

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

by Jane Austen



THE AUTHOR

Jane Austen (1775-1817) was the seventh child and second daughter of an Anglican rector in a country parish in Hampshire, England. She had a happy childhood. She read widely, though she had little formal schooling, and she and her siblings delighted in writing and performing plays at home. At the age of twelve, she began to write parodies of popular literary works, and set her hand to her first serious writing project when she was nineteen. That project was an epistolary novel called *Lady Susan* which, while not a work of genius, was good enough to encourage her to keep writing.

Austen's novels evolved through years of writing and rewriting. In 1795, she began a novel called *Elinor and Marianne* that was finally published in 1810 as *Sense and Sensibility*. She started writing *First Impressions* in 1796; it was initially rejected for publication, but later saw print in 1812 as *Pride and Prejudice*. She began work in 1799 on a novel called *Susan* (not to be confused with her initial effort), which was published posthumously in 1818 as *Northanger Abbey*. She wrote three other novels as well - *Mansfield Park* (1813), *Emma* (1815), and *Persuasion* (published posthumously in 1818).

Her personal life was a happy but quiet one, consisting largely of her writing, along with the kind of country amusements - balls, parties, and teas - described in her novels. The family struggled financially between the death of her father in 1805 and the publication of her first novel in 1810. She never married, though in her late twenties she received a proposal from a local aristocrat named Harris Bigg-Wither. She accepted, but changed her mind the next morning. She always maintained a close relationship with her older sister Cassandra, though we know little of her private life, because not only did she guard her privacy very closely, but her family either censored or destroyed almost all of her correspondence after her death.

Jane Austen died in 1817 of what is now believed to have been Addison's disease. She knew she was dying, and raced against time and declining strength to finish *Persuasion*, the novel containing the character considered to be most like Jane herself - the plain but witty Anne Elliot. Her brother Henry arranged for the publication of her last two novels after her death. Only then did people become aware of the author of these popular works of literature - all the novels published during her lifetime had been published anonymously.

PLOT SUMMARY

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is the story of the Bennet family, and Mrs. Bennet's frantic attempts to marry her five daughters to eligible young men, the wealthier the better. The narrative focuses on three budding romances - between Jane and Bingley, Elizabeth and Darcy, and Lydia and Wickham.

As the story begins, the Bennet have received the news that a wealthy young man, Charles Bingley, has moved into the neighborhood. Mrs. Bennet is sure that he will marry one of her girls, and begins scheming for him to meet them. They have their chance at a ball he organizes at his home, Netherfield. At the ball, Bingley takes an evident interest in Jane, the oldest daughter, but all are offended by Bingley's friend Darcy, who is too proud to mix with country folk beneath his station. In the weeks that follow, Darcy begins to be attracted to Elizabeth, but she is still repelled by him. This makes Miss Bingley jealous, since she has her cap set for Darcy as well.

Shortly thereafter, Collins, the heir to the Bennet property, visits Longbourn and announces his intention of marrying one of the Bennet girls. He first ogles Jane, but Mrs. Bennet tells him "Jane is soon to be engaged" - assuming that Mr. Bingley will eventually propose to her. He then turns his attentions to Elizabeth, but she makes no secret of her disgust with him, and rejects his proposal in no uncertain terms, horrifying her mother in the process. At about the same time, the girls meet Wickham, an officer in the local militia; Lydia's obsession with handsome soldiers foreshadows the trouble to come. Elizabeth is also attracted to Wickham, which sets her up to believe his lies about Darcy, who he claims arbitrarily deprived him of a deserved preferment.

Collins then proposes to Charlotte, who accepts him. The Bingleys and Darcy then return to town, where Miss Bingley sends poisonous correspondence to Jane, suggesting that Bingley is soon to marry Darcy's sister. Jane is invited to come to London by her aunt and uncle, and hopes to have the opportunity to see Bingley while she is there. Meanwhile, Wickham turns his attentions to a wealthy young woman named Miss King. While in London, Jane and Elizabeth visit Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, a wealthy woman who thinks it is her birthright to order everyone else around. Elizabeth, unlike everyone else Lady Catherine has ever met, stands up to her bullying. While they are in London, Darcy proposes to Elizabeth against his better judgment, and she haughtily rejects him, citing his supposed injustice to Wickham and his role in keeping Bingley and Jane apart. From this point on, these two begin to develop love for one another.

His pride stricken, Darcy writes a letter to Elizabeth to justify his behavior in the matter of Wickham, explaining that the young man had tried to seduce his young sister in order to obtain her fortune. When this is confirmed by Darcy's cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam, Elizabeth is mortified. Lydia, meanwhile, is invited to spend the summer in Brighton with the wife of the regimental commander; she has already been flirting with Wickham (Miss King is now out of the picture), but her father, Elizabeth, and Darcy all fail to stop the disaster that is about to occur. Elizabeth is then invited to vacation in the north with her aunt and uncle. While there, they visit Darcy's estate at Pemberley, believing him to be away. The visit shows a side of Darcy that Elizabeth had never imagined - not only does the house reflect the man, but the servants speak in glowing terms of the kindness and generosity of their master. When Darcy himself appears, he acts like a perfect gentleman, and Elizabeth's opinion of him is clearly changing. This alteration is confirmed by her meeting with Darcy's sister Georgiana.

Word then arrives that Lydia has eloped with Wickham without benefit of clergy. Elizabeth turns to Darcy for help, while Mr. Bennet stands by helplessly and Mrs. Bennet goes into hysterics. Mr. Gardiner, the uncle, agrees to look for the “couple” in London. It is Darcy, however, who finds them and pays Wickham to marry Lydia, although at this point everyone still thinks Gardiner has accomplished this miracle. When Elizabeth discovers what Darcy has done, her love for him grows even more, but she is convinced that he cannot care for her because of the disgrace into which her family has been brought.

Bingley and Darcy return to the countryside, and Bingley soon proposes to Jane (at this point the reader does not know that Darcy has worked to remove the barriers that he had erected between them). Lady Catherine unexpectedly appears at Longbourn, demanding that Elizabeth renounce any desire to marry Darcy. Since any movement in this direction is news to her, she takes hope from the insulting visit, while doing all in her power to put the obnoxious Lady Catherine in her place. Soon after, Darcy visits and proposes to Elizabeth, and she joyfully accepts, later assuring her family that she really is marrying for love.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Mr. Bennet - A gentleman of modest income, he is cynical, witty, and eccentric. He loves Jane and Elizabeth very much, but considers the other women in his house to be fools.
- Mrs. Bennet - A foolish woman whose chief goal in life is to see her daughters married to wealthy men.
- Jane Bennet - The eldest of the Bennet girls, she is beautiful, kind, sweet, and shy. She is afraid to show her love for Bingley, and almost loses him as a result.
- Elizabeth Bennet - The protagonist of the novel, Elizabeth is intelligent, strong-willed and independent-minded. Her tongue is sometimes too sharp for her own good, and she tends to make snap judgments about people that are not always accurate. Her initial dislike of Darcy turns to love as she discovers his true character.
- Mary Bennet - A little snob who prides herself on her intelligence and musical ability, both of which she is lacking.
- Catherine Bennet (Kitty) - Easily swayed, she tends to be dominated by her other sisters, especially Lydia.
- Lydia Bennet - The youngest of the Bennet sisters, a wild, fun-loving but naive teenager. Gossipy and self-centered, she easily falls for Wickham’s line, and never does realize how much damage she has done to her family in the process.
- Charles Bingley - A genial, kindly young man with a large fortune. He falls in love with Jane, but is dissuaded by Darcy, though the two are ultimately reconciled and marry.

- Miss Bingley - Bingley's snobbish sister.
- Fitzwilliam Darcy - An intelligent, honest, very proud, and extremely wealthy young man, he is Bingley's best friend. He falls in love with Elizabeth, but she rejects him. After he rescues Lydia from Wickham's clutches, she sees his true character and they marry.
- Georgiana Darcy - Darcy's shy younger sister, she had almost been deceived by Wickham until Darcy prevented it. She is befriended by Elizabeth.
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh - Darcy's aunt, a rich and self-centered noblewoman and Mr. Collins' patroness. She tries to prevent Darcy's marriage to Elizabeth, but only winds up encouraging it.
- Mr. Collins - A pompous clergyman who is subservient to those in higher social classes. He is in line to inherit Mr. Bennet's property. When he proposes to Elizabeth, she rejects him in no uncertain terms, and he winds up marrying her best friend, Charlotte Lucas.
- Charlotte Lucas - The Bennets' neighbor and Elizabeth's best friend, she marries Collins because she is afraid that it is her last chance at marriage, and feels that she will at least be able to live comfortably.
- George Wickham - A handsome, fortune-hunting military man, he seduces Lydia and convinces her to run away with him. Darcy, whose sister Wickham had earlier tried to entrap, finds them and forces him to marry her.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” (p.225 - first line of novel)

“The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.” (referring to Darcy, p.229)

“I have no wish of denying that I did every thing in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself.” (Darcy, p.333)

“You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner.... You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it.” (Elizabeth, p.334)

“‘How despicably I have acted!’ she cried - ‘I who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! Yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself.’” (Elizabeth, p.343)

“‘If you were to give me forty such men, I never could be so happy as you. Till I have your disposition, your godness, I never can have your happiness.’” (Elizabeth, p.423)

“‘I do, I do like him,’ she replied with tears in her eyes, ‘I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms.’” (Elizabeth, p.438)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Jane Austen once described the subject of her novels as “three or four families in a country village.” Such a narrowly proscribed scope cuts her characters off from larger historical movements or philosophical discussions of the day, such as the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and Romanticism, and limits her plots to the events of everyday life. Do you consider this to be an advantage or a disadvantage? Why? Use specific incidents and characters from *Pride and Prejudice* to support your conclusion.
2. Charlotte Bronte, the author of *Jane Eyre*, did not like Jane Austen’s work because she thought Austen failed to write about her characters’ hearts. Do you think this criticism is accurate? What incidents in *Pride and Prejudice* give evidence of the depth or superficiality of the emotional lives of Austen’s characters?
3. Jane Austen’s work falls into the gap in the history of the English novel between Gothic and Romantic literature. Though Austen satirizes the Gothic novel in *Northanger Abbey*, she shows little inclination to follow the trends of the burgeoning Romantic movement. Using *Pride and Prejudice* as an example, show how Austen’s writing differs from the styles that preceded and followed her.
4. Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* was originally titled *First Impressions* - a title she had to change when another author published a work of the same name in 1800. Was her original title an appropriate one? What role do first impressions play in the story? In which cases do first impressions turn out to be accurate, and in which cases are they not?

5. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, after Jane becomes engaged to Bingley, she wishes that Elizabeth could be as happy as she is. Elizabeth replies, "If you were to give me forty such men, I never could be so happy as you. Till I have your disposition, your goodness, I can never have your happiness." Do you think Elizabeth's statement is true? Is it better to be good, always thinking the best of people, and be happy, or to see the world more accurately and be less happy?
6. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennet is an appealing character because of his wry wit and honesty, but it is also very clear that he has been a failure as a father. In what ways does Mr. Bennet let his children down? How does his action (or inaction) affect the behavior of his daughters? his wife? the development of the story?
7. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte doesn't marry Mr. Collins for love. Why does she marry him? Are her reasons valid? Are they fair to Mr. Collins?
8. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, both Elizabeth and Darcy undergo transformations over the course of the book. Of what do these changes consist, and how are they brought about? Could the changes in one have occurred without the changes in the other?
9. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh are wonderful comic creations. What makes them so funny? How does Elizabeth's perception of them affect the reader's trust in her views of other people in the book, particularly Wickham and Darcy?
10. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the title describes the heart of the conflict separating Elizabeth and Darcy. Give specific examples to illustrate their pride and prejudice. How are these stubborn sins that keep them apart overcome in the story? To what extent should the resolution of their conflict serve as a model for dealing with similar problems today?
11. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the great events of the day, such as the Napoleonic Wars, are not mentioned at all, allowing the author to concentrate all her attention on the private drama being worked out in the everyday lives of her characters. Some have suggested that it is this very insularity of the novel that gives it such a timeless appeal. Do you consider *Pride and Prejudice* to be timeless? In what ways are the themes of the book relevant to all ages, and in what ways are they peculiar to the time in which Austen lived?
12. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the problem of human pride as a barrier to healthy relationships is explored from many angles. Use specific characters and incidents from the novel to distinguish between pride that is good and proper and that which is destructive and inappropriate.
13. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the moral values of the author are grounded more in society as a whole than in the organized church or explicitly-stated religious principles. To what extent is the world of Jane Austen's novels a Christian world? Use specific characters and incidents to support your assertions.

14. Class consciousness plays a large role in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. To what extent is Austen critical of the class divisions of English society, and to what extent does she accept them as inevitable? Use specific incidents from the novel to support your conclusions.
15. Compare and contrast the relationships between Jane and Bingley and Elizabeth and Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Which relationship do you consider to be stronger by the end of the novel? Why?
16. To what extent does Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* serve as a critique of the place of women in early nineteenth-century British society? What aspects of the place of women does she consider unjust? How does the novel serve to make her point?
17. Jane Austen characteristically allows dialogue rather than description to create a picture of the characters in her novels in the minds of the readers. Give examples of this from *Pride and Prejudice*. Is this more or less effective than description? What does it say about Austen's understanding about the key to a person's character?
18. Compare and contrast the views of love found in Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In your essay consider the authors' views on the motivations of men and women, the characteristics essential for love to blossom, and the requirements for a good marriage.
19. Compare and contrast Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to Amanda Wingfield in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. How are these two overbearing mothers the same? How are they different? Do they have the same approach to the marriages of their daughters? for the same reasons? Support your arguments with details from the two stories.
20. Compare and contrast the standards of sexual morality affirmed in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Do the two women hold the same standard? Is the idea of sexual morality found in the two books a biblical one?
21. Compare and contrast the characters of Jane in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Elizabeth in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. What personality traits do these two female protagonists have in common, and in what ways are they different? Which character do you consider more admirable, and why?
22. Compare and contrast the roles played by social class in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Which author's critique of class distinctions is more severe? Why do you think so?

23. The theme of love between people of differing social classes is common in nineteenth-century English novels. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, the woman is of a lower social class than the man. In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and R.D. Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*, the man is of the lower class. In all four cases, however, the narrator or protagonist aspires to the love of someone higher than himself or herself. What is the significance of this? Use illustrations from *Pride and Prejudice* and one of the others to support your analysis. Be sure to comment on the social criticism enabled by such a plot device.
24. Both Bulstrode in *Middlemarch* and Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* offend the moral standards of the society in which they live. Whose offense is the more serious in your opinion? Which man is punished more severely by the society in which he lives? Why do you think this is the case?
25. Both Rosamond in *Middlemarch* and Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice* are consummately selfish women, though the nature of their self-centeredness differs significantly. Both marry young, and face long years ahead with an unsuitable mate. Which of the two do you think would be more likely to overcome her selfishness and lead a productive life? Why do you think so?
26. Jane Austen once described the subjects of her novels as "three or four families in a country village." The same description in some ways fits the writings of George Eliot, yet the two also differ in the ways in which they utilize such an isolated setting. Compare and contrast the roles of the "country village" setting in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.
27. Compare and contrast the elopements of Maggie and Stephen Guest in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and Lydia and Wickham in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In doing so, consider not only the outcomes for the people involved but also the consequences for the respective families and the societal responses to the behavior of the couples.
28. Compare and contrast the initial meetings of Margaret Hale and John Thornton at the Hales' dinner party in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* and Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy at the dance in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. How are their first impressions similar and how are they different? How do these initial encounters foreshadow the relationships that are to develop later?
29. Jane Austen incorporated much of her own personality into the characters of some of her heroines, such as Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elinor Dashwood of *Sense and Sensibility*, and Anne Elliot of *Persuasion*. What do these heroines have in common? What do their common qualities tell you about what the author valued, both in herself and in other women? Be sure to support your argument with specific details from all three novels.

30. If Jane Austen's heroines are in many ways similar, her heroes are more diverse. Consider Fitzwilliam Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice*, Edward Ferrars of *Sense and Sensibility*, and Frederick Wentworth of *Persuasion*. What sets these leading men apart from one another? Consider both character qualities and the dynamics of their relationships with the heroines of the stories. Do they have any important characteristics in common?
31. Compare and contrast the handsome cads in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Persuasion*. What do Wickham, Willoughby, and William Elliot have in common? Do they have any important differences? If so, what are they?
32. Jane Austen lived on the cusp between the Enlightenment and the Romantic Era. Some scholars have suggested that the arc of her writing career reflects a movement from one to the other in her thinking. They suggest that, while *Pride and Prejudice* shows the heroine making vital decisions on purely rational grounds and *Sense and Sensibility* shows the value of both reason and emotion, Austen's final novel *Persuasion* validates following one's feelings, even if they lead one in opposition to the wishes of one's family and the social values of the day. Do you agree with this assessment? Support your conclusion with details from all three novels.
33. Parents in the novels of Jane Austen are often not portrayed in very flattering ways. Consider the characters of Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion* and Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. How do these foolish characters serve as important plot devices for the author? How do they serve as vehicles of social criticism?
34. Compare and contrast Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* with the same author's *Pride and Prejudice*. Critics often consider the earlier work a practice run for the more famous novel. Be sure in your comparison to note both similar characters and similar incidents that bind the two novels together. In what ways is the developing skill of Jane Austen visible when comparing the two works?
35. Compare and contrast the sexual mores contained in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. How do the two stories demonstrate the social strictures faced by men and women seeking to know one another better? Are these strictures healthy or oppressive? Do they serve to protect people from harmful relationships or encourage them to form lifelong relationships on shallow foundations? Use examples from the novels to support your analysis.
36. Compare the characters of Ginevra Fanshawe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* and Lydia Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. To what extent are their values similar? To what extent are the consequences of their priorities comparable? Discuss the views of such sets of values held by the authors of the two novels, using details from the stories to support your conclusions.

37. Both Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* deal with the evils and necessities of marrying for money. Though both authors clearly do not like the practice, how do they differ in their views of it? Use specifics from both novels to answer the question.
38. Both Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* deal with the dangers of depending on first impressions of people, and part of the effectiveness of both plots depends on the villains initially creating positive impressions of themselves. Discuss how this technique on the part of the authors is carried out in the portrayals of George Wickham, Sir Percival Glyde, and Count Fosco.
39. "Nerves" play an important role in the characterizations of Frederick Fairlie in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Both characters are caricatures, extreme in their self-absorption, yet both play central roles in the plots of the novels in which they are involved. Compare and contrast the two authors' treatments of hypochondria and self-absorption. Consider the ways in which readers are intended to react to the two characters in your analysis.
40. Emily Bronte's sister Charlotte, the author of *Jane Eyre*, did not like Jane Austen's work because she thought Austen failed to write about her characters' hearts. Do you think this criticism is accurate? Compare Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* to *Pride and Prejudice* in terms of the depth or superficiality of the emotional lives the characters. Use specific examples.
41. A comparison of the works of Jane Austen and Emily Bronte illustrates clearly the changes introduced into literature by the Romantic movement. Choose one specific scene or character from *Wuthering Heights* and *Pride and Prejudice* and use it to discuss the difference between Romanticism and the style of literature that preceded it.
42. Compare and contrast the views of love presented in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. How do the two authors understand love differently? Is one more biblical than the other? How do the two understand the relationship between love and marriage?
43. When asked by an interviewer what her ambition as a writer was, Harper Lee responded by saying, "All I want to be is the Jane Austen of South Alabama." To what extent did she succeed? Compare and contrast Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, paying special attention to the treatment of middle-class small-town life in the stories.
44. Compare and contrast the parenting skills of Dr. Primrose in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Mr. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. What are their respective strengths and weaknesses? Which do you consider the better father, and why?

45. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* is mentioned with approval by Jane Austen in her novel *Emma*, but the influences of Goldsmith's work can be seen much more clearly in *Pride and Prejudice*. Compare and contrast the two works, giving special attention to characters and plot devices. Do the two authors use these characters and devices in the same ways? Why or why not? Use specifics from both books to support your argument.
46. Compare and contrast the mothers, Mrs. Primrose and Mrs. Bennet, in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In pointing out similarities and differences, also address the social conventions being satirized by the two authors in their novels.
47. In Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, sisters become attached to men whose characters they misunderstand – a supposed gentleman who turns out to be a scoundrel and a perceived villain who turns out to be a gentleman. Compare and contrast the roles played by Squire Thornhill and Burchell in the former and Wickham and Darcy in the latter. How do these characters advance the plots and themes of the two novels? Do the two authors use these relationships in the same ways? Be sure to support your analysis with details from both books.
48. Compare the views of marriage and its relationship to love, morality, and economic concerns in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Though Austen wrote a generation later, to what extent do the view of marriage in the two books reflect the same cultural milieu and contain the same criticism of that environment? Use specifics from both novels to support your arguments.
49. Compare and contrast Mrs. Hardcastle in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with regard to their attitudes toward the marriages of their children. Consider the importance to both women of marriages arranged by parents along with factors of wealth and social status. In what ways do the two authors mine the qualities of the mothers for comic purposes? In what ways do they help develop the main themes of the stories?
50. Compare and contrast Mrs. Gibson in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* with Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Which is the more effective comic figure? Which is the more annoying? Given that the two novels were written about fifty years apart, what social conditions are the two novelists satirizing through their portrayals of these two wives?
51. Compare and contrast Mr. Gibson in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* and Mr. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Both men prove to be ineffective in dealing with their difficult wives. What personality traits in the two men cause this problem? Which of the two turns out to be stronger and more admirable in addressing the conflicts that arise in the course of the two stories?

52. In chapter six of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, Mrs. Hamley, on first meeting Molly, says, "I think we shall be great friends. I like your face, and I am always guided by first impressions." *First Impressions*, of course, was the original title of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. To what extent does reliance on first impressions drive the plot of Gaskell's final novel? Do they play the same role as in Austen's famous story? Why or why not?
53. Both Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* are accounts of a parent seeking to control the lives of his or her children in order to realize the parent's ambitions. Though the stories are in most ways very different, the negative impacts of this behavior on the children and their relationship to their parents are somewhat similar. Give particular attention to Biff and Lydia as you discuss the negative consequences of what some today might refer to as "helicopter parenting." How and why did Jane and Elizabeth manage to avoid similar consequences?
54. Compare and contrast the plight of Antonia when she becomes pregnant out of wedlock in Willa Cather's *My Antonia* and that of Lydia under similar circumstances in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Consider the reasons for the girls' actions, the reactions of those around them, the ways in which the girls respond to their circumstances, and the impact on their future lives in your analysis.
55. All of Jane Austen's protagonists undergo change in the course of the novels in which they are found. Compare and contrast the changes undergone by the title character in *Emma* and Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Pay special attention to the role of repentance in the changes the two young women experience.
56. Jane Austen often included weak father-figures in her novels. Compare and contrast the fathers in *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*. What do Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Bennet have in common? In what ways are they different? Consider not only their character qualities, but also the ways in which they influence the lives of their daughters.
57. Miss Bates in Jane Austen's *Emma* and Mrs. Bennet in the same author's *Pride and Prejudice* share the trait of lacking a filter between their brains and their mouths. How does their talkativeness make them comic figures? Do you find them more humorous or more annoying? Compare and contrast the roles their uncontrolled tongues play in the two novels.