

## “Talking Jane”

### Birthday Greetings to Jane Austen on her 233<sup>rd</sup> Birthday

At the December 14, 2008 Birthday meeting, attendees were divided into groups and asked to compose a congratulatory message for Jane Austen on her 233<sup>rd</sup> birthday from one of her characters. The clever, funny and meaningful messages are listed below:

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Despite her disapproval of female authors in general – and Miss Austen’s treatment of her in her writings – Lady Catherine de Bourgh has condescended to authorize me to offer her singular congratulations on Miss Austen’s birthday. My wife Charlotte joins in extending felicitations.

*The Reverend William Collins*

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Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Miss Austen, you are 233 today.  
Your writing is timeless, I can say:  
You were brilliant then;  
You are brilliant today.  
You saw through pretensions, arrogance, and pride;  
You gave me Elizabeth as my bride.  
Your happiest couple sends you love  
On this auspicious occasion, which you celebrate above

*Mr. Darcy*

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To my dear Miss Austen:  
I pray, we celebrate your birthday today.  
With Lady Catherine’s permission,  
I’ve made it my mission  
To wish you Happy Birthday  
If I may.

*Mr. Collins*

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My dear Miss Austen,  
Sincere congratulations on the anniversary of your birth.  
Please accept my apologies for not joining you in person, but there has been the most dreadful chill in the air! I must implore you to check for draughts in the room. If you must eat cake, a very little bit would suffice! (And really, a nice, thin gruel would be so much better.)

Yours in health,

*Mr. Woodhouse*

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My dear Miss Austen,  
My esteemed patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, joins me in proffering felicitations upon the anniversary of your birth. Having ascertained that you have reached an age where a prudent and fortuitous marriage is unlikely, I have the great privilege of offering you a solution recommended by my esteemed patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Her lovely daughter, Miss Anne de Bourgh, finds herself in need of a new companion, an honour singularly to be desired for your continued welfare.  
Your humble servant,  
*Mr. William Collins*

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Dear Miss Austen, allow me to make free  
To felicitate you on turning 233.  
Thanks to you and your like, Mrs. Radcliffe included,  
Isabella Thorpe and I were properly deluded.  
You could not then have known your obscure, gentle name  
Would one day achieve such illustrious fame.  
Dear Henry and I, when we're not being flirty,  
Are amazed at someone's being even as old as thirty.  
So here's to you, at turning 233,  
Best wishes from all in *Northanger Abbey*.  
*Catherine Morland*

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Miss Austen:  
On this, the 233<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebration of your birth, I thank you most especially for giving me a second chance! You have given me great joy over the last 200 or so years with the love of my life, who consented to be my wife because of your great heart and deep appreciation of romance.  
*Captain Wentworth*

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Dear Jane,  
As we all know, 233 is the new 100. Happy Birthday and while I am at it, I want to thank you so much for pairing me with Fitzwilliam Darcy. We've just celebrated our 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. And they said it wouldn't last. The most esteemed Lady Catherine sends her regards. That was by post. She never visits. Our 10 children are not well enough behaved.  
Here's to the next 233!  
*Elizabeth Bennet Darcy*

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Miss Austen:  
Your talk of admirals, rear and vice  
I don't consider very nice.  
I don't appreciate your gibes;  
Those rules we break enhance our lives.  
Both Lucy Steele and I agree  
That you are not our cup of tea.  
And Fanny Dashwood is not so mean  
As you, my dear, would have her seem.  
Now Caroline Bingley's really charming;  
I have found her most disarming.  
So Happy Birthday, my dear Jane.  
(To us you give a royal pain!)  
Affectionately,  
*Mary Crawford*

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And oh my dear Miss Austen, I am thankful to say we have just received a letter from our dearest Jane. Oh I should say our dearest Mrs. Frank Churchill and in trying to make out her cross hatching, for mother is always so, so interested in dear Jane's diverting news, but can't keep her spectacles in order without dear Mr. Churchill and I must not forget to thank Mrs. Knightley for that wonderful porker that Mr. Larkins delivered but insisted it was the last of the porkers and Mr. Woodhouse mustn't know that we plan to bake it if Patty remembers to take it to the baker and doesn't trip on the turning of the stairs, but I'm thankful that the stairs are always mended by our obliging neighbors who I am thankful to say were so good to inform us that Mrs. Elton's lace was the talk of the ball even though she failed to remember her tippet – always so draughty in the Crown Inn, always so obliging and despite the cold, even if the carriage ride was crowded and we took up so much space, and by the by, happy birthday dear Miss Austen.

*Miss Bates*