

Reflections:

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *Pride and Prejudice*

*by Jane Austen*

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*Pride and Prejudice*

## **Pre-reading**

1. Jane Austen is considered one of the greatest English novelists of all time. *Pride and Prejudice*, though, has been criticized through the years because the female characters in the novel have two choices for their adult lives: marriage or becoming spinsters, to rely forever on the charity of male family members.

Write a letter to the National Organization for Women, a women's rights group, that explains your views about whether women should marry or whether they should rely on the charity of their families. Support your opinion with some facts.

2. Jane Austen's work was celebrated during her lifetime, particularly in the early 1800s. She has since become one of the best loved of all English authors. Think about some of our current artists: actors, singers, musicians, and writers. Write a short paragraph that explains who, among our artists today, you think will still be popular a hundred years from now. In your paragraph, include reasons why you think that person's work is so significant.

## **Chapters I and II**

3. The very first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* says, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Do you think that every single person wants to be married? Write a posting for a singles' website, explaining your views about whether every person who is single wants to be in a relationship.
4. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have been married for 23 years. Although Mrs. Bennet wants the new bachelor, Mr. Bingley, to meet her family, she still says that "at [her] time of life, it is not so pleasant...to make...a new acquaintance every day." Write a letter to Mrs. Bennet, stating the reasons why it actually is important, at any age, to make new friends.

## **Chapter III**

5. Many times, when a new person moves into an area, he is welcomed into the community with a flyer or a note from his neighbors. Write a note to Mr. Bingley, welcoming him to the neighborhood in Hertfordshire.
6. The people at the local party are struck by the differences between the personalities of Mr. Bingley and his best friend, Mr. Darcy. Make a list of the personality characteristics of each of these men. Then, write a short paragraph that compares and contrasts them. Your list may begin like this

**Mr. Bingley**

Good-looking  
Gentlemanly  
Friendly

**Mr. Darcy**

Handsome  
Noble  
Stand-offish

7. When Mrs. Bennet and her daughters return from the party, Mr. Bennet is still awake and reading a book. Jane Austen writes of Mr. Bennet that “with a book he was regardless of time.” In other words, he becomes so engrossed in reading that he loses track of the time. Each of us has a pastime in which we can become so engrossed as to forget everything else. Write an e-mail to a friend, telling him of an activity that you enjoy so much that you become engrossed in it. Make sure that you explain what it is about that activity that makes it so fascinating.

## **Chapter IV**

8. Elizabeth says of Jane that she is “too apt...to like people in general.” Jane, apparently, “never see[s] fault in any body.” It is clear, then, that Jane is an optimist and a “people person.” What about you; do you consider yourself a “people person,” who “never sees fault in any body” like Jane, or do you have different views? Write a short paragraph to be used on a job application, responding to the question, “Are you a people person?”
  
9. Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley are the best of friends, even though they have very different personality traits. Sometimes, two people who are complete opposites become friends, but other times, friends are so similar that they can complete each other’s sentences.

Write a short, two-paragraph section for a non-fiction book about the nature of friendship. In your essay, explain whether friends should be exactly alike or if differences between people enhance a relationship.

## Chapters V and VI

10. The theme of pride obviously plays a big role in this novel. Mary says that, “Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us.”

Write a dialogue between yourself and a classmate, discussing what Mary means by this statement. You may begin like this

**Friend:** Mary says, basically, that pride deals with how we think of our selves, but vanity deals with how others see us. I wonder what she means by that, though?

**You:** Well, I think she means...

11. Many people have written books that give readers tips on how to succeed in love. Although *Pride and Prejudice* is certainly not a self-help book, it does offer lots of opinions on how to find someone to love and how to act when you are in love.

Make a list of at least five quotes from this book that refer to love or to relationships. Then, write a sentence for each that explains what that quote means. Here’s one to get you started

“A woman had better shew *more* affection than she feels.”

Translation: In order to get a man’s interest, a woman must act more interested in him than she really is.

12. As the girls discuss Jane’s chances of marrying Mr. Bingley, they argue over how well Jane and Bingley can know each other since it has only been two weeks since they met. Elizabeth says that there is no possible way for Jane to know Bingley because they haven’t been acquainted too long, but others agree that a person can grow to love another in just a few weeks.

Write a letter to Jane, supporting her belief that one can fall deeply in love in just a short time.

## **Chapter VII**

13. Mrs. Bennet's greatest dream is to see all of her daughters married. When this book was written in 1813, a popular way for eligible men and women to meet was to go to a ball or to be introduced by a mutual friend. Now, however, meeting people on the Internet is very popular. Write a listing for Jane to be used on a singles website. Be sure to include a description of her and to list all of her positive qualities.
  
14. Mr. Bennet calls his daughters "the silliest girls in the country" because they gush over the military men who are camped near their house. In fact, the girls make excuses to go to town just so they can have a chance to talk to the men. Even though her husband takes a dim view of their daughters' actions, Mrs. Bennet tells Mr. Bennet that the girls are just acting as any normal young woman would do.

Write an e-mail to Mr. Bennet, expressing your opinion about the Bennet girls. Do you think the girls are silly and boy-crazy, or do you think they're just acting their ages?