

## Revisiting Pride and Prejudice

- Published - 1813
- Writer- Jane Austen
- *It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.*
- Thus the initial comment in the novel **Pride and Prejudice** reunites all of the **central** themes of the novel: "*Love versus Class and Reputation*".

### *Setting of the novel-*

- England - in the very late 1700s-early 1800s.
- Though the exact dates are unclear, the action seems to take place some time during the Napoleonic Wars (1797-1815)
- The locations are set in England, including Brighton, London, and the counties of Hertfordshire, Derbyshire, and Kent, but there is little detailed description of the geographic settings.
- Most of the action is confined to private parties among a few neighbouring families
- Austen implies that *intense psychological drama can still unfold even within a small and seemingly uneventful world.*

### Characters in the Novel-

#### Elizabeth Bennet -

- The Protagonist of the novel
- The second daughter of Mr. Bennet
- The most intelligent and sensible of the five Bennet sisters.
- Her realization of Darcy's essential goodness eventually triumphs over her initial prejudice against him.

### **Fitzwilliam Darcy -**

- A wealthy gentleman, the master of Pemberley, and the nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh.
- Intelligent and honest
- Tempers his class-consciousness and learns to admire and love Elizabeth for her strong character.

### **Jane Bennet**

- The eldest and most beautiful Bennet sister.
- More reserved and gentler than Elizabeth.
- Mr Bingley appreciates

### **Charles Bingley -**

- Darcy's considerably wealthy best friend.
- A genial, well-intentioned gentleman
- Blissfully uncaring about class differences.

### **Mr. Bennet -**

- The patriarch of the Bennet family
- A gentleman of modest income with five unmarried daughters.

### **Mrs. Bennet -**

- Mr. Bennet's wife
- A foolish, noisy woman whose only goal in life is to see her daughters married.

### **George Wickham -**

- A handsome, fortune-hunting militia officer.
- Wickham's good looks and charm attract and trap Lydia

### **Lydia Bennet -**

- The youngest Bennet sister
- Gossipy, immature, and self-involved.

- Flings herself headlong into romance and ends up running off with Wickham.

**Mr. Collins -**

- A pompous, generally idiotic clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property.
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh serves as his patroness. He is the worst combination of snobbish and obsequious.

**Miss Bingley -**

- Bingley's snobbish sister.
- Bears inordinate disdain for Elizabeth's middle-class background.
- Attempts vainly to garner Darcy's attention.

**Lady Catherine De Bourgh -**

- A rich, bossy noblewoman; Mr. Collins's patron and Darcy's aunt.

**Mr. And Mrs. Gardiner -**

- Mrs. Bennet's brother and his wife.
- Often prove to be better parents to the Bennet daughters than Mr. Bennet and his wife.

**Charlotte Lucas -**

- Elizabeth's dear friend.
- Interested in having a comfortable home. Thus, when Mr. Collins proposes, she accepts.

**Georgiana Darcy -**

- Darcy's sister. She is immensely pretty and just as shy. She has great skill at playing the pianoforte

**Mary Bennet -**

- The middle Bennet sister, bookish and pedantic.

#### **Catherine Bennet -**

- The fourth Bennet sister. Like Lydia, she is girlishly enthralled with the soldiers.

### **Review on the Plot of the Novel**

- Mr Bennet of Longbourn estate has five daughters
- As his property can only be passed to a male heir and they have no sons, it is imperative that at least one of the girls marry well to support the others. This is a motivation that drives the plot.
- The novel revolves around the importance of marrying for love, not for money or social prestige, despite the communal pressure to make a wealthy match.
- The news that a wealthy young gentleman named Charles Bingley has rented the manor of Netherfield Park causes a great stir in the nearby village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennet household. The Bennets have five unmarried daughters—from oldest to youngest, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia—and Mrs. Bennet is desperate to see them all married.
- After Mr. Bennet pays a social visit to Mr. Bingley, the Bennets attend a ball at which Mr. Bingley is present. He is taken with Jane and spends much of the evening dancing with her. His close friend, Mr. Darcy, is less pleased with the evening and haughtily refuses to dance with Elizabeth, which makes everyone view him as arrogant and obnoxious.
- At social functions over subsequent weeks, however, Mr. Darcy finds himself increasingly attracted to Elizabeth's charm and intelligence.

Jane's friendship with Mr. Bingley also continues to burgeon, and Jane pays a visit to the Bingley mansion.

- On her journey to the house she is caught in a downpour and catches ill, forcing her to stay at Netherfield for several days. In order to tend to Jane, Elizabeth hikes through muddy fields and arrives with a spattered dress, much to the disdain of the snobbish Miss Bingley, Charles Bingley's sister. Miss Bingley's spite only increases when she notices that Darcy, whom she is pursuing, pays quite a bit of attention to Elizabeth.
- When Elizabeth and Jane return home, they find Mr. Collins visiting their household. Mr. Collins is a young clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property. Shortly after his arrival, he makes a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. She turns him down,
- Meanwhile, the Bennet girls have become friendly with militia officers stationed in a nearby town. Among them is Wickham, a handsome young soldier who is friendly toward Elizabeth and tells her how Darcy cruelly cheated him out of an inheritance.
- At the beginning of winter, the Bingleys and Darcy leave Netherfield and return to London, much to Jane's dismay. A further shock arrives with the news that Mr. Collins has become engaged to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend and the poor daughter of a local knight. They are soon married.
- As winter progresses, Jane visits the city to see friends (hoping also that she might see Mr. Bingley). However, Miss Bingley visits her and behaves rudely, while Mr. Bingley fails to visit her at all. The marriage prospects for the Bennet girls appear bleak.
- That spring, Elizabeth visits Charlotte, who now lives near the home of Mr. Collins's patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is also Darcy's

aunt. Darcy calls on Lady Catherine and encounters Elizabeth and pays frequent visits to the Collins's.

- One day, he makes a shocking proposal of marriage, which Elizabeth quickly refuses. She tells Darcy that she considers him arrogant and unpleasant, then scolds him for steering Bingley away from Jane and disinheriting Wickham.
- Darcy leaves her but shortly thereafter delivers a letter to her. In this letter, he admits that he urged Bingley to distance himself from Jane, but claims he did so only because he thought their romance was not serious. As for Wickham, he informs Elizabeth that the young officer is a liar and that the real cause of their disagreement was Wickham's attempt to elope with his young sister, Georgiana Darcy.
- This letter causes Elizabeth to re-evaluate her feelings about Darcy. She returns home and acts coldly toward Wickham.
- With the arrival of June, Elizabeth goes on another journey, this time with the Gardiners, who are relatives of the Bennets. The trip takes her to the North and eventually to the neighborhood of Pemberley, Darcy's estate. She hears from Darcy's servants that he is a wonderful, generous master. Suddenly, Darcy arrives and behaves cordially toward her.
- Shortly thereafter, however, a letter arrives from home, telling Elizabeth that Lydia has eloped with Wickham and that the couple is nowhere to be found.
- Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Bennet go off to search for Lydia. A letter comes from Mr. Gardiner saying that the couple has been found and that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia in exchange for an annual income. The Bennets are convinced that Mr. Gardiner has paid off Wickham, but

Elizabeth learns that the source of the money, and of her family's salvation, was none other than Darcy.

- Now married, Wickham and Lydia return to Longbourn briefly, where Mr. Bennet treats them coldly.
- Shortly thereafter, Bingley returns to Netherfield and resumes his courtship of Jane.
- Darcy goes to stay with him and pays visits to the Bennets but makes no mention of his desire to marry Elizabeth. Bingley,
- While the family celebrates, Lady Catherine de Bourgh pays a visit to Longbourn. She considers a Bennet an unsuitable match for a Darcy, Lady Catherine demands that Elizabeth promise to refuse him.
- Elizabeth spiritedly refuses. A little later, Elizabeth and Darcy go out walking together. She tenderly accepts his proposal, and both Jane and Elizabeth are married.

## **Major Themes**

### **❖ Love**

*Pride and Prejudice* contains one of the most cherished love stories in English literature: presenting the courtship between Darcy and Elizabeth. Austen suggests that true love is a force separate from society and one that can conquer even the most difficult of circumstances.

### **❖ Reputation and Class**

*Pride and Prejudice* depicts a society in which a woman's reputation is of the utmost importance. A woman is expected to behave in certain ways. The theme of class is related to reputation, in that both reflect the strictly regimented nature of life for the middle and upper classes in Regency England. The lines of class

are strictly drawn. While the Bennets, who are middle class, may socialize with the upper-class Bingleys and Darcys, they are clearly their social inferiors and are treated as such.

### ❖ **Family**

Family is an integral theme in the novel. All of the characters operate within networks of family connections that shape their decisions and perspectives. For the female characters in particular, the influence and behaviour of their family members is a significant factor in their lives.

### **Gender**

Gender is a key theme in *Pride and Prejudice*. The story takes place at a time when gender roles were quite rigid, and men and women had a very different set of options and influences. Marriage is a pressing question for female characters. Even the upper class women would not have been able to work to earn a living, or live independently. Marriage offered one of the only ways to move beyond their birth families.

WEB SOURCE- <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pride/themes/>