

Pride and Prejudice



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Adapted from the 1813 novel by Jane Austen

Norman Maine Publishing

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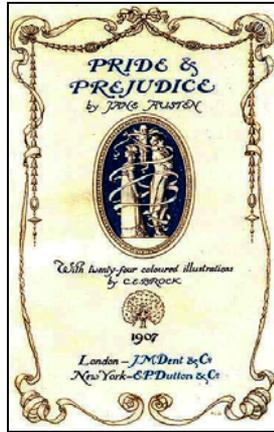
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*For Natalie,
You are a special and beautiful girl.
May you grow up to be
as strong, kind, and courageous
as the heroine of this story.
I love you so much.*

Pride and Prejudice

CLASSIC/ROMANTIC COMEDY. Adapted from the 1813 novel by Jane Austen. When Charles Bingley, a wealthy bachelor, moves into a nearby house, Mrs. Bennet is overjoyed because she and her husband have five unmarried daughters who they are eager to see married. Mr. Bingley is taken with Jane Bennet, who is considered to be the most beautiful of the Bennet daughters, and introduces his wealthy friend, Mr. Darcy, to Elizabeth Bennet. Mr. Darcy is drawn to Elizabeth's intelligence and independent nature, but Elizabeth thinks Mr. Darcy is arrogant and spiteful. In the end, Elizabeth must learn to overcome her own pride and prejudice in order to find true love.

Performance Time: Approximately 90-120 minutes.



Title page of the 1907 edition
illustrated by C.E. Brock

About the Story

English novelist Jane Austen (1775-1817) never married and lived with her family for most of her life. Austen had six brothers and one sister and was educated primarily at home and by reading books. By the age of 12, Austen was writing poems, stories, and plays to amuse her family. At 20, Austen met Tom Lefroy, who was a nephew of one of her neighbors. The two spent much time together, but the Lefroy family intervened and sent him away, and Jane never saw him again. Austen received her only marriage proposal in 1802 from Harris Bigg-Wither, who was considered quiet and unattractive. At first, Austen agreed to marry him but promptly changed her mind the next morning. Austen's novels are known for their realism, biting social commentary, and comic elements. *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813 and proved an immediate success along with her other romantic novels, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma*, which have since become literary classics.

Characters

(9 M, 17 F)

(With doubling: 8 M, 13 F)

MR. BENNET: Patriarch of the Bennet family and owner of the Longbourn estate; a gentleman of modest income who has five unmarried daughters.

MRS. BENNET: Mr. Bennet's wife whose main goal in life is to see her daughters married.

JANE BENNET: Eldest Bennet daughter and considered the most beautiful; reserved and gentle, she intends to marry for love.

ELIZABETH BENNET: Second eldest Bennet daughter who is the most independent, witty, and sensible of the five daughters.

MARY BENNET: Middle Bennet sister who is plain and bookish and hates the idea of marriage.

CATHERINE "KITTY" BENNET: Fourth Bennet sister who is enamored with the idea of marrying a man in uniform.

LYDIA BENNET: Youngest of the Bennet sisters; headstrong, immature, and likes to flirt with soldiers; disgraces the family by running off with George Wickham.

GEORGE WICKHAM: Handsome, charming military officer and Mr. Darcy's childhood friend who runs off with Lydia Bennet.

CHARLES BINGLEY: A wealthy, genial gentleman who has moved into Netherfield, an estate near the Bennets, and is considered a much sought-after bachelor; male.

CAROLINE BINGLEY: Mr. Bingley's snobbish sister who is romantically interested in Mr. Darcy and looks down on Elizabeth's middle-class background.

FITZWILLIAM DARCY: Mr. Bingley's friend, a wealthy gentleman and the nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh; handsome, tall, and intelligent but tends to be rather aloof.

GEORGIANA DARCY: Mr. Darcy's younger sister who is beautiful, shy, and good at playing the pianoforte; almost eloped with Mr. Wickham, who had his sights set on her dowry.

WILLIAM COLLINS: Pompous, snobby clergyman and cousin of Mr. Bennet who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property; Lady Catherine de Bourgh serves as his patroness.

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH: Haughty, condescending, wealthy noblewoman who is Mr. Darcy's aunt and Mr. Collins' patron; wants to prevent Mr. Darcy from marrying Elizabeth.

ANNE DE BOURGH: Lady Catherine's pale, sickly daughter who is adept at feminine pursuits like painting, sewing, and the pianoforte.

MRS. GARDNER: Mrs. Bennet's caring, nurturing sister-in-law.

MRS. LOUISA HURST: Mr. Bingley's sister.

MR. HURST: Louisa's husband and Mr. Bingley's brother-in-law.

LADY LUCAS: Friend and neighbor of the Bennets.

SIR WILLIAM LUCAS: Lady Lucas's husband.

CHARLOTTE LUCAS: Elizabeth's older friend who doesn't view love as the most important part of marriage and is more interested in obtaining financial security so she isn't a burden to her family; considered slightly odd-looking.

MARIA LUCAS: Charlotte's sister.

MR. DENNY: Officer and friend of Mr. Wickham.

MRS. JENKINSON: Elderly companion to Anne and a bit senile.

COLONEL FITZWILLIAM: Friend of Mr. Darcy's and the youngest son of an earl.

MRS. HILL: Housekeeper at Longbourn.

MRS. REYNOLDS: Housekeeper at Rosings Park.

Options for Doubling

MRS. HILL/MRS. REYNOLDS (female)

ANNE DE BOURGH/MRS. GARDNER (female)

GEORGIANA DARCY/ LOUISA HURST(female)

LADY LUCAS/MRS. JENKINSON (female)

MR. DENNY/COLONEL FITZWILLIAM (male)

Costumes

Costumes should represent the early 1800s. The Bingleys, Mr. Darcy, and Lady Catherine should be dressed elegantly, while the Bennets and Lucases should wear more simple attire. Mr. Collins should wear clothing suggesting a clergy member.

Setting

Early 1800s, England.

Set

This play is easy to stage with few set pieces required.

Drawing room of Longbourn, the Bennet estate. Décor is modest but should appear more sparsely and shabbily furnished than Netherfield Park. There is a fireplace center. A small sofa and various other seating is present as well as accent tables and lamps.

Drawing room of Netherfield Park, the Bingley estate. Décor is elegant. There is a writing desk on one side of the stage. A sofa, chairs, small tables, and a large bookcase are present.

Garden at Rosings, the estate of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. There is outdoor seating and a few small tables with flowers/plants on them.

Props

Books
Ball decorations
Bouquet of flowers
2 Letters
Hat, for Jane
Playing cards
Paper
Pen
Tea service
Hand bell
Medicine bottle
Spoon
Nightgown and robe, for Jane, Elizabeth, and Mrs. Bennet
Book of sermons
Needlepoint

Special Effects

Classical music for ball scenes

“Vanity is a weakness, indeed.
But pride has its place
when a person has truly earned it.”

—Mr. Darcy

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Drawing room of Longbourn. Mr. Bennet is seated in a chair near the fireplace, reading a book. Mrs. Bennet enters.)

MRS. BENNET: *(Excited.)* My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that the lovely estate of Netherfield Park has a new tenant?

MR. BENNET: *(Without looking up from book.)* I can't say that I have.

MRS. BENNET: Well, it has! Mrs. Long has just been here and she told me about it. *(Mr. Bennet does not look up. Impatient.)* Don't you want to know who has taken it?

(Mr. Bennet puts down his book.)

MR. BENNET: I can see that you want to tell me, so you may as well.

MRS. BENNET: Why, Netherfield has been rented by a wealthy man from the north of England. Apparently, he was so delighted with the place that he agreed to terms with Mr. Morris immediately!

MR. BENNET: What is his name?

MRS. BENNET: Mr. Bingley.

MR. BENNET: Is he married or single?

MRS. BENNET: Oh, single, my dear! A single man with a large fortune! What a fine thing for our girls!

MR. BENNET: Whatever do you mean by that?

MRS. BENNET: *(Exasperated.)* How can you be so obtuse? Of course, I mean that Mr. Bingley might marry one of our daughters!

(Lydia enters with Kitty.)

LYDIA: Did I hear someone speak of marriage?

(Kitty coughs loudly.)

MRS. BENNET: *(Annoyed.)* Please stop coughing, Kitty. Have a little compassion for my nerves. That wretched sound tears them to pieces!

KITTY: *(Suppresses coughs intermittently.)* Sorry, Mother.

MR. BENNET: *(Rolls his eyes.)* Kitty is simply careless with her coughs. She times them poorly.

KITTY: *(Upset.)* I do not cough for my own amusement!

LYDIA: *(To Kitty.)* Please cease your coughing. I was trying to ask Mother a question. Who might marry one of us, Mama?

MRS. BENNET: Our new neighbor, Mr. Bingley.

(Elizabeth and Jane enter.)

ELIZABETH: *(With a smirk.)* It appears Mother has already heard news of our new neighbors.

(Mrs. Bennet rushes to Jane.)

MRS. BENNET: Oh, Jane, darling, did you hear? Our new neighbor, Mr. Bingley, is single and quite wealthy.

JANE: How wonderful.

MRS. BENNET: *(To Mr. Bennet.)* My dear, you must call upon Mr. Bingley immediately.

MR. BENNET: I see no reason for that. You and the girls may go.

MRS. BENNET: It would be improper for us to visit him if you do not go first. Think of your daughters!

ELIZABETH: What makes you think he hasn't gone already?

MRS. BENNET: Surely, he has not, Lizzy. He only just heard of his arrival moments ago.

ELIZABETH: Are you certain of that, Mother?

MR. BENNET: I daresay Mr. Bingley would be glad to see you. I will send a letter to express my consent to his marrying whichever of the girls he chooses, though I must throw in a good word for my Lizzy.

ELIZABETH: (*Laughs.*) That is hardly necessary, Papa.

(*Mary enters, looking sullen.*)

MR. BENNET: There you are, Mary. You are a sensible young lady. Perhaps you can help determine how we might resolve this situation.

MARY: I do not wish to take part in this matter. The whole idea of marriage is simply barbaric.

MRS. BENNET: Mary! Must you be so petulant?!

MR. BENNET: While Mary is adjusting her attitude toward marriage, let us return to the subject of Mr. Bingley.

(*Mrs. Bennet turns her back and crosses her arms.*)

MRS. BENNET: I am already growing sick of Mr. Bingley.

MR. BENNET: (*With a smirk.*) I am sorry to hear that, my dear wife. If I had known you would tire of him so quickly, I certainly would not have called on him this very morning.

MRS. BENNET: (*Shocked.*) You haven't!

ELIZABETH: I told you he had, Mama.

MR. BENNET: (*With an affectionate smile.*) My little Lizzy knows me too well.

(*Mrs. Bennet crosses to Mr. Bennet and throws her arms around him.*)

MRS. BENNET: How good of you! I just knew that you could be persuaded to make Mr. Bingley's acquaintance. (*Turns to Girls.*) Remember the power of female persuasion, girls.

JANE: (*Aside, to Elizabeth.*) Didn't Papa go to see Mr. Bingley before Mama even knew of his existence?

ELIZABETH: *(With a smirk.)* As Papa well knows, it is better for Mama to think it was her idea.

MRS. BENNET: What an excellent father you have, girls.

(Mr. Bennet stands.)

MR. BENNET: Now, since that is settled, I shall retire to my room so that I might have a moment's peace. *(Turns to Kitty.)* You may resume your coughing now, Kitty.

KITTY: *(Stamping the ground, upset.)* I'm not coughing on purpose!

(Mr. Bennet exits, chuckling.)

MRS. BENNET: Perhaps we should hold a ball to welcome our new neighbor. I'll see to the preparations. *(Exits.)*

LYDIA: *(Twirling with excitement.)* How exciting! I don't remember the last time we had a ball here at Longbourn!

(Kitty rushes to Mary and clasps her hands.)

KITTY: A ball! How splendid! Don't you agree, Mary?

MARY: *(Sarcastically.)* I can hardly wait.

(Lydia, Kitty, and Mary exit. Elizabeth links arms with Jane.)

ELIZABETH: Well, Sister, what do you have to say about our new neighbor?

JANE: I don't even know him.

ELIZABETH: I'm sure that once he sets eyes on you, he will fall instantly in love.

JANE: *(Embarrassed.)* I don't know about that.

ELIZABETH: Well, I do know one thing...if we don't hurry, Mama will surely have Papa regretting ever having visited Mr. Bingley in the first place.

[END OF FREEVIEW]