

The six marriages in "pride and prejudice" essay sample

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



The Six Marriages in “Pride and Prejudice” Essay Sample

Jane Austen in this novel writes about marriages in the nineteenth century. How well did she portray this? How successful was she in putting across the opinions of marriage through the characters? Marriage in that era was seen as essential for a woman's fulfilment in adult life. It was a matter of living a life of neighbours, dress, housekeeping, dancing and music or working as a governess. This meant being excluded from society, which was extremely humiliating, and leading a restricted life with no money because of this unfulfilling job.

Jane Austen in this novel focuses on the landed gentry. Mr Bennet, is a landowner, but because he did not produce any sons in his marriage his nephew Mr Collins will inherit his land and house. This means that when Mr Bennet dies his daughters will be left homeless and with no financial support. This therefore means that his daughters will have to attract men with their own virtues and being married will play a very important role in their lives.

Mr and Mrs Bennet are quite badly matched in marriage and it is one that should not be an example for his daughters. In the novel it is clearly shown that Mr Bennett has not much respect for his wife “ I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard them with consideration these last twenty years.” It is apparent to the readers that he has no interest in his wife and what she has to say.

We are lead to believe by Elizabeth that Mrs Bennet was attractive in her youth. “ her father, captivated by youth and beauty and that appearance of

good humour with youth and beauty generally gives, had married a woman whose weak understanding and liberal mind had very early in the marriage put an end to all real affection for her." This is what drew Mr Bennet to her. Ostensibly when Mrs Bennet's beauty faded away with age so did Mr Bennet's allure and affection for her. This happened early on in the marriage. She is now ludicrous, silly and a gossip " for Mrs Long has just been her and has told me all about it."

Apart from gossiping her main aim in life is to marry off her daughters. This is shown very early on in the novel when she finds out that Mr Bingley is in Netherfield "...you know I must be thinking of his marrying one of them." Being so determined to see the girls married does affect them. Her determination for Jane to get to know Bingley made Jane very unwell. When Jane went to Netherfield she was made to "... go on horseback because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night." Mrs Bennet is also very embarrassing as she is so indiscreet and anticipates the turn of events, "... as Jane's marrying so greatly must throw them in the way of other rich men ..." This statement mortifies her daughter Elizabeth as she realises Darcy is listening.

Further into the novel the contrast between Mr and Mrs Bennet and their attitudes towards marriage are established. This happens when Mr Collins asks Elizabeth in the most pompous way to be his wife. Mrs Bennet on hearing Elizabeth's refusal is very upset, but Mr Bennet simply could not care less and to contradict his wife says, " your mother will never see you again, if you do not marry Mr Collins, and I will never see you again if you do." When

it is heard that Mr Collins is now marrying Charlotte Lucas, Mrs Bennet thinks that " he must be clearly mistaken" as he wants to marry Elizabeth. Mrs Bennet is left feeling very angry after hearing this information. She is also very annoyed at Bingley's total disregard towards Jane, but she still hopes that he will come back to Netherfield " There is no talk of him coming back to Netherfield again in the summer; as I have enquired of everybody who is likely to know." Much later on in the novel when Bingley does come back, Mrs Bennet is delighted because the reason for him returning is Jane.

Mr Bennet's interests seem not be to marry off his daughters or otherwise paying attention to his wife doing so. He found other interests like " Country of books." This is what most fulfilled him His daughter Elizabeth realises his lack of respect for his wife and it upsets her " she always seen it with pain ..." but she chooses to forget these thoughts but realises the disadvantages for the children that are brought up in such a relationship. "... the disadvantages that must attend the children of so an unsuitable marriage ..."

Another situation in the novel which shows the different levels of intelligence of Mr and Mrs Bennet, is Lydia's elopement. Mr Bennet thinks logically about how to pay Mr Gardiner, who Mr Bennet thinks has paid for the marriage. Mrs Bennet can only think about wedding clothes " but the clothes, the wedding clothes!" for the forthcoming marriage. She does not care about the fact that Mr Gardiner has paid because, he can afford it. Nor does she care about the shameful circumstances surrounding this wedding.

At the end of the novel Mr Bennet advises Elizabeth to make sure her feelings for Darcy are the right ones. That unless she " truly esteemed her

husband happiness and respect would be lacking in her marriage." He feels that unless she thinks it through she will be trapped in an unhappy marriage "... would place you in the greatest danger of an unequal marriage." In this talk with Elizabeth he emphasises the fact of not being rash in her decisions. Basically I feel that he is telling her not to make the same mistake he did.

Let us now look at another marriage in the novel, the one of Mr and Mrs Gardiner. We meet them in chapter 25 of the novel, and it is said that Mr Gardiner is "greatly superior to his sister, as well as by nature as education." Both he and his wife are an example of what a marriage between two people with an equal understanding can be. They respect each other and also love each other. This is the sort of marriage the Bennet girls should be aspiring to. The combination of Mr Gardiner who was "... a sensible, manlike man ..." and Mrs Gardiner who was "... and amiable, intelligent, elegant woman ..." was a precise one and were a interpenetrate couple. This couple is a sharp contrast to Mr and Mrs Bennet in this novel.

Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas' marriage on the other hand is one of convenience, there is no love from the start, and there will never be any. The marriage between this couple arose because firstly Jane could not be his wife, then Elizabeth refused his advances, and at his third attempt at proposal was accepted. This shows how superficially Mr Collins chose a wife.

At the beginning of the novel Charlotte expresses her view on men and what she finds attractive in them to Elizabeth. She said "one cannot wonder that so very a fine man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour should think

highly of himself." . She has no expectations from men, but accepts Darcy's pride expressed throughout the novel as he has a large fortune.

Charlotte Lucas is twenty-seven years old, has no fortune, and seems to have no illusions of marrying for love. She accepts Mr Collins' proposal " the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment." She later tells Elizabeth that she is " not romantic" and never has been. She states clearly that she is engaged to him because in marriage she only asks for " a comfortable home; and considering Mr Collins' character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is fair...". This establishes that her marriage to Mr Collins is purely going to be one of convenience.

When Elizabeth goes to visit Charlotte at her new home she observes a number of things. The fact that Charlotte seems not to hear Mr Collins' embarrassing comments "... Charlotte wisely did not hear." Also that when Charlotte forgot the circumstances she was in, "... there was really a great air of comfort throughout..." Charlotte seems to enjoy this and Elizabeth thinks that Charlotte often forgets Mr Collins "... he must be often forgotten."

This marriage is one of convenience, there was no love or attraction and I feel Charlotte Lucas knew the reasons why she was getting married to Mr Collins, and because of this she knew that her marriage wasn't going to be one of the happiest ones.

The first of the Bennet sisters to marry is Lydia. She is immature and witless like her mother when she was young. She tends to like a lot of men and takes great interest in the men who are in the regiment when they are

staying at Meryton. She shows no interest in Wickham for the duration of his stay. The first we hear of them being together is when Jane contacted Elizabeth, quite far into the novel to say that they had eloped "... she was gone off to Scotland with one of his officers; to own the truth with Wickham!"

Wickham, we find out earlier in the novel, tried to elope with Darcy's sister Georgiana. He persuaded her that she was in love and because she was young and gullible she believed it "... she was persuaded to believe herself in love and to consent an elopement." Not only did Wickham want to elope with her but we also find out that he also is a fortune hunter and only wanted her money. " Mr Wickham's chief object was unquestionably my sister's fortune." Although we see Wickham as one of the villains in the novel, we have to take it into consideration that he himself has no fortune. He therefore has to find a wife with money or he will lead a restricted life with hardly any money.

It is therefore quite certain that when Wickham elopes with Lydia he has no intentions of marrying her, because of the reputation he has as a fortune hunter. Despite Mr Gardiner's attempts at optimism, he is also partly convinced " Wickham will never marry a woman without some money".

Whilst the family is waiting for news on the couple more and more disreputable stories are heard about Wickham. Finally Mr Gardiner informs the family that Lydia and Wickham will be married after a financial situation is sorted out. Mr Bennet is convinced that Mr Gardiner had paid for them to get married and is worried " how I (he) is ever going to pay him." Later on it

is found out that Mr Darcy has persuaded Wickham into marrying Lydia by paying off his debts, giving him money and getting him his commission.

Elizabeth lets us know that the couple was brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtues and worries about the happiness of her sister and her new husband. This marriage is an example of a foolish and immature girl who does not realise the consequences of eloping with a man in those days. If Darcy had not helped her, her reputation would have been ruined for the rest of her life, and she almost certainly would not have found another husband.

The next sister to become engaged is the eldest sister Jane. She is betrothed to Bingley, who from the beginning of the novel seems to take an interest in her. Just when she starts to become attracted to him, his sisters send her a letter saying, "the whole party has left Netherfield ... without any intention of coming back again." The letter also contains the information of Mr Bingley's plans to marry Georgiana Darcy. Jane is clearly upset and heartbroken, but refuses to show it. Elizabeth is convinced that it is the Bingley sisters trying to ruin any feelings that existed between the two. As the story progresses Jane receives a second letter from Caroline, Bingley's sister, emphasising again on Miss Darcy, and "her many attractions" also on the increasing intimacy "between Georgina and Bingley."

After this letter Jane resigns herself to losing Bingley. "He may live in my memory as the most amiable man of my acquaintance, but that is all."

Although Bingley might have done wrong in encouraging Jane's affections

she prefers to think that she read more into the situation than there actually was. After this talk with Elizabeth “ Bingley’s name was scarcely ever mentioned between them.” I feel that this paragraph shows clearly that the Bingley sisters do not want Bingley to marry Jane. This is because of her lack of fortune. If Jane was to marry him instead of the family fortune increasing it would decrease as she has no money to add to it, in that time this was very relevant.

The letter Darcy writes to Elizabeth is very significant to this marriage, as we find out that Mr Darcy told his friend that he felt the marriage should not happen and pointed out “ the certain evils of such a choice”. Her family is part of the reason for this talk between Bingley and Darcy and Elizabeth is fully aware that the engagement between the couple could have been prevented because of “ the folly and indecorum of their own family.”

Near the end of the novel Bingley comes back to Netherfield and accompanied by Darcy joins the Bennet family for dinner. Jane says she no longer expects Bingley to like her other than as a friend, but a few days later Bingley calls by the Bennet’s house alone “ a few days after this visit Mr Bingley called again, and alone.” The next day he dines at the Bennet’ household again. He goes on several more occasions to Jane’s house. A couple of days after their reunion Jane and Bingley are deep in conversation when Elizabeth interrupts. Bingley leaves Jane at this moment. Jane then immediately gets up and “ instantly embracing her” tells Elizabeth the news, though not directly.

This marriage was again a convenient marriage, but unlike the Collins' they loved each other and were both happy. Jane states in the novel " why is not everybody as happy." The marriage is a good match because although Jane has no money she is beautiful and educated. Bingley does have money, so together they would live a happy and comfortable life. Although they have the advantage of money the true objective for marriage in this relationship is the love for one another.

The last marriage dealt with in the novel is the one of Elizabeth and Darcy. I feel this relationship is one of the most sagacious ones in the novel. It seems to be on the same level of love and respect of the marriage of the Gardiners. They have the same elements of education, understanding, respect and love.

The relationship between the couple is not like this from the beginning of the novel. When Elizabeth meets Darcy for the first time their characters clash. She has no respect for him and dislikes him. Darcy sees her as " tolerable: but not enough to tempt me (him)." Darcy's feeling towards Elizabeth start to change almost immediately "... it jumps from admiration to love ..."

Further on in the novel Darcy and Elizabeth are allowed to talk properly for the first time. They discuss " the accomplished woman" and have very different views on this topic. Darcy thinks that an accomplished woman should " have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages." Elizabeth disagrees and states that she " never saw such a woman." This shows that if this relationship does flourish they

would both have to respect each other's views on marriage. I feel that both their characters are strong and mature enough for this to be accomplished.

Again we find out a little later in the novel about Darcy's increasing admiration towards Elizabeth's straightforward and unpretentious nature: "he really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger." Again this states what was written at the beginning of the essay.

Elizabeth and Darcy get on very well and in different sections of the novel they talk and become better acquainted with each other. In one instant they discuss weaknesses and both recognise their own. Her stay at Netherfield does a lot to strengthen and deepen the relationship, but Darcy is glad to hear that Elizabeth is returning home "to Darcy it welcome intelligence - Elizabeth had been at Netherfield long enough she attracted him more than she liked ..."

Wickham interferes in this relationship on one occasion by telling lies about Darcy, which causes plenty of damage. Elizabeth does not know if there is a basis to these lies and therefore fits in with her poor impression of Darcy, "I had supposed him to be despising his fellow creatures in general ..." This news about Darcy lowers Elizabeth's respect and perhaps her slow growing fondness towards Darcy. Wickham also states that Mr Darcy and his cousin Miss DeBourgh are to be married "is believed that she and her cousin will unite the two estates." When Elizabeth goes to Hertfordshire she "cannot discern any symptom of love between Anne De Burgh and Darcy."

The next day Darcy unexpectedly appears at the Parsonage and with no warning he proposes marriage to Elizabeth. He emphasises the fact of his attempt to stop himself falling in love with Elizabeth “ in vain I have struggled it will not do. My feelings will not be repressed.” He states that her family are “ a degradation” and makes points of how he has tried to resist his love towards her. Understandably Elizabeth refuses Darcy’s marriage proposal and has no sympathy towards him. She tells that she would never marry a man “ who has the means of ruining, perhaps forever, the happiness of a most beloved sister.” She also talks about “ the recital” that she received from Wickham many months ago.

Darcy then sends Elizabeth a letter telling her the truth about Wickham and what he had mentioned about her sister to Bingley. After she receives this letter it is clear that her feelings towards Darcy are starting to change for the better.

Elizabeth travels to Derbyshire with her uncle and aunt, but is hesitant, as this is where Darcy’s estate is. When they visit his house they come across Darcy’s housekeeper and she shows them around the estate. She describes Darcy as “ the best landlord and the best master.” These remarks about Darcy soften Elizabeth’s feelings towards him even more. To Elizabeth’s surprise she meets Darcy outside his house, but is quite embarrassed “ it might seem as if she had purposely thrown herself in his way again!”

A while after this incident Darcy takes his sister to visit Elizabeth, by the end of the chapter Elizabeth's feelings have increasingly grown, and were now depending on " the renewal of his address."

Later on in the novel after the Lydia and Wickham affair we discover that Elizabeth feels even greater admiration for Darcy, she also feels deep regret " for every saucy speech she had directed to him."

When Darcy travels to Netherfield for the last time Elizabeth thanks him for her sister's wedding and he replies by saying " but your family owe me nothing much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only of you." He lets her know that his " affections and wishes are unchanged." Elizabeth tells him that " her sentiments had undergone so material a change ...". In the remainder of this chapter they discuss their misunderstandings of the past and express their feelings towards one another.

By analysing these marriages I have learnt that marriage was very important and did not necessarily depend upon a couple's attraction towards each other, but primarily upon economic factors. The marriages vary in this novel and it gives you an insight into different relationship in the 1800's. If you were fortunate enough you had a marriage like the Gardiners' or the Darcys', a marriage of ' true minds'. You could however, find yourself in an unfortunate marriage like the Bennets', this was not beneficial for the couple or the children. Examples of marriages of convenience were the Collins' who did not love each other and to a certain extent the Bingleys' who even though they had affection for each other and this was the main incentive for

marriage, it was economically convenient for Jane. Either way marriage had to take place in a person's life if they wanted to survive or find a suitable place in society.