***Pride and Prejudice*** is the second novel by English author [Jane Austen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Austen), published in 1813. A [novel of manners](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novel_of_manners), it follows the character development of [Elizabeth Bennet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Bennet), the [protagonist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protagonist) of the book, who learns about the repercussions of hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between superficial goodness and actual goodness.

[Mr Bennet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr_Bennet), owner of the Longbourn estate in [Hertfordshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hertfordshire), has five daughters, but his property is [entailed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entailed) and can only be passed to a male heir. His wife lacks an inheritance, so his family faces becoming poor upon his death. Thus, it is imperative that at least one of the daughters marry well to support the others, which is a primary motivation driving the plot.

*Pride and Prejudice* has consistently appeared near the top of lists of "most-loved books" among literary scholars and the reading public. It has become one of the most popular novels in English literature, with over 20 million copies sold, and has inspired many derivatives in modern literature.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-2) For more than a century, dramatic adaptations, reprints, unofficial sequels, films, and TV versions of *Pride and Prejudice* have portrayed the memorable characters and themes of the novel, reaching mass audiences.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-3)

**Plot summary**

Mr. Darcy says Elizabeth is "not handsome enough to tempt him" to dance. (Artist: [C.E. Brock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C.E._Brock), 1895)

In the early 19th century, the [Bennet family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family) lives at their Longbourn estate, situated near the village of Meryton in [Hertfordshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hertfordshire), England. Mrs. Bennet's greatest desire is to marry off her five daughters to secure their futures.

The arrival of Mr. Bingley, a rich bachelor who rents the neighbouring Netherfield estate, gives her hope that one of her daughters might contract a marriage to the advantage, because "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife".

At a ball, the family is introduced to the Netherfield party, including Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, Caroline, who is unmarried, and Louisa, who is married to Mr. Hurst, and his closest friend [Mr. Darcy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Darcy). Mr. Bingley's friendly and cheerful manner earns him popularity among the guests. He appears interested in Jane, the eldest Bennet daughter. Mr. Darcy, reputed to be twice as wealthy as Mr. Bingley, is haughty and aloof, causing a decided dislike of him. He declines to dance with [Elizabeth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Bennet), the second-eldest Bennet daughter, as she is "not handsome enough". Although she jokes about it with her friend, Elizabeth is deeply offended. Despite this first impression, Mr. Darcy secretly begins to find himself drawn to Elizabeth as they continue to encounter each other at social events, appreciating her wit and frankness.

[Mr. Collins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Collins), the heir to the Longbourn estate, visits the Bennet family with the intention of finding a wife among the five girls under the advice of his patroness [Lady Catherine de Bourgh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Catherine_de_Bourgh), also revealed to be Mr. Darcy's aunt. He decides to pursue Elizabeth. The Bennet family meets the charming army officer [George Wickham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Wickham), who tells Elizabeth in confidence about Mr. Darcy's unpleasant treatment of him in the past. Elizabeth, blinded by her prejudice toward Mr. Darcy, believes him.

Elizabeth dances with Mr. Darcy at a ball, where Mrs. Bennet hints loudly that she expects Jane and Bingley to become engaged. Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins' marriage proposal, to her mother's fury and her father's relief. Mr. Collins subsequently proposes to Charlotte Lucas, a friend of Elizabeth, and is accepted.

Having heard Mrs. Bennet's words at the ball and disapproving of the marriage, Mr. Darcy joins Mr. Bingley in a trip to London and, with the help of his sisters, persuades him not to return to Netherfield. A heartbroken Jane visits her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner in London to raise her spirits, while Elizabeth's hatred for Mr. Darcy grows as she suspects he was responsible for Mr. Bingley's departure.

Elizabeth tells her father that Darcy was responsible for uniting Lydia and Wickham, in one of the two earliest illustrations of *Pride and Prejudice*.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-4) The clothing styles reflect the time the illustration was engraved (the 1830s), not the time in which the novel was written or set.

In the spring, Elizabeth visits Charlotte and Mr. Collins in [Kent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent). Elizabeth and her hosts are invited to Rosings Park, Lady Catherine's home. Mr. Darcy and his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, are also visiting Rosings Park. Fitzwilliam tells Elizabeth how Mr. Darcy recently saved a friend, presumably Bingley, from an undesirable match. Elizabeth realises that the prevented engagement was to Jane.

Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, declaring his love for her despite her low social connections. She is shocked, as she was unaware of Mr. Darcy's interest, and rejects him angrily, saying that he is the last person she would ever marry and that she could never love a man who caused her sister such unhappiness; she further accuses him of treating Wickham unjustly. Mr. Darcy brags about his success in separating Bingley and Jane and sarcastically dismisses the accusation regarding Wickham without addressing it.

The next day, Mr. Darcy gives Elizabeth a letter, explaining that Wickham, the son of his late father's steward, had refused the "[living](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benefice#Church_of_England)" his father had arranged for him and was instead given money for it. Wickham quickly squandered the money and tried to elope with Darcy's 15-year-old sister, Georgiana, for her considerable [dowry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowry)=προίκα. Mr. Darcy also writes that he separated Jane and Bingley because he believed her to be indifferent to Bingley and because of the lack of propriety displayed by her family. Elizabeth is ashamed by her family's behaviour and her own prejudice against Mr. Darcy.

Months later, Elizabeth accompanies the Gardiners on a tour of [Derbyshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derbyshire). They visit [Pemberley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pemberley), Darcy's estate. When Mr. Darcy returns unexpectedly, he is exceedingly gracious with Elizabeth and the Gardiners. Elizabeth is surprised by Darcy's behaviour and grows fond of him, even coming to regret rejecting his proposal. She receives news that her sister Lydia has run off with Wickham. She tells Mr. Darcy, then departs in haste. After an agonising interim, Wickham agrees to marry Lydia. Lydia and Wickham visit the Bennet family at Longbourn, where Lydia tells Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy was at her wedding. Though Mr. Darcy had sworn everyone involved to secrecy, Mrs. Gardiner now feels obliged to inform Elizabeth that he secured the match, at great expense and trouble to himself.

Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy return to Netherfield. Jane accepts Mr. Bingley's proposal. Lady Catherine, having heard rumours that Elizabeth intends to marry Mr. Darcy, visits her and demands she promise never to accept Mr. Darcy's proposal, as she and Darcy's late mother had already planned his marriage to her daughter Anne. Elizabeth refuses and asks the outraged Lady Catherine to leave. Darcy, heartened by his aunt's indignant relaying of Elizabeth's response, again proposes to her and is accepted.

**Principal Characters**

* [**Elizabeth Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Bennet) – the second-eldest of the Bennet daughters, she is attractive, witty and intelligent – but with a tendency to form tenacious and prejudiced first impressions. As the story progresses, so does her tumultuous relationship with Mr. Darcy. The course of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is ultimately decided when Darcy overcomes his pride, and Elizabeth overcomes her prejudice, leading them both to surrender to their love for each other.
* [**Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Fitzwilliam_Darcy) – Mr. Bingley's friend and the wealthy owner of the estate of [Pemberley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pemberley) in Derbyshire, said to be worth at least £10,000 a year. Although he is handsome, tall, and intelligent, Darcy lacks ease and [social graces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_graces), so others frequently mistake his initially haughty reserve as proof of excessive pride. A new visitor to the Meryton setting of the novel, he is ultimately Elizabeth Bennet's love interest. Though he appears to be proud and is largely disliked by people for this reason, his servants vouch for his kindness and decency.
* [**Mr. Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family) – A logical and reasonable late-middle-aged [landed gentleman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landed_gentleman) of a more modest income of £2,000 per annum, and the dryly sarcastic patriarch of the [Bennet family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family), with five unmarried daughters. His estate, Longbourn, is [entailed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entailed) to the male line. His affection for his wife wore off early in their marriage and is now reduced to mere toleration. He is often described as 'indolent' in the novel.
* [**Mrs. Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family)**(**[**née**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_name#Maiden_and_married_names)**Gardiner)** – the middle-aged wife of Mr. Bennet, and the mother of their five daughters. Mrs. Bennet is a [hypochondriac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypochondriac) who imagines herself susceptible to attacks of tremors and palpitations (her "poor nerves") whenever things are not going her way. She is silly, frivolous, and tactless, and is given to embarrassing her husband and older daughters. Her main ambition in life is to marry her daughters off to wealthy men. Whether or not any such matches will give her daughters happiness is of little concern to her. She was settled a [dowry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowry) of £4,000 from her father.

In a letter to Cassandra dated May 1813, Jane Austen describes a picture she saw at a gallery which was a good likeness of "Mrs. Bingley" – Jane Bennet. Deirdre Le Faye in *The World of Her Novels* suggests that "Portrait of Mrs Q" is the picture Austen was referring to. (pp. 201–203)

* [**Jane Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family) – the eldest Bennet sister. She is considered the most beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood and is inclined to see only the good in others (but can be persuaded otherwise on sufficient evidence). She falls in love with Charles Bingley, a rich young man recently moved to Hertfordshire and a close friend of Mr. Darcy.
* [**Mary Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family) – the middle Bennet sister, and the plainest of her siblings. Mary has a serious disposition and mostly reads and plays music, although she is often impatient to display her accomplishments and is rather vain about them. She frequently moralises to her family. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh's [*A Memoir of Jane Austen*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Memoir_of_Jane_Austen), Mary ended up marrying one of her Uncle Philips' law clerks and moving into Meryton with him.
* [**Catherine "Kitty" Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family#Catherine_%22Kitty%22_Bennet) – the fourth Bennet daughter. Though older than Lydia, she is her shadow and follows her in her pursuit of the officers of the militia. She is often portrayed as envious of Lydia and is described as a "silly" young woman. However, it is said that she improved when removed from Lydia's influence. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, Kitty later married a clergyman who lived near Pemberley.
* [**Lydia Bennet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_family) – the youngest Bennet sister. She is frivolous, headstrong, irresponsible, and spoiled, and is her mother's favorite. Her main activity in life is socialising, especially flirting with the officers of the militia. This leads to her running off with George Wickham, although he has no intention of marrying her. Lydia shows no regard for the moral code of her society; as Ashley Tauchert says, she "feels without reasoning".[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Ashley_Tauchert-5)
* **Charles Bingley** – a handsome, amiable, and wealthy young man who leases Netherfield Park with hopes of purchasing it. Though genial and well-mannered, he is easily influenced by his friend Mr. Darcy and his sisters' opinion, which leads to the disruption of his romance with Jane Bennet. He inherited a fortune of £100,000.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-6)
* **Caroline Bingley** – the snobbish sister of Charles Bingley, with a fortune of £20,000. She harbours designs on Mr. Darcy and is jealous of his growing attachment to Elizabeth. She also disapproves of her brother's admiration for Jane Bennet and is disdainful of Meryton society, driven by her vanity and desire for social elevation.

**Major themes**

Many critics take the title as the start when analysing the themes of *Pride and Prejudice* but Robert Fox cautions against reading too much into the title (which was initially *First Impressions*), because commercial factors may have played a role in its selection. "After the success of [*Sense and Sensibility*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sense_and_Sensibility), nothing would have seemed more natural than to bring out another novel of the same author using again the formula of antithesis and alliteration for the title."

The qualities of the title are not exclusively assigned to one or the other of the protagonists; both Elizabeth and Darcy display pride and prejudice."[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-fox-ncf-8) The phrase "pride and prejudice" had been used over the preceding two centuries by [Joseph Hall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Hall_(bishop)), [Jeremy Taylor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Taylor), [Joseph Addison](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Addison) and [Samuel Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Johnson).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-teltitle-10) Austen is thought to have taken her title from a passage in [Fanny Burney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny_Burney)'s [*Cecilia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecilia_(Burney_novel)) (1782), a novel she is known to have admired:

"The whole of this unfortunate business," said Dr. Lyster, "has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. ... if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination."[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-teltitle-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Burney1782-11) (capitalisation as in the original)

A theme in much of Austen's work is the importance of environment and upbringing in developing young people's character and morality.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Pinion-12) Social standing and wealth are not necessarily advantages in her works, and a further theme common to Austen's work is ineffectual parents. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the failure of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet as parents is blamed for Lydia's lack of moral judgment. Darcy has been taught to be principled and scrupulously honourable but he is also proud and overbearing.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Pinion-12) Kitty, rescued from Lydia's bad influence and spending more time with her older sisters after they marry, is said to improve greatly in their superior society.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-13)

The American novelist Anna Quindlen observed in an introduction to an edition of Austen's novel in 1995:

*Pride and Prejudice* is also about that thing that all great novels consider, the search for self. And it is the first great novel that teaches us this search is as surely undertaken in the [drawing room](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing_room) making [small talk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_talk) as in the pursuit of a [great white whale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moby-Dick) or the [public punishment of adultery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scarlet_Letter).[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Intro-14)

**Marriage**

*Main article:*[*Marriage in the works of Jane Austen*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_in_the_works_of_Jane_Austen)

The opening line of the novel announces: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-15) This sets marriage as a [motif](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motif_(narrative)) and a central idea in the novel. Readers are poised to question whether or not these single men need a wife, or if the need is dictated by the "neighbourhood" families and their daughters who require a "good fortune". According to [American Book Review](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Book_Review) the opening line of Pride and Prejudice is considered second on their list of top 100 greatest opening lines in English literature behind only "Call me Ishmael:" from [Moby Dick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moby_Dick).

Marriage is a complex social activity that takes political and financial economy into account. In the case of Charlotte Lucas, the seeming success of her marriage lies in the comfortable financial circumstances of their household, while the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet serves to illustrate bad marriages based on an initial attraction and surface over substance (economic and psychological).

The Bennets' marriage is an example that the youngest Bennet, Lydia, re-enacts with Wickham and the results are far from felicitous. Although the central characters, Elizabeth and Darcy, begin the novel as hostile acquaintances and unlikely friends, they eventually work toward a better understanding of themselves and each other, which frees them to truly fall in love. This does not eliminate the challenges of the real differences in their technically equivalent social status as gentry and their female relations. It does however provide them with a better understanding of each other's point of view from the different ends of the rather wide scale of differences within that category.

When Elizabeth rejects Darcy's first proposal, the argument of marrying for love is introduced. Elizabeth accepts Darcy's proposal only when she is certain she loves him and her feelings are reciprocated.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-16) Austen's complex sketching of different marriages ultimately allows readers to question what forms of alliance are desirable especially when it comes to privileging economic, sexual, or companionate attraction.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-17)

**Wealth**

Money plays a fundamental role in the marriage market, for the young ladies seeking a well-off husband and for men who wish to marry a woman of means. George Wickham tries to elope with Georgiana Darcy, and Colonel Fitzwilliam states that he will marry someone with wealth.

Marrying a woman of a rich family also ensured a linkage to a higher-class family, as is visible in the desires of Bingley's sisters to have their brother married to Georgiana Darcy. Mrs. Bennet is frequently seen encouraging her daughters to marry a wealthy man of high social class. In chapter 1, when Mr. Bingley arrives, she declares "I am thinking of his marrying one of them".[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-18)

Inheritance was by descent but could be further restricted by [entailment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fee_tail), which in the case of the Longbourn estate restricted inheritance to male heirs only. In the case of the Bennet family, Mr. Collins was to inherit the family estate upon Mr. Bennet's death in the absence of any closer male heirs, and his proposal to Elizabeth would have ensured her security; but she refuses his offer.

Inheritance laws benefited males because married women did not have independent legal rights until the second half of the 19th century. For the upper-middle and aristocratic classes, marriage to a man with a reliable income was almost the only route to security for the woman and the children she was to have.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Chung-19) The irony of the opening line is that generally within this society it would be a woman who would be looking for a wealthy husband to have a prosperous life.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-20)

**Class**

Lady Catherine and Elizabeth by [C. E. Brock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._E._Brock), 1895Lady Catherine confronts Elizabeth about [Darcy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitzwilliam_Darcy), on the title page of the first illustrated edition. This is the other of the first two illustrations of the novel.

Austen might be known now for her "romances" but the marriages in her novels engage with economics and class distinction. *Pride and Prejudice* is hardly the exception.

When Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, he cites their economic and social differences as an obstacle his excessive love has had to overcome, though he still anxiously harps on the problems it poses for him within his social circle. His aunt, Lady Catherine, later characterizes these differences in particularly harsh terms when she conveys what Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy will become, "Will the shades of Pemberley be thus polluted?" Although Elizabeth responds to Lady Catherine's accusations that hers is a potentially contaminating economic and social position (Elizabeth even insists she and Darcy, as gentleman's daughter and gentleman, are "equals"), Lady Catherine refuses to accept the possibility of Darcy's marriage to Elizabeth. However, as the novel closes, "...through curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself", Lady Catherine condescends to visit them at Pemberley.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-21)

The Bingleys present a particular problem for navigating class. Though Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst behave and speak of others as if they have always belonged in the upper echelons of society, Austen makes it clear that the Bingley fortunes stem from trade. The fact that Bingley rents Nether field Hall – it is, after all, "to let" – distinguishes him significantly from Darcy, whose estate belonged to his father's family and who through his mother is the grandson and nephew of an [earl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl). Bingley, unlike Darcy, does not own his property but has portable and growing wealth that makes him a good catch on the marriage market for poorer daughters of the gentry, like Jane Bennet, or of ambitious merchants. Class plays a central role in the evolution of the characters and Jane Austen's radical approach to class is seen as the plot unfolds.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-22)

An undercurrent of the old [Anglo-Norman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Normans) upper class is hinted at in the story, as suggested by the names of Fitzwilliam Darcy and his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bough; [*Fitzwilliam*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitzwilliam_(surname)), [*D'Arcy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darcy_(surname)), [*de Bourgh*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Burgh) ([*Burke*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burke)), and even [*Bennet*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennet_(surname)), are traditional Norman surnames.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Doody2015-23)

**Self-knowledge**

Through their interactions and their critiques of each other, Darcy and Elizabeth come to recognize their faults and work to correct them. Elizabeth meditates on her own mistakes thoroughly in chapter 36:

"How despicably have I acted!" she cried; "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candor of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blamable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself."[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-24)

Other characters rarely exhibit this depth of understanding or at least are not given the space within the novel for this sort of development.

Tanner writes that Mrs. Bennet in particular, "has a very limited view of the requirements of that performance; lacking any introspective tendencies she is incapable of appreciating the feelings of others and is only aware of material objects".[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-25) Mrs Bennet's behavior reflects the society in which she lives, as she knows that her daughters will not succeed if they do not get married. "The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news."[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-26) This shows that Mrs. Bennet is only aware of "material objects" and not of her feelings and emotions.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-27)

A notable exception is Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth Bennet's close friend and confidant. She accepts Mr. Collins's proposal of marriage once Lizzie rejects him, not out of sentiment but acute awareness of her circumstances as "one of a large family". Charlotte's decision is reflective of her prudent nature and awareness.

**Style**

*Pride and Prejudice*, like most of Austen's works, employs the narrative technique of [free indirect speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_indirect_speech), which has been defined as "the free representation of a character's speech, by which one means, not words actually spoken by a character, but the words that typify the character's thoughts, or the way the character would think or speak, if she thought or spoke".

Austen creates her characters with fully developed personalities and unique voices. Though Darcy and Elizabeth are very alike, they are also considerably different.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-29) By using narrative that adopts the tone and vocabulary of a particular character (in this case, Elizabeth), Austen invites the reader to follow events from Elizabeth's viewpoint, sharing her prejudices and misapprehensions. "The learning curve, while undergone by both protagonists, is disclosed to us solely through Elizabeth's point of view and her free indirect speech is essential ... for it is through it that we remain caught, if not stuck, within Elizabeth's misprisions."[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-miles-28)

The few times the reader is allowed to gain further knowledge of another character's feelings, is through the letters exchanged in this novel. Darcy's first letter to Elizabeth is an example of this as through his letter, the reader and Elizabeth are both given knowledge of Wickham's true character.

Austen is known to use irony throughout the novel especially from viewpoint of the character of Elizabeth Bennet. She conveys the "oppressive rules of femininity that actually dominate her life and work, and are covered by her beautifully carved Trojan horse of ironic distance."[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pride_and_Prejudice#cite_note-Ashley_Tauchert-5) Beginning with a historical investigation of the development of a particular literary form and then transitioning into empirical verifications, it reveals free indirect discourse as a tool that emerged over time as practical means for addressing the physical distinctness of minds. Seen in this way, free indirect discourse is a distinctly literary response to an environmental concern, providing a scientific justification that does not reduce literature to a mechanical extension of biology, but takes its value to be its own original form.