

# lop – pride and prejudice essay sample

Literature



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Good afternoon. My individual oral presentation is based on the book *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen in the year of 1813. Today, I will examine the character of William Collins, by analyzing his marriage proposal to Elizabeth Bennet in Chapter 19. I believe that this passage contains great importance in the understanding of Jane Austen's character, Mr. Collins.

Mr. Collins is a clergyman and an extremely comical character because of his mix of adulation and pride. He is fond of making long and silly speeches and stating formalities which have absolutely no meaning in themselves. For Mr. Collins, speech is not a means to communicate truth but a means to say what he thinks the people around him want to hear or what will make the people around him think well of him. He is first in line to inherit Mr. Bennet's estate, and wishes to marry one of the Bennet sisters to lessen the burden of entailment.

I have begun my key-passage analysis from the line "The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing that she could not use the short pause he allowed in any attempt to stop him further, and he continued:"... From this excerpt, we can see that Jane Austen has used the term 'solemn composure' to exhibit Mr. Collins' seriousness and sincere poise. We may also observe the attention that Mr. Collins has obtained from the society, due to his comical nature, as Elizabeth Bennet could 'barely contain herself,' despite his sincerity.

Mr. Collins announces his philosophy about marriage as he says "My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it is a right thing for every clergyman in

easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly — which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honor of calling patroness.” From this quote, we may examine many factors affecting Mr. Collins’s character. Mr. Collins has ‘ reasons for marriage,’ and by this phrase imposed by Jane Austen, we understand that Mr. Collins has no self objectives or aims, and just follows social conventions! It also displays his materialistic character, as he does not believe in true love, and instead believes in material possessions which improve his reputation in social standings. Also, from the line “ I think it is a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself),” we learn that William Collins is proud of his attainment.

Using the phrase ‘ like myself,’ Jane Austen conveys Mr. Collins’ self-esteem and belief of belonging in the ‘ higher social class.’ Also, we discover with the help of the line “ that it will add very greatly to my happiness,” that Mr. Collins is pompous, as he is already content with life, and can be considered the epitome of style and fashion. When Mr. Collins describes his third reason for marriage, he says “ thirdly-which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier,” which clearly explains to us that Mr. Collins is an oiler or a greaser, loves to flatter or be flattered, and that he regularly displays obsequiousness. Also, Mr. Collins says “ that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honor of calling patroness.” With the help of the words ‘ advice’ and ‘ recommendation’ we

can comprehend that Mr. Collins is exceptionally foolish, and that he is easily distracted by the advice of members of higher social statuses.

Mr. Collins continues his proposal by speaking about the words of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whom he highly respects and holds her as his patroness. She advises him to marry quickly and appropriately, and tells him to bring his wife to Hunsford, the town of Mr. Collins. After quoting Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Collins declares, " Allow me, by the way, to observe, my fair cousin, that I do not reckon the notice and kindness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh as among the least of the advantages in my power to offer. You will find her manners beyond anything I can describe; and your wit and vivacity I think must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and respect which her rank will inevitably excite. Thus much for my general intention in favor of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighborhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women."

From the line, " that I do not reckon the notice and kindness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh as among the least of the advantages in my power to offer," Jane Austen imposes that Mr. Collins believes that he makes strong and thought-provoking statements, although he doesn't understand that these formalities are considered humorous to the external civilization. He also mentions " your wit and vivacity I think must be acceptable to her," and with the usage of the words ' wit' and ' vivacity,' we witness Mr. Collins attempting to flatter Jane Elizabeth, to strengthen the influence of his marriage proposal. From the line " must be acceptable to her," we learn that Collins can be considered a disciple of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, as his <https://assignbuster.com/iop-pride-and-prejudice-essay-sample/>

actions are only to please her. He also says, “ my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighborhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women.” Through this phrase, we understand that Mr. Collins is implying that he may easily find a wife in another neighborhood, and it is not necessary that he must marry Elizabeth Bennet. He is trying to show his importance in his neighborhood, which again is displaying his pompous character.

Later, Mr. Collins says “ But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honored father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place — which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem.

And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection.” From the first sentence of this quote, we can understand that Mr. Collins is using the matter of inheriting as an excuse to marry Elizabeth Bennet, and from this I believe that Jane Austen is trying to give us a picture of Mr. Collins’ ability to flatter and the actual reason behind Mr. Collins’ speeches. I think that Mr. Collins speaks to satisfy/sweet-talk the people around him, but not to express what he actually feels. Mr. Collins also says “ This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem.

And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection.” From the phrases ‘ flatter myself’ and ‘ sink me in your esteem’ we recognize Mr. Collins’ hope to hide the fact that he actually wishes to marry Elizabeth Bennet, by giving a valid excuse of entailing the Longbourn estate. This shows us his foolish personality and his heavy pride. The last sentence of this quote, “ And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection,” is a beautifully-written phrase by Jane Austen, which gives ‘ affection’ an attribute of being ‘ violent.’ She has also metaphorically replaced tranquility with ‘ animated language.’ What we must value from this line is the fact that Mr. Collins is still able to grease up his proposal with his promising thoughts/actions.

To end his proposal, Mr. Collins says “ To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother’s decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.” Through the first sentence of this quote, we comprehend that Mr. Collins is trying to impose a sympathetic and considerate attitude towards Elizabeth, as he is trying to manipulate her thoughts. Mr. Collins is easily laying out the advantages of marriage along with him, and effectively attempting to convince Elizabeth to marry him. But, in the last few words of his proposal, “ when we are married,” we are able to perceive his confidence and self-esteem in himself and his communication.

My key-passage ends with Elizabeth feeling the urge to interrupt Mr. Collins and her urge to end the proposal. This shows how the society regards Mr. Collins' speeches as lengthy and worthless, and how he himself is never able to understand how foolish the society thinks of him.

One of the literary features I highly appreciate of Jane Austen is her ability to convey her images of her characters not by simply stating her descriptions of them, but instead displaying her characters by their diction, language, and actions. In this case, Jane Austen doesn't directly describe Mr. Collins, but shows us the image of Mr. Collins in the society's perspective, and by his long and silly speeches. Jane Austen's vivid vocabulary efficiently assists in the portrayal of her characters.

To conclude, I would like to say that Mr. Collins' proposal and his reaction to Elizabeth's refusal solidify Jane Austen's portrait of this absurd character. The proposal itself is delivered in such a way that it seems more appropriate for a business deal than for a declaration of love. I think Mr. Collins is an example of someone who sees marriage more as a partnership for social and financial advantage than as a relationship to express the love and affection of two people for each other. Only after he explains these cold considerations does he mention that he has a high regard for Elizabeth. It becomes clear that his wife will be merely an ornament in the "respectable" life he's creating for himself. I believe that Mr. Collins is an extremely society-dependent man, and lives to make others feel highly of him. Not only with the upper-class, but Collins believes in creating a good impact on everyone. But, I think that his extreme level of adulation and pride will lead him to a down-fall.