

Emma clueless essay

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Emma Essay How has the changing contexts influenced the representations of main issues from Emma to Clueless? Amy Heckerling's Clueless is a cinematic reconstruction of Jane Austen's 19th century classic Emma and perfectly encapsulates the idea that the issues of a time, change and adapt with the changing of context. The contemporary text Clueless takes the rustic values placed on courtship, dating and ultimately marriage as well as the social/class distinctions in Regency England and successfully transforms them to better suite the new context of a contemporary audience and less rigid society.

In the 19th century, marriage was the sole occupation of women and was the only way for women to rise in social status and to 'support themselves'. Marriage was a fundamental aspect of Austen's world and the importance of marriage is highlighted as Emma states that she is "not going to be married" and Harriet exclaims in a shocked tone "it is so odd to hear a woman talk so!". For Harriet, and most women in the 19th century, marriage was an economic necessity to provide a stable financial future.

This is reiterated by Emma's use of short phrases in "a single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid" which expresses her disdain for those women who do not possess fortunes to match hers and reinforces the value of wealth in relation to marriage. Marriage was therefor, not for love but for wealth, as is demonstrated in Mr. Elton's arrogant proclamation that he "need not so totally despair of an equal alliance as to be addressing myself to Ms. Smith!" The use of the word 'alliance' emphasizes the fact that matrimony was for financial benefits.

Marriage in Austen's time was valued unconditionally and was seen as a means to achieve financial and social stability. While Emma focuses on the importance of marriage in the rigid Regency period, in the contemporary American setting of Clueless, although marriage is still featured, the focus has shifted to more contemporary themes relating to the sexuality and fluidity of relationships. Cher's dialogue when explaining her indecisiveness over who to lose her virginity to: " You know how picky I a with my shoes, and they only go on my feet! shows how sexual relationships have replaced marriage in the new context, as Cher's dilemma becomes a question of whom to lose her virginity to and not whom to marry. The role of women in courtship has also changed dramatically as is demonstrated by the zoom in on Cher's feet rubbing Christians, indicating her desire to have sex with him. This active role in the relationship contrasts starkly with the subservient role women played in the 19th century. Marriage still plays a role in the 21st century and this is shown the last scene; the marriage of Mr.

Hall and Ms. Geist. Heckerling does however, employ satire through Cher's voice-over of " As if! I'm only 16! This is California, not Kentucky. " when audiences presume that she is marrying to gently mock the 19th century necessity to marry early, once again highlighting the shift away from the importance of marriage. In the 21st century, marriage has been pushed to the side and values in relationships focus more on sexuality. The social hierarchy of Regency England was rigid and dependent on wealth, property and heritage of the individuals and families.

The extreme importance of class is demonstrated through the exaggerated caricature of Mrs. Elton, a woman who is quite obnoxious, but still thought to

be a better “catch” than the kind-hearted Harriet, simply because of her “genteel heritage” and “wealth”. The rigidity of social standings is further accentuated by Emma’s pretentious and condescending tone in “the yeomanry are precisely the people with which I feel I can have nothing to do with” where her disdain for Robert Martin, a farmer in love with Harriet, reflect her disdain for those with a lower social standing than herself.

Austen however, challenges the prerequisites of her society through her character Mr. Knightley, who shows generosity towards the lower class despite his own high social standing, even describing Robert Martins as “respectable, intelligent, gentle”. His use of positive adjectives accentuates Austen’s view that kindness and charity are more important than social superiority; an idea that many in her time did not share. Heckerling appropriates 19th century class snobbery and transforms them to better suite the growing multicultural and democratic setting in Clueless.

Although class distinction no longer exists, Clueless depicts a social structure based on popularity, appearance and acquaintance in a high school environment. The importance of popularity mirrors the importance of class in Emma and is established through Cher’s use of dialogue in “The fact that you hang with Dionne and I, speaks very highly of you.” Close up shots of Cher and Dionne’s disgusted expressions as they scorn Trevor (the Clueless equivalent of Robert Martin) again echoes the class snobbery and disdain shown by the genteel in Emma towards those of lesser standing.

Heckerling does however; emphasize the fluidity and flexibility of 21st century class structure, which is the principal difference between the contexts of Emma and Clueless. Tai’s gradual change of costume is in direct

correlation to her gradual rise in popularity from “ adorably clueless” outcast to the centre of attention; highlighting the superficial and shallow ‘ social’ structure present in the 21st century. Amy Heckerling has taken into consideration the changed context of Clueless and appropriately caused the adapted the Regency England views on social structure to better reflect the class values of the high school setting.