

Unit 7

Pride and Prejudice

1. Work in groups and discuss the following questions:

Suggested answer

- a. We believe that everybody tries to build and maintain a good reputation for themselves. This shows that having a good reputation and a high social status plays a vital role in the way other people see us. **A good reputation is an obvious and quick way to know what kind of a person you are dealing with. Of course, we mustn't forget that a good reputation does not equal popularity.** A person can be extremely popular, but it might be for all the wrong reasons. **And we mustn't forget, either, that a good reputation is not enough to appreciate a person. It may be a good start, but you can't really appreciate a person until you get to know them.**
- b. Everybody is influenced by first impressions and trying to make a great first impression is imperative to becoming popular. Our hair, clothes, posture, friendly smile and positive energy are a few examples of the factors that influence first impressions. **Nobody would bother to get to know us if the first impressions we give out are not good.** That's why people who are about to take a job interview, sell or promote products make sure that they are well dressed and look confident. The same is true if you're trying to impress a boy or girl, for example, at a party. Would he or she accept to go on a date with you if first impressions are not good?
- c. We believe that for someone to be considered "significant," it's important that they are friendly and polite. Giving the impression that you're truthful and honest is also very important. Being willing to listen and showing respect to others are important qualities, too. Last but not least, people who are considered "significant" usually have strong, confident personalities and a positive attitude.

2. Read the plot summary of the novel and work in pairs to do the tasks below.

Suggested answer

- a. Mr Bennett, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, Lydia, Mr Bingley, Mr Bingley's sister and Mr Darcy
- b. Elizabeth
- c. Mr Darcy
- d. After their father's death, the Bennet family will lose their house and become poor. The family's future happiness and security depends on the girls marrying into rich families.
- e. Because he brings along his attractive, wealthy and proud friend, Mr Darcy, who one of the Bennet sisters soon falls in love with.

3. Read the adapted summary of the first chapters of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and*

- refuses to dance with Elizabeth.
- describes Elizabeth as "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt him."
- declares that he has no interest in women (like Elizabeth) who are "slighted by other men."
- finds people dull.
- criticises Jane for smiling too often.
- admits that his only fault is the resentment he feels towards other people.

Elizabeth...

- refuses to dance with Darcy twice.
- takes an immediate and understandable dislike to Darcy.
- engages in criticism and ridicule of Darcy's character in her conversation with Miss Bingley.
- says that it's better for a young woman to be patient until she is sure of her feelings, demonstrating her sense of pride.

Jane...

- is a friendly, good-natured young woman who keeps smiling and is always ready to think the best of others. She shows no signs of pride or prejudice.

Bingley...

- is a cheerful, sociable, amiable young man who, despite his wealth, chooses to live as a tenant. He shows no signs of pride or prejudice and his character is in complete contrast with Darcy's.

b. Darcy...

- refuses to dance with Elizabeth.
- describes Elizabeth as "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt him."
- declares that he has no interest in women (like Elizabeth) who are "slighted by other men."
- finds people dull.
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Elizabeth...

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Jane...

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Bingley...

- is a cheerful, sociable, amiable young man who, despite his wealth, chooses to live as a tenant. He shows no signs of pride or prejudice and his character is in complete contrast with Darcy's.

- b. There are values and issues in the novel, which transcend time and place constraints. Some of them are true love, integrity, dignity, independence, gender (in)equality, self-confidence, true friendship despite differences in characters, sisterly love and social (in)equality.
- c. Elizabeth is the symbol of an independent, witty, daring woman who defies social conventions and is not prepared to marry only in order to become wealthy. She is not afraid to speak her mind nor is she afraid to admit the error of her initial prejudice against Darcy. Even though she comes from a humble background, she is self-confident, independent, dignified and proud of her family. She is charismatic and agreeable, she knows that Darcy is attracted to her, but she is far from being arrogant. All these traits truly make her a remarkable woman!

8. Read the opening line of the novel as well as famous quotations from it and work in groups to answer the questions.

- Opening line

- a. The two themes revealed in the opening line are: marriages of convenience and the status of men and women in contemporary society.
- b. Individuals are defined by their class, their social status, their wealth and their gender. Women are considered inferior to men and a rich marriage is the only respectable and acceptable "profession" for them. They are expected to be serious, reserved and refrain from expressing their feelings.
- c. Jane Austen depicts a society where social class, wealth and gender are of utmost importance. It is a society which engages in parties, gossiping and having fun, only paying attention to the superficial and not the essential. People are constantly being watched, gossiped about and criticised in their social gatherings. Austen is critical of this society, that's why her central characters, Elizabeth and Darcy, finally defy social conventions and choose to follow their hearts. Elizabeth decides not to have a marriage of convenience

- is a novel which focuses on human relationships and feelings, which are universal and timeless. The characters experience feelings of love, jealousy, resentment, pride and regret.
 - is interesting because it provides an accurate description of society in the 19th century, especially the status of women in it.
 - is the story of a strong woman (Elizabeth) who goes against conventions of society and isn't going to settle for anything less than what she wants.
 - is the story of how our pride and prejudice can often blind us and lead us into forming first impressions which are mistaken.
 - is the story of how the two main characters (Darcy and Elizabeth) come to realise how wrongful their first impressions of each other were, and appreciate the difference between the superficial and the essential.
- b. There are values and issues in the novel, which transcend time and place constraints. Some of them are true love, integrity, dignity, independence, gender (in)equality, self-confidence, true friendship despite differences in characters, sisterly love and social (in)equality.
- c. Elizabeth is the symbol of an independent, witty, daring woman who defies social conventions and is not prepared to marry only in order to become wealthy. She is not afraid to speak her mind nor is she afraid to admit the error of her initial prejudice against Darcy. Even though she comes from a humble background, she is self-confident, independent, dignified and proud of her family. She is charismatic and agreeable, she knows that Darcy is attracted to her, but she is far from being arrogant. All these traits truly make her a remarkable woman!
- 8. Read the opening line of the novel as well as famous quotations from it and work in groups to answer the questions.**

Suggested answer – Opening line

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and Darcy decides to marry the woman he loves, although she comes from a lower social class.

- d. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of true love.

- First extract

- a. Being an aristocrat, Darcy sees people of Meryton as his inferiors.
- b. Darcy can be characterised as bigheaded, haughty and superficial, as he only judges people depending on their social status.
- c. Darcy finds Elizabeth plain and not worthy of his attention. He judges her superficially and is quick to jump to conclusions.

- Second extract

- a. Arrogant and discourteous.
- b. Elizabeth takes pride in her family background and is not willing to marry Darcy for his wealth. She is even more prejudiced against him, given the arrogance he shows towards her.
- c. Darcy probably feels humiliated and must be terribly upset at Elizabeth's rejection. At the same time, he appreciates Elizabeth's integrity of character and becomes determined to prove to her that he truly loves her and that he has rid himself of pride and prejudice.
- d. Elizabeth is indifferent to Darcy's aristocratic background. She only judges him on the basis of his (arrogant) behaviour towards her.

- Third extract

- a. Despicably, have often disdained, vanity, useless or blameable mistrust, wretchedly blind, my folly, prepossession, ignorance, driven reason away.
- b. Elizabeth has bitterly realised and admitted her faults. Her pride and prejudice blinded her judgement and she failed to see that Darcy is an honest, decent man who loves her.
- c. Elizabeth is a bold, daring young woman who is not afraid to defy social conventions. This means that, although she may feel humiliated, she is not reluctant to acknowledge her mistakes and admit her feelings to Darcy.

and Darcy decides to marry the woman he loves, although she comes from a lower social class.

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d.

Elizabeth is...	Actions
intelligent and witty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She prides herself on being a good judge of character. She engages in witty social interaction.
proud and independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She refuses to dance with Darcy twice because she does not like the way he treats her. She refuses to have a marriage of convenience.

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Elizabeth is...	Actions
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proud and independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• She refuses to dance with Darcy twice because she does not like the way he treats her.• She refuses to have a marriage of convenience.

and Darcy decides to marry the woman he loves, although she comes from a lower social class.

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Suggested answer – Second extract

- Arrogant and discourteous.
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Suggested answer – Third extract

- Despicably, have often disdained, vanity, useless or blameable mistrust, wretchedly blind, my-folly, prepossession, ignorance, driven reason away.
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Elizabeth is...	Actions
narrow-minded and prejudiced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She fails to understand that Darcy is an honest man, blinded by her prejudice. • She doesn't realise Darcy's true feelings for her until late in the development of the plot.
bold, courageous and outspoken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She is not afraid to speak her mind, even to people who belong to a higher social class. • She is not reluctant to admit her mistake in how she has judged Darcy. • She admits her feelings to Darcy, although it may be humiliating.
superficial, rash and strong-minded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially, she misjudges Darcy and takes an immediate but understandable dislike to him. • Darcy's repeated attempts to change the way Elizabeth sees him fail, because of her stubbornness.
vain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She admits to being vain and blames her vanity for misjudging Darcy.
sensitive and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She quickly understands Jane's feelings for Bingley and justifies her behaviour.

Elizabeth is...	Actions
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sensitive and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She quickly understands Jane's feelings for Bingley and justifies her behaviour.

Suggested answer – Fourth extract

- Yes, Darcy admits to being selfish and he blames his upbringing for that. His parents spoilt him and encouraged him to care for no one but himself and his family circle. But Elizabeth's behaviour towards him has taught him a lesson.
- Darcy also admits that his selfishness has made him believe that he is superior to everybody else who belongs to a lower social class. This opinion is revealed through words or phrases like "selfish", "pride", "conceit", "was spoilt", "taught me to be selfish and overbearing", "I care for none beyond my family circle", "think meanly of all the rest of the world."
- His upbringing is definitely responsible for his behaviour. He was an only son and for many years an only child, so his parents spoilt him, although they had good intentions and gave him good principles. He was led to follow these principles with pride and conceit.
- Elizabeth's behaviour humbled him and made him realise that it was a mistake to only care about the superficial and not the essential. He became conscious of his flaws and decided to change and become the man that Elizabeth deserves to have by her side.
- Students provide their own answers.

Suggested answer – Fourth extract

- a.** Yes, Darcy admits to being selfish and he blames his upbringing for that. His parents spoilt him and encouraged him to care for no one but himself and his family circle. But Elizabeth's behaviour towards him has taught him a lesson.
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- c.** His upbringing is definitely responsible for his behaviour. He was an only son and for many years an only child, so his parents spoilt him, although they had good intentions and gave him good principles. He was led to follow these principles with pride and conceit.
- d.** Elizabeth's behaviour humbled him and made him realise that it was a mistake to only care about the superficial and not the essential. He became conscious of his flaws and decided to change and become the man that Elizabeth deserves to have by her side.

- d. As for class consciousness being a characteristic of society in Greece, students provide their own answers based on their personal experiences, backgrounds, attitudes of life stance. However, we must keep in mind that **class divisions in Greece today are not as strict or clear-cut as they used to be in the past** when people coming from humbler and poorer backgrounds were not supposed to mingle with people belonging to the upper class. On the whole, **in the Greek society, it's clear that there are people belonging to the working class and work hard to make ends meet while there are others who are more affluent and have a more luxurious lifestyle.**
- e. **One of the similarities is that there still are countries in the world today where women have an inferior position in society.** There are countries where women are not allowed to go to school, study, get a job or select the man they want to marry. However, in developed countries, there have been huge improvements since Austen's time, and women enjoy equal opportunities and rights. Of course, the picture is not that rosy. Women still have to fight for equal academic and professional opportunities in many parts of the world.

As for social behaviours, like gossiping exhibited at social gatherings, things are much better today. There is still gossiping, but guests at social gatherings do not spend their time monitoring other people's lives.

- f. Freedom of thought, democracy, equal rights to education, respect for life, gender equality, equality of opportunity, justice and fairness, humanity, religious and racial tolerance, dignity, compassion, integrity, honesty, generosity.
- g. Women in Austen's time were not expected to get any education. As Austen ironically puts it in the opening line of the novel ("It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife"), **women were just expected to land a wealthy husband, while it was only men who would receive an education. But Austen's sarcasm ridicules this mentality.** Another example, reflecting the importance Austen places on education, is Darcy's reasoning for refusing to dance with Elizabeth. **He says that he wouldn't "dance with anyone not rich and well bred."** That means that only people who received an education and were well bred, as a result, were worthy of other people's respect. **So, Austen is actually saying that education makes people cultured and socially accepted.** Finally, Darcy admits that he "was given good principles," as his rich parents obviously provided him with a good education. His education was instrumental in making him, albeit spoilt and conceited, a well-mannered man. In modern societies in developed countries, a sig-

9. Work in groups and discuss the following topics.

Suggested answer

- Students provide their own answers.
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- One of the similarities is that there still are countries in the world today where women have an inferior position in society.** There are countries where women are not allowed to go to school, study, get a job or select the man they want to marry. However, in developed countries, there have been huge improvements since Austen's time, and women enjoy equal opportunities and rights. Of course, the picture is not that rosy. Women still have to fight for equal academic and professional opportunities in many parts of the world.

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