

What do we learn about the characters in pride and prejudice from their epistolar...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Letters play an extremely important role in the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. They help communicate important information that would've taken much longer if written in narrative form. Some are used as turning points in the novel such as Darcy's letter to Elizabeth after she refuses his first marriage proposal. Others reveal the character and personality of the letter writer. They allow the narrative to intensify quickly without spending many pages describing the events. It also allows changes in the character's views of one another, for example Miss Bingley's feelings about Jane, and helps the reader understand the motivations behind many of the characters' actions because of the background information. Letters are used as a dramatic device to further the plot, link the story and to inform the readers of the character's personalities. The letters that I am going to compare with each other are Mr Collins' letter to Mr Bennet in chapter 48, and Lydia's letter to Mrs Forster in chapter 47. In chapter 48, it is difficult to count the number of ways in which Mr Collins manages to be offensive, apparently without being aware of it. He begins by saying ' I feel myself called upon... to condole with you...' He almost deliberately chooses not to be discreet about the exact source from which he heard the news, and does not avoid the implication that he has spread the scandal. Instead he tells on the Lucases for spreading the news of the scandal to Hunsford. He then goes on to say that he and Charlotte have been discussing the Bennet's private affairs, as has he been doing with the De Bourghs. Mr Collins then ridiculously " comforts" Mr Bennet by pointing out that " The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this". He manages to blame the Bennet parents for being too indulgent and informs Mr Bennet that Lady Catherin thinks that this will ruin

the chances of his other daughters marrying, and is happy that he did not marry Elizabeth after all. Letters can be used to deliver good or bad news at any time, and Lydia's letter in chapter 47 to Mrs Forster is definitely bad news. Lydia completely disregards the feelings of her family, and acts on selfish impulses by eloping with Wickham as she believes that they are in love with each other. She is inconsiderate in her language, ' I cannot help myself laughing myself at your surprise to-morrow...' She does not understand the true consequences of her actions and the effect it will have on her family and friends. She also writes " What a good joke it will be! " if she signs her name " Lydia Wickham" on a letter to her parents which is a very immature way of telling your entire family of your whereabouts. Lydia is so thoughtless in this letter, and even though she is telling Ms Forster about a very serious issue, she manages to ask her to tell Sally to mend one of her gowns before sending it to her. This is very immature of her, and through this letter, we establish a new view of her character. Lydia ends her letter with the sentence, " I hope you will drink to our good journey" as if she wants us to be entirely accepting of the situation and to treat it as though it is like a normal marriage. I think that in a way, Mr Collins and Lydia are both offensive and ignorant in their ways of writing. They both manage to be incredibly thoughtless. Although they are as bad as each other, we do get the impression that Lydia is much more deliberate in her selfishness and thoughtlessness. Mr Collins is more on the side of being completely ignorant to his actions and we forgive him more as he is thought to be a hopeless character in the novel. As we have seen, letters can play a huge part in a novel, and I have written about two letters that have an effect on the story.

These letters have especially changed our view on these two characters and there is more motivation behind the character's actions.