

The various members
of the Bennet family
and their
relationships essay
sample



From your study of chapters 1-21 of *Pride & Prejudice* what have you learnt about the various members of the Bennet family and their relationships?

The Bennet family consists of Mr Bennet, Mrs Bennet and their five daughters; Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. They all live together in Longbourn House, Hertfordshire. The reason for so many daughters is that they kept on trying for a child in hope that Mrs Bennet would give birth to a boy, evidently they were unsuccessful. The reason that they kept trying was because the heir to Mr Bennets inheritance would have to be male. Therefore as soon as Mr Bennett dies the family would be turned out of their home and left with just £5, 000 to live on, of which is all Mrs Bennets fortune. Consequently, Mrs Bennets objective and mission is to get every daughter well married as soon as possible – “ The business of her life was to get her daughters married.”

Mr Bennet is a man of at least 40 years old, he’s “ an odd mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve and caprice”, he is intelligent but isn’t a very effective family man. He neglects his responsibilities as a father and husband and distances himself from the rest of the family, in particular his wife – “ Mr Bennett left the room fatigued with the raptures of his wife”. He has increasingly become uninvolved in the daily life of his family and tends to leave them and go to his drawing room. Obviously this has had an effect on the two younger daughters as they are silly, he shows no respect for them and often refers to them being “ two of the silliest girls in the country,” and “ uncommonly foolish”. This being partly his fault of course, as he left them with their rather foolish and ignorant mother.

Over the years, Mr Bennet has lost all affection and respect for his wife and regularly amuses himself in teasing her and intentionally annoying her. " He had always intended to visit her, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go," this shows that he deliberately is aggravating Mrs Bennet. Although in general he doesn't take much interest in his family he does have an obvious fondness and preference for Elizabeth, regularly showing it throughout the novel - " I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy." " Lizzy has something more of a quickness than her sisters."

The mother of the family, Mrs Bennet is a ignorant, dull and obnoxious character. " She was a woman of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous." She is frequently in hysterics and as her husband often tries to distance himself from her, her sole focus are her daughters, in particular Lydia, her favourite. Mrs Bennet is desperate to see all five of her daughters well married, and is concerned that they all find wealthy husbands before they are too old or before their fathers death, leaving them with no home or wealth. " A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year! What a fine thing for our girls!", "...and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for."

Mrs Bennets lack of intelligence and understanding means she is an easy victim for her husband's sarcastic wit -

"...for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr Bingley might like you the best of the party."

“ My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now.” She is unaware that Mr. Bennet is joking with her, and playing with her stupidity and her self-love. She is also oblivious to her two youngest daughters' foolish behaviour and their own lack of sense, probably because she is so dumb herself – “ Yes – but as it happens, they are all of them very clever.” “...you must not expect such girls to have the sense of their father and mother.” She doesn't even realise (or admit?) that she is also dull.

Jane is the eldest of the daughters at 22 years old. She is frequently referred to as ' Miss Bennet', because in that period the eldest unmarried daughter would be called ' Miss'. She is also the prettier of the girls as the story goes and people often speak of her beauty –

* “ You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room”(Mr Darcy)

* “ Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld”(Mr Bingley)

* “ One does not often see anybody better looking” (Mrs Bennet). Jane is mostly happy, good tempered and always finds the good side in a person, often dismissing the uglier side in any situation, such as it was with Caroline Bingley. Elizabeth is honest enough to tell her, “ You never see fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I've never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life.” Her reserved character confused Bingley to whether or not she had feelings for him, because she only “ helped him on, as much as her nature will allow,” and consequently is heart broken when Bingley and family leave Netherfield to go to London.

The second eldest daughter is Elizabeth, often referred to as Lizzy. She is two years younger than Jane, and therefore 20 years old. She also appears to be the prettiest secondary to Jane; “.. a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.” (Mr Darcy). Lizzy is the main character of the story, and probably the most liked. The majority of the story is told through her perspective and what sets her apart from her sisters is her amiable personality. She is confident, independent, intelligent and unafraid to let her opinions be known, yet she is always polite, well-mannered and cheerful. “... for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.”

Lizzy is Mr. Bennet's favourite daughter and he frequently shows it, “ I must throw in a good word for my Lizzy,” “.. they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of a quickness than her sisters.” It's true that Elizabeth is a quite a bit brighter than the rest of her sisters. She often realises things before anyone else and has more understanding. “ With more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister.” She's also able to understand people well. Unlike her elder sister, Jane that tends to see the best in anyone, in any situation, Lizzy doesn't. She discreetly recognises the faults in ill-mannered and proud people, yet still being slightly proud herself - “ I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine.”

The middle sister is called Mary, and not much is said about her in the story. We know that she is the plainest looking of all five daughters, and to make up for it she reads many books, “ Mary, who having in consequence of being the only plain one in the family worked hard for knowledge and

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accomplishments.” “ Young lady of deep reflection.” Although overall she still hasn’t the intelligence and sensitivity of her older sisters, “ Mary wished to say something intelligent, but knew not how.” “ Mary had neither genius nor taste.” She enjoys performing and showing off her (lack of) musical ability; “ Mary’s powers were by no means fitted for such a display; her voice was weak and her manner affected.” She does not realise how bad she actually is.

Kitty is the next daughter, and two years older than Lydia so she’s probably 17 or 18. She, unlike the eldest two, and much like her mother is very dull and silly. Notice that when the author refers to Kitty or Lydia they are referred to as a pair as they go everywhere and do everything together and have the closest bond. She is influenced greatly by her more confident younger sister.

They are both lacking intelligence as their father, Mr. Bennet, retired to his library and ignored his family over the years, so that they both, more than the others have been left to the foolishness of their mother. Mr. Bennet is always the first to admit both Kitty and Lydia’s silliness - “ as to think our two youngest daughters uncommonly foolish,” “ two of the silliest girls in the country,” “...they are all silly and ignorant like other girls.” The only thing that either of them seems interested in are the officers stationed at Meryton; “...a walk to Meryton was necessary to amuse their morning hours and furnish conversation for the evening.” “ Everyday added something to their Knowledge of the officers’ names and connections.”

Lydia is the youngest of the five at 15 years old, she seems to be the most confident too. " I am not afraid; for though I am the youngest, I'm the tallest." " Lydia was a stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and good-humoured countenance; a favourite with her mother, whose affection had brought her into public at an early age. She had high animal spirits." Lydia is a firm favourite with her mother and Mrs. Bennet often shows preference towards her, I believe this is because they are most alike-empty-headed. " Nor half so good-humoured as Lydia," " Lydia, my love..." She is loud and doesn't know how to behave- " For she was a most determined talker." " Lydia was bid by her two eldest sisters to hold her tongue."

All in all, I believe that the Bennet family is a pretty dysfunctional family. Mr and Mrs Bennet do not love each other anymore and are disrespectful to each other, in particular Mr Bennet. Mr Bennet's ignorance towards his family has led to the two younger to be silly, which will lead to bigger problems for the family further on in the novel. Mrs Bennet probably feels lonely without her husband (when he ignores her) and therefore busies herself with her daughters, interrupting their lives. The fact that both parents have their favourites isn't particularly nice on the other three and they probably feel rejected. Mary also probably feels rejected, as Jane and Lizzy are close, as are Kitty and Lydia, and she is left with nobody.

If Mr Bennet had taken more interest in his wife and daughters, or had married somebody who he loved for their personality instead of beauty, I think there would be a much more pleasant, happy family.