

# PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

BY JANE AUSTEN



**Jane Austen** (1775-1817) was a British novelist famous for having written six novels dealing with human relations, particularly love and marriage among the upper middle classes and the landed gentry of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Northanger Abbey* (1817) and *Persuasion* (1817). All have been made into films. In her work she focused on gender issues, particularly the situation of women and their dependence on marriage to give them financial security and social standing. The use of humour and irony is a key characteristic of her work, and most of the female protagonists are strong and outspoken.

## Pre-reading

- 1 What truths are absolute, i. e. non-negotiable? Buzz with your partner and then reach agreement with another couple. Can you reach class agreement on two or three such truths?
- 2 Vocabulary. Attitudes. [www](http://www)

## Pride and Prejudice

### CHAPTER 1

acknowledge aner-  
kende  
in possession of i  
besiddelse af  
fortune formue  
be in want of mangle

let udleje

return svare

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "for Mrs Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr Bennet made no answer.

SPECTATORS

LOVE

EVIL

MAN AND NATURE

EMPIRE



no objection intet  
imod

chaise and four let  
vogn med fire heste

Michaelmas  
Mikkelsdag (29.  
september)

affect vedrøre

tiresome trættende,  
irriterende

design hensigt, plan

occasion grund

flatter smigre  
share lod, del

give over opgive

engage for påtage sig  
ansvaret  
establishment parti

merely blot  
on that account af  
den grund

scrupulous gør sig  
mange bekymringer

hearty oprigtig  
consent samtykke  
chuse = choose

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

5 "Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants  
10 are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Bingley."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four  
15 or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

"How so? how can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design in settling here?"

20 "Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

"I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for, as you  
25 are as handsome as any of them, Mr Bingley might like you the best of the party."

"My dear, you flatter me. I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own  
30 beauty."

"In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."

"But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood."

"It is more than I engage for, I assure you."

35 "But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know they visit no new comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him, if you do not."

40 "You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the



good humoured  
venlig, rar  
recommend tale til  
fordel for

abuse nedrakke  
take delight in finde  
fornøjelse i  
vex ærgre  
compassion  
medfølelse  
consideration  
hensynsfuldhed

depend upon regne  
med  
odd kunstig, besyn-  
derlig  
part talent, begavelse  
reserve tilbagehold-  
enhed  
caprice lune, indfald  
insufficient util-  
strækkelig  
develop finde ud af  
mean ringe,  
småtskåren  
information viden  
discontented util-  
freds  
fancy oneself bilde  
sig ind  
'solace trøst

others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend them," replied he; "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something  
5 more of quickness than her sisters."

"Mr Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration  
10 these twenty years at least."

"Ah! you do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."

"It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will  
15 not visit them."

"Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all."

Mr Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had  
20 been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

(1801)

## While-reading

### COMPREHENSION AND ANALYSIS

- 1 Take turns to ask and answer these questions:
  - a Which two characters are having a dialogue?
  - b What has happened to Netherfield Park?
  - c How does Mrs Bennet know?
  - d What information do we get about Mr Bingley?
  - e What does Mrs Bennet want from Mr Bingley?
  - f What does Mrs Bennet want from her husband?
  - g How many daughters have the Bennets got?
  - h Why, according to Mrs Bennet, are Sir William and Lady Lucas going to visit Mr Bingley?
  - i Who is Mr Bennet's favourite among his daughters and why?
  - j What is Mrs Bennet's attitude to her daughters?
  - k What career options existed for women around 1800?
  - l What is Mr Bingley's social status compared to Mr Bennet's?
  - m Why is Mrs Bennet so keen on Mr Bingley seeing her daughters?
  - n Find examples in the text which show how Mr and Mrs Bennet are represented as opposites.



**2** Tone:

- a** What is the narrative point of view?
- b** The term *verbal irony* is used to describe a statement in which the meaning intended by the speaker is different from what is actually said. As the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary* has it: "the use of words that say the opposite of what you really mean." What then, can we imply, is the meaning of the first sentence? What textual evidence can you find in the first chapter to support this?
- c** What other aspects of verbal irony can you find in the chapter?
- d** Which of these ironic comments are made by one of the characters and which by the narrator?
- e** The effect of the use of verbal irony is said to sharpen our understanding of aspects or characters in the text. When the readers proceed with the novel, what have they been invited to look out for regarding relationships between people?

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**Post-reading** [www](#)**LEARNING CHECK**

- 1** The definition of irony and the spelling of keywords.

**WIDER CONTEXTS**

- 1** Literary context: other excerpts from same text: Mr Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth (chapter 34, glossary and questions) and Mr Collins' proposal to Elizabeth (chapter 19, glossary and question).
  - 2** Literary context: other excerpt from the same text: Charlotte Lucas' view of marriage (chapter 22, glossary and question).
  - 3** Literary criticism: why read Jane Austen? (Fay Weldon and Sebastian Faulks) and written assignment.
  - 4** Other media: film references and tasks.
  - 5** Other genre: compare and contrast Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, p. 101.
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