

# Pride and prejudice jane austen

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Independent Reading A Guide to Pride and Prejudice Jane Austen " Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. " Special Considerations Copyright Holt, Rinehart and Winston. All rights reserved. The Novel at a Glance Pride and Prejudice (1813) is a comedy of manners that explores how considerations of money, family background, and personal vanity can complicate the course of true love. Setting: Mostly in rural Hertfordshire in England in the late eighteenth century.

Protagonist: Elizabeth Bennet, the most intelligent and complex daughter in a family of five unmarried sisters who have no prospect of inheriting wealth.

Structure: The novel is divided into three parts each subdivided into many short chapters. The plot involves pairs of lovers who seem destined never to get together because of the opposition of powerful blocking figures and forces. The couples, however, after bringing the entire community together, are happily married in the end. Conflicts: The plot is propelled by the need of the female characters to find suitable husbands.

The main conflicts are the obstacles or blocks that get in the way of achieving these marriages. The obstacles are both external (the want of beauty, money, sense, or social connections) and internal (an inability to discern the true character or feelings of another). Resolution: By learning from her experience and honestly evaluating herself, Elizabeth gains a husband who is not only wealthy but truly worthy. She overcomes her prejudice against Fitzwilliam Darcy, which was based on his appearance of pride, and he overcomes his prejudice against her family, which was based on pride in his own social rank and good manners.

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Themes: Knowledge comes through careful reasoning and considered experience, unclouded by pride or prejudice based on rank or mere appearances. Of Special Note: By means of comic irony and satirical exaggeration, Austen exposes the social and moral follies of her society. The vocabulary of *Pride and Prejudice* should pose no major problems to upper-grade-level students reading at grade level, but all students, especially those reading below grade level, should be prepared to encounter a society whose social and economic conditions are markedly different from those of today.

They can learn a great deal about Austen's world from the novel itself, but some understanding of the British system of inherited wealth and the position of women within that system during the early nineteenth century will help orient them. Background Entailed Property. In the traditional British class system, wealth was passed on via the inheritance of family property, an annual income for life, or both. Inherited wealth conferred far more status than money earned by work. Family estates were usually inherited by the oldest son; and other sons, and sometimes daughters, were given smaller incomes.

An entail is a restriction on the inheritance of family property, and in the case of the Bennets, the entail stipulated that Longbourn, the family home, be passed on to a male cousin. The Eighteenth-century Gentlewoman. The Bennet sisters were considered gentlewomen because their father had inherited some wealth and therefore did not have to work to earn money. Because of the entail, however, they would not inherit any wealth of their

own, unlike Georgiana Darcy and Caroline Bingley, whose fathers' estates were so large that all the children were designated to inherit.

Since it was not respectable or generally even feasible for gentlewomen to work, the Bennet sisters had no option but to find husbands who could support them and maintain their position in the class to which they were born. If they did not marry, they would have to depend on the generosity of male relatives. Jane Austen's own situation was typical of the time: she remained with her father until he died and then moved to her brother's house. What was not typical was that she wrote books and was paid for her work. *Pride and Prejudice* 1 Mrs.

Bennet, a frivolous woman, bent on making advantageous matches for her five daughters but lacking the ability to judge the worth of their prospective suitors. She makes silly comments, often at inappropriate times. Mr. Bennet, an intelligent but usually aloof man who looks on his wife and the marital dilemmas of his daughters with detached amusement. Notable for witty comments. Jane Bennet, the eldest daughter (in her early twenties), very beautiful and sweet-tempered, always ready to think well of others and modestly of herself" the friend and foil of her sister Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Bennet, at first too quick and confident in her judgments, she refines her knowledge of herself and her ability to evaluate others. More outspoken and opinionated than her sister Jane. Mary, Catherine (Kitty), and Lydia Bennet, the three younger sisters, flat characters who change little in response to experience. Mary is a pedant with no real knowledge. Lydia's high spirits are unrestrained by good sense. Charles Bingley, a good-looking,

wealthy, and agreeable young man, who falls in love with Jane but whose courtship of Jane is not encouraged by his friend Darcy or his fashionable sister Caroline, who wishes to marry Darcy.

Functions as a foil for Darcy. Fitzwilliam Darcy, a handsome, dignified gentleman, heir to great property and wealth. A reserved man, ill at ease with strangers and mindful of social rank. He strikes the Bennets as cold and aloof. Falls in love with Elizabeth. Reverend William Collins, a clergyman and cousin of Mr. Bennet, who has ingratiated himself with the formidable Lady Catherine de Bourgh and stands to inherit Longbourn. He is accepted by Elizabeth's plain, practical friend, Charlotte Lucas, after Elizabeth rejects his marriage proposals.