

# Young men in Regency\* England

\* 'Regency' is the time between 1811 and 1820.



**Regency England is named after the Prince Regent, who became King George IV. He lived a wild life, and many young men copied him. He ate and drank too much, loved gambling and spent a lot of money.**

“ *Rawdon was excellent at gambling, horse-riding and drinking.* ”

## Becoming a gentleman

Boys from rich families studied Latin and Greek before going to a top school, such as Eton or Harrow. Families with a little less money sent their sons to schools like Dr Swishtail's School in *Vanity Fair*. They were taught writing, maths and French. Riding a horse, fighting with a sword and racing in a carriage were all important skills for a young gentleman.

## Studying ... and having fun

Oxford and Cambridge were the only universities in England at this time. Young



men there studied Latin and Greek, the law or prepared for the church. Like Rawdon Crawley, and William Thackeray himself, many students cared more about horses, carriages, clothes and drinking than studying.

## Working life: army, church or a rich wife?

What did a young gentleman do all day long? Older sons of lords and ladies, like Pitt Crawley, managed their country estates and went into Parliament. Younger sons were less lucky. Like Rawdon Crawley, they often inherited very little. They either had to work or find a rich wife. Young gentlemen with a title (for example, Lord, Lady, Sir) and no money often married young ladies with plenty of money but no title.

If a gentleman had money but no title, he could buy a good place in the army. George Osborne begins this story as Lieutenant Osborne.

**Britain was always at war at this time. There were no policemen, and fighting was an important skill for boys and young men to learn. Think of three times in *Vanity Fair* where men fight.**



His father then buys him a promotion, and he becomes Captain Osborne. He could go into the church or the law, or become a banker. A gentleman could go abroad. Jos Sedley becomes rich as a tax collector in India.

**What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.**  
**sword manage Parliament inherit title promotion**