WOLFNOTE SUMMARY OF...

JANE AUSTEN’s

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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

There is great excitement in the small community of Longbourn, Hertfordshire, as the empty Netherfield Estate is soon to have a new occupant. Apparently, he is a rich young bachelor, and the Bennett household in particular, looks forward to his arrival as they have five daughters who are seeking a good match.

It is Mrs. Bennett's priority in life to have her daughters marry well, and she hopes that Charles Bingley, the new arrival, will choose one of her daughters. She is further excited at the prospect that Bingley will also bring new people to the area, and she may be able to marry off more than one of her daughters.

At the local ball, Bingley is impressed with the Bennetts’ oldest daughter, Jane, and the two soon form an attachment. Bingley’s friend, Fitzwilliam Darcy, is an even richer aristocrat, but is very proud and haughty, and does not wish to associate with the locals. Elizabeth Bennett overhears him refusing to dance with her whilst he is in conversation with Bingley. Unfortunately, Jane does not receive the approval of Bingley's sisters, because they regard Mrs. Bennett as being of lower status.

Darcy finds himself attracted to Elizabeth, even though he does not like the Bennett family. Her spirited wit and beautiful eyes enthrall him. Caroline Bingley’s envious criticism of Elizabeth only fuels Darcy's admiration for her. At this stage Elizabeth holds Darcy in contempt due to his proud manner.

George Wickham, a handsome military officer, tells Elizabeth that he grew up with Darcy, but was treated badly by the family. His story makes Darcy appear to be cruel, and Elizabeth accepts the story on face value.

William Collins, a clergyman and cousin of Mr. Bennett, visits. He stands to inherit Mr. Bennett’s estate when he dies, because of a legal stricture called ‘entail’. He is apologetic of this and spends his time praising his patroness, Lady Catherine De Bourgh. She insists that Collins marries, and he intends to choose one of the Bennett daughters, and decides on Elizabeth. She quickly refuses him.

The Bennetts’ neighbors, the Lucas family, have a daughter Charlotte, who is anxious to marry for security and she is soon engaged to Collins.

Disappointment comes to the Bennett household just when their plans were going well; they realize that the entire Bingley entourage has left Netherfield for London. Jane learns that Bingley may marry Darcy's sister, Georgiana. Jane accepts this stoically, but her sister Elizabeth is angry at the apparently shabby way she has been treated by the Bingley's.

Elizabeth visits Charlotte in her new home in Kent, and they are introduced to Lady Catherine De Bourgh, who is also Darcy's aunt. She is a strong character and enjoys interfering in other people’s lives. Darcy visits his aunt with his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam, and he is at a loss to understand Elizabeth’s strange behavior. He has been unable to forget about Elizabeth, and he suddenly proposes to her. Elizabeth suspects, wrongly, that he was instrumental in separating Bingley from Jane, and also of being cruel to Wickham, and so she refuses his proposal. She receives a letter from Darcy explaining the situation with Bingley / Jane, and the truth about Wickham’s situation. Elizabeth still considers him to be proud, but he is clearly innocent of any mischievous intent, or cruelty. Elizabeth condemns herself for her pride and prejudice against Darcy.

Elizabeth undertakes a trip with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner, and their travels take them to Darcy's estate in Derbyshire. Thinking he is not there, they visit the estate, but are confronted with Darcy, who treats them graciously, and is the perfect host. Slowly, Elizabeth starts to reciprocate Darcy’s love for her.

Just then, shame descends on the Bennett family with the revelation that Lydia has eloped with Wickham. Elizabeth fears that her blossoming love for Darcy is now hopeless. Lydia is found, but she and Wickham marry, and Elizabeth discovers that Darcy was instrumental in arranging the marriage, thus saving the Bennett family from further shame.

On his return to Netherfield, Bingley asks Jane to marry him and she accepts.
So far as Mrs. Bennett is concerned, this is a perfect end to her plans, but she is annoyed at Darcy's presence. Darcy’s aunt, Lady Catherine, confronts Elizabeth with a view to splitting up their relationship, demanding that Elizabeth will not accept any proposal of marriage from Darcy. She refuses, and Lady Catherine is forced to relate Elizabeth’s impertinence to Darcy. Darcy senses that Elizabeth has changed her view of him, and he proposes again and Elizabeth accepts.

The Author
Jane Austen 1775 – 1817
Arguably the greatest English woman novelist, she completed six major works in her short career. She was the seventh child of a country Minister and was born in Hampshire in the small village of Steventon. Her father was well-read, and encouraged Jane to read extensively, and from an early age she was interested in the works of Sir Walter Scott, Henry Fielding and also in the poetry of George Crabbe, amongst others.

In 1801, Jane’s family moved to Bath in the west of England on the retirement of her father, the Reverend George Austen. Out of her large family, her closest relationship was with her sister Cassandra, and her letters to her sister give further insight into the social content of her fictional writings. It is widely agreed that the Austen daughters were attractive, and enjoyed socializing, especially at country parties. No doubt these experiences provided inspiration for much of Austen’s early novels.

Her first three novels were Northanger Abbey (published 1818 after her death), Sense and Sensibility (published 1811), and Pride and Prejudice (published 1817). 'Northanger Abbey', was a satirical work aimed at the Gothic novels that were very popular at that time.

The family remained in Bath until 1809 when the Reverend Austen died. During this time Austen wrote very little. The family then moved to Chawton in Hampshire where Jane resumed her writing and wrote her last three novels, Mansfield Park (published 1814), Emma (published 1816), and Persuasion (also published posthumously in 1818). It should be noted that her work was not particularly popular during her lifetime, although it has been agreed by scholars that she showed sparkling wit, droll sarcasm, and an accurate insight into human nature and relationships.

Although she had many suitors in her lifetime and was briefly engaged – for one day – she turned down all her suitors and remained devoted to her family.
It wasn’t until the end of the 19th century that her work began to be appreciated by a wider readership. She was little known in America until the early 20th century, but her work has recently undergone a further enthusiastic revival in the public’s imagination following several successful film adaptations of her work. These are notably Emma Thomson’s version of Sense and Sensibility in 1995 starring Emma Thomson, Hugh Grant and Alan Rickman. An excellent 1995 version of Pride and Prejudice was adapted for television by Andrew Davies of the B.B.C. in which Austen’s romance, drama and humor are captured, and this is available on video.

Somerset Maughan said of her, that she had at her command the most precious gift a novelist can possess – that of keeping the reader’s interest.

Main Characters
Jane Bennett
The oldest of five sisters, Jane is a beautiful, kind-hearted young woman who is attracted to Bingley, and throughout the story, this develops into love. Their relationship starts well, but when Bingley moves back to London seemingly on a permanent basis, it appears to mark the end of their relationship.

Elizabeth Bennett
Second oldest of the Bennett sisters, like her sister, Elizabeth has the proper decorum of a young lady in Regency society. Although not as attractive as her older sister, she makes up for this with a bright and intelligent mind, and she also has a keen wit, and devotion to Jane. However, she can be naive concerning relationships with men, and she shows prejudice against those who disagree with her views, and disdain for Darcy, mistaking his reserved nature for pride. However, she eventually falls in love with him and they marry.

Mary Bennett
The third Bennett daughter, Mary’s main interest is reading as opposed to husband hunting, which occupies her other sisters. She thinks that she has command of the social graces, and in particular singing, but her performance at the Netherfield Ball was embarrassing.

Catherine (Kitty) Bennett
Kitty is the second youngest of the Bennett sisters, who has an irritable nature and joins with her younger sister, Lydia in flirting with soldiers.

Lydia Bennett
The youngest of the five Bennett children, she is irresponsible, reckless and immature, and brings scandal to the family by running away with Wickham.
Mr. Bennett
In some ways a failed man, Mr. Bennett has not secured a financial future for his family after his death. He prefers to isolate himself from the women of his household, and shows apathy regarding events that take place. However, he does care for his oldest two daughters, and gives support to Elizabeth against his wife, over the Collins' proposal.

Mrs. Bennett
She is really an older version of Lydia. She is an unrestrained mother and an embarrassment to Elizabeth and Jane at public functions. Her main aim in life is for her five daughters to be settled, and hopefully one will marry well so that the rest of the family will have financial security in the future.

Fitzwilliam Darcy
He is a wealthy aristocrat who is reserved and sometimes proud. He is attracted to Elizabeth's intellect and independence, and he falls in love with her, and his love is so strong that it bridges the gulf between them socially.

Charles Bingley
Bingley is a wealthy man who falls in love with Jane, but unfortunately, he is easily swayed by the opinions of others. Fortunately, one of these is Darcy, and he is in love with Jane's sister, and if this were not the case, then perhaps Bingley and Jane would not have ended up together.

Caroline Bingley
Charles' haughty sister is a jealous and shallow person, and manipulates Jane cruelly. She vainly tries to ensnare Darcy, but he only has eyes for Elizabeth.

Mr. and Mrs. Hurst
Bingley's arrogant sister and brother-in-law spend much of their time in Charles' company. The two sisters are much alike, and delight in gossiping and finding fault in others, especially the Bennett family. Mr. Hurst is an inactive man who spends most of his time between sleeping and card games.

George Wickham
He is a handsome officer who is adept at charming the ladies. His first meeting with Elizabeth is in stark contrast to the one she had with Darcy, and she is immediately attracted to him. He brings disgrace to the Bennett family by running off with Lydia. He is also shown to be mercenary by making advances to a rich heiress.

Mr. Collins
He is a cousin to Mr. Bennett and will inherit the Bennett home, as Mr. Bennett has no immediate male heir. He is a minister and has a wealthy patron, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, who is also Darcy's aunt. His patron is keen for him to marry. He first proposes to Elizabeth and is rejected, and then is more successful with Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's close friend.

Lady Catherine De Bourgh
She is a very rich, arrogant woman who totally dominates Collins and hopes that her sickly, bland daughter will marry Darcy.

Colonel Fitzwilliam
He is the well-mannered cousin of Darcy who also shows interest in Elizabeth, but needs to marry someone with property.

Charlotte Lucas
She is a close friend to Elizabeth, who is practical and intelligent. She obtains security by marrying Collins. Her parents, Sir William and Lady Lucas, are the Bennett's' neighbors.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner
Brother and sister-in-law to Mrs. Bennett, they are well established in society, regarded as an intelligent and cultivated couple.
Notes on society of the day

Women in Regency Britain had far less options than women of today. By and large, women did not receive a formal education, and their aim was to become “accomplished”, which means being proficient in the social graces such as music, needlework and literature, although the latter did not have the same emphasis.

In our story, Elizabeth was a well read and, therefore, intelligent young lady, having made full use of her father’s extensive library – hence she became his favorite. As a result of being well read, she was regarded as opinionated, and this was one of the features that attracted Darcy to her.

There was constant pressure on women of these times to marry well, to obtain financial security, not for just themselves, but also for their immediate family.

Being in love with your partner was clearly a bonus, and most women did not expect to achieve this. The most important benefits of marriage for a woman were financial security and social position.

The position of unmarried women was clearly defined. You will note in Pride and Prejudice that there is no instance where a single woman traveled alone, or was without a chaperone.

When the Bennett daughters traveled they were either with a relative or a married woman. Both Jane and Elizabeth traveled with the Gardiners. When Elizabeth stayed in Kent, it was with Mrs. Collins. When Lydia traveled to Brighton it was with Mrs. Foster, the Colonel’s wife, so when she runs away with Wickham she breaks all the social codes of the day and therefore, brings disgrace on her family. This situation could only be redeemed one way – with Lydia’s marriage to Wickham. Anything less would forever tarnish the Bennett family name.

The situation regarding unmarried women with no financial means of support was dire. However, if they could obtain a position as a companion or governess, these were the few jobs that were allowed for women to take in Regency Britain. Although they retained their respectability, some of these jobs were unpleasant and degrading for they were always in a vulnerable situation. They could always be easy prey for men in the families for which they worked.

Another way to obtain income for the single woman was through writing, and some women authors used a male pseudonym.

However, the best way for a woman to avoid all these pitfalls was to marry well.
Chapters 1 and 2 – Rumor and Gossip
Summary
Rumors abound in Hertfordshire County that a Mr. Bingley, a wealthy young bachelor, has rented Netherfield Park, a large estate, and is in need of a wife.

There is particular excitement in the Bennett household in Longbourn, where there are five eligible daughters, and Mrs. Bennett’s prime occupation is to see her daughter’s suitably matched. Mr. Bennett is not as enthusiastic about his wife’s matchmaking, and he seems impervious to her pleas for him to call on Mr. Bingley in order that their daughters can be introduced. The daughters are eldest Jane, Elizabeth (Lizzie), Mary, Catherine (Kitty), and youngest Lydia.

Mr. Bennett has every intention of visiting Bingley, but he delights in annoying his wife.

Interpretation
I have quoted the first line of Chapter 1 in the Précis above, which gives the reader the main theme of the novel.

Mrs. Bennett is preoccupied with the arrangement of suitable marriages for her daughters.

There is much irony in this novel, and the first sentence shows this. It should not be read literally, as what Austen means to say is that everybody knows that women who want to be his wife will pursue a rich bachelor. Austen views the situations and characters with a humorous eye and will place the characters in certain situations, which seem to signify one thing, but actually relate to something else as the plot develops.

Austen also wishes the reader to interpret the characters in the book in the way that she sees them, and at the end of Chapter 1, she provides character analysis for Mr. and Mrs. Bennett. She portrays Mr. Bennett as being easy-going, reserved, and full of sarcastic humor, in contrast to Mrs. Bennett, who is a woman of temperamental nature, one who listens to gossip and spreads it, a woman of limited understanding. This is illustrated thus, Mrs. Bennett: “Mr. Bennett, you take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves.” He replies, “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 these twenty years at least.”

Chapter 3 – The Ball
Summary
Mr. Bingley returns Mrs. Bennett’s visit, but the girls are absent, and they will not get the chance to meet him until the next Ball is held in the neighborhood.

There is much gossip in the neighborhood as to the extent and content of Bingley’s party at the forthcoming Ball. At the end, he brings himself, his two sisters, his brother-in-law and a friend, Mr. Darcy. It is clear that Darcy finds the Ball disagreeable, and those there consider him to be haughty and proud. Elizabeth overhears Bingley encouraging Darcy to ask Elizabeth to dance, but he refuses to take up Bingley’s suggestion.

Mrs. Bennett notices that Bingley danced with Jane twice - more than with any other lady present. Mrs. Bennett hopes, “If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for.”

It has been a successful night for Jane, but Elizabeth feels offended at Darcy’s behavior.

Interpretation
Austen makes the point of emphasizing the gossip that is prevalent in this small town society. There seems to be more delight in making up stories, than establishing the truth of any situation. If you don’t know the facts – make them up!

We also, in this Chapter, get an insight into the characters of Jane and Elizabeth. Jane is placid and accepts the situation she is in. This is perhaps part of her charm in that she is beautiful and demure, and these are qualities that make her noticeable to Bingley. Elizabeth, however, is more forthcoming, and ready to speak her mind, and as will be shown later on, she is protective of her family, in particular Jane. She criticizes Jane for always seeing the best in people, and turning a blind eye to their faults. This is ironic for Elizabeth is blind to her own pride and prejudice, as will be revealed later.

We are made aware of the Bennetts’ neighbors, the Lucas family, in particular Charlotte Lucas, who will have an important part to play later.

Chapters 4 and 5 – After the Ball
Summary
The residents of Longbourn and Netherfield discuss the happenings at the Ball.

Jane and Elizabeth mull over Bingley’s clear intentions towards Jane, who admits that she found him attractive and charming. She is flattered at his admiration for her. Jane says, “He is just what a young man...”
ought to be, sensible, good humored, and lively.” Elizabeth responds, “He is also handsome, which a young man ought likewise to be if he possibly can.”

Bingley and his sisters together with Mr. Darcy, have different views on the success of the Ball. They are agreed that Jane is the most beautiful of all the Bennett daughters, but Darcy considered the Ball to be a bore, and there was no lady there that he wished to dance with.

The Ball remains the main topic of conversation for days after, and when Sir William Lucas visits with his oldest daughter, Charlotte, the Bennett’s are able to obtain other views of the Ball. Charlotte is Elizabeth’s closest friend, and she too is aware of Darcy’s rude behavior towards her, and she commiserates with Elizabeth.

Interpretation

Through Austen’s descriptive writing, the reader obtains an entertaining view of the gossiping in the various households.

The discussions between Elizabeth and Jane, not only provide the reader with more information, but they also help develop the respective characters. Austen is placing the characters in clearly defined categories. Bingley is handsome and debonair, Darcy is cold and proud, Jane is beautiful and demure, Elizabeth is forthright and intelligent, the Bingley sisters are jealous and catty, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennett we have already covered. Some of these traits will be developed or shown to be incorrect later in the novel.

Chapters 6 and 7 – Matchmaking Plot

Summary

Netherfield Hall receives more and more visits from Jane and Elizabeth. Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst become fond of Jane, and the relationship between Jane and Bingley continues to blossom. Although Elizabeth thinks that Bingley will be a very good match for her sister, she still regards Bingley’s two sisters as self-centered and superior. Her view of Mr. Darcy remains unaltered, still thinking that he has not changed his views about her.

Darcy has the ability to conceal his feelings and is becoming increasingly concerned about the attraction he feels for Elizabeth. Miss Bingley senses this, and never fails to take the opportunity of bringing Elizabeth down in Darcy’s eyes.

One day, Jane receives a formal request to come to Netherfield for dinner, and Mrs. Bennett sees the opportunity to do some serious matchmaking in order to clinch an engagement between Jane and Bingley. She advises Jane to travel on horseback to Netherfield as it looks as if it might rain, and she will be forced to spend the night rather than ride home in bad weather. The plot works better than expected as Jane arrives soaked at Netherfield and as a result comes down with a cold. Mr. Bennett chides his wife for her over-zealous matchmaking and says to her, “If your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness – if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley and under your orders.” Mrs. Bennett replies, “Oh! I am not at all afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds. She will be taken good care of. As long as she stays there, it is all very well.” Mrs. Bennett seems content that her ploy has worked, but Elizabeth is concerned about her sister’s welfare and decides to walk the three miles to Netherfield to see how Jane is faring.

When Elizabeth arrives at Netherfield, Jane is sicker than she imagined, and Miss Bingley reluctantly invites Elizabeth to stay with Jane. The Bingley’s were somewhat surprised at Elizabeth’s entrance.

Interpretation

Elizabeth is fast becoming the most interesting character in the novel. While her older sister Jane has beauty, her character is rather dull. She is just what Bingley is looking for – a beautiful, but obedient partner. In contrast, Elizabeth is outspoken and adventurous – rare qualities in women of this Regency period, and these very qualities are what attract Darcy. He is not looking for a subservient mate, but one who will challenge him intellectually. Elizabeth demonstrates vibrancy, intelligence, and courage by staying with people who consider her to be inferior, but the bond with her ill sister is stronger. One of Elizabeth’s most redeeming features is her dark eyes, whose spark mirrors her intelligence.

Chapters 8 and 9 – The Bennett’s come to Netherfield

Summary

The jealous Caroline Bingley sees a real opportunity in bringing down Elizabeth in front of Darcy. She thinks that Elizabeth’s unladylike behavior in tramping across three miles of countryside and arriving at Netherfield in a disheveled state will enable her to poke fun at Elizabeth. The women observe the mud on Elizabeth’s clothes, and her wild hair, but all Darcy sees is that the walk has made her complexion alive and fresh, and he is impressed by her devotion to her sister.

Elizabeth spends most of her time with Jane, but she does eat with the others, and in the evening converses with them in the drawing room. Caroline’s attempts to discredit Elizabeth are clearly failing, so...
she widens her scorn to include all the Bennett family, planting the seed in Darcy's mind as to what they would be like as his in-laws. During one conversation the discussion deals with the accomplishments of women. Caroline's angle is that walking three miles in poor weather in the countryside is not one of these accomplishments. In contrast, what she can do are accomplishments, i.e. "paint tables, cover screens, and net purses." Darcy disagrees with Caroline's view on the acceptable accomplishments of women, "I cannot boast of knowing more than half-a-dozen in the whole range of my acquaintance that are really accomplished." (A snide at Caroline.) He is clearly impressed by Elizabeth's performance and although she has knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing and languages, as does many of her contemporaries; she has something extra and unusual.

When Elizabeth leaves the room, again Caroline tries to bring her down. She says, "She is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own ....... it is a paltry device, a very mean art." Darcy responds, "There is meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable." (A further dig at Caroline.) Her poisoned tongue will not sway him.

Soon Jane is well enough to leave her bed, and she joins in with the social gatherings in the evenings. The Bennett family visits to check on Jane's progress, and Caroline sees a further opportunity to discredit the whole family. Elizabeth becomes increasingly embarrassed by their behavior. Mrs. Bennett fawns over Bingley while making no pretence about her feelings towards Darcy. Lydia, who is only 15, is far too familiar with Bingley, reminding him to give a Ball at Netherfield, which he agrees to do when Jane fully recovers.

Interpretation

It is important that the reader has a clear view on what the typical Regency woman in these social circles behaved like. By and large, they were frail creatures and were almost like ornaments to their husbands and prospective partners. They busied themselves with frivolous pastimes that would augment their domestic lives. Elizabeth, although proficient in the expected skills, broke this mould. Through her reading, she had broadened her mind and had definite opinions, which she did not hesitate to voice in company. She is in stark contrast to her older sister. The frailty of women is demonstrated by the ease with which Jane contracts a cold, due to exposure to inclement weather.

Women were expected to always be immaculately presented, especially in company, and for Elizabeth to arrive at Netherfield unannounced and in a disheveled state, clearly would have been unthinkable, and this shocked the Bingley's, but intrigued Darcy.

It is clear that Caroline will go to extreme lengths in order to win Darcy over to her. During one of the evening social gatherings, Darcy is immersed in a book and Caroline realizes the only way to obtain his attention is to walk round the room with Elizabeth. Darcy is in a dilemma for although he attempts to engage in conversation with Elizabeth, she remains cold towards him. He says to Elizabeth concerning poetry, "I have been used to consider poetry as the food of love." Elizabeth responds, "Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Everything nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet would starve it entirely away." Elizabeth makes it plain to Darcy that she has little regard for him. This must frustrate Caroline, because try as she may, she cannot get Darcy interested in her, and she knows that Elizabeth only has to flash her eyes, and Darcy will come running.

The arrival of the Bennett family is Caroline's last chance to disillusion Darcy about Elizabeth and the entire Bennett family, and they do all in their power to help her in her plan. Mrs. Bennett talks incessantly and is gushing towards Bingley, whilst being positively rude to Darcy. Lydia is far too forward for her tender years. She has something extra and unusual. When Elizabeth leaves the room, again Caroline tries to bring her down. She says, "She is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own ..... it is a paltry device, a very mean art." Darcy responds, "There is meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable." (A further dig at Caroline.) Her poisoned tongue will not sway him.

Summary

Chapters 10 and 11 – Darcy bewitched

Jane nears full health at Netherfield, and Elizabeth is looking forward to returning home. She has to undergo the daily drawing room meetings with the household, but she is not intimidated by this, and views her dialogue with Darcy as a challenge. As Jane now joins them in the drawing room, Bingley and Jane spend most of their time together leaving Elizabeth alone with the Bingley sisters and Darcy.

Finally Jane and Elizabeth return home, and on their arrival they hear that William Collins is to visit.

Interpretation

Bingley appears to be easily manipulated, and in particular by his sisters. Elizabeth is concerned that Darcy may have too much influence over Bingley, but still hopes that he will propose to Jane, for this would be...
good match for her. Due to Bingley’s nature, Jane would be able to have a fair degree of freedom, and Elizabeth would still be able to visit her sister on a regular basis. This is obviously a flaw in Bingley’s character being that he is so easily swayed.

The reader now has some idea as to how 19th century society operates. Darcy and the Bingley’s are regarded as being the highest echelon of society. They do not need to work for their money, they are landed gentry, and their estates provide them with their income. This is in contrast to the Bennett’s, who do not own land, and obtain their money through work, e.g. the Bennett girls’ Uncle Philips is an attorney working in London. These professionals are regarded as socially inferior. It is humorous how situations change, and Austen makes a point of this, because the Bingley sisters inherited their wealth from people who obtained their fortune through work.

Chapters 12, 13 and 14 – Mr. Collins

Summary

Mr. Bennett’s cousin, William Collins, arrives. He will inherit Longbourn on the death of Mr. Bennett because the estate must pass to a male heir, in other words the estate is entailed. As Collins has this power over the Bennett family, they are obliged to overlook his pompousness and ridiculous behavior, and ingratiate themselves to him. Through his patron, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, he has obtained a good living as the Rector of Hunsford Parish. Lady Catherine is Darcy’s aunt, and a very forceful character. She has indicated to Collins that he should acquire himself a wife, and he has it in mind to ask one of the Bennett daughters.

Interpretation

The reader can now appreciate Mrs. Bennett’s obsession with getting her daughters married, for it is revealed that their home will pass to Mr. Collins, so the whole family will need to be supported by at least one rich husband of the daughters, or they could end up penniless. Collins could be a potential husband for one of the girls, for although he is not rich himself, he has a very wealthy patron. Austen makes an interesting contrast in the characterizations of Darcy and Collins. One method she uses is showing their writing and reading skills. Remember these are the main modes of communication at this time, and the way in which a person writes is an indication as to the way in which they think. The reader should, therefore, pay particular attention to the form and manner in which the correspondence from the characters is portrayed. For example, Darcy’s writing style is slow and deliberate, whilst Collins’ writings are a strange blend of arrogance and subservience. So far as reading is concerned, we have heard that Darcy has a large library on his estate, whereas Collins normally only reads books in public and out loud, and he usually chooses to recite other people’s sermons. He, therefore, has poor communication skills compared with Darcy.

Chapters 15 and 16 – Pride and Prejudice

Summary

Collins is now convinced to ask one of the Bennett girls to marry him. Mrs. Bennett explains that Jane is as good as spoken for, so he diverts his attention to Elizabeth. Collins joins Elizabeth, Lydia and Kitty on a walk to Meryton, where the younger sisters are excited as they hope to meet some of the Officers stationed there, and in particular, George Wickham, a new arrival.

Wickham impresses Elizabeth with his good looks and charm, and has already struck up a rapport with her, when Darcy and Bingley ride up. It is clear that Darcy knows Wickham, but they barely acknowledge one another.

The next day, the Bennett sisters visit their mother’s sister, Mrs. Philips, and Wickham and some other officers are present. Wickham and Elizabeth soon engage in conversation, and he reveals his relationship with Darcy. His father was Darcy’s father’s steward, and the two boys grew up together. Wickham was favored by Darcy’s father, and when he died he was to have received a position on the estate, but Darcy, out of jealousy, gave this job to someone else. Wickham states that Darcy and his sister are unpleasant people, and Elizabeth agrees with this opinion.

When Elizabeth tells Jane about this, she is sure there must be some misunderstanding, for Bingley would not associate himself with someone so cruel.

Interpretation

These chapters are all about Elizabeth’s prejudice concerning Darcy. She laps up all that Wickham says about Darcy, accepting it on face value. She says to Wickham that Darcy is a proud man, not favorably spoken of by anyone, “Everybody is disgusted with his pride.” Elizabeth is always ready to champion somebody’s cause. This will be demonstrated with Jane, but she now shows this trait with Wickham, suggesting that he should take Darcy to Court over his lost inheritance. She also twists
the words that Darcy spoke about his own temperament telling Wickham that he has "an unforgiving temper".

In total contrast to her behavior with Darcy, Elizabeth is warm towards Wickham, being sympathetic to his plight, and says of him, "a young man, too, like you whose very countenance may vouch for your being amiable." Wickham further criticizes Darcy by saying, "all his actions may be traced to pride; and pride has often been his best friend."

Elizabeth then goes on to say that she is astonished by the high regard that Bingley has for Darcy. She is supposed to be an intelligent woman, but her prejudice has blinded her to the obvious. She leaves the question, "How can they suit each other.. Mr. Bingley is a sweet-tempered, amiable, charming man. He cannot know what Mr. Darcy is."

The reader must think – Elizabeth, you cannot know what Mr. Wickham is?

We also learn in these chapters that Mrs. Bennett now has the opportunity of seeing two of her daughters settled. Although Mrs. Bennett considered Collins loathsome, he has undergone a metamorphosis in her eyes now that he is a potential mate for daughter number two.

Collins gives some details concerning his patron, and her connection with Darcy. Lady Catherine's daughter, Miss De Bourgh will eventually inherit a very large fortune and it is planned that the cousins will unite and therefore, join the two estates. This makes Elizabeth smile, and she thinks of poor Miss Bingley who will lose Darcy.

Chapters 17 and 18 – The Netherfield Ball

Summary

Again the whole family are excited at the prospect of the Netherfield Ball, and this includes Collins, much to the others surprise, but he sees this as a means of securing his ties with Elizabeth, and she finds herself maneuvered into agreeing to dance with Collins for the first two dances. Elizabeth had hoped that she would initially dance with Wickham at the Ball. When they arrive, she is further disappointed to see that Wickham is not at the Ball, and that a miserable night is in store for her.

There is much gossip concerning the potential engagement between Jane and Bingley, and Mrs. Bennett is at the forefront of this unfounded rumor.

Elizabeth negotiates her two dances with Collins, and then to her surprise Darcy asks her to dance, and she accepts. There is tension between the two, and they at first make polite conversation, then Elizabeth raises the subject of Wickham and their dance ends with dissatisfaction and anger.

Again, certain members of the Bennett family manage to embarrass themselves, and Elizabeth feels humiliated by her mother and her younger sisters who act without restraint. For a change, it is Mary who is the main embarrassment for she believes she can sing, and is not content to inflict her audience with one song, but with two, much to the amusement of the Bingley sisters, who sense Jane and Elizabeth's embarrassment, and they finally manage to get Mr. Bennett to call a halt to Mary's performance.

Interpretation

You cannot underestimate the importance of dancing in this Regency society. This was hinted at, at the first Ball where the fact that Bingley danced with Jane twice, was viewed as an indication of their further relationship. A woman's whole future may depend on what happens at one of these Balls. Elizabeth hopes to cement her relationship with Wickham at this Ball, and has earmarked the first dances for him. To her horror, she is forced by common convention and obligation to her family, to accept Collins' invitation for the first two dances. She hopes to emulate her older sister by securing Wickham, but now it looks as if she might be tied to Collins. This would certainly be the case if she had Jane's nature, but we know that Elizabeth is different.

What actually happens at the Ball is that Wickham is not there, which she blames on Darcy, but she ends up dancing with Darcy, again through convention, and her evening which started with such hopes has turned into a disaster. In the meantime, her older sister's relationship with Bingley goes from strength to strength. Perhaps Elizabeth is relieved in the end that Wickham was not present to witness the embarrassing behavior of her family.

The reader will note that the plot is becoming more complicated with the introduction of Wickham and Collins. This is one of the ways by which Austen keeps her readers interested in her work. The reader suspects that the 'prejudice' part of the book's title can be allocated to Elizabeth. It has already been established that 'pride' belongs to Darcy.

The reader wonders at the true natures of Darcy and Wickham. All the other characters have been made deliberately plain to the reader by Austen, but these two gentlemen are the more obtuse characters in the novel.

We also note how much more Darcy is involved in this Ball as opposed to the first, and all his actions center around Elizabeth. He tries hard to improve his behavior towards her, but Elizabeth is blind to this. She is prejudiced against him because she only remembers his initial reaction to her when he knew nothing about

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her. She prefers Wickham because he is handsome, and he turned on his charm for her at their first meeting. In their conversations with one another, Wickham fuelled Elizabeth’s prejudice concerning Darcy. We return to Austen’s use of irony, and her comment on this Regency society. She pulls fun at their manners and sense of decorum, and this is exemplified through Collins’ behavior, being a mixture of excessive pride because he has such a well-known patron, and his fawning behavior when he introduces himself to his host, thus breaking one of society’s rules.

Mrs. Bennett behaves absurdly, threatening to undo all her previous matchmaking, by talking unreservedly about Jane’s prospective marriage to Bingley. Elizabeth is happy for her sister Jane, for Bingley is clearly a good match, but she is concerned that Darcy is deceiving him. Ironically, it is Wickham who has been deceiving Elizabeth as will be made plain.

Finally, I give examples of Austen’s humor, wit, irony, and descriptive writing in the following quotes:-

Elizabeth says of Darcy: "To find a man agreeable whom one is determined to hate! Do not wish me such an evil.”

Elizabeth says to Darcy: "Never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice.”

Austen says of Mary’s singing: ‘Mary’s powers were by no means fitted for such a display; her voice was weak and her manner affected. Elizabeth was in agony. The Bingley sisters made signs of derision at each other.’

Mr. Bennett brings Mary’s performance to an end by saying, “That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit.”

Chapters 19 to 23 – The Proposal

Summary

The next day following the Netherfield Ball, Mr. Collins decides to make his play for Elizabeth. He is totally confident that he will be successful, for who could refuse such a suitor who has so much to offer. He asks permission from Mrs. Bennett to speak to Elizabeth alone. She already suspects what is going to happen. The discourse between these two includes some of the most humorous moments in the story. Collins conducts the proposal as if it is a business transaction. He points out his own virtues, his association with the De Bourgh family, and Elizabeth’s own insecurity. He advises Elizabeth that he has been spurred on by his patron who charged him to acquire a wife who is a person that is “active, useful, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way.”

Elizabeth refuses Collins proposal, but he is undaunted and merely thinks she is being coy. He tells her that it is unthinkable for her to refuse him, but in plain terms Elizabeth says, “You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make you so. Nay, were your friend Lady Catherine to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill qualified for the situation.”

Finally, Collins realizes that his courtship of Elizabeth is over. Mrs. Bennett is appalled by this situation saying that she will never see her again. Elizabeth is summoned to her father’s retreat in the library and he says, “An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do not.”

Charlotte Lucas visits the Bennett household and learns of the breakdown of Mr. Collins suit of Elizabeth. She begins spending more time with Collins, and in a few days they are engaged to be married. Elizabeth is annoyed at her friend accepting marriage with someone she doesn’t love, but Charlotte has accepted Collins’ proposal in order to obtain security.

Jane receives a letter from Caroline Bingley advising her that the whole Netherfield household have moved to London for the winter. Jane is greatly disappointed. It is evident that Miss Georgiana Darcy is spending time with Bingley. The news makes Jane despondent, whereas Elizabeth is angry, and suspects Darcy has a role in this development.

Interpretation

The reader should study Collins’ proposal to Elizabeth. It typifies his character, and highlights his absurd speech and manners. Elizabeth has to control herself in order to avoid laughing out loud in front of him. She has strong views, one being that a woman should marry for love and not security, hence her disappointment in Charlotte who doesn’t mind being Collins’ second choice as she is only interested in obtaining security.

The 19th century readership will quite easily be able to sympathize with Charlotte, for most marriages were merely a business arrangement, and Elizabeth’s view is idealistic and not in the least practical. The reader hopes that the heroine will find love and happiness, one of the main ways in which Austen keeps the reader’s attention.
Chapters 24 and 25 – A false friend

Summary
A further letter is received from Caroline Bingley saying that they now have no plans for returning to Netherfield. This further adds to Jane's depression and fuels Elizabeth's anger. Elizabeth is frustrated, but she has not means to release her pent up feelings, and she hates the way her sister has been manipulated.

She continues to receive visits from Wickham. Christmas arrives and the Bennett household is swelled by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, Mrs. Bennet's brother and sister-in-law. The Gardiner's are acquainted with the happenings in Longbourn, and Mrs. Gardiner warns Elizabeth about her relationship with Wickham, for he has no prospects and any match would be fraught with difficulties.

In an attempt to lift Jane's depression, Mrs. Gardiner invites her to return to London with them. In London, Jane visits Caroline Bingley, but she receives a cold reception, and it is clear she has been a false friend.

Interpretation
Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are introduced into the storyline.
Unlike her sister-in-law, Mrs. Gardiner is able to provide good advice to Jane and Elizabeth. She warns Elizabeth about her relationship with Wickham, as there is no future in this. This advice unfortunately Elizabeth disregards. Her prejudice against marriages of convenience means that she would sacrifice her position in society and her stability in order to marry for love. She cannot see how Charlotte can be happy in a marriage without love.

She also shows continued prejudice against Darcy, feeling he is instrumental in the manipulation of her sister Jane.

Ironically, Elizabeth was correct in her assessment of Bingley's sister, for when Jane visits her in London, it is clear that she has treated her falsely.

The society that Austen projects seems a daunting one for the women. They have to balance their security with their feelings for their husband, and hope that at least they will be happy with their partner, if not in love with him.

Charlotte has agreed to marry Collins for security, but she may also think she is able to control him.

Jane had hoped to marry Bingley, not only to obtain security, but it is clear that he was a man she could perhaps love.

Chapters 26 and 27 – Wickham exposed?

Summary
Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins marry and leave for his parish in Kent.
Elizabeth reluctantly agrees to visit them soon.
In the spring, Elizabeth, Charlotte's father Sir William, and her sister Maria, make the trip to Kent, stopping of at London, with the Gardiners. Elizabeth learns that Wickham has been seeing a rich young heiress, Miss King, and Mrs. Gardiner views his actions as fortune hunting. Surprisingly, Elizabeth comes to Wickham's defense saying that he has every right to pursue a wealthy bride.

Elizabeth agrees to go with her aunt and uncle on a summer trip to north England.
The party resumes their trip to Kent.

Interpretation
We are getting clear indications from Austen that Wickham is not what he seems. He is clearly a philanderer, full of charm, and he hopes to use this to obtain his security.
Up until now, we have been concerned with eligible women seeking security in marriage. Here we have Wickham doing the same, which in this society was certainly not becoming an officer and a gentleman.
Mrs. Gardiner can see this, and makes the correct and unbiased view concerning his actions, and almost anyone else would agree with her. However, Elizabeth has her own defined views regarding the freedom of the individual regardless of the petty rules of Regency society.

The reader must now think that Elizabeth's plan to obtain love and happiness has taken a severe blow. Perhaps the family may come into some property, which would make her more attractive to Wickham, but is Wickham good enough for Elizabeth?

Chapters 28 to 30 – Mrs. Collins

Summary
Mrs. Collins (Charlotte) and Collins, give a warm welcome to Elizabeth, Sir William and Maria. They are keen to give them a conducted tour of the house and gardens.

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Lady Catherine De Bourgh invites them to dine at her residence, Rosings. All the party is in awe of Lady Catherine and her surroundings except Elizabeth, who is merely curious. Lady Catherine keeps herself abreast of the goings-on in her parish, and also the affairs of those she comes into contact with, and she prides herself in being able to give advice freely. She soon turns her attention to Elizabeth wishing to know the most personal details concerning her, but Elizabeth refuses to be too forthcoming, which affronts Lady Catherine.

Sir William returns home leaving Elizabeth to spend her time walking in the picturesque countryside. They dine on a regular basis at Rosings.

The company is expanded by the arrival of Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam. Elizabeth is impressed with Colonel Fitzwilliam, regarding him as a perfect gentleman. Darcy remains reserved. Charlotte arrives home and notices Elizabeth and Darcy in close conversation, and wonders if Darcy has affection for Elizabeth.

Interpretation
Elizabeth is forced to confess that her friend, Charlotte, may not have been totally unwise in accepting Collins' proposal. She seems to have settled well in her new home, and just as Mr. Bennett uses his library as a retreat, Charlotte does the same with her sitting room. Collins is very respectful towards his wife, and allows her some space. It is clear there is no love between the couple, but the marriage itself clearly provides them both with certain advantages.

The reader is already aware of the nature of the Bennett's marriage, and Austen now illustrates a different type of marriage between Charlotte and Collins. At present, Charlotte is very respectful of her husband unlike Mr. Bennett's treatment of his wife, but give it time, they have only been married a short while.

Chapters 31 to 36 – Darcy
Summary
One day, Darcy visits the Parsonage to find Elizabeth alone, and she takes the opportunity to enquire whether Bingley will return to Netherfield. It doesn't seem hopeful.

Darcy makes a point of seeking out Elizabeth whilst on her walks, and she becomes agitated by this. However, one day she meets Colonel Fitzwilliam, and the conversation turns to Darcy. He reveals that Darcy is a good friend to have. He has helped Bingley escape "a most imprudent marriage", and Elizabeth immediately realizes that he is referring to Jane, although the Colonel knows less. When she is alone, she is full of anger and breaks down in tears, feeling unable to attend dinner at Rosings, so she sends her apologies that she is unwell. When Darcy hears this, he comes to visit her, totally taking Elizabeth by surprise. She is further shocked by Darcy's declaration of love for her and his proposal of marriage. What further shocks Elizabeth is the manner of his proposal. He speaks of his struggle to deny his feelings, and despite Elizabeth's "inferiority …… it being a degradation …… there are immense family obstacles", he is still inclined to make the proposal. Elizabeth has the feeling that she should feel grateful to Darcy for his proposal, but she responds by saying, "I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry." Now it's Darcy's turn to be surprised and he asks for reasons for his rejection. She responds by saying it was twofold - firstly, by breaking up Jane and Bingley's relationship, and secondly, because of his cruel treatment of Wickham. Darcy angrily leaves, and Elizabeth is overwhelmed with emotion.

The next day, she receives a letter from Darcy in which he explains his role with his friend Bingley where he advised him that in his view, Jane did not love him. He now realizes that this is an error, and bows to Elizabeth's view of her sister's feelings, as clearly sisters are very close. However, he stands by the criticisms that he aired concerning Elizabeth's mother, and the three younger sisters, believing that they act improperly in public, and are a source of embarrassment.

So far as Wickham is concerned, the truth of the matter is that the position offered to Wickham on the death of his father was refused. Wickham did not wish to become a preacher, and wished to study law. Darcy gave him £3,000 for his purpose. This he squandered and tried to elope with Darcy's sister. Colonel Fitzwilliam can confirm all these facts. Elizabeth reads the letter several times, and comes to the conclusion that certain facts are irrefutable, and therefore, the whole letter must be true. She suddenly realizes that she has been blind in regard to her feelings towards Darcy.

Interpretation
Elizabeth's visit to Kent has involved a steep learning curve, and over these weeks, the reader has noted that Elizabeth is maturing and now has the ability to change her strong views. This is evident in respect of her view of Charlotte's marriage. If she can blend this maturity with her spirit, she will become a formidable
woman. She is not like the rest of her party, intimidated by Lady Catherine, and stands up to her, causing some embarrassment to the rest of her company. However, her sparring with Lady Catherine is merely a preliminary encounter, which will be repeated towards the end of the story.

Through Elizabeth's ability to converse vibrantly with Lady Catherine and Darcy, Austen enables the plot to advance. In fact the dialogue between Elizabeth and Darcy is a key element of *Pride and Prejudice*. The reader experiences some frustration regarding Elizabeth and her failure to see Darcy's feelings for her. She regards his attentiveness as an annoyance. Before these two can come together, both must undergo a change. Elizabeth has to lose her prejudice, and Darcy has to lose his pride. Darcy's timing regarding his proposal of marriage is poor. It comes when Elizabeth's anger and annoyance at Darcy is at its height.

These chapters mark the climax of the plot. It is important that the reader pays particular attention to Chapter 35, which is almost entirely made up of Darcy's letter to Elizabeth. Up until now, the book has been narrated from Elizabeth's point of view, but Darcy's letter gives the reader an insight into his character, and by the time we have reached the end, we realize that Darcy is by far the best male character in the novel, and a good match for Elizabeth. The reader wants these two to end up together, but how can this now happen with what has passed between them?

It is clear from the letter that Darcy is concerned that she will not read, so he soon appeals to her sense of justice. Remember, Elizabeth has accused him of ruining the happiness of her most beloved sister, of reducing Wickham to poverty through cruelty, and manipulating Bingley in order to suit their social circle. Darcy comes over as an honest man, and he does not flinch from illustrating the shortcomings of some of the members of the Bennett household, to which Elizabeth has to agree. However, in the end, the letter is an apology showing that he is willing to give up some pride. Will Elizabeth be less prejudiced?

Again Austen uses irony regarding the two main themes of the book – pride and prejudice – for Darcy has accused Elizabeth of being proud, and Elizabeth accuses Darcy of being prejudiced against Wickham. So, in different ways, both main characters have been guilty of pride and prejudice.
Chapters 37 to 43 - The holiday
Summary
Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam leave, closely followed by Elizabeth and Maria. The ladies stop off at the Gardiners' home in London, and joined by Jane, all three return to Longbourn. Kitty and Lydia are distraught that the militia is leaving for Brighton in two weeks. Elizabeth is pleased at this news for it will mean the departure of Wickham. Elizabeth eventually tells Jane about Darcy's proposal, but decides not to tell her about his part in Jane and Bingley's breakdown. She is shocked concerning Wickham's mercenary nature, but decide not to make this public as he is leaving the district. The wife of the Regiment's Colonel invites Lydia to be a companion to go with her to Brighton. Elizabeth pleads with her father not to allow it, but he refuses, probably thinking that there will be one less hysterical female in the house. Elizabeth goes on her trip with the Gardiners and they will go to Derbyshire where Darcy's estate is. They decide to visit the Pemberley Estate, believing that Darcy is away, but whilst they are walking in the grounds they meet with him.

Interpretation
We obtain a further insight into Mr. Bennett's character in these chapters. He is totally irresponsible regarding the care of his daughters and in particular the youngest, Lydia. He really only has time for his favorite daughter Elizabeth, and his apathy concerning Lydia will bring scandal on the whole family. Knowing her nature, he allows her to follow the militia to Brighton despite Elizabeth's warning. It is a wonder that Jane and Elizabeth have turned out the way they have considering their parents' lack of guidance. It is surprising that Mrs. Bennett cannot foresee the potential dangers in allowing her younger daughters so much freedom. Her main aim in life is to see them well settled, but all this is put at risk should the young daughters bring scandal on the whole family. One must assume therefore, that she is just very stupid. Elizabeth is quite pleased to visit Darcy's estate, and it is clear that her prejudice against him is melting away. In conversation with his staff, they have nothing but high praise for Darcy, and for Elizabeth, this represents a complete turn-around in her views concerning him. At the start of the novel, she was occupied by finding more and more reasons why she should dislike him, but now she is obtaining nothing but praise from everyone regarding his behavior.

Chapters 44 to 46 – Caroline's last throw of the dice
Summary
Darcy is exceedingly polite, and clearly in his own territory he is full of confidence, and is the perfect host. Of course the Gardiners represent the respectable and sane branch of the Bennett family. They meet with Darcy's younger sister and she is totally different from Wickham's description of her. Bingley and his sisters arrive, and Elizabeth notices through the conversations the odd wistful reference to her sister Jane. The Gardiners, unlike Elizabeth, soon sense Darcy's love for Elizabeth. Elizabeth too experiences uncertainty concerning Darcy, and is unable to sleep. She is also pleased that there is no sign of romance between Bingley and Darcy's sister. There is still tension between Elizabeth and Caroline Bingley, and Elizabeth can now smugly attribute this to jealousy. Caroline's attempts to drive a wedge between Darcy and Elizabeth are now desperate. She even makes reference to Wickham, but this just compounds to make her look foolish, and Elizabeth's calm response highlights Caroline's jealousy. When Darcy makes the remark that Elizabeth is "one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance", Caroline realizes that her cause is lost. Elizabeth receives letters from Jane revealing that Lydia has run away with Wickham to London, and they are not married. Mr. Bennett has gone in pursuit. Elizabeth is horrified, and she goes to her uncle for comfort, but is met my Darcy. She breaks down and tells him what has happened. Instead of disapproving, he is supportive and Elizabeth realizes that she loves him, but this scandal will ruin everything. She departs with the Gardiners for Longbourn.

Interpretation
These chapters mark a major turning point for Elizabeth. She realizes that her initial dislike of Darcy was through blind prejudice. This has now dissolved and she discovers that she loves him, but because of this family scandal, she thinks that her chance of happiness has gone. She must consider that her family is poison for the likes of Darcy and his social circle. Darcy had himself in his letter pointed out the shortcomings of certain members of the Bennett household, and just when this seemed to be less important due to his genuine friendship with the Gardiners, Lydia disgraces the family with her elopement. Darcy feels responsible for Wickham's actions, for he should have publicly dishonored him when he tried to elope with his sister.
Chapters 47 to 50 – Scandal

Summary
When the Gardiners and Elizabeth arrive at Longbourn they are brought up-to-date regarding Lydia's situation. Mr. Gardiner leaves to join Mr. Bennett in London, the latter returning soon after, leaving Gardiner to manage the situation.

Jane is running the household because Mrs. Bennett is indisposed in her room with hysterics. Mr. Bennett regrets not heeding Elizabeth's warning and resolves to be stricter with Kitty. The whole neighborhood is full of gossip concerning Lydia's shame, and what the future holds for her. In panic, Mr. Collins writes making useful remarks such as, "the death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison to this." "This false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family?" He advised Mr. Bennett to disown her in order to save the rest of the family.

At last the suspense in the household is released with a letter from Mr. Gardiner saying the two are to be wed, provided that Wickham's debts are paid and Lydia receives a yearly stipend. Mr. Bennett agrees, but is now concerned that he will be in debt to Mr. Gardiner who has no doubt settled Wickham's bills. Mrs. Bennett undergoes a transformation from hysterical depression to exuberance and starts making plans for wedding clothes etc.

Gardiner advises that Wickham has a commission in the north of England, and only Mrs. Bennett is despondent at the thought of the couple being so far away.

Elizabeth sees no hope of a future with Darcy for he will not wish to marry into a family of which Wickham is a member.

Interpretation
Austen now deals with a third type of marriage. We have seen the Bennett's who don't like each other very much; the Collins who have a businesslike marriage, and now Lydia and Wickham whose marriage is based on infatuation and lust.

Chapters 51 to 60 – Happy endings

Summary
The "happy couple" arrives at Longbourn acting as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened. In fact, Lydia is quite smug in having secured a husband in front of all her older sisters. (It is normal custom that daughters married according to age where at all possible).

Wickham seemed less enthusiastic and Elizabeth makes it plain to him that she is aware of his past, but will accept him into the family. Some time later, Lydia lets it slip that Darcy was present at her wedding, and so Elizabeth writes to her aunt, Mrs. Gardiner, for more information. It was in fact Darcy that had paid off Wickham's debts and bought him a commission in the army. Mrs. Gardiner tells Elizabeth that his motive for this was his love for Elizabeth.

Lydia and Wickham depart and only Mrs. Bennett is sad to see them go.

Bingley returns to Netherfield and he calls at Longbourn with Darcy. Although Mrs. Bennett is pleased to see Bingley, she makes Darcy feel uncomfortable. Bingley's relationship with Jane develops once more and he finally proposes.

Darcy leaves for London, and soon after, Longbourn receives a surprise visit from Lady Catherine de Bourgh. She has heard a rumor that Darcy and Elizabeth are about to be engaged. Lady Catherine is mindful of Elizabeth's previous impertinence and has come to warn Elizabeth off should Darcy propose. There follows a heated debate, "Miss Bennett, you ought to know that I am not to be trifled with ...... A report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. You are soon to be united with my nephew ...... I know it must be a scandalous falsehood." Elizabeth replies, "If you believed it impossible to be true ...... I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far." Lady Catherine: "I have come at once to insist upon having such a report universally contradicted." Elizabeth responds coolly, "Your coming to Longbourn, to see my and my family will be rather a confirmation of it; if, indeed, such a report is in existence." Despite Lady Catherine's demands, Elizabeth refuses to promise that she will not accept a proposal of marriage from Darcy. Fuming, Lady Catherine leaves.

Next day, Mr. Bennett receives a letter from Mr. Collins, which no one in the Bennett household can quite believe – that Darcy may propose to Elizabeth. Remember, the Gardiners are the only ones who know about Elizabeth's change of heart.

A few days later, Darcy and Bingley arrive at Longbourn. Darcy declares his love for Elizabeth and they agree to be married.
Mrs. Bennett is at a total loss concerning this new development. She immediately loses all disdain she had for Darcy, no doubt thinking about the many visits she can have to the Pemberley Estate. She says, “Oh, my dear Lizzie! Pray apologize for my having disliked him so much before. Dear, dear Lizzie! A house in the town! Everything that is charming! Three daughters married! £10,000 a year! Oh, Lord! What will become of me? I shall go distracted.”

Mr. Bennett is relieved that Darcy paid off Wickham for he will be under no obligation to pay the money back.

After the two marriages, life progresses happily for the newly-weds. Jane and Bingley move closer to Pemberley, and Kitty visits them on a regular basis, and improves considerably as a consequence.

At Longbourn, Mrs. Bennett continues her outrageous behavior, but is suitably distanced from Pemberley. Mary enjoys the situation of having no pretty sisters to compete with her. Wickham and Lydia continue to spend, spend, and spend.

Elizabeth becomes very close to Miss Darcy, and the Gardiners become close friends, for they were instrumental in bringing Darcy and Elizabeth together. Lady Catherine is never reconciled with Elizabeth.

**Interpretation**

Darcy’s unselfish involvement in Lydia’s marriage was done out of love for Elizabeth, and this singular action will help bring the couple together. When Elizabeth discovers this, through Lydia’s incapacity for keeping a secret, she realizes the depth of Darcy’s love for her.

The reader is pleased to see Wickham getting his just deserts, for Lydia will be a handful for him.

The reader now has a sense of anticipation that Darcy and Elizabeth will get together, but it comes in an unexpected form, with the intervention of Lady Catherine. She inadvertently becomes the catalyst that prompts Darcy to propose for a second time. In fact it is not a clear verbal proposal as he asks her if she still has the same feelings for him as when he first proposed. She replies that she has undergone a complete change of heart from that time, and this gives Darcy an overwhelming feeling of joy as the two walk side by side. “They walked on without knowing in what direction. There was too much to be thought, and felt, and said, for attention to any other objects.” They had an understanding.

We have seen various forms of marriage, and the last two are based on not just love, but also a similarity of feelings and points of view on the world in general, in other words – on compatibility.

In her conversation with Lady Catherine, Elizabeth is shown to be confident and self-assured. She is in control of the whole conversation, and is able to think on her feet and counter every move that Lady Catherine makes.

At the start of the book, we had the five Bennett girls searching for husbands. Three have been successful, and two of these have found husbands they can respect and love.

The storylines are brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and Austen gives a brief illustration of what is in store for the main characters of the book. She presents the reader with what they want - happy endings, and not only has she been successful in keeping the reader’s attention, but hopefully the reader will go on and read more of her works.

**Questions for study with ideas for answers**

Q: What significance does the book’s title ‘Pride and Prejudice’ have? Who does it relate to, and show how it stands in the way of romance?

Ideas:
At the start of the novel, it is clear that Darcy is the proud character, and that Elizabeth is prejudiced against him because of this.
The way Darcy behaves at the couple’s first meeting has more to do with his reserved nature, in that he does not feel at home with strangers.
Elizabeth’s prejudice initially stems from her overhearing a conversation between Bingley and Darcy concerning her. At this very early stage, Darcy knows nothing about Elizabeth. He has no idea regarding her intelligence and wit, and these are the characteristics, which challenge him throughout the novel causing him to grow increasingly fond of her.
Austen cleverly uses irony throughout the book, and Darcy actually accuses Elizabeth of being proud, when he proposes to her in Chapter 34. At the same point in the novel, Elizabeth accuses Darcy of being prejudiced towards her.
His proposal was proud in its execution for he explains that it is made against his social background that he is prepared to marry someone of lower status, prepared to suffer the hostility from his relations, all of which sounds as if he is doing Elizabeth a favor. In this awkward situation, he fails to emphasize that he is making the proposal because of his depth of feeling for her, but this is eventually made evident to Elizabeth through his steadfast support when her family is faced with scandal.
It is only when the two parties appreciate the shallowness of their pride and prejudice and they allow these traits to melt away that romance can blossom between them. Elizabeth also exhibits prejudice against her close friend, Charlotte, when she marries for convenience instead of love, and when this transpires to be a satisfactory arrangement for both parties, she is forced to eat some of her words.

Q: Although having never married, Jane Austen makes comments regarding marriage in Regency society. How does she do this?

Ideas:
Mr. and Mrs. Bennett: Their marriage must be regarded as failed. They do not appear to like one another much, and their conversations are almost exclusively devoted to their daughters’ situations. Because Mr. Bennett has failed to provide for his family financially, Mrs. Bennett is driven to see her daughters settled, and hopefully at least one will secure a husband rich enough to provide financially for the rest of the family. Just as Mr. Bennett failed financially, he has failed to produce a male heir, and his family is at the mercy of Mr. Collins, Mr. Bennett’s cousin, who will inherit Longbourn. Mr. Bennett spends his time in his retreat in the library, while Mrs. Bennett’s life is filled by her daughters, and gossiping with her neighbors.

Mr. and Mrs. Collins: Both these parties were pressured into marriage, Collins by his wealthy patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, “a person not to be trifled with”, and Charlotte, Elizabeth’s close friend, who seeks the security that marriage will bring. This is a businesslike arrangement, a marriage of convenience and not for love, and both parties get what they desire out of the arrangement. Collins acquires himself a respectable wife, who will manage his parsonage efficiently, is acceptable to his circle of friends, and meets Lady Catherine’s requirements. Charlotte will obtain a secure way of life, and just as Collins is controlled by Lady Catherine, she will in time be able to exert control over Collins. She likes to be involved in the pastimes of the day, such as needlework etc., and she has already set up her sitting room as a retreat from her husband, so she also has her own space.

Lydia Bennett and Wickham: Lydia is just fifteen when she elopes with Wickham, and she is infatuated with him. Wickham is shown to be a philanderer, and fortune hunter, and clearly does not intend to make this relationship an honorable one for Lydia’s sake. He merely has a sexual attraction to her and therefore, the union is based on lust. However, with Darcy’s intervention Wickham is forced to marry Lydia, and he buys a commission for Wickham in order to provide some security. Lydia comes best out of the deal for she has, in her eyes, outwitted her older and prettier sisters Jane and Elizabeth, and she will have quite an entertaining life as the wife of an officer. Nowadays, this arrangement would not last and would end in divorce, but in Regency times this was more difficult, and we do not learn how this relationship develops.

Bingley and Jane & Darcy and Elizabeth: Austen shows that the marriages above are not perfect, and she also states that a marriage must be a combination of the entire above, plus being based on love, and most importantly, compatibility. This is the recipe for a perfect marriage. She considers that these four characters, although different, have arrived at the perfect marriage because each couple is compatible. Bingley requires a beautiful wife who has the social graces and Jane requires a husband who is handsome and caring, and will be a good father for her children. Darcy requires an intelligent and spirited wife, and Elizabeth meets these requirements. Elizabeth requires a husband who will not suffocate her spirit and care for her.

Q: Explain why ‘Pride and Prejudice’ contains letters from the various characters.

Ideas:
Letter writing was the most important means of communication in Regency times, next to conversation. Austen made clever use of letter writing in this novel, as the way in which a letter is written is a good insight into a person’s character. The letter from Mr. Collins to Mr. Bennett in Chapter 13, and the way in which it is written gives a clear picture of his character. He shows his arrogance and his peculiar nature through the lines of his letter. He is really just an upstart, who is fortunate enough to have a wealthy patron. This fortunate turn of events has made him proud, and he clearly delights in having some power over the Bennett family. He would, no doubt, be quite capable of obtaining a wife in his local parish, but he wishes to take advantage of his authority over the Bennett family and to choose one of the five sisters.

In Darcy’s letters, he has a ‘particular’ style. They are usually quite long and deliberate in format. Like his behavior in the company of strangers, he is not totally at ease in writing letters, and he takes his time ensuring that they are formed correctly. Like his behavior throughout the book, he considers his moves carefully and is not prone to making rash statements or actions. The content of his letters comes across as being honest and true, and the letter Elizabeth receives from him the day after she rejected his proposal of marriage is crucial to the plot of the book. Darcy has to ensure that this letter has the desired effect on the woman that he loves. He cleverly appeals to her sense of justice, and
Elizabeth ends up reading the letter several times. In this way she can see that he is honest and this letter helps to reduce the prejudice she has for him.

Bingley is described by his sisters as being impetuous and changeable, and is in some ways a careless man. This is highlighted in his letter writing, which is in total contrast to Darcy's. His letters are short with some words missing, and with the occasional blot detracting from their overall appearance. Bingley makes up for this inadequacy in the written word, by his mastery of the spoken word.

When Mr. Gardiner writes to the Bennett's about Lydia's disappearance, he is clearly mindful about his family's feelings, showing him to be a caring man. He also does not write until he has something substantial to report, and although this increases the tension back in Longbourn, he obviously views the situation, as 'no news is good news'. His letter is able to assuage the anxiety that the Bennett's feel, and it comes over that he is a man that has the situation under control.

Lydia writes to Colonel Foster's wife, Harriet, and we get a real insight into her character. She is totally irresponsible, and has not a notion as to the consequences of her behavior on the reputation of her family. She seems to be divorced from the real world and thinks that she is a character in a pantomime or fairy tale. She clearly does not see Wickham for what he is, and she believes herself to be in love with him, but she is hardly of an age to know what she feels. She sees her future life as a long series of dances and buying clothes and other frivolous items.