

# Jane Austen On Screen



**Week Four**

## Welcome to *Jane Austen on Screen*

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Welcome, *Emma*.

The last novel to be published in Jane Austen's lifetime, *Emma* is, alongside *Sense & Sensibility* and *Pride & Prejudice*, one of the most frequently adapted of her novels.

Much of this has to do with the affection – by contrast to *Mansfield Park*'s Fanny Price – in which its protagonist Emma Woodhouse is held by readers and viewers alike.

In Austen's own words:

'Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and a happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.'

She's meddling, very often misguided and always acting in what she believes to be the best interests of others. In other words, a perfect comic character, whose foibles we excuse, with a shake of the head, because of her intrinsically good nature.

That said, it is a testament to Austen's abilities that even when her creation is causing havoc, she never becomes insufferable. We can all see ourselves in Emma, without any false modesty – she's prone to mistakes but means well.

From an adaptation perspective, it makes her a gift to an actor and an easy sell for an audience.

For all the fantastic visual versions of the story, however, perhaps the best is not a straight retelling at all: the teen comedy *Clueless* from 1995, which captures the novel's spirit impeccably.



## WEEK FOUR FILMS

Emma (1967)  
*Manuel Aguado*

Clueless (1995)  
*Amy Heckerling*

Emma (1996)  
*Diarmuid Lawrence*

Emma (1999)  
*Douglas McGrath*

Emma (2009)  
*Jim O'Hanlon*

Aisha (2010)  
*Rajshree Ojha*

Emma (2013)  
*Bernie Su*

Emma (2020)  
*Autumn de Wilde*