

# Pride and prejudice essay – a comparison of elizabeth and lydia

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



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Elizabeth Bennet is the 2nd eldest of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's 5 daughters. Lydia is the youngest. The only thing these 2 brother or sisters seem to share is their family. The girls contrast starkly.

Lydia Bennet has a rather childish and fun caring disposition. She encounters as a little doing not have in intelligence and her own dad even reaches to call her 'among the silliest women in the country.' As well as stating that she is 'ridiculous and oblivious like other ladies'.

Elizabeth on the other hand is fully grown, kind, caring and rather more in her daddies favour than her more youthful sis. He appears especially keen on his 'little Lizzy' and informs his better half that she 'has something more of quickness than her siblings'.

Throughout the unique the women opposing personalities are demonstrated. Lydia's flirtatious and frivolous ways are really obvious at the beginning of the novel through her behaviour towards the soldiers. Elizabeth's wisdom shines through at the very first ball in the unique, when she overhears Mr Darcy explaining her to Mr Bingley as 'tolerable; but not handsome adequate to tempt me'.

Elizabeth however takes this on the chin, and instead mocks him by stating the story to her friends and chuckling at his rudeness and arrogance. Her conduct is exceptional, a lesser girl would have been ravaged to hear herself explained in such an unflattering and uncomplimentary method, and in this instance we really see her great manners and sense of maturity.

Both Elizabeth and Lydia are confident and outspoken girls although in rather different ways. Lydia tends to say exactly what she thinks without much consideration, whereas Elizabeth's words are always thoughtful and quick witted. Her observance and good sense make her mostly a consistently accurate judge of character. For example she recognises the inappropriate behaviour of some members of her family, like her mother and Lydia, and feels embarrassed. Also she realises Mr Collins unsuitability for her and refuses his proposal, despite it offering her notable financial stability. She also takes a dislike to Lady Catherine De Bourgh, regardless of her influential position, and stands up for herself and her family. However, in the case of Mr Wickham and Mr Darcy, her perception was originally misguided, but later she recognises her mistakes.

Lydia on the other hand does not have such a sound sense of judgement. She believes that Wickham genuinely loves her and will marry her, when his intentions were only to elope with her. She was so gullible that she ran away with him and her only saving grace was Mr Darcy forcing Mr Wickham to enter into marriage with her.

Lydia rushes headfirst into her affair with Wickham and claims to love him, although in reality she barely knows him.

Elizabeth is completely different to her sister and by no means hurries into her romance with Mr Darcy. She demonstrates at several stages in the novel that she does not want a pretentious and shallow relationship or marriage for practicality, but wants to find a true love match. Her cousin Mr Collins is very

admiring towards Elizabeth and asks for her hand in marriage. The acceptance of this proposal would have offered Elizabeth a sound life as Mr Collins had ' a good house and very sufficient income'. But having no physical or mental attraction to the man, Elizabeth tells how, in regard to his proposals ' it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them.' Mr Darcy also asks for Elizabeth's ' acceptance of his hand.' At the stage when he makes his first proposal to Elizabeth she believes him to have wronged Mr Wickham and feels a ' deeply rooted dislike' for him and so declines his proposal. In this instance she follows her heart, despite Mr Darcy earning ' ten thousand a year' and having a very respectable status and estate.

Neither Lydia nor Elizabeth really conform to the expectations of the society that they live in. They are both different to the mould of average women of the setting, but in their own ways. Lydia is less discreet than her elder sister and certainly makes a name for herself with her flirtatious and attention seeking tendencies. She is only fifteen years of age and many people scorn her for socialising with men, attending balls and such like. Lady Catherine De Bourgh is a prime example of this and tells Elizabeth that it is ' very odd' Lydia being out at only fifteen years of age.

Another far more scandalous way in which Lydia does not conform to the values of her society is her elopement with Wickham. She runs away with him to London without a single care for her family or the disgrace it might bring to their name. She believes all that he tells her unquestionably and is certainly very naive. She is ignorant with regard to her family's feelings and her actions outrage her father and cause her mother to be ' taken ill

immediately'. It places their home in 'such confusion' and forces Mr Darcy to pay out a substantial sum of money to the penniless Wickham. Lydia's behaviour was not the norm and Elizabeth tells how her 'conduct has been such as neither you, nor I, nor anybody can ever forget' which implies that the elopement has tarnished the Bennett name lastingly.

At the time the novel was written, women were expected to become 'accomplished' in things such as art, music and reading. Elizabeth is suitably talented at playing the piano and 'has a good notion of fingering' and Darcy tells how 'no one admitted to the privilege of hearing' her 'can think of anything wanting.' She is also 'a great reader' and so all in all is quite an accomplished girl. Lydia though does not, as far as I can tell, show much talent or interest in the areas of music and arts. She seems rather preoccupied with the soldiers in neighbouring Meryton, clothes, balls and gossip.

Although Elizabeth is generally well liked and highly thought of, she does not completely live up to expectations in her society. As I have discussed previously she doesn't, like most girls of the time, consider money an important enough reason to marry and hence refuses two marriage proposals. In this period, women were considered second class citizens in society, as equality had not yet been established between the sexes. This makes Elizabeth an even more remarkable character as she is by no means intimidated by Mr Darcy and is intelligent and assured enough to tease and mock him, questioning his actions and picking him up on his past wrongs.

Her disposition is so confident that she has enough conviction to stand up for herself and express her views cleverly regardless of the company she is keeping. This is demonstrated when she stands her ground when confronted by Lady Catherine De Bourgh, telling her in no uncertain terms that her prospective marriage to Mr Darcy is none of her business. In the period that the novel was written, this would not have been considered acceptable conduct as Lady Catherine is of much higher social status than Elizabeth. Lady De Bourgh explains how she has ‘not been accustomed to language as this’ and goes on to ask Elizabeth – ‘do you know who I am?’

Elizabeth also causes a minor stir when she walks three miles from Longbourne to Netherfield. It was unusual for ‘ladies’ of the time to walk so far unaccompanied – they would usually have taken a carriage. This is a way in which Elizabeth takes a subtle stand and resolves to do as she pleases regardless of what people may think. Miss Bingley tells how Elizabeth seems to ‘show an abominable sort of conceited independence.’

The main character of the novel is Elizabeth Bennet and much of the story is portrayed through her eyes, leading the reader to favour her. She is the heroine of the novel and the main narrative is her story in particular. I think that Jane Austin meant for her to be a particularly likeable character, as she shows admirable and dignified conduct throughout. She is the sort of woman that many people would aspire to – she has intelligence, beauty, talent and is a kind and compassionate sort of person. She does not allow herself to simply be dictated to, but has the strength of personality to do and say as

she sees fit, and for these reasons I think that she earns almost all readers approval.

I do not think that Jane Austin intended us to approve of Lydia. Her behaviour certainly was not approved of by the characters in the book as she acted without any consideration for others. She was self centred, reckless and stupid. However, I do not think that Lydia is a bad character that we are meant to strongly dislike, but on the contrary, we are meant to be entertained by her antics. She adds a touch of scandal to the story making it all the more interesting and in the end it is her carelessness in not thinking before she speaks that lead to Elizabeth and Mr Darcy finally uniting.

The two sisters are very different indeed and are both portrayed to opposite extremes. Elizabeth's responsibility and great qualities are magnified by Lydia's outrageous behaviour at the other end of the scale. I think that without Lydia's character Elizabeth would not seem quite so exemplary, and without Elizabeth to live up to, Lydia would not seem such an immature and thoughtless character.

I personally prefer Elizabeth and I think this is a feeling that most readers would share. I think she is an ideal role model who overcomes many obstacles to find truly deserved happiness in the story. Although I don't particularly dislike Lydia, I think that she is a silly and annoying character who lacks all the inspiring qualities possessed by her older sister, Elizabeth Bennet.