pride and Prejudice_ starring Aishwarya Rai and Martin Henderson (left) and brought to life by director and co-screenwriter Gurinder Chadha.

_Lost in Austen (2008)_—In this miniseries, ardent Austen fan Amanda Price (Jemima Rooper) accidentally trades places with Elizabeth Bennet and finds herself inside her favorite novel, where she wreaks havoc on the plot. Amanda also gets Mr. Darcy (Elliot Cowan, right) to recreate the wet white shirt scene from the 1995 miniseries.
**A Modern Pride and Prejudice (2011)**—Filmed in Colorado, this version retains most of the Regency language but otherwise modernizes the story.

**The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (2012)**—This 110-episode web series introduced a new generation to *Pride and Prejudice* and is officially the longest adaptation recorded to date. It stars Ashley Clements and Daniel Vincent Gordh (right) as Lizzie Bennet and William Darcy.

**Austenland (2013)**—Less an adaptation than an homage, this feature film borrows several *Pride and Prejudice* tropes as the heroine searches for her own Mr. Darcy at a Jane Austen theme park.

**Thug Notes: Pride and Prejudice (2013)**—The YouTube sensation (hosted by “Sparky Sweets, PhD”) presents a spot-on, hilarious 4-minute, 15-second analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*.

**Death Comes to Pemberley (2013)**—In this miniseries based on P.D. James’ mystery novel, Elizabeth and Darcy have been married for six years when a suspicious death occurs on the Pemberley grounds. (Left) Matthew Rhys and Anna Maxwell Martin play the Darcys, with Matthew Goode and Jenna Coleman as the Wickhams.

**Pride and Prejudice (2014)**—IMDB says this was a six-episode miniseries but not much information seems to be available about the production.

**Pride + Prejudice + Zombies (2016)**—The film version hews much more closely to Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* than Seth Grahame-Smith’s parody novel, transporting the characters to a Regency England overrun by zombies. The Bennet sisters (right) are warriors in the zombie wars.

**Before the Fall (2016)**—A modern-day re-imagining of *Pride and Prejudice* set in rural Virginia with gay protagonists and the status of the two leads inverted. Darcy is down on his luck while “Ben” Bennett is an affluent attorney.

**Unleashing Mr. Darcy (2016)**—This Hallmark TV movie, based on a book influenced by *Pride and Prejudice*, centers on the dog-show world. It spawned a sequel, *Marrying Mr. Darcy (2018)*.
**Christmas at Pemberley Manor (2018)**—New York event planner Elizabeth Bennett is organizing a holiday festival in a small, quaint town, where she meets — surprise, surprise — billionaire William Darcy in this Hallmark Channel film.

**Pride, Prejudice, and Mistletoe (2018)**—Yet another Hallmark TV movie capitalizing on Austen’s name recognition. This one makes a gender switch with Lacey Chabert as workaholic Darcy.


**Pride and Prejudice (2020?)**—The producers of *Victoria* and *Poldark* are reportedly making a “darker” version of the novel for Britain’s ITV, with playwright Nina Raine adapting.

**Lost Adaptations**

**Pride and Prejudice (1967)**—This six-episode series aired on the BBC, and some video excerpts still exist. Only four Bennet sisters appear in this version: Mary is missing.

**Pride and Prejudice (1958)**—This six-episode series that aired on the BBC and is now lost.

**Pride and Prejudice (1958)**—This hourlong version aired on Encounter, an anthology series out of Toronto that was carried by ABC in the U.S. It starred Patrick Macnee (right), who went on to headline the cult British series *The Avengers*.

**Pride and Prejudice (1956)**—This one-hour version was on Matinee Theatre, a daily anthology show. Helene Hanff, who wrote the script, is best known for her book *84 Charing Cross Road*.

**Pride and Prejudice (1952)**—This six-episode series included Thea Holme as Jane Austen, Peter Cushing (left) as Mr. Darcy and Prunella Scales as Lydia Bennet. It’s a shame this one has been lost! It would be fascinating to see how Jane Austen worked into the plot.

**Pride and Prejudice (1949)**—This Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse production is now considered lost.

**Pride and Prejudice (1938)**—This 55-minute TV movie aired on May 22, 1938.

Austen Adaptations/JASNA Southwest
Send suggestions for updates to Regional Coordinator Susie Wampler at jasnsw@jasnsw.com.
*Pride and Prejudice (1936)*—The Broadway production of Helen Jerome’s play was captured on film by an MGM crew for use in guiding future adaptations, according to research by Austen scholar Devoney Looser. The big-budget stage production was seen by tens of thousands, on Broadway and then in London’s West End. “Noted English Shakespearean actor Colin Keith-Johnston (1896-1980) [right] gave what was, by all accounts, a tour de force performance as a heartthrob, throbbing Darcy in 1935,” Looser says.
Sense and Sensibility

Sense and Sensibility is the second most frequently adapted Austen novel, with numerous traditional versions as well as several modern spin-offs. And because the action of the novel takes place in so many diverse locations, the wealth of location filming also is among the most diverse in the Austen canon.

Traditional Adaptations

Sense and Sensibility (2008)—This beautifully acted, three-hour, three-part miniseries, with a screenplay by Andrew Davies, is a faithful adaptation that feels very cinematic. It is also the only version that includes the duel between Col. Brandon and Willoughby that’s briefly mentioned in the novel. Hattie Morahan and Charity Wakefield portray the Dashwood sisters, with Dan Stevens as Edward Ferrars, David Morrissey as Col. Brandon and Dominic Cooper as Willoughby.

Sense and Sensibility (1995)—Still the only feature adaptation of Austen’s first published novel, this 136-minute version sticks close to the source material and earned Emma Thompson an Oscar, BAFTA and Golden Globe for best adapted screenplay. The film also won the Golden Globe for best motion picture (drama) and the BAFTA for best film, and an Oscar nomination for best film. Emma Thompson and Kate Winslet play the Dashwood sisters, with Hugh Grant as Edward Ferrars and the late Alan Rickman as Col. Brandon.

Sense and Sensibility (1981)—This videotaped version is a departure from some of the other BBC Austen adaptations of the era in that it had more episodes but of shorter duration each (seven episodes of 30 minutes apiece).

Sense and Sensibility (1971)—This three-hour, four-part miniseries stars Joanna David (right) (Mrs. Gardiner in the 1995 Pride and Prejudice) as Elinor Dashwood and Ciaran Madden as a particularly melodramatic Marianne Dashwood.
Modern/Loose Adaptations

*From Prada to Nada (2011)—*After their father’s sudden death, two sisters — law student Nora and shopaholic Mary — are forced to live with their estranged aunt in East Los Angeles in this Latina spin on *Sense and Sensibility* (right). Camilla Belle plays Nora and Alexa PenaVega is Mary, with Nicholas D’Agosto as Edward Ferris and Wilmer Valderrama as Bruno, the Col. Brandon stand-in.

*Scents and Sensibility (2011)—*In this loose modernization, the Dashwood sisters have to navigate their way in the world when their father is jailed for extortion. Marla Sokoloff and Nick Zano (left) play Marianne Dashwood and Brandon Hurst, with Ashley Williams as Elinor and Brad Johnson as Edward Farris.

*Elinor and Marianne Take Barton (2014)—* Created and produced by full-time University of Warwick students, this web series follows the adventures of free-spirited Marianne Dashwood and her thoughtful sister, Elinor, in their first year at university.

*Sense and Sensibility (2014)—*Filmed in Seattle, this version includes the expected characters of Elinor, Marianne, Edward Ferrars, Col. Brandon and John Willoughby, but also features a Detective Tennyson, Wealthy High Dude, High Party Girl, Dealer Wickham, Lydia and Kitty.

*I Have Found it (Kandukondain Kandukondain) (2000)—*This musical take on *Sense and Sensibility* transplants the story to modern-day India, where two sisters of very different temperaments must navigate rough waters to find happiness and love. Aishwarya Rai (who plays the Elizabeth Bennet character in *Bride & Prejudice*) takes on another Austen-inspired role as this film’s Marianne Dashwood equivalent.

*Material Girls (2006)—*Sisters Hilary and Haylie Duff play the Marchetta sisters, who are heiresses to a cosmetics empire until a scandal threatens their fortunes.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)—*Director Ang Lee (who also helmed the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility*) described *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as *Sense and Sensibility* with martial arts. The film includes parallel stories of a more experienced heroine who lets her head rule her heart and her younger counterpart who lets her emotions reign supreme.
Sanditon

Although Austen only wrote 12 chapters of *Sanditon*, a 28-episode multiplatform series has fleshed out the story and an eight-part miniseries adapted by Andrew Davies aired on PBS MASTERPIECE in 2020 in the U.S. (on ITV in 2019 in the UK). Davies is well-known to Janeites for his adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) with Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle. He also has adapted versions of *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

The 2020 miniseries evoked a love-it or hate-it division among audiences and stirred controversy as the producers aimed for a second season—leaving several key storylines, including that of heroine Charlotte Heywood and her love interest Sidney Parker (played by Rose Williams and Theo James, left), unsatisfactorily resolved.

Another production was announced in 2015, starring *Charlotte Rampling as Lady Denham*, but it remains listed as “in production.” Director Jim O’Hanlon previously directed the 2009 *Emma* and screenwriter Simon Reade previously adapted *Pride and Prejudice* for the stage.

IMDB lists a version of *Sanditon from 2014*, but it seems to have ceased production.

Modern/Loose Adaptation

*Welcome to Sanditon (2013)*—Set in a California beach town, this 28-episode, multiplatform adaptation of Austen's unfinished novel *Sanditon* is a production of Pemberley Digital, which created *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (TLBD) and *Emma Approved*. The character of Gigi Darcy from TLBD plays a central role in the action.
Lady Susan

The first-ever film adaptation of *Lady Susan* took shape as *Love & Friendship* — borrowing the name (with corrected spelling) of an unrelated work from Austen’s juvenilia — in Whit Stillman’s faithful version, released in 2016.

*Love & Friendship (2016)*—This theatrical release marked a return to the Austen-verse for star Kate Beckinsale — who played the lead in a 1996 production of *Emma* in a 1996 production — and for filmmaker Whit Stillman, whose 1990 film *Metropolitan* is widely considered a loose adaptation of *Mansfield Park*.

Watch the official trailer and read an interview with Stillman in *The New Yorker*. 