

## *PRIDE & PREJUDICE* – LITERARY ANALYSIS PAPER QUESTIONS

Choose one (1) question to answer in two (2) pages.

Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet are a source of much humor in the early chapters of the novel. Write an analysis of these two characters. First, consider them separately. What adjectives would you use to describe each character? What are some humorous comments each one makes? Why do we laugh at these comments? Then, consider them as a couple. How would you describe the Bennets' marriage? Is it an example of a happy marriage? Why might Austen have opened the novel by sketching their relationship? Use examples of dialogue and other evidence from the novel to back up your ideas about these characters.

Summarize the two subplots involving Wickham and Elizabeth, and Mr. Collins and Elizabeth. Explain how the actions of Wickham and Mr. Collins advance the main plot. How do their actions help us learn more about the main character, Elizabeth? Use examples of dialogue and other evidence from the novel to back up your ideas.

The author places Mr. Collins at the center of some of the funniest scenes in the novel. Discuss the character of Mr. Collins. Find examples of his behavior and speech that bring out his personal traits. Also, look for direct statements made about him by the other characters and by the narrator. Focus particularly on Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 19. Make a list of ten adjectives or phrases that describe Mr. Collins. Then, think about what purpose Austen might have had in making Mr. Collins such a ridiculous figure. What aspects of society or human nature might she be criticizing? Use examples of dialogue and other evidence from the novel to back up your ideas.

Do you like Darcy? Do you think he has been judged unfairly by Elizabeth? Do you think his words in proposing to Elizabeth were appropriate? Do you think his letter speaks well for him? Argue that Darcy is a sympathetic and admirable character or an unsympathetic and less-than-admirable character. Or perhaps you feel he is somewhere in between these two extremes. Use evidence from this section of the novel to support your argument.

Three of the Bennet daughters are involved in relationships that may or may not lead to marriage. In Chapters 39 through 50, the focus is primarily on Elizabeth and Lydia. Write an analysis of the way the author uses suspense in this section to make the reader wonder what will happen next for each of these young women. In your analysis, cite specific incidents and statements from the novel.

Compare and contrast the characters of Lydia, Jane, and Elizabeth. How are their personalities similar or different? How do they generally interact with men? What kinds of people do they eventually choose as husbands, and why? Which two characters, do you think, provide the greatest contrast? Use examples of dialogue and other evidence from the novel to back up your ideas.

# Before You Read

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 1–12

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

Do you pay attention to first impressions? How do you form an opinion about someone you are meeting for the first time?

#### List and Discuss

As a class, list four or five things that influence people when forming a first impression of a new acquaintance. Rank these items from most important to least important. Then discuss whether first impressions are usually reliable and why.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how first impressions shape the relationship of the two main characters, Elizabeth and Darcy.

### BACKGROUND

#### The Social Setting

In *Pride and Prejudice*, almost all of the characters are members of England's middle to upper-middle class. This social class includes both the "new rich," families who have acquired wealth through trade or business, and the "old rich," families who have inherited their wealth. Although these two groups share a similar lifestyle, Austen shows that there are significant differences in income and social prestige between them. These differences play a critical role in the relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth. Austen also highlights finer social distinctions within these two groups. Elizabeth's father, Mr. Bennet, inherited his rather modest estate but cannot pass it on to his wife or daughters—only to a male relative. Mr. Bingley, the Bennets' new neighbor, has a handsome income, but it is not as great as Mr. Darcy's. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, like Darcy, is a member of the upper class, but her rank is even higher for she has a title. Terms such as "Sir" and "Lady" signified either an inherited title or a knighthood received for a particular service of great merit. Elizabeth's good friend, Charlotte, is the daughter of Sir William Lucas, a man "formerly in trade" whose social status rose a notch when he received a knighthood. Charlotte, like Elizabeth, however, is not endowed with a great fortune.

#### Did You Know?

*Pride and Prejudice* opens with one of the most famous first lines in English literature: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." This sentence tells us much about the author's purpose and attitude. It states one of the novel's main themes: the relationship of money and marriage. It also sets an ironic tone. The truth about the "marriage market" was just the opposite. It was single young women who did *not* possess a fortune who were most in want of a *husband*. The author turns this truth upside down, in a way that surprises and amuses the reader. There is also humor in the fact that she uses dignified language to describe a crude fact of life. However, as Austen unfolds her plot and develops her characters, it becomes clear that she views one's choice in marriage as a serious matter. This section introduces several eligible young women and men. As you read, try to discover what motivates each of these characters in their pursuit of a suitable mate.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**archly** [ˈɑːrç h'leɪ] *adv.* brashly; mischievously

**censure** [ˈsen'shər] *n.* disapproval

**disconcerted** [dɪs'kən sɜrt'əd] *adj.* thrown into confusion

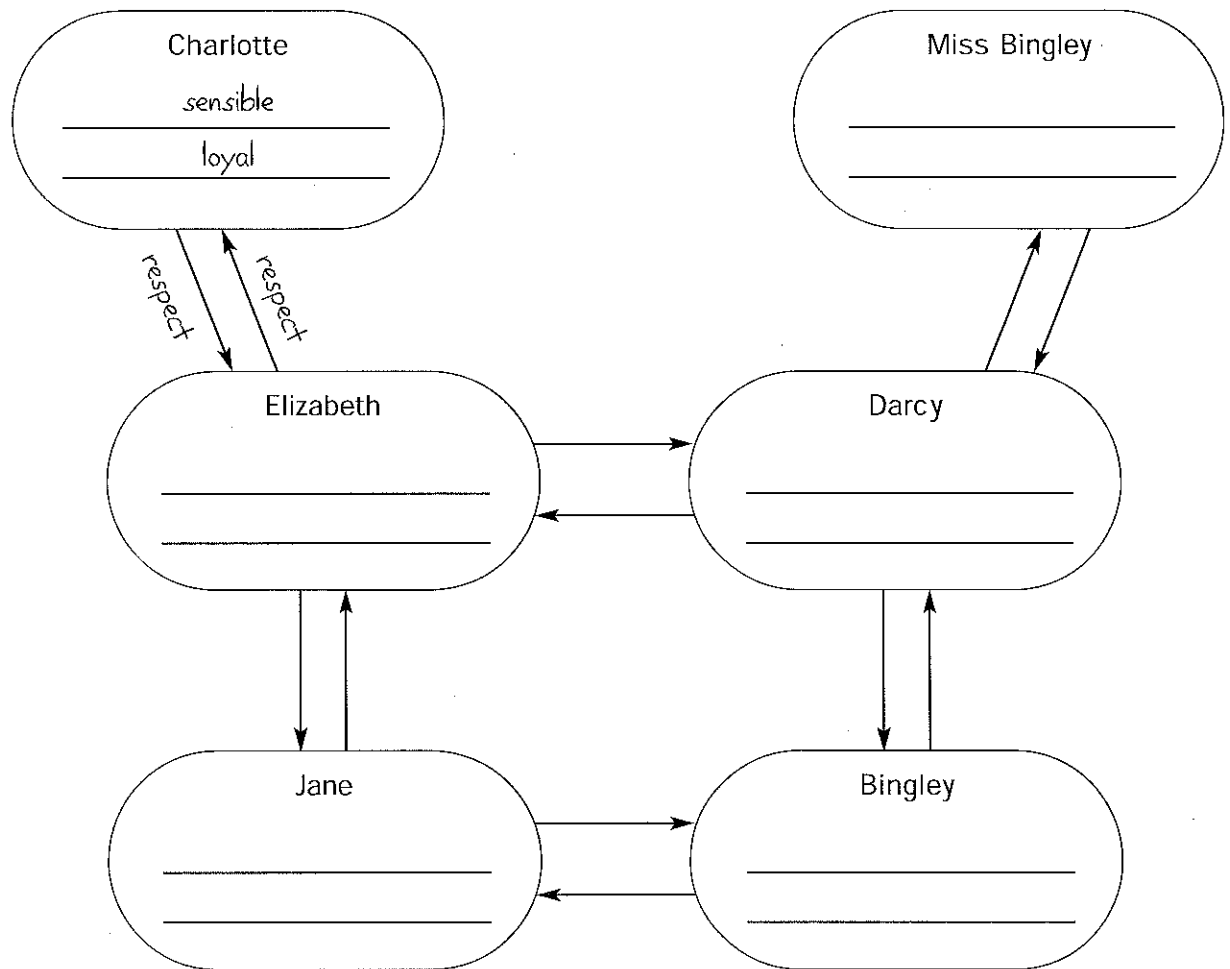
**entail** [en təɪl] *v.* to limit the inheritance of (property) to a specified line of heirs

**vexed** [ˈvɛkst] *adj.* irritated; annoyed

# Active Reading

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 1-12

The relationships between the major characters in the novel are introduced in these first chapters. Some of these relationships are well established when the novel begins; others are just developing. As you read Chapters 1-12, complete the diagram below. Write one or two words that describe each character. Then describe the attitudes that the characters connected by arrows have toward each other.



# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 1–12

### Personal Response

Do you think Elizabeth's first impression of Darcy was justified? Before you answer, review the list you made for the **Focus Activity** on page 12.

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. At the first ball, what facts does the narrator give about Darcy? How do the guests perceive him? What is Elizabeth's first impression of him? Why?

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2. Who is Charlotte Lucas? What comment does she make about Jane? What do you suppose is the reason behind such a comment?

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3. At Sir William Lucas's gathering, how does Darcy act around Elizabeth? At Netherfield, what are their conversations like?

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# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 1–12

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Why, do you think, is Darcy attracted to Elizabeth? What appealing qualities does she have?

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5. Charlotte Lucas says, "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance." What does this statement reveal about her? Do you agree with her statement? Explain.

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### Literature and Writing

#### A Funny Relationship

Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet are a source of much humor in the early chapters of the novel. Write an analysis of these two characters. First, consider them separately. What adjectives would you use to describe each character? What are some humorous comments each one makes? Why do we laugh at these comments? Then, consider them as a couple. How would you describe the Bennets' marriage? Is it an example of a happy marriage? Why might Austen have opened the novel by sketching their relationship? Use examples of dialogue and other evidence from the novel to back up your ideas about these characters.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

Jane Austen is a master at revealing character through dialogue. She prefers to show rather than tell what the characters are like. In your group, assign one or two chapters from this section to each person. Skim to find lines of dialogue that reveal something important about Darcy and Elizabeth. Then, take turns reading aloud, in chapter order, the statements or passages of dialogue that you selected. Discuss how the passage gave you insight into the character's personality and relationships with others. If time allows, repeat this procedure for other characters, such as Bingley, Jane, Charlotte Lucas, and Caroline Bingley.

#### Learning for Life

Knowing how to conduct oneself in social settings is important for success in life. In the early nineteenth century, as today, certain spoken and unspoken rules helped people interact smoothly and courteously. In a small group, develop a list of six to ten rules of conduct that seem to guide the behavior of the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. For example, how should one go about meeting a new neighbor? What rules should be followed when making introductions or conversing at a ball? What courtesies are expected when visiting in someone's home? Share your lists with other groups, noting similarities and differences.



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

# Before You Read

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 13–24

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

When someone says something good or bad about another person, do you tend to believe what you've heard?

#### Quickwrite

Describe on paper a time when you received “hearsay” information about another person. How did you decide whether to believe the person who spread the information?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read about Elizabeth and the new information she receives about Darcy.

### BACKGROUND

#### Did You Know?

This section introduces one of Austen's comic creations, the Reverend Mr. Collins. During Austen's time, clergy in the Church of England increasingly came from the upper middle class. The occupation was viewed as a learned and prestigious profession, providing a moderate income.

After being ordained, or certified as a minister, following a period of study, a clergyman in the Church of England was given a living, meaning a house and job, in a church district, or parish. The minister was called a parson and his house, which was usually modest but comfortable, the parsonage. In some parishes, as in the case of Mr. Collins, a wealthy landowner might become a financial sponsor, or patron, of the local church. As you read, notice how Mr. Collins is closely linked with his patron, the intimidating Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

#### Plot and Subplots

Elizabeth and Darcy are clearly at the center of the main plot in *Pride and Prejudice*. A closely related subplot—involving Bingley and Elizabeth's sister Jane—has already been introduced. In the next section of the novel, Austen develops two more subplots that both complicate and advance the main action of the story. One subplot introduces a charming young soldier named George Wickham. Like Darcy, Wickham makes a strong first impression on Elizabeth. The other subplot involves the pretentious clergyman Mr. Collins, a distant relative of the Bennets who will inherit their home, known as Longbourn, after Mr. Bennet dies. As you read, think about how Austen interweaves these two subplots with the main action. How do they add an element of suspense to the plot? How do they affect the mood of the story? How do they deepen the reader's understanding of the two main characters, Elizabeth and Darcy?

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**abominable** [ə bəm'ə nəbəl] *adj.* deserving scorn; hateful

**condescend** [kən'di send'] *v.* to assume a superior manner

**dissemble** [dɪ sem'bəl] *v.* to hide; to disguise

**imprudent** [ɪm prəd'ənt] *adj.* unwise

**incredulous** [ɪn krej'ə ləs] *adj.* unbelieving; skeptical

**lament** [lə ment'] *v.* to express sorrow or regret

**pompous** [pəm'pəs] *adj.* pretentious; overly dignified

# Active Reading

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 13–24

The pace of the novel quickens as two subplots unfold. One subplot concerns Elizabeth and Wickham, the other concerns Elizabeth and Mr. Collins. As you read, use the chart below to analyze why the various characters think or act as they do. To analyze their motives or reasons, think about what the character says about himself or herself as well as what others have to say about the character.

Mr. Collins decides to propose to one of the Bennet daughters	because	he wants to make up for inheriting Longbourn in their place but also thinks one of them would make a suitable wife.
Wickham does not have warm feelings for Darcy	because	
Bingley's sister, Caroline, disapproves of Wickham	because	
Jane believes Darcy could not have mistreated Wickham	because	
At the Netherfield ball, Elizabeth is embarrassed by her family	because	
Mr. Collins does not accept Elizabeth's rejection of his proposal	because	
Charlotte accepts Mr. Collins's proposal	because	
Nearly everyone adopts a low opinion of Darcy	because	

# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 13–24

### Personal Response

Which scene or chapter in this section did you most enjoy? Why?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. When Wickham and Elizabeth first meet, what report does Wickham give Elizabeth about Darcy? What second impression does Wickham make on her? What is your impression of Wickham?

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2. How does Elizabeth respond to Mr. Collins's proposal? What does her response reveal about her character?

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3. What event leaves Jane feeling downcast? Why is Elizabeth angry at Bingley, his sisters, and Darcy?

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# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 13–24

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. How does Wickham's story deepen Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy? Before you answer, review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 16.

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5. Do you share Elizabeth's shock at Charlotte's engagement to Mr. Collins? Explain.

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### Literature and Writing

#### Summary

Summarize the two subplots involving Wickham and Elizabeth, and Mr. Collins and Elizabeth. Review the chart you completed in the **Active Reading** on page 17. Explain how the actions of Wickham and Mr. Collins advance the main plot. How do their actions help us learn more about the main character, Elizabeth?

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

The author places Mr. Collins at the center of some of the funniest scenes in the novel. In your group, discuss the character of Mr. Collins. Find examples of his behavior and speech that bring out his personal traits. Also, look for direct statements made about him by the other characters and by the narrator. Focus particularly on Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 19. As you discuss, make a list of ten adjectives or phrases that describe Mr. Collins. Then, think about what purpose Austen might have had in making Mr. Collins such a ridiculous figure. What aspects of society or human nature might she be criticizing?

#### Speaking and Listening

Knowing the right questions to ask is a skill that can help you in many settings—at work, at school, and in community activities. Write a question to ask each character who appears in this section of the novel. Answering the question should allow the character to state something important about his or her motives, actions, or relationships with other characters.

Then, as a class, ask and answer your questions in round-robin fashion:

- The first person should turn to the student in the next seat and, using the character's name, ask a question. For example, "Jane, why were you disappointed when Bingley left Netherfield?"
- The next student should answer the question using "I" and then pose a new question to the third student.
- Proceed in this way through the entire class. If students listening to the questions strongly disagree with an answer, allow a moment for brief comments.



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

# Before You Read

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 25–38

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

How might you react if another person completely misinterpreted your actions or intentions?

#### Journal

Describe in a journal entry a time when you felt that something you did was totally misunderstood by another person. Was the person's reaction understandable? How did it make you feel? How did you handle the situation of being misjudged?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out who misjudges whom and the consequences that result.

### BACKGROUND

#### Did You Know?

Letters play an important role in the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. In fact, Austen may have originally written the work as an **epistolary** novel. In this type of novel, the plot is developed entirely through letters. Some epistolary novels present an exchange of letters between several characters. In others, the letters of only one character make up the narrative. Readers of novels in Jane Austen's time, being frequent letter writers and readers, would have been very comfortable with this genre. Letter writing helped to maintain social and family ties and communicated important information; thus, the ability to write a good letter was greatly admired. The epistolary novel was extremely popular in the 1700s. Since that time, however, novelists have rarely used this form. One recent exception is Nick Bantock's popular novel *Griffin and Sabine* (1991). This romance by correspondence includes illustrated postcards and removable handwritten letters tucked into envelopes.

#### More Than Comedy

In earlier chapters of the novel, Mr. Collins made many worshipful remarks about his patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. In this section, readers meet Lady Catherine in the flesh, and so does Elizabeth. Like Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine is a comic figure. Both characters, however, are more than just a source of humor in the novel—Austen also uses them as a means to criticize the follies of class distinctions. Each also plays a crucial role in the plot. As you read, notice how Lady Catherine is connected to Darcy and how she responds to Elizabeth.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**affability** [af'ə bil'i tē] *n.* friendliness

**ardently** [ār'dent lē] *adv.* passionately

**composure** [kəm pō'zhər] *n.* calm state of mind

**discernment** [di surn'mənt] *n.* perceptiveness

**indignation** [in dig nā'shən] *n.* anger at an injustice

**scruples** [skrōp'əls] *n.* principles of right and wrong

**tumult** [tūm'əlt] *n.* state of confusion or disorder

# Active Reading

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 25–38

In Chapters 34 through 36, Elizabeth and Darcy speak frankly to each other and respond to each other's criticisms. The narrative in these chapters follows a cause-and-effect pattern as Austen presents Darcy's proposal, Elizabeth's reaction, Darcy's letter of explanation, and Elizabeth's reflections on his letter. As you read, use the chart below to note the specific points the two characters make as they explain or reflect on their actions.

Elizabeth rejects Darcy's proposal	Darcy responds to Elizabeth's objections	Elizabeth reflects on Darcy's explanation
<p>He ruined her sister's happiness by separating Bingley and Jane.</p>		

# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 25–38

### Personal Response

In Chapter 36, Elizabeth begins to examine her previous behavior and attitudes honestly. Review the journal entry you wrote for the **Focus Activity** on page 20. Why, do you think, is it hard for people to admit their mistakes in judging others?

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Do you see any parallels between your own personal experiences and those of Elizabeth?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What new interest does Wickham have? What are the reasons behind this new interest? Does Elizabeth disapprove? Explain.

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2. To whom is Lady Catherine de Bourgh related? How would you describe her treatment of Elizabeth?

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3. What important information does Elizabeth learn about Darcy from Colonel Fitzwilliam? How does she react?

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# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 25–38

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. The novel reaches its first climax, or dramatic turning point, in this section. In what scene does this climax occur? What questions hang in the reader's mind after this scene?

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5. What effect does Darcy's letter have on Elizabeth? What does she realize about herself? About her family?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Reply to Darcy

Imagine that Elizabeth has decided to respond to Darcy's letter with a letter of her own. Put yourself in Elizabeth's place and write a letter to Darcy that sums up your feelings and thoughts. Before you write, review the chart you completed for **Active Reading** on page 21. Also, ask yourself some questions about Elizabeth's reactions to Darcy's letter (in Chapter 36). Do you think Elizabeth draws correct conclusions about herself? Has she changed her mind completely about Darcy? What might she wish for the future? Write your letter in a style that fits the time period of the novel or in a style used today. In either case, make sure your letter accurately reflects Elizabeth's personality and state of mind.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

Do you like Darcy? Do you think he has been judged unfairly by Elizabeth? Do you think his words in proposing to Elizabeth were appropriate? Do you think his letter speaks well for him? In your group, hold a discussion in which you argue that Darcy is a sympathetic and admirable character or an unsympathetic and less-than-admirable character. Or perhaps you feel he is somewhere in between these two extremes. Use evidence from this section of the novel to support your argument.

#### Drama Connection

To better appreciate Austen's skillful use of dialogue, select a scene from one of these chapters to read aloud. Some possible choices include:

- the proposal scene, in which Elizabeth and Darcy speak frankly
- the scene in which Elizabeth and the Collinses visit Lady Catherine
- the scene in which Elizabeth and Colonel Fitzwilliam converse about Darcy

Assign the parts, including one for the narrator. Then, photocopy the pages that contain the scene, enlarging them so they are easy to read. Give a copy to each group member. In the margin, label the lines spoken by each character and highlight the lines you will speak. Practice your reading at least twice, emphasizing vocal expression and clear pronunciation, and then present it to the class.



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

# Before You Read

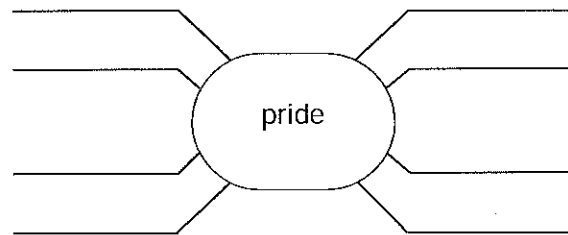
## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 39–50

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think about the word *pride*. What are some different situations in which people may feel pride? What are some different ways to define pride?

#### Web It

Create a web, like the one below, for the word *pride*. On the lines attached to the circle, list brief definitions or synonyms for *pride*. As you think of definitions, consider both the positive and negative aspects of pride.



#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how the novel continues to explore the theme of pride through the two main characters.

### BACKGROUND

#### Did You Know?

In a typical plot, a certain event introduces a conflict and then the action gradually rises to a high point of intensity known as the **climax**. You could diagram this dramatic structure as a simple mountain peak, with the peak representing the climax. The left side represents the rising action, which develops the conflict. The right side represents the falling action, in which the conflict is resolved. In many novels the climax occurs near the end or somewhere in the second half of the novel. Do you think this is the case with *Pride and Prejudice*? Why or why not?

#### Pride: For Better or Worse?

The title of the novel clearly suggests one of the important themes of the novel: pride and its consequences. You have already met two characters who strongly exhibit the quality of pride: Fitzwilliam Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. These characters are quite different from each other, however. Furthermore, pride is not a simple concept, in life or in fiction. It can be a positive quality as well as a negative one. As you read, look for the positive and negative qualities of pride demonstrated in this section.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**anguish** [ˈæŋˈɡwɪʃ] *n.* deep suffering or pain

**consolation** [kən sə ləˈʃən] *n.* comfort; help for sorrow

**felicity** [fɪ lɪˈsɪ tə] *n.* great happiness

**impetuous** [ɪm pechˈʊəs] *adj.* impulsive

**indolence** [ɪndˈəl əns] *n.* habit of laziness

**profligate** [prɒfˈlɪ ɡɪt] *adj.* recklessly wasteful; pleasure-seeking

# Active Reading

## ***Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 39–50**

In these chapters, Elizabeth begins to reconsider her opinion of Darcy and wonders if his feelings remain the same toward her. Using the chart below, record events in the plot that cause Elizabeth to reflect on Darcy's character and their future relationship. Note Elizabeth's thoughts or feelings in response to each event.

Event	Elizabeth's Reaction
Elizabeth tells Jane the truth about Wickham.	She thinks Darcy has merit and goodness, while Wickham has only the appearance of these qualities.

# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 39–50

### Personal Response

Were you surprised by Darcy's behavior toward Elizabeth at Pemberley? Why or why not?

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Review the word web you completed in the **Focus Activity** on page 24. What definitions of pride could be applied to Elizabeth and Darcy based on their actions in this section of the novel?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What two secrets concerning Darcy does Elizabeth reveal to Jane? What concern does Elizabeth express to her father?

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2. What does Elizabeth learn about Darcy from the housekeeper at Pemberley? When Darcy appears, what surprises her about his behavior?

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3. What crisis occurs involving Lydia? How is the crisis resolved?

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# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 39–50

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Which chapters provide comic relief from the mounting suspense about Lydia's and Elizabeth's futures in this section? What comic events occur in these chapters?

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5. In Chapter 42, what techniques does Austen use to describe the shortcomings of the Bennets' marriage? In what ways is it a failed marriage?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Suspense

Three of the Bennet daughters are involved in relationships that may or may not lead to marriage. In Chapters 39 through 50, the focus is primarily on Elizabeth and Lydia. Write an analysis of the way the author uses suspense in this section to make the reader wonder what will happen next for each of these young women. In your analysis, cite specific incidents and statements from the novel.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

The grounds and house at Pemberley, Darcy's estate, is the only setting in the book that Austen describes in detail. Austen is economical in her description, however, using the setting simply to further the plot and bring out important qualities of the two main characters. Review the descriptions of Pemberley in Chapter 43. Then, draw several sketches to show what the house and grounds are like. Assign one area of the house or grounds to each person in the group. Include a sketch of the interior of one of the rooms that Elizabeth and the Gardiners see on their tour. Post your drawings where the entire class can view them. Describe the features that impressed Elizabeth and events from the plot that took place in the locations your group sketched.

#### Performing

In this section, Elizabeth goes through a process of self-examination. With a partner, role-play an interview in which Elizabeth answers questions about the evolution of her feelings toward herself and toward Darcy. Review the **Active Reading** chart on page 25. Also think about how the person portraying Elizabeth can use posture, gesture, vocal quality, and expression to capture Elizabeth's personality and her frame of mind in this part of the novel. Perform your interview for a small group of students or the entire class.



**Save your work for your portfolio.**

# Before You Read

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 51–61

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

How do two people in love decide if they would make good lifetime companions in marriage?

#### Discuss

In a small group, discuss the factors that contribute to a happy marriage. In the real world, what does it mean to “live happily every after”?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what happens to the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy.

### BACKGROUND

#### Did You Know?

Jane Austen has had a fan club for over 100 years. In the late 1800s, the first publication of an Austen biography and collected edition of her novels led to a boom of interest in Jane Austen. Many of these early admirers were interested in her characters and in Austen herself. Austen acquired more scholarly admirers in the twentieth century, when many critics highlighted her mastery of language, plot, and irony.

Today, a Jane Austen Society exists in both Great Britain and North America. Austen’s modern-day fans appreciate her novels as literature, but they are also fascinated by the era that shaped Jane Austen’s life and writings. The Jane Austen Society of North America was founded in 1979. Its members’ interests range from publishing scholarly papers on Austen’s works to re-creating dinner parties and balls like those attended by her characters. To find out more about this group, visit their Web site at <http://www.jasna.org>.

#### Jane Austen: Social Critic?

In a scene earlier in the novel, Elizabeth implores Mr. Collins to treat her as “a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart.” Her statement seems to echo Mary Wollstonecraft, an author whose writings marked the beginning of the women’s rights movement. The well-read Austen would have been familiar with Wollstonecraft’s landmark work, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792. This popular book challenged the prevailing idea that a woman’s purpose in life was to please men. Wollstonecraft claimed that, as mental equals, women should have the same opportunities in education, work, and politics as men.

None of Austen’s female characters “rocks the boat” the way Wollstonecraft did. Elizabeth Bennet, however, like other Austen heroines, is an intelligent woman of depth and substance. As you finish reading the novel, think about Elizabeth in relation to her society. Does she seem to accept society’s limits on her as a woman? How do you think Austen views the restrictions on her heroine? Do you think her purpose in writing the novel was merely to entertain, or did her work contain a deeper message of social criticism?

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**alacrity** [ə lək’rə tē] *n.* speed

**effusion** [i fū’zhən] *n.* outpouring of words or feelings

**irrevocably** [i rev’ə kə blē] *adv.* in a manner impossible to reverse

**saucy** [sō’ sē] *adj.* teasingly or amusingly bold

**unabated** [un ə bāt’əd] *adj.* maintaining full force

# Active Reading

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 51–61

In the final chapters of the novel, the plot brings together three pairs of characters whose courtships have been anything but smooth. As you read this last section, use the chart below to track each relationship as the main conflict of the novel is resolved.

Couple 1: Jane and Bingley	
Who brings them together? How?	Darcy, he reveals to Bingley that Jane still cares for him
What happens?	
What is their future?	
Couple 2:	
Who brings them together? How?	
What happens?	
What is their future?	
Couple 3:	
Who brings them together? How?	
What happens?	
What is their future?	

# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 51–61

### Personal Response

Were you surprised by the outcome of the novel? Explain why or why not.

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Think back to your discussion from the **Focus Activity** on page 28. What sort of marriage would you predict for Elizabeth and Darcy, Jane and Bingley, and Wickham and Lydia?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. Describe Lydia and Wickham as newlyweds. How does Darcy solve the family crisis Lydia has caused? How does Elizabeth find out about Darcy's actions?

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2. Why does Lady Catherine cross-examine Elizabeth? How does Elizabeth respond?

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3. What do Elizabeth and Darcy say to each other on their long walk? What has each learned from the other?

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# Responding

## *Pride and Prejudice* Chapters 51–61

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Defending her right to marry Darcy, Elizabeth tells Lady Catherine, “He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman’s daughter; so far we are equal.” In what other ways are Elizabeth and Darcy equals?

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5. Considering the story’s conclusion, how would you describe Elizabeth? Would you call her a feminist? Explain.

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### Literature and Writing

#### Character Study

Compare and contrast the characters of Lydia, Jane, and Elizabeth. How are their personalities similar or different? How do they generally interact with men? What kinds of people do they eventually choose as husbands, and why? Which two characters, do you think, provide the greatest contrast? Write your analysis on a separate sheet of paper.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

**Symmetry**, a term from geometry, refers to shapes or forms that have a mirror-image or equally balanced parts that correspond in size, shape, or position. Some critics claim that Austen’s plots have a definite symmetry and that *Pride and Prejudice* is the most symmetrical of her novels. In your group, examine the novel for symmetry. As a starting point, think of the novel in terms of plot structure: rising action, climax, and falling action. Recall the scene that you identified as the climax of the narrative. Where in the novel does this climax occur? How does the rising action compare with the falling action in terms of length and content? You may also want to think about the title of the novel itself. What sort of balance or symmetry might the author be suggesting by the juxtaposition of “pride” and “prejudice”? Back up your opinions with examples and passages from the novel.

#### Creative Writing

Chapters 58 and 60 contain two important conversations between Elizabeth and Darcy. In Chapter 58, they speak frankly and from the heart. In Chapter 60, the tone of their conversation is more playful. Select one of these dialogues and rewrite it in your own words, simplifying the language. As you paraphrase Elizabeth’s and Darcy’s statements, look for the key information, idea, or feeling each character is sharing. Keep in mind the character’s personality. Write out your dialogue, and read it aloud. Compare it with your classmates’ versions.



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