

Classic Readers

Pride & Prejudice

Jane Austen

retold by Jenny Dooley - Virginia Evans



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New Neighbours

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man with a large fortune must be looking for a wife. And so, when such a wealthy young man moves into a neighbourhood, the local families hope that one of their daughters will soon be married to him.

One sunny autumn morning in their home at Longbourn, Mrs Bennet announced some important news.

"Have you heard that Netherfield Park has been let at last? It's a wonderful opportunity for our girls."

When Mr Bennet made no reply, Mrs Bennet continued.

"Don't you want to know who's taken it?"

Mr Bennet smiled ever so slightly as he responded to his wife.

"You want to tell me and I have no objection to hearing it."

"A wealthy single man by the name of Bingley is moving in."

"Really? How does it affect our girls?"

"Mr Bennet, you must know! I am hoping he will marry one of them! You should go and visit Mr Bingley as soon as he moves in."

"I don't think it's necessary for me to go. You and the girls can go, if you like."

"You know very well that we can't. Just think of what a marriage it would be for one of them. Even the Lucases are going and, as you know, they hardly ever go to welcome newcomers."

"I don't see why you can't go instead. I'll send Mr Bingley a note to give him my permission to marry whichever of them he chooses, although I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"You will do no such thing. Lizzy is no better than the others –

she's not as pretty as Jane or as outgoing as Lydia, and yet you always favour her."

"Well, they're all silly and ignorant, of course, but Lizzy is a little quicker to understand things than her sisters."

"Mr Bennet, how can you speak of your children like that? You so enjoy teasing me and have no concern for my nerves!"

Despite what he had said to his wife, Mr Bennet did visit Mr Bingley on the day after Mr Bingley moved in. That evening he decided to break the news to his family in his own way. He noticed Elizabeth repairing a hat.

"I hope Mr Bingley will like that hat, Lizzy."

Mrs Bennet responded before Lizzy could say a word.

"But, if we aren't going to visit Mr Bingley, how will he ever see Lizzy's hat?"

"You're forgetting, Mama, that we'll meet him at the public balls. Mrs Long has promised to introduce us."

Mr Bennet played along.

"When is your next ball, Lizzy?"

"There's one in Meryton in two weeks' time."

This worried Mrs Bennet.

"But Mrs Long will be away till the day before the ball. How can she introduce us, when she won't yet know him herself? Oh, I'm sick of Mr Bingley!"

Mr Bennet quite enjoyed the next moment.

"I'm sorry to hear that. If you had told me, I wouldn't have visited him this morning. Now, we cannot simply ignore him."

Mrs Bennet and her daughters' concern turned to joy. Mr Bingley was certain to be at the ball in Meryton!





Mr Collins and Mr Wickham

Comprehension

Read or listen to Chapter 3 and fill in the names.

- 1 is looking for a wife.
- 2 tells Mr Collins that Jane will soon be engaged.
- 3 holds a dinner party at her home.
- 4 and Lydia are very excited about meeting officers.
- 5 asks Elizabeth questions about Mr Darcy.
- 6 holds a ball at Netherfield.
- 7 is concerned about Elizabeth's respect for Mr Wickham.
- 8 tells Elizabeth that Mr Wickham has been telling her stories.
- 9 tells Elizabeth that Mr Bingley does not know Mr Wickham personally.
- 10 believes that Darcy has wronged Wickham.

What do you think?

A *Discuss the following questions.*

- 1 Judging from the text, what is your opinion of Mr Collins?
- 2 How do Mr Wickham's words affect Elizabeth's feelings about Darcy? Are Mr and Miss Bingley also affected? Why (not)?
- 3 Do you think it is proper to discuss personal issues, especially if they concern someone else?

B *Find the following extracts from Chapter 3 and discuss their meanings.*

- 1 p. 27: "Maybe he couldn't bear the thought of my having something granted by his father."
- 2 p. 27: "Mr Wickham has indeed got a pleasant manner that ensures he makes many friends, but he has a problem keeping them."

Language Practice

- 1 Use the verbs in the box to fill in the blanks and make collocations. Then fill in the sentences below, putting the verbs in the correct form.

• bear • catch • attend • make(X2)
• set up • have • join

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------|---------|----------|
| 1 | the thought | 5 | camp |
| 2 | no doubt | 6 | a ball |
| 3 | sb off guard | 7 | the army |
| 4 | amends | 8 | sense |

- 1 Wickham won't be the ball at Netherfield because he has to go to London on business.
- 2 Although Mr Bingley hasn't heard the whole story, he no doubt that Darcy hasn't wronged Wickham.
- 3 Lydia and Kitty can't wait to meet the officers who have camp near Meryton.
- 4 Wickham thinks that Darcy couldn't the thought of him having something granted by the late Mr Darcy.
- 5 Mr Collins sees his marriage to one of the Bennet girls as a way for him to amends for inheriting their father's estate.
- 6 Wickham is left with no choice but to the army, when Darcy prevents him from becoming a priest.
- 7 Darcy Elizabeth off guard when he suddenly comes up to her and asks her to dance with him.
- 8 After talking to Jane, it all sense to Elizabeth, who is convinced of Darcy's shameful behaviour to Wickham.

- 11 Look at the word list for Chapter 3. Use ten words/phrases from it to write a summary of the chapter.

A Wedding

Comprehension

Read or listen to Chapter 4 and correct the mistakes.

- 1 Mr Collins assumes Kitty would be happy to marry him.
- 2 Mr Bennet is very upset that Elizabeth has refused Mr Collins' proposal.
- 3 Elizabeth hurts Mr Collins' feelings with her rejection.
- 4 Jane is very disappointed that Elizabeth won't see Darcy for the whole winter.
- 5 Charlotte tries to direct Mr Collins' attentions back onto Elizabeth.
- 6 To Elizabeth's delight, Charlotte accepts Mr Collins' marriage proposal.
- 7 Mrs Gardiner advises Elizabeth to encourage Wickham.
- 8 Elizabeth cannot compete with Miss King's beauty.

What do you think?

A *Discuss the following questions.*

- 1 Elizabeth and Charlotte appear to be very different from each other as characters. Refer to the text to explain how.
- 2 What can you tell about Mr and Mrs Bennet's relationship? Who do you think the head of the family is? Why?
- 3 What do you think Elizabeth's stay in Kent will be like? Explain.

B *Find the following extracts from Chapter 4 and discuss their meanings.*

- 1 p. 31: "Come now, I know it's the custom for you young ladies to refuse the first offer, but just think about what it is you're turning down."
- 2 p. 33: "This leaves you with an unfortunate choice. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr Collins, and I will never see you again if you do."

Weddings

Marriage is a prevalent theme in “Pride and Prejudice”, being Mrs Bennet’s constant concern as regards her daughters. In Jane Austen’s time, education and professions were not accessible to women, whose only chance of having an income was either by getting married or receiving an inheritance. Marriage, therefore, was always seen in connection with money and respectability, and was the only way for a young woman to secure herself financially and not become an old maid.

No matter how different woman’s position is today, all human societies embrace the institution of marriage. Every culture has its own distinctive way of celebrating a wedding, placing emphasis on every single aspect of it, including clothing, food, music and rituals. These all have symbolic meaning. Examples include the following:

Clothing

In China, the bride and groom both usually wear red, since red is traditionally the colour of happiness and good fortune. The phoenix symbol is woven into the bride’s clothing whereas the groom’s clothes bear a woven pattern of the dragon symbol. These symbols are rooted in ancient Chinese mythology.



Food

The traditional French wedding cake, called croquembouche, or crunch in the mouth, consists of buns filled with crème patisserie, built into a pyramid and decorated with fine strands of caramel. Other Western wedding cakes are made in tiers and have miniature figurines of the bride and groom on the top.

Pride & Prejudice

Free-spirited Elizabeth dislikes Mr Darcy, thinking he is the most conceited man in the world, the moment he looks down on her at a dance. She is in for a surprise, though, as she soon discovers that the proud and arrogant Darcy is a well-mannered, caring person. First impressions are not always to be trusted in this witty story of love and marriage.



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