PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

‘It is a truth well known to all the world that an unmarried man in possession of a large fortune must be in need of a wife.’ And so, when such a man comes to live near the Bennet family, Mrs Bennet is delighted. At once, she sees in Mr Bingley a possible, almost a certain, husband for one of her five daughters.

‘People say he’s quite young, very handsome, and extremely charming!’ says foolish Lydia, the youngest of the Bennet sisters. ‘And even better, he loves dancing! Everybody knows that means he’s likely to fall in love!’

But with whom? Soon, Elizabeth Bennet is sure that he admires her eldest sister, Jane. Certainly, he is most attentive to her whenever they meet, but who can tell if admiration will lead to marriage, and happiness?

Mr Bingley, however, is not the only young man to show interest in the Bennet girls. There is their cousin, the boring Mr Collins. There are the officers of the regiment – the charming Mr Wickham, for example. And of course, there is Mr Bingley’s friend, Mr Darcy - tall, dark, and extremely wealthy, but then he is such a rude, proud, disagreeable man . . .
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PEOPLE IN THIS STORY

Mr Bennet, of Longbourn House
Mrs Bennet, his wife
Jane Bennet
Elizabeth Bennet
Mary Bennet
Kitty Bennet
Lydia Bennet
Charlotte Lucas, a friend of Elizabeth Bennet’s
Sir William and Lady Lucas, Charlotte’s parents
Maria Lucas, Charlotte’s sister
Mr Collins, a rector and a distant cousin of Mr Bennet’s
Mrs Philips, Mrs Bennet’s sister
Mr Philips, her husband
Mr Gardiner, Mrs Bennet’s brother
Mrs Gardiner, his wife

Mr Charles Bingley, of Netherfield Park
Miss Caroline Bingley, his younger sister
Mrs Louisa Hurst, his elder sister
Mr Hurst, husband to Mrs Hurst
Mr Darcy, a friend of Mr Bingley’s
Miss Georgiana Darcy, Mr Darcy’s young sister
Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr Darcy’s cousin
Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr Darcy’s aunt
Miss Anne de Bourgh, Lady Catherine’s daughter

Mr George Wickham, an officer in the regiment
Colonel Forster, Commanding Officer of the regiment
Mrs Forster, his wife
The Bennets’ new neighbour

It is a truth well known to all the world that an unmarried man in possession of a large fortune must be in need of a wife. And when such a man moves into a neighbourhood, even if nothing is known about his feelings or opinions, this truth is so clear to the surrounding families, that they think of him immediately as the future husband of one or other of their daughters.

‘My dear Mr Bennet,’ said Mrs Bennet to her husband one day, ‘have you heard that someone is going to rent Netherfield Park at last?’

‘No, Mrs Bennet, I haven’t,’ said her husband.

‘Don’t you want to know who is renting it?’ cried Mrs Bennet impatiently.

‘You want to tell me, and I don’t mind listening.’

Mrs Bennet needed no further encouragement. ‘Well, my dear, I hear that he’s a very rich young man from the north of England. It seems he came to see Netherfield on Monday and was so delighted with it that he arranged to rent it at once. Of course, it is the finest house in the area, with the largest gardens. His servants will be here by the end of the week, and he will be arriving soon afterwards!’

‘What is his name?’ asked Mr Bennet.

‘Bingley.’

‘Is he married or single?’

‘Oh, single, my dear, of course! A single man of large fortune – he has an income of four or five thousand pounds a year. How wonderful for our girls!’

‘Why? How can it affect them?’ Mr Bennet asked.
'My dear Mr Bennet,’ she replied, ‘how can you be so annoying! You must realize I’m thinking of his marrying one of our daughters.’

‘Is that his purpose in coming to the area?’

‘His purpose? No, of course not. But it’s very likely that he’ll fall in love with one of them. And I want him to see the girls as soon as possible, before our other neighbours introduce themselves. So you must visit him as soon as he arrives.’

‘I really don’t see why I should,’ said Mr Bennet. ‘You and the girls can visit him, or perhaps you should send them by themselves. Yes, that might be better, as you’re as attractive as any of them, and Mr Bingley might like you best.’

‘My dear, you flatter me,’ replied his wife, ‘I certainly have been called beautiful in the past, but I think a woman with five adult daughters should stop thinking of her own beauty. Mr Bennet, I beg you to visit him. You know it’s correct for the gentleman of the family to visit new neighbours first. I simply cannot take the girls to see him unless you have already met him.’

‘Surely you worry too much about the rules of polite society. I’m sure Mr Bingley will be delighted to see you all. And I’ll write him a few lines, which you can give him, agreeing gladly to his marrying any of the girls, although I must especially recommend my dear little Lizzy.’

‘Oh no, Mr Bennet!’ gasped Mrs Bennet, horrified. ‘Please don’t do that! And Lizzy is no better than the others, although I know she is your favourite.’

‘Our daughters are all very silly, ignorant girls, it’s true. But at least Lizzy is a little more intelligent than her sisters.’

‘Mr Bennet, how can you speak so unkindly of your own children? Oh dear, how ill I feel! Have you no pity for me?
Don’t you realize how I suffer?

‘Indeed, my dear, I’ve suffered with you for the last twenty-three years. But I think you will recover, and live to see many more rich young men come into the neighbourhood.’

When he was young, Mr Bennet had made the mistake of falling in love with a pretty but foolish young woman. During the long years of their marriage, he had had time to regret his mistake. He soon realized that his wife had little intelligence or common sense, and was only interested in talking, shopping and finding husbands for her daughters. His experience had made him rather bitter, and he could not stop himself mocking his wife, who never understood her husband’s sense of humour.

So when, a week later, Mrs Bennet discovered that her husband had in fact visited Mr Bingley at Netherfield, she was surprised and very pleased. But she and her daughters tried in vain to persuade Mr Bennet to describe the wealthy stranger, and in the end they had to rely on another neighbour’s description.

‘He sounds wonderful, Mama!’ cried Lydia, the youngest and noisiest of the sisters. ‘Charlotte Lucas’s father has been to see him, and says he’s quite young, very handsome, and extremely charming! And even better, he loves dancing! Everybody knows that means he’s very likely to fall in love!’

As politeness required, Mr Bingley came to visit Mr Bennet a few days later. He was not, however, fortunate enough to see the Bennet girls, who were hiding behind the curtains in an upstairs room in order to catch sight of the handsome stranger. Mrs Bennet planned to invite him to dinner, but in fact they met him at another social event first. The Bennets lived in the small Hertfordshire village of Longbourn, and public dances
Pride and Prejudice

were regularly held in the nearest town, Meryton. The girls were greatly looking forward to this particular dance, because they had heard that Mr Bingley would be attending, with a group of friends from London.

On the night of the dance, all eyes were on Mr Bingley as he entered the room. He had brought his two sisters, with the husband of the elder, Mr Hurst, and another young man, Mr Darcy. Mr Bingley was indeed good-looking and gentleman-like, and his sisters were fine, fashionable women. However, everybody was soon talking about Mr Darcy, a tall, handsome man, who, it was said, had an income of ten thousand pounds a year. The ladies in the room gazed at him in admiration for about half the evening, until they became aware of his constant frown and his unwillingness to talk or dance. Then there was general agreement that he was proud and disagreeable, and considered himself superior to country people. Mr Bingley, on the other hand, made himself popular with the ladies by dancing every dance and talking to everybody.

As there were not as many gentlemen as ladies, Elizabeth Bennet did not have a partner for one of the dances, and was sitting watching the dancing. Mr Darcy was standing near her, and when Mr Bingley came up to speak to his friend, Elizabeth could not avoid hearing their conversation.

‘Come, Darcy,’ said Bingley, ‘I hate to see you looking so cross! Why don’t you dance with one of these lovely girls?’

‘Certainly not,’ replied Darcy. ‘You know how I hate dancing with a partner I don’t know. I would particularly dislike it at a village dance like this. Apart from your sisters, there isn’t a woman in the room I would even consider dancing with. You are dancing with the only attractive girl here.’ He was looking at Mrs Bennet’s eldest daughter Jane, who was
waiting for Bingley to join her for the next dance.

‘Oh yes! She’s the most beautiful creature I’ve ever seen! But just behind you is one of her sisters. She’s very pretty, and I’m sure she’s very pleasant. My partner could introduce you.’

‘Who do you mean?’ And Darcy turned to look at Elizabeth for a moment. ‘No,’ he said coldly, ‘she’s not attractive enough to tempt me. Go back to your partner, Bingley.’

‘No,’ Darcy said coldly, ‘she’s not attractive enough to tempt me.’
This conversation did not endear Mr Darcy to Elizabeth, but she told the story very cheerfully and amusingly to her friends.

The evening passed very happily for everybody else, and Mrs Bennet was delighted with the effect her eldest daughter had had on Mr Bingley.

‘He danced with Jane twice!’ she told her husband later. ‘He danced with all the others only once! And he really is so handsome! But his friend Mr Darcy was so rude to poor Elizabeth! Luckily, she doesn’t care! She wouldn’t want to please him! Such a horrible, proud man! I simply hate him!’

When Jane and Elizabeth were alone, they discussed their dancing partners.

‘I was really very flattered when Mr Bingley asked me to dance a second time!’ said Jane, blushing. ‘I didn’t expect it at all!’

‘Didn’t you?’ said Elizabeth. ‘I did. Dear Jane! You were five times prettier than any other woman in the room, but you’re too modest ever to expect admiration.’

‘I have to admit that I liked Mr Bingley,’ continued Jane in her gentle voice. ‘He’s so good-mannered and agreeable!’

‘He’s also handsome,’ added her sister, ‘which makes his character quite perfect! But what did you think of his sisters?’

‘Very pleasant when you get to know them. The younger, Miss Caroline Bingley, will be living at Netherfield with her brother. I’m sure we’ll enjoy having her as a neighbour.’

Elizabeth listened in silence. She was not convinced. ‘Jane is so kind!’ she thought. ‘Always ready to see the good side of people’s characters! I considered Mr Bingley’s sisters too proud, almost rude, in fact. I’m sure they feel superior to most other people, like Mr Darcy.’ But she did not say any more.

After the dance the Bennet and Bingley families began to
visit each other every few days. It became evident that Mr Bingley admired Jane very much, and Elizabeth knew that her sister was close to falling in love with him. She was discussing this with her good friend, Charlotte Lucas, one day. Charlotte was a sensible, intelligent young woman of twenty-seven, the eldest daughter of Sir William and Lady Lucas, who were neighbours of the Bennet family.

‘It’s a good thing,’ said Elizabeth, ‘that if Jane is in love with Mr Bingley, nobody will know, because she always behaves so cheerfully and normally.’

‘That’s sometimes a mistake,’ replied Charlotte, shaking her head wisely. ‘If she doesn’t show her feelings at all, even to the man she loves, she may lose the opportunity of catching him. Jane should use every moment she gets with Bingley to attract and encourage him.’

‘But I consider a man should try to discover a woman’s feelings, not wait for her encouragement! And Jane probably doesn’t know what her real feelings for Bingley are yet – she has only seen him a few times, not often enough to understand his character, or be sure that she really loves him.’

‘Well, I wish Jane success with all my heart,’ said Charlotte finally, ‘but I think she’d have as much chance of happiness if she married him tomorrow, as if she studied his character for a whole year. Happiness in marriage is simply a question of chance. I think it’s better to know as little as possible about the person you’re going to spend your life with.’

Elizabeth laughed, sure that Charlotte did not mean what she was saying.

While observing Mr Bingley’s interest in Jane, however, Elizabeth had not noticed Mr Darcy’s interest in herself. Although at first he had not even considered her pretty, he
now began to realize what a beautiful expression her dark eyes gave to her intelligent face, and what an attractive figure she had. ‘Of course, she is only an unfashionable village girl,’ he told himself, ‘but her conversation is often quite amusing.’ Whenever they met, he did not speak to her, but stood near her, listening to her and watching her closely, conscious of a wish to know her better.

One evening at a party at the Lucases’ house, Darcy was standing alone, as usual, away from the other guests, watching the dancing. His host, Sir William, came to speak to him.

‘Mr Darcy! Are you enjoying the dancing, sir? What a delightful entertainment it is!’

Darcy frowned. ‘Yes,’ he said with cool disdain, ‘it’s something that any uneducated person can be good at.’

‘I’m sure you’re good at dancing yourself, sir,’ replied Sir William cheerfully. ‘Look! Here’s Miss Elizabeth Bennet.’ She was crossing the room at that moment. ‘Let me persuade you to dance with her. You cannot refuse to dance when so much beauty is in front of you.’

‘Indeed, sir,’ replied Elizabeth quickly, in some embarrassment, ‘I have no intention of dancing. You must excuse me.’

‘Miss Bennet, please allow me the pleasure of dancing with you,’ said Mr Darcy politely, holding out his hand.

But with equal politeness Elizabeth refused again, and turned away. Mr Darcy was watching her walk away, with a slight smile on his face, when Caroline Bingley came up to him.

‘Mr Darcy,’ she said, ‘I’m sure I know what you’re thinking – how boring all these silly little country people are!’

‘Not at all, Miss Bingley. In fact, I was just thinking what pleasure a pair of fine eyes can give.’

‘Really! And who do these fine eyes belong to, may I ask?’
‘Miss Elizabeth Bennet.’
‘Well! Let me be the first to congratulate you, Mr Darcy! When will the wedding be?’
‘Ah! That’s what I expected you to say. A lady’s imagination jumps from admiration, to love, to marriage, in a moment.’
‘Well, of course, when you’re married, you will often have her charming mother and sisters to stay. How delightful for you!’ And Miss Bingley, seeing that Darcy remained calm, continued to mock the Bennet family as amusingly as she could.

2

Jane’s illness

Mr Bennet had a comfortable income of two thousand a year, and a pleasant house in Longbourn. But, unfortunately for his daughters, after his death all his property would pass to a distant male relation. Mrs Bennet’s father had been a lawyer, and had only left his daughter a small amount of money. She had a brother who owned shops in London, and she also had a sister, married to a Mr Philips. He had been her father’s clerk, and now carried on his late employer’s business.

Mr and Mrs Philips lived in Meryton, which was only a kilometre or so from the village of Longbourn. It was a most convenient distance for the Bennet girls, who were usually tempted there three or four times a week, to visit their aunt or a dressmaker who lived opposite. The youngest daughters, Kitty and Lydia, were particularly regular visitors. Their minds were more vacant than their sisters’, and if no better entertainment was available, a walk to Meryton always provided some
amusement, as well as interesting local news from their aunt.

The latest news, which delighted Kitty and Lydia, was that the regiment which had recently arrived in Meryton was to stay there for the whole winter. The two girls now visited their aunt every day, and as Mr Philips knew all the officers, Kitty and Lydia were soon introduced to them. At home they could talk of nothing but officers and their handsome uniforms: even Mr Bingley’s fortune now seemed hardly worth considering.

After listening to their praise of the officers one morning, Mr Bennet said coolly, ‘From what I can see, you must be two of the silliest girls in the country. I’ve suspected it for some time, but now I’m convinced.’

Kitty was embarrassed and did not reply, but Lydia, the youngest, continued to express her admiration for a certain Captain Carter, with perfect indifference.

‘I am very surprised, my dear,’ said Mrs Bennet, ‘that you should be so ready to think your own children silly. As it happens, they are all very clever.’

‘That is the only point, I think, on which we do not agree. I am afraid I must say that I consider our two youngest daughters unusually foolish.’

‘My dear Mr Bennet, you mustn’t expect such young girls to have the common sense of their father or mother. I remember when I used to like a red coat myself, and indeed I still do. If a good-looking officer with five or six thousand a year wanted to marry one of my girls, I wouldn’t turn him down. And I thought Colonel Forster looked very handsome last night at Sir William’s, in his regimental uniform.’

Just then a servant entered with a note for Jane, which had come from Netherfield. Mrs Bennet’s eyes shone with pleasure and she called out eagerly, while her daughter was reading it,
‘Well, Jane, who is it from? What does he say? Tell us, tell us quickly, my love!’
‘It’s from Miss Bingley,’ said Jane. ‘She invites me to dinner at Netherfield, as she and her sister are alone. It seems her brother and the gentlemen are having dinner with the officers, in Meryton.’
‘With the officers!’ cried Lydia. ‘I wonder why aunt Philips didn’t tell us that!’
‘Having dinner in Meryton,’ repeated Mrs Bennet, shaking her head. ‘That’s very unlucky.’
‘May I take the carriage?’ asked Jane.
‘No, my dear, you’d better ride over there, because it looks likely to rain, and then you’ll have to stay the night.’
‘That would be a good plan,’ said Elizabeth to her mother, ‘if you were sure they wouldn’t offer to send her home in their carriage.’
‘Oh, but they can’t! The gentlemen must have taken Mr Bingley’s carriage to go to Meryton.’
‘I’d much rather go in the carriage,’ Jane said.
‘But, my dear, your father can’t spare the horses, I’m sure. They’re needed on the farm, aren’t they, Mr Bennet?’
Mr Bennet finally agreed that they were in fact being used that day in the fields. So Jane set out on her horse, while her mother called cheerfully after her, ‘I do hope it’ll rain heavily, my love!’ And Jane had not been gone for long before it rained hard. Elizabeth was a little worried about her sister, but Mrs Bennet was delighted. ‘What a good idea of mine that was!’ she said more than once, extremely pleased with herself.

Not until the next morning, however, did she realize the full extent of her success. After breakfast a servant from Netherfield arrived with a note from Jane to Elizabeth,
explaining that Jane had caught cold on her wet ride, and had been invited to stay at Netherfield until she recovered.

‘Well, my dear,’ said Mr Bennet, ‘if your daughter should become seriously ill and die, it would be a comfort to know that she died in a good cause, and in obedience to your orders.’

‘Oh, I’m not afraid of her dying. People don’t die of colds. She’ll be looked after well at Netherfield. As long as she stays there, everything will be all right.’

But Elizabeth felt really anxious, and was determined to go to her sister. As the carriage was not available, and she was not keen on riding, she decided to walk the five kilometres to Netherfield. Kitty and Lydia accompanied her as far as Meryton, where they went to visit one of the officers’ wives. Elizabeth continued alone, crossing field after field and jumping impatiently over streams, in her anxiety to see her sister.

When she arrived at Netherfield, with tired feet, muddy stockings and a face healthily pink with exercise, she was shown straight into the sitting-room. The two sisters, Miss Bingley and Mrs Hurst, could hardly believe that she had come so far alone and on foot in such bad weather, but they received her politely. Their brother, however, was more than polite: he was kind and considerate towards her. Mr Darcy said very little, hesitating between admiration of her healthy good looks and doubt whether she should have come such a distance alone. Mr Hurst said nothing at all, as he was thinking only of his breakfast.

Elizabeth was glad to be taken almost immediately to her sister’s room, where she found Jane delighted to see her, but very feverish and unwell. The doctor came, and after examining his patient, advised that she should stay in bed and take some medicine. Elizabeth stayed with her all day, looking after her, and the Bingley sisters also spent some time in the
patient’s room. However, in the afternoon, when it was time for Elizabeth to leave, Jane seemed so upset that Miss Bingley was obliged to invite Elizabeth to stay at Netherfield for the present, and a servant was sent to Longbourn to inform the Bennet family and bring back some clothes.

That evening Elizabeth went down to dinner, leaving Jane in bed in her room. She noticed the Bingley sisters’ apparent concern for Jane change to indifference in a few moments, and knew she had been right to dislike them at first sight. Mr Bingley, indeed, was the only one of the group whose behaviour she was satisfied with. His anxiety for Jane was evident, and his politeness towards herself most pleasing. But the others, she felt, treated her as an unwelcome guest. Miss Bingley was concentrating all her attention on Mr Darcy, and Mrs Hurst also joined in their conversation, while Mr Hurst was only interested in eating, drinking and playing cards.

When Elizabeth left the room after dinner to see if Jane needed anything, Miss Bingley at once began to criticize her.

‘What bad manners she has! She’s both proud, and lacking in politeness to her superiors! She has no conversation, no elegance and no beauty!’

Mrs Hurst agreed, and added, ‘She has no good qualities, except that she’s an excellent walker. I’ll never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild.’

‘She did indeed, Louisa. How silly of her to come at all! Why must she run around the countryside, just because her sister has a cold? Her hair looked so untidy! And her dress! Simply covered in mud!’

‘I must say,’ said Bingley, ‘I didn’t notice any of that. I thought she looked remarkably attractive when she arrived this morning.’
‘You observed her wild appearance, I’m sure, Mr Darcy,’ said Miss Bingley, ‘and I imagine you wouldn’t wish your sister to make such a show of herself.’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Walking four or five kilometres, whatever it was, up to her ankles in mud, and alone, quite alone! It seems to me to show a dreadful sort of independence, a country girl’s indifference to what is acceptable.’

‘I think it shows a very pleasing affection for her sister,’ said Bingley.

‘I’m afraid, Mr Darcy,’ whispered Miss Bingley, ‘that this adventure has rather lessened your admiration of her fine eyes.’

‘Not at all,’ he replied. ‘They were brightened by the exercise.’

After a short pause, Mrs Hurst began again. ‘I have a great liking for Jane Bennet. She is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well married. But with such a father and mother, and with such vulgar relations, I’m afraid there’s no chance of it.’

‘I think the Bennet girls have an uncle who’s a lawyer in Meryton.’

‘Yes, and they have another who owns shops in Cheapside! Such a nice part of London!’ Both the sisters laughed.

‘If they had enough uncles to fill Cheapside,’ cried Bingley, ‘it wouldn’t make them any less charming!’

‘But it must considerably lessen their chances of marrying men of any position in the world,’ replied Darcy.

Bingley did not answer, but his sisters agreed enthusiastically, and continued mocking their dear friend’s vulgar relations for some time.

Late in the evening, when Elizabeth was satisfied that
Jane was asleep, she felt she ought to go downstairs again. She found the party in the sitting-room, playing cards, but although they invited her to join in their game, she refused politely, and picked up a book to read.

‘I can fetch you more books to read, if you wish,’ offered Bingley, ‘but I’m afraid I haven’t got a large library. Unlike you, I’m too lazy to spend much time reading.’

‘What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr Darcy!’ said Miss Bingley. ‘And what a beautiful house it is! Charles, when you buy your house, I hope it will be even half as lovely as Pemberley.’

‘I hope so too,’ agreed Bingley.

‘And your dear sister, Mr Darcy? I expect she’s grown since the spring. I want so much to see her again! I’ve never met anyone who delighted me so much! Such an appearance, such manners! And so extremely accomplished for her age!’

‘I’m always surprised,’ said Bingley, ‘to find how very accomplished all young ladies are. How do they have the time and patience to learn all these skills?’

‘Certainly people use the word “accomplished” too loosely,’ said Darcy, ‘but I am far from agreeing with you about ladies in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than six who are really accomplished.’

‘Then,’ said Elizabeth, ‘your idea of an accomplished woman must include a great many qualities.’

‘Yes, a great many.’

‘Oh! Certainly,’ cried his faithful assistant, Miss Bingley, ‘an accomplished woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing and modern languages, and besides this, a certain something in her manner of walking, in her voice and in her behaviour.’
‘All this she must possess,’ added Darcy, ‘and something more solid, the improvement of her mind by wide reading.’

‘I'm no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women,’ said Elizabeth. ‘I rather wonder at your knowing any. I've never seen such elegance, and intelligence, and knowledge, as you describe, in one woman.’

Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley were both protesting loudly that they knew many women like this, when Mr Hurst called their attention back to the card game. As this meant an end to the conversation, Elizabeth soon afterwards left the room.

‘Miss Elizabeth Bennet,’ said Miss Bingley to Darcy, ‘is one of those women who try to appear attractive to men by undervaluing other women. I think that's a mean trick.’

‘It is true,’ said Darcy, ‘that there is meanness in all the tricks used by ladies to attract men.’

Miss Bingley was not satisfied enough with this answer to continue the conversation.

The next morning Elizabeth was glad to be able to inform Mr Bingley and his sisters that Jane was very much better.

In spite of this improvement, however, she asked for her mother to be sent for, as she wanted Mrs Bennet's opinion of Jane’s state of health. Soon after breakfast, therefore, Mrs Bennet, accompanied by her two youngest daughters, reached Netherfield.

Elizabeth, although relieved to hear that her mother did not think Jane’s illness serious, began to regret asking her to come, when she saw the Bingley sisters smiling at Mrs Bennet’s remarks. Elizabeth blushed for her mother, who could not help showing her lack of intelligence and common sense in everything she said.

Kitty and Lydia made an equally bad impression. They
Jane’s illness

had been whispering together, when suddenly Lydia, who was an attractive, confident, well-grown girl of fifteen, pushed herself rudely forward. She begged Mr Bingley to hold a ball at Netherfield. With his usual politeness, Mr Bingley promised he would, but Elizabeth saw his sisters exchanging meaningful glances. She was quite glad when her mother and sisters left. She and Jane were to stay another night at Netherfield, to allow Jane to recover completely.

That evening Elizabeth appeared again in the sitting-room. She could not avoid noticing how frequently Mr Darcy’s eyes were fixed on her, but as she felt sure that so great a man could not possibly admire her, she assumed that when he looked at her, he was criticizing her in some way. This thought did not cause her any pain, as she liked him too little to care for his approval.

In the conversations she had with him, she spoke in her usual slightly mocking manner, rather expecting to offend him, but was surprised by the quiet politeness of his replies. Darcy had never before been so charmed by any woman. He really believed that if she did not have such vulgar relations, he might be in danger of falling in love with her. Miss Bingley saw or suspected enough to be jealous, and her great anxiety for the recovery of her dear friend Jane was increased by her wish to get rid of Elizabeth.

Fortunately perhaps, for almost everyone at Netherfield, Elizabeth and her sister, who was now quite recovered, were returning home the next day. Only Mr Bingley showed real sorrow at this, and was concerned that Jane might not be fit enough to travel. Mr Darcy was quite relieved, and determined that no sign of admiration for Elizabeth should escape him now. Miss Bingley’s politeness to Elizabeth, as well as
her affection for Jane, increased rapidly as the moment of departure approached, and she was able to say goodbye to them with many warm expressions of friendliness and a promise to visit them very soon.

Mr Bennet was glad to welcome his eldest daughters home again, as he had felt their absence from the family circle, but
Mrs Bennet, who had hoped they would stay much longer, was quite disappointed to see them come back in such a short time.

3

‘I hope, my dear,’ said Mr Bennet to his wife...
ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

1 Read the back cover of the book, and the story introduction on the first page. Can you guess which of these ideas are true?

1 Mr Darcy is a proud man because . . .
   a) he has achieved a great deal in his life.
   b) he feels socially superior to other people.
2 Elizabeth Bennet is prejudiced against Mr Darcy because . . .
   a) she has been given false information about him.
   b) she cannot make reasoned judgements about anyone.
3 This story about the Bennet family is likely to include . . .
   a) misunderstandings  e) parties and dances
   b) quarrels  f) despair and death
   c) jealousy  g) interfering friends
   d) political events  h) war and battles

2 Read these two quotes from the story introduction on the first page, and choose the most probable meaning for each one.

1 ‘It is a truth well known to all the world that an unmarried man in possession of a large fortune must be in need of a wife.’
   a) A rich man needs a wife to look after him and his money.
   b) A rich man makes an attractive husband.
2 ‘And even better, he loves dancing! Everybody knows that means he’s likely to fall in love!’
   a) Dancing is a good way of showing off female charms and attracting a man’s interest.
   b) Men who love dancing always fall in love.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Austen was born in 1775 at Steventon in Hampshire, in the south of England. She was the sixth of seven children of a clergyman, the Reverend George Austen. He was a well-educated man, who encouraged Jane both in her reading and her writing. In 1801 the family moved to Bath; then, after George Austen’s death, to Southampton, and finally to Chawton in Hampshire (the house where Jane lived can still be visited). She led a quiet, uneventful life, occasionally visiting London, Bath, Lyme, and her brothers’ houses. She never married, though she had several admirers. One proposal of marriage she accepted, but the next day changed her mind and withdrew her acceptance. Little is known about her love affairs, as her sister Cassandra was careful to edit Jane’s private letters after her death, but it seems likely that Jane experienced disappointment in love and that she refused to marry without it. However, her life was spent in a close and affectionate family circle, and she was a much-loved aunt to her many nieces and nephews. She died in Winchester in 1817, aged only forty-two.

She started writing when she was only fourteen, and by her early twenties was already working on the first versions of some of her novels. She did not write about great events, like the French Revolution or the Napoleonic Wars, both of which happened during her lifetime. She wrote about what she knew best – the daily business of social visits, romantic affairs, and matchmaking. In a letter to a niece she wrote, ‘Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on.’ And in a reply to a suggestion for the subject of her next novel, she
explained that she could not write anything without ‘laughing at myself or at other people.’ With characteristic modesty she finished, ‘No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.’

Her six major novels are now classics of English literature. They are Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. Of these, Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion were written in the busy parlour at Chawton, in the middle of all the usual family activities and interruptions. Pride and Prejudice, originally called First Impressions, was rejected without being read by the publisher, but it was rewritten and finally published in 1813. Elizabeth Bennet was Jane Austen’s favourite heroine. ‘I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print,’ she wrote to her sister Cassandra. All her novels were praised for their wit and style by readers of the time, and the Prince Regent (later King George IV) enjoyed them so much that he kept a complete set of her novels in each of his houses.

The novels have remained popular since they were first published, and there is a Jane Austen Society (known as the Janeites), which guards her literary reputation and her memory jealously. There have been film and television dramatizations of all the novels, in particular some very successful recent films of Pride and Prejudice, Emma and Sense and Sensibility.

Jane Austen is one of the greatest novelists in the English language. Her novels are comedies of manners, dealing with parties, dresses, quarrels, engagements, and marriages, but no writer has ever drawn ‘such pictures of domestic life in country villages’ with a sharper eye or with a more exquisite irony.
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GRADING AND SAMPLE EXTRACTS

STARTER • 250 HEADWORDS

Her phone is ringing – but where is it?

Sally gets out of bed and looks in her bag. No phone. She looks under the bed. No phone. Then she looks behind the door. There is her phone. Sally picks up her phone and answers it. Sally’s Phone

STAGE 1 • 400 HEADWORDS

I knew him in Persia. He was a famous builder and I worked with him there. For a time I was his friend, but not for long. When he came to Paris, I came after him – I wanted to watch him. He was a very clever, very dangerous man. The Phantom of the Opera

STAGE 2 • 700 HEADWORDS

While I was writing these words in my diary, I decided what to do. I must try to escape. I shall try to get down the wall outside. The window is high above the ground, but I have to try. I shall take some of the gold with me – if I escape, perhaps it will be helpful later. Dracula
STAGE 3 • 1000 HEADWORDS

... should, may – present perfect continuous – used to – past perfect –
causative – relative clauses – indirect statements ...

Of course, it was most important that no one should see Colin, Mary, or Dickon entering the secret garden. So Colin gave orders to the gardeners that they must all keep away from that part of the garden in future. *The Secret Garden*

STAGE 4 • 1400 HEADWORDS

... past perfect continuous – passive (simple forms) –
would conditional clauses – indirect questions –
relatives with where/when – gerunds after prepositions/phrases ...

I was glad. Now Hyde could not show his face to the world again. If he did, every honest man in London would be proud to report him to the police. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

STAGE 5 • 1800 HEADWORDS

... future continuous – future perfect –
passive (modals, continuous forms) –
would have conditional clauses – modals + perfect infinitive ...

If he had spoken Estella’s name, I would have hit him. I was so angry with him, and so depressed about my future, that I could not eat the breakfast. Instead I went straight to the old house. *Great Expectations*

STAGE 6 • 2500 HEADWORDS

... passive (infinitives, gerunds) – advanced modal meanings –
clauses of concession, condition

When I stepped up to the piano, I was confident. It was as if I knew that the prodigy side of me really did exist. And when I started to play, I was so caught up in how lovely I looked that I didn’t worry how I would sound. *The Joy Luck Club*