

Pride and Prejudice

PLOT

Pride and Prejudice tells the story of Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters and how they have to navigate the prejudiced society to find respectable men for marriage. The Bennet family lives in Longbourn, and since Mrs. Bennet does not have an heir to the estate, her primary objective is to marry off her daughters to wealthy men. Elizabeth is intelligent, witty, and independent but has the flaw of quick judgment based on her prejudice of social standing. Throughout the book, characters show pride based on their societal status while making judgments of people because of it. As time goes on, Elizabeth learns to look beyond the exterior societal prejudice of Darcy as he proves himself honorable and kind, though still reserved. Their relationship grows through misunderstandings, personal reflections, and moments of vulnerability. Also, the novel shows how some characters' family dynamic and prideful nature restrict their perspective on people in society, challenging social class requirements, family expectations, and personal values in 19th-century England.

Primary Characters

- Elizabeth
 - Background: Elizabeth, the second-eldest of the Bennet family, is intelligent, independent, and witty. Unlike her sisters, she does not adhere to societal pressures, since she does not view a good marriage in financial and social position as the key to happiness. She is critical of others and boldly speaks her mind regarding the actions of other people since she views herself as a good judge of character. Her individuality and prejudice lead her to form strong opinions, which she realizes later might be incorrect.
 - Primary Motivation: Elizabeth seeks honest love and respect in marriage and does not settle for fortune or convenience. She is driven by the desire to be consistent with her ideals, which are to seek happiness even against societal pressure, which expects her to marry to secure a lifetime position.
 - “I am going tomorrow where I shall find a man who has not one agreeable quality, who has neither manners nor sense to recommend him. Stupid men are the only ones worth knowing after all.” (Page 108)
 - This quote shows Elizabeth's sarcasm against societal expectations placed upon women for status marriages without love. This is also hypocritical and ironic since Elizabeth primarily states that she looks for intelligence and wit in a man and does not stand men like Mr. Collins who are known for their stupidity and lack of social decency.
 - “Elizabeth listened in silence, but was unconvinced: their behavior at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and keep his house, and I am much mistaken if we shall not find a very charming neighbor in her.” (Page 11)
 - This quote shows Elizabeth's skepticism and critical thinking. She is not easily swayed by appearance or good manners and forms opinions through her judgment, which shows her independence. On the other hand, this shows that she also forms her opinions too quickly, as with Darcy initially.

Her silent judgement reflects her contemplative nature, as she often observes situations before speaking her mind.

- Darcy

- Fitzwilliam Darcy is a wealthy man, an owner of Pemberley's wealthy estate, and a man of high social standing and responsibility. He is shown as proud, reserved, and socially uncomfortable, Elizabeth along with others perceive him as arrogant and conceited in the beginning. Being raised in privileged conditions has given him a great feeling of responsibility for his family name, the protection of its good name, and maintaining his familial status in society. He is also fiercely loyal, kind, and reserved, qualities displayed as he gets closer to Elizabeth. His transformation changed his perception of pride learning to value character over social standing through a more open mind.
- Primary Motivation: While Darcy values holding his family name and prestige, his growing love for Elizabeth questions that priority. The readiness for changes, to prove his worth to Elizabeth, reflects the Elizabeth's demand for a relationship based on respect and equality.
- "I certainly have not the talent which some people possess," said Darcy, "of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch the tone of their conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done." (Page 122)
 - In this quote, Darcy's self-awareness highlights his social awkwardness, which is sometimes confused with ignorance and pride. His preference for genuineness over surface-level relationships is shown in his incapacity to strike up a conversation. Darcy becomes more genuine, demonstrating that his restrained composure is a result of insecurity rather than pride.
- "No one admitted to the privilege of hearing you, can think of anything want. We neither of us perform to strangers." (Page 122)
 - Darcy's comment shows his subtle flirting and his admiration for Elizabeth's honesty and individuality. By aligning himself with Elizabeth in their shared view for honesty, he shows his growing respect for her individual character. This quote also displays a shift in their relationship, as Darcy begins to see Elizabeth as an equal rather than someone beneath him.

- William Collins

- Background: Mr. Collins is a clergyman and the heir to the Bennet family's estate due to being the closest male relative of the family. He is overly self-important and excessively literal while also adhering to the typical societal standards through extensively submissive to Lady Catherine. Mr. Collins's behavior is often comically absurd, as he lacks self-awareness and social grace. His proposal to Elizabeth is motivated more by a sense of duty than genuine affection, and his inability to understand Elizabeth's rejection reflects his narrow view of marriage as a transactional arrangement.
- Primary Motivation: Mr. Collins is motivated by his desire to secure social and financial stability through marriage and to earn the approval of Lady Catherine.

He wants to be a “respected” member of formal society while maintaining his status and assets.

- “I am happy on every occasion to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies.” (Page 49)
 - Mr. Collins’s exaggerated politeness reveals his lack of sincerity and social awareness. His compliments often come across as hollow and self-serving, emphasizing his superficiality and obvious flattery. His behavior reflects the societal pressure to conform to rigid gender roles and class expectations.
- This licentious behavior in your daughter, has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence... Mrs. Collins joins me, but likewise by Lady Catherine and her daughter.” (Page 202)
 - Mr. Collins’s judgmental tone and reliance on Lady Catherine’s opinion highlight his inability to think independently and lack of social decency through his brutal honesty. His focus on societal judgment over personal empathy of his own family member reveals his rigid adherence to social normalities, making him very shallow and prejudiced. .

MAJOR THEMES

- Pride

- Pride throughout the novel explains why certain characters tend to have a superiority complex or think they deserve certain things over others just based on things such as their status. Darcy’s initial pride in his wealth and status prevents him from expressing his feelings for Elizabeth in a respectful way, while Elizabeth’s pride in her judgement leads her to misjudge Darcy and trust Wickham. Both characters must confront and overcome their pride to achieve personal growth and a deeper understanding of themselves and each other.
- “They are descended from the same noble line: and, on the father’s, from respectable, honourable, and ancient, though untitled families. The upstart pretensions of a young woman without family connections, or fortune.” (Page 243)
 - This quote from Lady Catherine shows how she views she has the right to decide who her nephew marries because of her superior status. She believes that because her daughter has supposedly superior lineage she deserves to have Darcy more than Elizabeth, showing her restricted views and pride.
- “I, who have prided myself on my don my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! Who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless blameless distrust.” (Page 144)
 - Elizabeth in this quote realizes that her pride for her “superior intellect” and better judge of character was not right because she unconsciously trusted Wickham due to being in a lower status and through his charm. This shows how Elizabeth recognizes her pride and judgement and attempts to change it.

- Prejudice

- Prejudice served as a barrier to understanding and connection with people in *Pride and Prejudice*, as characters judge one another based on appearances, class, and inherited wealth rather than character. Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy and Darcy's prejudice against people of lower status created tension and miscommunication, which was eventually overcome through growth, understanding and empathy. Throughout the novel, societal prejudices reinforced divisions and prevent genuine relationships from forming, emphasizing the importance of looking beyond preconceived notions and judging a person based on relevant interactions rather than assumptions.
- "And pray what sort of guardians do you make? Does your charge give you much trouble? Young ladies are sometimes a little difficult to manage, and if she has the true Darcy spirit." (Page 128)
 - The assumption that Georgiana shares Darcy's "difficult" nature shows how Elizabeth's prejudice unfairly extended to others based on familial associations without interaction or knowledge of their character. Georgiana is revealed to be shy and gentle, contradicting the expectations placed upon her through Elizabeth's prejudice given to her by Wickham.
- "And yet I meant to be uncommonly clever in taking so decided a dislike to him, without any reason. It is such a spur to one's genius, such an opening for wit to have a dislike of that kind." (Page 155)
 - Elizabeth's reflection shows her realization of her own prejudice against Darcy, which was fueled by her pride and Wickham's false accusations. Her acknowledgment of this flaw is a turning point and her progressive character development, as she starts to question her judgement and grow in self-awareness. Elizabeth believed that she was the best judge of character since she thought she understood people based on the social status but realized her mistakes as her judgements were shallow and incorrect sometimes.
- Family
 - Family in *Pride and Prejudice* is really important because it determines the status of the people in the family and their economic and social reputations in society. The Bennet family dynamic reflects societal expectations for women to marry well, as Mrs. Bennet's obsession with securing husbands for her daughters creates conflict and pressure. At the same time, the relationships within families, such as Elizabeth's bond with Jane or Darcy's loyalty to Georgiana, reveal how family influences values, decisions, and personal growth. Societal pressures throughout the novel have a way in altering familial relationships like how Ms. Bennet places the worth of her daughters based on their marriage prospects in contrast with Elizabeth and Darcy who value their family members and treat them with genuine affection.
 - "Our respectability in the world, must be affected by the wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character." (Page 159)
 - This quote shows the social importance of family reputation in the novel, since the actions of one member could impact the entire family's status. Elizabeth's concern for Lydia's recklessness reflects her maturity and awareness of the consequences of such behavior, while her father lacks

parental responsibility which will lead to the bad consequences of Lydia's behavior.

- "Elizabeth was the least dear to her of all her children; and though the man and the match were quite good enough for her, the worth of each was eclipsed by Mr. Bingley and Netherfield." (Page 75)
 - This quote shows Mrs. Bennet's shallow and materialistic nature, valuing wealth and status over the happiness or individuality of her children. Elizabeth's as "the least dear" shows her alienation from her mother's affection, as she prioritizes virtue and emotional intelligence over status. This also shows a contrast between Elizabeth's nature and her mothers since her mom views the daughter who marries to the highest status as the best rather than personality or character.

Key scenes

- Darcy's Love confession
 - Despite his strong feelings, Darcy states his proposal as a struggle against her inferior status and family background. His pride and honesty deeply offended Elizabeth, who rejects him while accusing him of arrogance and selfishness. This interaction creates a shift and growth for both the characters as both of them realize their pride and prejudice which they try to learn and grow from and find a genuine connection through respecting each other's individuality.
 - "He was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of pride. His sense of her inferiority— of its being a degradation— of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination." (Page 131)
 - This quote shows Darcy's internal conflict between his pride and his love for Elizabeth. His inability to separate his feelings from his social prejudices and familial obligations showed his emotional dilemma. The repetition of "pride" emphasizes the class barrier they both have, including in their relationship creating a strain. This showed how due to his accepting of societal pressure he viewed marriage as a joining of families rather than love between two individuals which prevented him from expressing his genuine spark with Elizabeth.
 - "Your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feeling of others, were such as to form that ground-work." (Page 134)
 - Elizabeth's hostile response shows her justified anger toward Darcy's blunt behavior and proposal. Her accusations of arrogance show his failure to empathize with others and recognize her value as an individual beyond social rank. This moment shows Elizabeth's pride and refusal to accept love without mutual understanding, showing her individuality and strength.
- Supper with Lady Catherine
 - During this scene Elizabeth is being asked questions by Lady Catherine in which she answers them relatively honestly while also disagreeing with Lady Catherine and responding logically to her claims rather than being submissively in

agreement with her. This scene shows how Lady Catherine expects to be treated with a sense of superiority from everyone around her to feel better about herself.

- “Lady Catherine seemed quite astonished at not receiving a direct answer; and Elizabeth suspected herself to be the first creature who had ever dared to trifle with so much dignified impertinence.” (Page 116)
 - This quote shows Lady Catherine’s entitlement and belief in her superiority, which reflects the rigid hierarchical system of the 1800’s. Elizabeth’s boldness in standing up to her reveals her confidence and individualistic values. Her being “impertinent” shows how she’s breaking the rules but in a dignified way through logical reasoning.
- “I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early.” (Page 116)
 - Elizabeth’s argument against Lady Catherine shows her desire of rejecting societal norms that prioritize wealth and status over personal happiness. Her support for equal opportunities within her family reflects her fairness and empathy. This shows how she values individual freedom over pleasing society in contrast to the restrictive obligations placed on women.
- Elizabeth Visiting Darcy’s Manor (Pemberley)
 - Elizabeth visiting Darcy’s house even though she made bad excuses to the Gardeners shows her reluctance to face Darcy after she knew her pride and wrong judgement potential ruined her chance at that relationship. Throughout the scene she gets closer to Darcy and understands his true personality through interactions including compliments to each other and repairing the tension in their relationship.
 - “He is the best landlord, and the best master,” said she, that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves.” (Page 169)
 - Ms. Reynolds’ praise for Darcy provides Elizabeth with a new perspective on his character because her previous description of him as selfless and considerate contradicted her new judgement of Darcy after the letter, but she is still not completely sure of his character. This moment made Elizabeth more sure of Darcy’s story and character because she is prejudiced towards people of lower status like Ms. Reynolds and saw how Darcy treated people beneath him with respect rather than belittlement.
 - “Her features are not at all handsome. Her nose wants sometimes been called so fine, I never could perceive anything extraordinary in them.” (Page 184)
 - Caroline’s petty insults of Elizabeth’s appearance reveals her insecurity and jealousy, as she attempts to belittle Elizabeth to uplift her own self in regards to Darcy’s affection. This shows how Elizabeth’s inner values and good character overshadows Darcy’s affections to her “lack” of beauty which Caroline unsuccessfully tries to criticize.