

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

a literary adaptation from
Jane Austen's novel

Autore

Jane Austen nacque a Steventon nello Hampshire nel 1775 in una famiglia numerosa e culturalmente vivace. Suo padre, un pastore anglicano, seguì personalmente la sua educazione e le mise a disposizione la propria biblioteca. Tra il 1787 e il 1793 compose i *Juvenilia*, tre raccolte di poesie, racconti e parodie destinate al diletto di amici e familiari. Nel 1795 Jane si innamorò di Thomas Langlois Lefroy, ma a causa delle differenze sociali il matrimonio fu considerato impossibile dalla famiglia Lefroy. Dallo stesso anno la Austen iniziò a lavorare alla stesura dei suoi lavori più celebri: ***Pride and Prejudice*** e *Sense and Sensibility*. In linea con l'idea dell'epoca che la scrittura non fosse attività confacente a una giovane di buona famiglia, i suoi romanzi furono pubblicati anonimi o sotto pseudonimo e ottennero fin da subito un discreto successo. Nel 1816 Jane si ammalò gravemente e nel 1817 si recò a Winchester in cerca di una cura. Lì morì in quello stesso anno.

Alcune opere

Juvenilia (raccolta in tre volumi di poesie, racconti e altri scritti, 1787-1793)
- *Sir Charles Grandison or the Happy Man, a Comedy in 5 Acts* (1792-1800)
- *Lady Susan* (1794-1805, pubblicato postumo) - *Northanger Abbey* (1803, pubblicato postumo nel 1818) - *The Watsons* (incompiuto, 1804) - *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) - ***Pride and Prejudice*** (1813) - *Mansfield Park* (1814) - *Emma* (1815) - *Persuasion* (1815, pubblicato postumo nel 1818) - *Sanditon* (incompiuto, 1817).

Trama

Mr. e Mrs. Bennet hanno cinque figlie in età da marito: la maggiore, Jane, spicca per bellezza, la secondogenita, Elizabeth, per intelligenza e ironia e le tre minori per una certa tendenza alla superficialità. Con un patrimonio vincolato alla nascita, ormai impossibile, di un erede maschio e tante figlie da accasare, lo stabilirsi lì nei pressi di un giovane facoltoso non passa inosservato a casa Bennet. Mr. Bingley si dimostra da subito interessato alla bella Jane, mentre il suo amico Mr. Darcy scatena l'antipatia e il sarcasmo di Elizabeth. Quando a casa Bennet arriva anche Mr. Collins, il cugino ed erede di tutti i beni della famiglia, gli ingredienti per l'esplosivo intreccio sentimentale sono completi. A far deflagrare la situazione è la partenza improvvisa di Mr. Bingley, al quale Mr. Darcy cerca di impedire il fidanzamento con Jane. Il corso degli eventi rivoluzionerà più volte aspettative e sentimenti dei protagonisti, portando Elizabeth ad innamorarsi di Mr. Darcy e Jane a sospirare a lungo il ritorno del suo futuro marito. Quel

che è certo è che, per dirimere tutti i conflitti e arrivare al sospirato happy ending matrimoniale, i protagonisti devono veramente fare i conti con il loro orgoglio e i loro numerosi pregiudizi.

Note di regia

Attraverso lo sguardo pungente e ironico con cui Jane Austen mette a nudo l'animo umano, la regista **Irina Sabristova** (*An Ideal Husband*) fa scoprire al giovane pubblico molti dei personaggi del romanzo originale: la loro profondità, la spontaneità delle loro reazioni agli eventi, i loro vizi e le loro virtù, che rispecchiano quelli dell'intera società. I dialoghi sono attraversati da un umorismo sottile e piacevole, che gli attori madrelingua amplificano attraverso una recitazione chiara ed espressiva. La scenografia, simbolica, impreziosita da veli che si muovono con il soffiare del vento e i vari ambienti sono definiti da pochi ma iconici oggetti. I costumi, disegnati e realizzati appositamente per questo spettacolo, richiamano nelle forme lo stile dell'epoca romantica e nei colori emergono le tonalità pastello in varie sfumature. La musica accompagna i personaggi ovunque, sottolineando il loro stato d'animo e le loro azioni. Il pianoforte e i violini protagonisti degli sfarzosi balli si alternano ai canti degli uccelli e al rumore della pioggia delle passeggiate sui prati, così come la spiritualità e l'emotività che regnano nelle conversazioni salottiere lasciano il posto al colore e alla natura predominanti nella silenziosa vita di campagna. Tutto si fonde sulla scena, l'uomo e la natura, per scoprire l'essenza della vita: l'amore.

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CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

MR. BENNET
MRS. BENNET
ELIZABETH (LIZZI) BENNET
JANE BENNET
MR. BINGLEY
LYDIA BENNET
MR. DARCY
CHARLOTTE LUCAS
SIR WILLIAM LUCAS
MISS BINGLEY
MR. COLLINS
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH
MR. WICKHAM
ANNE DE BOURGH
GEORGIANA DARCY

ACT I

SCENE 1

The Bennet family's house. The garden.

Mrs. and Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth and Jane.

Elizabeth is sitting under a tree and is reading to Jane. Mr. Bennet is drinking a cup of tea on the other side of the garden.

Elizabeth (*Shakespeare's sonnet n.116*).

LOVE... IS AN EVER-FIXED MARK
THAT LOOKS ON TEMPESTS AND IS NEVER SHAKEN
IT IS THE STAR TO EVERY WANDERING BARK
WHOSE WORTH'S UNKNOWN ALTHOUGH HIS HEIGHT BE
TAKEN LOVE'S NOT TIME'S FOOL THOUGH...

Mrs. Bennet enters running.

Mrs. Bennet. My dear... dear Mr Bennet... A wonderful news!... Finally, Netherfield Park has been rented!

Mr. Bennet does not reply. The girls are listening.

Mrs. Bennet (*with impatience*). Do you not want to know who has rented it?

Mr. Bennet. I see your enthusiasm, dear, I doubt I can choose not to know it.

Mrs. Bennet. It has been rented by a young man with a large fortune.

Mr. Bennet. What is his name?

Mrs. Bennet. Mr. Bingley.

Mr. Bennet. Is he married or single?

Mrs. Bennet. Oh! Single, my dear, you can be sure! His fortune is of four or five thousand a year. What a nice thing for our girls!

Mr. Bennet. And why on earth? How can it affect them?

Mrs. Bennet. My dear Mr. Bennet, you are so irritating! I hope he will marry one of them.

Elizabeth (*to Jane, making fun of her mother*). Of course, if he is rich he must necessarily have a wife.

Mr. Bennet. Ah! Do you even know his plans?

Mrs. Bennet. Not precisely... But I am sure he will fall in love with one of our pretty daughters. So, you must absolutely visit him before the ball of tomorrow.

Mr. Bennet. Visit him? No, I cannot see any reason... Go yourself with the girls. Or rather it is better they go without you.

Mrs. Bennet. By themselves?

Mr. Bennet. But of course! You are pretty too. I would not like Mr. Bingley falls in love with you.

The girls are laughing hidden.

Mrs. Bennet. Oh, my nerves, my nerves.

Mrs. Bennet exits.

Voice of Mrs. Bennet. I always have to think of everything!

Mr. Bennet (*stopping her*). Alright, I will send a letter to Mr. Bingley with my pleasant blessing to his marriage to any of the girls he prefers.

Mrs. Bennet (*she starts writing the letter*). Ah, My nerves, my nerves. You enjoy irritating me. A letter is not the same thing. You must go in person! One visit – only one!

Mr. Bennet (*laughing*). If there were twenty suitors, I would go there immediately, but only for one...

He exits amused.

SCENE 2

The Bennet's house. The living room.

The following afternoon.

Mrs. and Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth and Jane.

Jane, Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet sit on the sofa in silence.

Lydia is practicing at the piano in the adjoining room. Jane is embroidering a hat.

Mrs. Bennet (*impatiently*). Time is going on... There are few hours left before the ball.

Mr. Bennet. Why are not you preparing? You will be late.

Silence.

Mrs. Bennet (*to Jane*). Ah, Mr. Bingley would appreciate that hat, Jane.

Mr. Bennet. He would definitely like it.

Mrs. Bennet. We cannot know what Mr. Bingley likes, nobody will introduce us.

Elizabeth. But you forget, mother, we will see him at the ball, and Mrs. Long promised to introduce us to him.

Mrs. Bennet. I do not think Mrs. Long would do something like that. She is a selfish woman. (*She turns towards the sound of the piano.*) Stop Lydia, for Heaven's sake! (*The piano stops playing.*) Ah, my nerves...

Elizabeth looks at Jane and laughs without her mother seeing her.

Mrs. Bennet (*to Mr. Bennet*). Five beautiful, talented, polite daughters but Mr. Bingley will never know it. Oh, my poor nerves! I give up.

Jane. What is this Mr. Bingley like?

Mrs. Bennet. Enough! I am fed up of hearing this name!

Mr. Bennet. I am sorry. If I had known, I would not have visited him just this morning. But, as I did, we cannot avoid to meeting him tonight.

Mrs. Bennet and the girls rejoice.

Mrs. Bennet. How kind it was of you, my darling! I'm sure you love our girls too much to miss such a good opportunity. Well, I am so pleased! Oh, how pleased I am!

Mr. Bennet (*to Lydia*). Now Lydia, you may continue to play.

He exits to the room. Lydia starts to play again.

Mrs. Bennet. What an excellent father, girls! I don't know how you will ever reward his kindness; or even mine. Jane, Lizzy go and get ready for the ball. Kitty, my darling... Mary? Where are you? Lydia, stop playing, go and get dressed!

Hearing the voices of the young women.

SCENE 3

First ball.

Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, Elizabeth, Jane and Lydia.

Music, voices out of the scene.

Mr. Darcy is sitting aside. Mr. Bingley is approaching.

Mr. Bingley. This is where you are hiding, my dear friend.

Mr. Darcy. I am not hiding... It is too crowded there.

Mr. Bingley. I have to convince you to dance. I hate to see you standing alone. You should dance.

Mr. Darcy. Bingley, you know how much I hate it. There is no woman in that room I would think of dancing with.

Mr. Bingley. Word of honour, I have never seen so many pleasant girls in my life, as this evening.

Mr. Bennet enters, Jane, Elizabeth, Lydia.

Mr. Bennet. Mr. Bingley! What a pleasure to see you again.

Mr. Bingley. Mr. Bennet.

Mr. Bennet. Let me introduce you to my daughters. Miss Jane Bennet...

Mr. Bingley. A pleasure to meet you.

Mr. Bennet. Miss Elizabeth Bennet...

Mr. Bingley. A great pleasure to meet you.

Mr. Bennet. And Miss Lydia Bennet.

Mr. Bingley. My pleasure.

Mr. Bennet. Somewhere there must be the other two, the youngest daughters. I am sure you will meet them soon.

Mr. Bingley. I introduce you to my dear friend, Mr. Darcy.

The music changes.

Mr. Bingley (to Jane). May I have the next dance?

Jane nods her head.

Elizabeth (to Mr. Darcy). Do you dance Sir?

Mr. Darcy. No, I do not. Unless I am obliged.

Elizabeth stands in front of her father.

Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth, Mr. Bingley, Jane are preparing to dance. Lydia is embarrassed in front of Mr. Darcy, but Mr. Darcy gets away once again. Lydia sits down embarrassed.

Jane. What a charming ball!

Mr. Bingley. Do you like dancing Miss Bennet?

Jane. Yes. I love it. And this is my favourite dance.

Mr. Bingley. Oh really? Mine too. I have never had so much fun.

Jane. Why not?

Mr. Bingley. Because you dance very well, Miss Bennet.

Jane. I practice with my sisters.

Mr. Bingley. They are very lucky to have such a good partner.

Jane. Thank you.

Music ends. Lydia, bored, exits.

Mr. Bingley (getting close). Darcy...

Mr. Darcy (looking at Jane). You are dancing with the only attractive girl of the room.

Mr. Bingley. Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen! But there is one of her sisters just sitting down behind you, who is very nice, and may I also say very pleasant.

Mr. Darcy. Who are you talking about? (Turning around, he looks at Elizabeth for a while.) She is tolerable, but she is not beautiful enough to tempt me. You had better return to your lady and enjoy her smiles, because you are wasting time with me.

Mr. Darcy moves away. Elizabeth who has heard the words of Mr. Darcy follows him with an offended look.

Mr. Bennet (to Elizabeth). My darling daughter, I am exhausted! But it is always a joy to dance with you. Now I shall let some gentleman invite you in the next dance.

Elizabeth. Oh no, father, you are the only gentleman with whom I want to dance at this moment.

Mr. Bingley invites Jane again to dance.

Elizabeth and Mr. Bennet join in the dances until the music disappears.

SCENE 4

*The Bennet's house. The Garden.
The following day.
Elizabeth, Jane, and then Charlotte.*

Jane. Mr. Bingley is exactly how a man ought to be: sensitive, fun, cheerful...

Elizabeth (*laughing*). He is also handsome and wealthy.

Jane. A perfect man!

Elizabeth. You know, only true love could push me to get married, that is why I will be alone forever.

Jane. Do you think he really likes me?

Elizabeth. Of course, Jane. It shows he is not stupid and I give you permission, with pleasure, to get to know him.

Jane. Ah, Lizzi!

Elizabeth. Certainly he could choose some better friends.

Jane. Do you mean Mr. Darcy?

Elizabeth. Oh yes. He is so selfish that he would not notice an elephant nearby.

Jane. Perhaps Mr. Darcy may improve, getting more close to him.

Elizabeth. Who, Mr. “but not beautiful enough to tempt me”?

They laugh.

Jane. It was very wrong of him to say such things.

Elizabeth. No, at all. I would have forgiven his pride if he had not mortified mine. Never mind, I do not think he will stay here for a long time.

Charlotte enters.

Elizabeth. Oh, look, Charlotte!

Charlotte. Good morning Lizzi. My father will give a party today. You are all invited.

SCENE 5

*Second ball.
Party at the house of Mr. William Lucas.
Sir William, Mr. Bingley, Jane, Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy.*

Sir William (*to Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley*). Welcome Gentlemen! My house is honoured by your presence.

Mr. Bingley. Good evening, Sir William.

Sir William. As you can see here we do with less ceremony and formality.

Mr. Darcy (*looking around*). Oh yes, I see.

Mr. Bingley sees Jane and he goes to her. They start to dance.

Sir William. What a charming pastime for young people, Mr. Darcy! There is nothing more entertaining than dancing. I consider it as one of the main refinements of civilised society.

Mr. Darcy. The savage can dance too.

Sir William (*a bit lost*). Oh yes, indeed.

The action moves to Elizabeth who is speaking with Charlotte.

Charlotte. It seems that Mr. Bingley is very well pleased with Jane!

Elizabeth. I am very happy for her, Charlotte. They will end up falling in love, you will see.

Charlotte. Then Jane should show him she is interested, if she wants to catch him.

Elizabeth (*laughing*). Catch him? Before she is sure of his character?

Charlotte. Of course! Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. It is better to know as little as possible of the flaws of your future husband.

Elizabeth. Our Jane is not acting by calculation, she is kind, generous and very patient. Deep down you are like her too.

Charlotte. If Jane does not make the first move, I hope Mr. Bingley will make it.

Elizabeth. I shall go and see where my mother is. I hope to see her drinking tea in silence.

Charlotte laughs.

Sir William with Mr. Darcy are walking toward the centre.

Sir William. Your friend performs delightfully, and... I have no doubt that you are an expert in this science yourself, Mr. Darcy. (*He sees Elizabeth and calls her.*) My dear Miss Elizabeth, why are you not dancing? Mr. Darcy, let me show you this young lady to you as a very desirable partner. You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure when so much beauty is before you. (*Takes her hand and hands it to Mr. Darcy.*)

Elizabeth (*upset*). To tell the truth, Sir, I have not the least intention of dancing. I ask you not to suppose that I came to your home in order to look for a dance partner.

Mr. Darcy (*with serious honesty*). May I have the honour of dancing with you, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth. I thank you, but I really do not want to.

Sir William. But, why not? Mr. Darcy, for example, even if he does not like this kind of amusement in general, he invited you all the same.

Elizabeth. Mr. Darcy just wants to be courteous.

Sir William. He is, of course... But, considering to whom this courtesy is for.

Elizabeth. Will you excuse me, gentlemen.

*She moves away.
Mr. Darcy follows her with a smug look.*

Mr. Bingley (*approaching*). What are you thinking about, my friend?

Mr. Darcy. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure that a pair of beautiful eyes on a pretty woman can give.

Mr. Bingley. Who is this woman?

Mr. Darcy. Miss Elizabeth Bennet.

Mr. Bingley (*laughs*). You do well, you do very well.

SCENE 6

*The Bennet's house.
The next morning.
Mr. Bennet, Jane, Lydia and then Mrs. Bennet.*

Jane. Mr. Bingley danced with me all night.

Mr. Bennet. Splendid. I did not expect anything less.

Lydia enters in a hurry.

Lydia. Father, the soldiers have arrived in the city. They seem terribly courageous and fascinating. I would marry all of them.

Mr. Bennet. All of them? This is too much even for your mother.

Lydia. Oh, those uniforms...

Mr. Bennet. I have suspected it some time, but I am now convinced that you must be one of the silliest girls in the whole country.

Lydia. That is not fair, father.

Exits.

Mr. Bennet. Where is Elizabeth? I would like to ask her opinion about the book I gave her to read.

Jane. She loves it. She even read a few lines to me. (*Quotes.*) LOVE... IS AN EVER-FIXED MARK. It is quite true.

Mr. Bennet. My lovely daughter, do you already talk about love?

*Jane goes to embrace her father.
Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet run on stage. Mrs. Bennet has a letter in her hand.*

Mrs. Bennet. Jane! Jane! A letter for you from the sister of Mr. Bingley.

Jane (*takes the letter and reads*). Miss Bingley... She has invited me to dine with her. Mr. Bingley will be dining out...

Mrs. Bennet. Dining out? ...It is really a pity.

Jane. May I use the carriage?

Mrs. Bennet. No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night. In that case you may have the chance to see Mr. Bingley.

Elizabeth. And if they offer to take her back home?

Mrs. Bennet. What a nonsense! A nonsense! Jane will go on horseback!

*Jane runs off happy to get ready.
Sound of rain.*

SCENE 7

*The same place.
The next day.
Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth.*

Mrs. Bennet. It was really a great idea of mine! It is raining and Jane has not returned yet.

Mr. Bennet. My dear, you will never cease to amaze me.

Elizabeth enters running.

Elizabeth. A letter from Jane! She writes that she caught a cold going to Netherfield and now she is confined to bed. Mr. Bingley will not let her go home until she has fully recovered.

Mr. Bennet. Well, my dear, if she died, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in the pursuit of Mr. Bingley.

Mrs. Bennet. Oh! People do not die of little trifling colds. She will be taken good care of. As long as she stays there, everything will be fine.

Elizabeth. I will go to visit her! I will go on foot!

Mrs. Bennet. How can you be so silly?! In all this mud! You will not be fit to be seen when you get there.

Elizabeth. I shall be very fit to see Jane which is all I want.

Mrs. Bennet. You are just wasting your time. Go instead with Lydia to meet some officers.

Elizabeth. I am sure that Jane would wish for me to be with her. She is shy and definitely will feel unwanted.

Mr. Bennet. Lizzi, if you wait a couple of hours I will take you in the carriage!

Elizabeth. Thank you father, but I would rather walk. The distance is nothing. I shall be back for dinner.

Mr. Bennet. I admire your benevolence, Lizzi. (*Kisses her on the forehead.*)

Elizabeth exits.

Mrs. Bennet. Indeed... Indeed, you do not save sweet words for your favorite daughter.

Mr. Bennet (*looking out at the window*). Look at her! She will walk for miles to reach Jane. How can you be so indifferent.

Mrs. Bennet snorts and exits.

SCENE 8

Netherfield. The park.

*Elizabeth, Jane, Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy, Miss Bingley.
Mr. Darcy and Miss Bingley come across with Elizabeth all dirty
and with the hair down.*

Mr. Darcy (*amazed*). Miss Elizabeth Bennet?!

Miss Bingley. Has she come on foot?

Elizabeth (*looks up*). I came to visit Jane... Would you mind telling me where she is?

Miss Bingley. The butler will accompany you.

Elizabeth. Thank you.

Elizabeth exits.

Mr. Darcy freezes as he watches her walk away.

Miss Bingley. Her hair, so untidy, is not it? And her petticoat covered in mud? ... You observed it, I am sure!

Mr. Darcy. Yes, I did.

Miss Bingley. To walk all of this way? What could she mean by doing it? It seems to me to show a disgusting sort of presumptuous independence.

Mr. Darcy. Or it simply shows an affection for her sister.

Miss Bingley. I am afraid, Mr. Darcy that this adventure has rather affected your admiration of her fine eyes.

Mr. Darcy. Not at all. The effort made them brighter.

SCENE 9

Netherfield. The drawing-room.

Mr. Bingley, Miss Bingley, Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth.

*Mr. Bingley and Miss Bingley are playing cards. Mr. Darcy is writing a letter.
Elizabeth enters.*

Mr. Bingley (*stands up*). How is Miss Jane?

Elizabeth. She is quit unwell.

Mr. Bingley. May I ask you then to stay until she has completely recovered?

Elizabeth. Certainly.

Miss Bingley. Come and play cards with us.

Elizabeth. In a short time I will return to my sister. If you do not mind I shall read a book.

Miss Bingley. She despises cards. She is a great reader, and she does not like anything else.

Elizabeth. I am not a great reader, and I like many things.

Mr. Bingley. I am sure you have pleasure in assisting your sister and I am sure that she will be quite well soon, so I can organise a ball here.

Miss Bingley. What are you writing so secretly there?

Mr. Darcy. I am writing to my sister.

Miss Bingley. Miss Darcy has grown a lot since this spring! Will she be as tall as I am?

Mr. Darcy. She is now about Miss Elizabeth Bennet's height.

Miss Bingley. How I wish to see her again! ... Her education is completed. She plays the piano in an exquisite way. Do you play, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth. Yes, but very badly, in reality.

Miss Bingley. All young ladies are well educated: they can sing, can play, can paint...

Mr. Darcy. I, however, know few women that are reputed to be well educated.

Miss Bingley. Oh! Certainly. Besides the singing and painting, a young lady must possess a certain indefinable quality in her attitude and in the manner of walking, in the tone of her voice, in the way she addresses and expresses herself to others.

Mr. Darcy. And to all this she must add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.

Elizabeth. I am hardly surprised that you know a few accomplished women. I rather wonder now that you know any.

Miss Bingley. Are you so severe upon your own sex?

Elizabeth. I am used to saying what I think.

Miss Bingley. In high society, that you have not had the good fortune of attending, you would have met them. Stop playing. Would you like to take a walk around the room with me, Miss Bennet?

Elizabeth nods and closes the book. Both are walking around the room.

Miss Bingley. It is very refreshing after being sat down for a long time.

Elizabeth. And this is a little lesson of education, I suppose.

Miss Bingley. Do you not want to join us, Mr. Darcy?

Mr. Darcy. If I did it, I would not achieve my aim.

Miss Bingley. Explain yourself.

Mr. Darcy. It is simple. I can admire you much better if I rest seated here.

Miss Bingley. It is disgusting. How we should punish him for such a reply?

Elizabeth. We can laugh at him.

Mr. Bingley. Oh no. Mr. Darcy is the best of men. He has no faults.

Elizabeth. Let us see... Are you not perhaps too proud, sir? Would you consider pride a fault or a virtue, Mr. Darcy?

Mr. Darcy. Where there is a real superiority of the intellect, pride will always be under careful control. Intellect is not among my flaws.

Elizabeth (ironic). Mr. Darcy has no defects. He admits so, himself, without any doubt.

Mr. Darcy. For my character I do not guarantee. I find difficult to forgive the faults of others or the offense it causes me. Once my respect is lost, it is lost forever.

Elizabeth. This is a flaw, but I cannot laugh of it.

Mr. Darcy. In every character there is a tendency to a particular imperfection.

Elizabeth. And your imperfection is detesting everyone.

Mr. Darcy. And yours is an obstinacy to misunderstand them.

Mr. Bingley. Do you want to listen some music?

SCENE 10

The Bennet's house.

Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, Jane, Elizabeth, Mr. Collins.

Jane. Mr. Bingley was so kind to me.

Elizabeth (ironic). It was very instructive to be in that house.

Mr. Bennet. I have news for you...

Mrs. Bennet enters.

Mrs. Bennet. What news, my dear?

Mr. Bennet. What timing, dear! ...From the man who can throw all of you out of this house, when I will be dead.

Mrs. Bennet. Not your nephew, Mr. Collins! How can you tolerate pronouncing that man's name? You know how much this topic upsets me. If only we had a son!

Mr. Bennet. It is a little late now, Mrs. Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet. If we had a son, our estate would be his at your death and not your wretched nephew's! He will throw us out of our home.

Mr. Bennet. Think positive, my dear. Think that I will live a longer time than you. Mr. Collins says that he comes in peace, since he has become a pastor under Lady Catherine de Bourgh's protection.

Everyone. Lady Catherine De Bourgh!

Mrs. Bennet. When is he arriving?

Mr. Bennet consults his watch.

Mr. Bennet. Approximately... now.

Mr. Collins enters.

Mr. Bennet. Mr. Collins, welcome!

Mr. Collins. Dearest Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet. Mr. Collins, please, I introduce to you Jane, and Elizabeth. Our other daughters are in town, unfortunately. Your visit surprised... in a positive way... all of us.

Mr. Collins. What a beautiful family of daughters! I do not want to seem rash but I arrived here precisely with the intention of admiring your daughters, if you understand what I mean.

Mrs. Bennet. Sit down, sir.

Everyone sits down.

Mrs. Bennet. Help yourself.

On the little table there is a plate of biscuits.

Mr. Collins (eating). Really delicious! It reminds me of the delicacies offered by Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Have I mentioned the worthy qualities of that lady?

Elizabeth. Not yet, but I am sure that we will hear a lot.

Mrs. Bennet. ...And very gladly.

Mr. Collins. The kindness that she has shown to me challenges every description. Did I tell you that my humble rectory is separated from her estate only by the narrowest of paths?

Mr. Bennet. How wonderful.

Mr. Collins. Her estate is so extended and mine so small, yet she lowered herself to come and visit me.

Mr. Bennet. Congratulations.

Mr. Collins. Moreover, I was occasionally invited to dinner in the splendour of her home.

Mrs. Bennet. Has she got sons, by any chance?

Mr. Collins. She has a wonderful daughter, the heir of a very extended estate. I have often said to Lady Catherine that her daughter was born to be a duchess. This is the kind of little attention that I particularly feel to offer to ladies.

Mr. Bennet. Do these pleasant attentions arise from a momentary impulse, or are they the result of preparation?

Mr. Collins. Momentary impulse, and although sometimes I enjoy inventing such little elegant presents, I force myself to give them a natural air.

Elizabeth and Jane force themselves not to laugh.

Elizabeth. Jane, do you not want to visit Meryton this afternoon? It would be a pleasure to walk with you.

Jane. Sure. I think that other soldiers have arrived and we will surely find our sister Lydia in the vicinity.

Elizabeth. May we go, father?

Mr. Collins. Soldiers? You will need protection.

Mr. Bennet. And you are the man that can offer it. You should go now or the light will dim.

Mr. Collins. I am sure that there will be many occasions to do that, but now I would like to talk to you privately.

Elizabeth and Jane exit.

Mr. Collins. Lady Catherine De Bourgh thinks that I should marry.

Mrs. Bennet (*with interest*). Ah!

Mr. Collins. Adequately and not under my rank.

Mrs. Bennet. I am pretty sure that my daughters are not under your rank. Excuse me. Maybe you have never thought about it.

Mr. Collins. Actually, I have to admit yes.

Mrs. Bennet. Really?

Mr. Collins. Your daughter Jane...

Mrs. Bennet. Oh, Mr. Collins, unfortunately Jane will be engaged very soon to Mr. Bingley.

Mr. Collins. A very respectable fiancé!

Mrs. Bennet. Elizabeth, however, is quite... available.

Mr. Bennet tries to stop her, making signals.

Mr. Collins. I was just to comment on Miss Elizabeth's beauty. It is almost like Miss Jane's. As soon as she returns from her walk, I will ask her to talk with me privately.

Mrs. Bennet. Certainly.

SCENE 11

*The streets of Meryton
Jane, Elizabeth, Lydia, Mr. Wickham.*

Jane. Mr. Collins is really odd.

Elizabeth (*she impersonates Mr. Collins*). "...I was occasionally invited to dinner by Lady Catherine De Bourgh..."

Both laugh.

Jane. I really cannot imagine a wife next to him.

Elizabeth. Surely she will be covered by "small elegant presents" from morning to evening...

*They laugh again.
Lydia and Mr. Wickham enter.*

Lydia. Jane, Elizabeth, you are here! I introduce you to Captain Wickham.

Mr. Wickham. I am not a Captain yet, but I shall be soon. May I take the liberty to say that you are all very beautiful.

Elizabeth. Will you stay for a long time, Mr. Wickham?

Mr. Wickham. All winter, luckily.

Lydia. Mr. Wickham told me that he knows Mr. Bingley very well and especially Mr. Darcy. You should come to the ball that they are organising. (*To Jane.*) Jane, I bought beautiful ribbons in the town, I am looking forward to showing them to you.

Jane (*to Elizabeth*). Excuse us for a minute.

Jane and Lydia exit.

Elizabeth. Can I ask in what circumstance did you know Mr. Darcy?

Mr. Wickham. Have you known him from a long time?

Elizabeth. One month. For the little that I know about him, I judge him to be a proud man with terrible character.

Mr. Wickham. I ask myself if it is probable that he will stop again for a long time in this area.

Elizabeth. I have no idea. I hope that your plans will not be influenced by his presence in this vicinity.

Mr. Wickham. Oh no, it is not for me to go away because of Mr. Darcy. If he wants to avoid to see me, it must be for him to go. We are not in a friendly relationship, on the contrary he was very cruel to me.

Elizabeth. May I know, Mr. Wickham, what happened between you two?

Mr. Wickham. His father, Miss Bennet, the deceased Mr. Darcy, was one of the best men who ever existed. I grew up in his house. He loved me like a son. At the moment of his death, he left me the parish of his estate.

Elizabeth. The parish?

Mr. Wickham. Military life was not what I was destined for. The church had to become my home and Reverend was to be my profession. Darcy ignored his father's desires and the parish was given to another person.

Elizabeth. That is terrible! But why this aversion towards you?

Mr. Wickham. Jealousy. I think that the unusual affection of his father towards me had irritated him since childhood. His sister resembles him in everything.

Elizabeth. I did not believe Mr. Darcy was so wicked!

Lydia and Jane move closer.

Lydia. Who is wicked?

Mr. Wickham. Excuse me, Miss Elizabeth, if I had annoyed you with my story.

Elizabeth. Not at all.

Jane. We should go home, Elizabeth.

Lydia. Go to the ball tonight, so we may dance all evening.

Mr. Wickham. See you tonight then, Miss Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. See you tonight, Mr. Wickham.

SCENE 12

The Bennet's home. The sitting room.

Elizabeth, Jane, Mr. Collins.

Elizabeth and Jane go into the house. They find Mr. Collins sitting on the sofa, deep in thought.

Elizabeth (*she bows*). Mr. Collins is here... All alone?

Mr. Collins. I was precisely waiting for you, Miss Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Mr. Collins, you could have nothing to say to me that Jane cannot hear.

Mr. Collins. This conversation regards only you... In other words, you and me.

Jane. I am sorry Elizabeth.

Elizabeth begs her with the gaze not to leave her alone, but Jane exits.

Mr. Collins. Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, your modesty enhances you, but I assure that I have your respected mother's approval for this talk.

Elizabeth. Mr. Collins...

Mr. Collins (*interrupting*). Almost immediately, once I entered in this house, I chose you as my future life partner. But before to get myself carried away from my feelings, it is suitable to explain the reasons that I have to marry. First...

Elizabeth. Please, Mr. Collins...

Mr. Collins. Your impatience encourages me! So... First: I consider right for every member of the clergy to give the example of marriage in his own parish. Second: ...

Elizabeth. I insist, Mr. Collins...

Mr. Collins. Second: I am sure that this will contribute to my happiness; and third – but maybe I should have mentioned for first – that...

Elizabeth (*to herself*). This is really a nightmare.

Mr. Collins. ...This was the advice of the very noble woman that I have the honour to call my patroness. And now, nothing else remains for me but to show you my affection.

He gets closer.

Elizabeth (*she stands up*). You are too rushed, sir. You forget I gave no answer.

Mr. Collins. I can also add that...

Elizabeth (*she interrupts*). Mr. Collins, I am aware of the honour of your proposal, but for me it is impossible to accept it.

Mr. Collins. I forgot that obviously as it is the custom of women to refuse marriage proposal when it was made for the first time, I do not consider myself barely discouraged from that what you have just said.

Elizabeth. I assure you, sir, I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make me happy, and I could not make you happy.

Mr. Collins. I keep hoping that this is only a way, by waiting, to increase my love for you.

Elizabeth. I am honest, sir, please, I ask you to understand me. I cannot accept.

Furious, she exits and sees Mrs. Bennet who was eavesdropping on the door.

Mrs. Bennet. Mr. Collins, be sure that Elizabeth will come to her senses. I will talk with her immediately. She is a foolish and very stubborn girl!

Mr. Collins. Forgive me if I interrupt you, Madam, but if she is really foolish and stubborn, all things considered, I do not know if she would make a desirable wife for a man of my position.

He goes out.

Mrs. Bennet. You misunderstood me, Mr. Collins.

Mr. Bennet enters.

Mr. Bennet. What is happening here?

Mrs. Bennet. Oh, Mr. Bennet, we absolutely need you right now; we are in turmoil. You have to go to Elizabeth and convince her to marry Mr. Collins, because she declares that she does not want him anymore, and Mr. Collins has started saying that he does not want her.

Mr. Bennet. And what could I do? It seems a desperate case.

Mrs. Bennet. Talk with Elizabeth. Tell her that you insist on her marrying him. (*She shouts.*) Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

Elizabeth enters again.

Mr. Bennet. Come here, my child.

Mrs. Bennet. Tell her that you insist that they get married.

Elizabeth. Father, please.

Mr. Bennet. Let us get to the point. Your mother insists so that you accept. Do you not, Mrs. Bennet?

Mrs. Bennet. Yes, otherwise I will not want to see her again.

Mr. Bennet. You face a sad choice, Elizabeth. From today you will have to be a stranger for one of your parents. Your mother will not want to see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins. And I will not want to see you again if you marry him.

Elizabeth (*with a soft smile*). Thank you father.

She exits.

Mrs. Bennet. I can never rely on you. I always have to do all by myself! Ah, my nerves! Thank God I have Jane. (*Remembering.*) The ball, I have completely forgotten!

SCENE 13

*Third ball.
Netherfield.*

*Lavish atmosphere. Elizabeth, Jane, dressed much better than the first two balls.
Elizabeth is looking for someone. Mr. Collins instead is dancing with Charlotte.
Jane arrives.*

Jane. Elizabeth, look that happy couple!

Elizabeth. To see my friend laughing at Mr. Collins jokes is very strange!

Jane. But it is also strange that Mr. Collins is having so much fun after a refusal to marry happened four hours ago.

Elizabeth. Then I will have to tell Charlotte to keep a distance from Mr. Collins. Jane, have you seen Mr. Wickham, by chance?

Jane. Did you not know? Lydia told me that Mr. Wickham was called back to the town.

Elizabeth. Called back?

Mr. Darcy enters and stands in front of Elizabeth.

Mr. Darcy. May I have the next ball?

Elizabeth (*without understanding what she is saying*). Sure.

Mr. Darcy moves to the other side.

Jane (*mumbling*). This is another strange thing. Try not to stamp his feet.

Elizabeth (*mumbling*). I swore to myself to never dance with him.

A music starts. Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth dance for a while in silence.

Elizabeth. A wonderful ball.

Darcy. Yes indeed.

Elizabeth (*after a while*). It is up to you to say something, Mr. Darcy.

He says nothing.

Elizabeth. Maybe you should make some comments on the room dimension or on the number of couples.

Mr. Darcy. Whatever you want me to say, please consider it said.

Elizabeth. I got to know Mr. Wickham today. A kind and honest man.

Mr. Darcy (*he stops for a second*). Mr. Wickham has such pleasant attitudes that guarantees him to make friendships, it is however not certain that he can maintain them.

Elizabeth (*with emphasis*). He was so unlucky to lose your friendship and in a way that probably will make him suffer for his whole life.

The ball ends.

Mr. Darcy. What are you trying to say to me?

Elizabeth. I am only trying to understand your character.

Mr. Darcy. And are you succeeding in?

Elizabeth. I did not go one step further. I hear talk about you in so many different ways that I feel extremely confused.

Mr. Darcy. I am sure that you have heard a lot of talk. I will try to offer to you more clearness in the future.

The two separate.

SCENE 14

The Bennet's house. The garden.

The day after.

Elizabeth, Jane, Charlotte.

Elizabeth is sitting under a tree, deep in thought.

She has in her hands a book of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Jane. Oh, Elizabeth, I received a letter from Miss Bingley.

Elizabeth. What does she say?

Jane (*choking up*). She and her brother are going to leave Netherfield without intention to return. It is because of Mr. Darcy.

Elizabeth. It is without doubts because of Mr. Darcy.

Jane. Mr. Darcy wishes that Mr. Bingley meets his sister, Georgiana, who has grown in beauty, elegance and quality... (*Pause.*) So none of us is going to get married.

Elizabeth. You are talking so calmly about it. How could Mr. Bingley have left Netherfield?

Jane. We were not engaged. He was free to go.

Elizabeth. You are too good, my dear Jane. Carolyne, his sister, has surely contributed to their so sudden departure.

Jane. But maybe he does not love me at all.

Elizabeth. He loves you, Jane and you love him. This is the only certainty I have right now.

Jane. And you, Lizzi? Who do you have in your heart?

Elizabeth. I have you in my heart.

She hugs her. Charlotte enters.

Elizabeth. Charlotte? Are you smiling? Have you brought us good news?

Jane. You know, we need it.

Charlotte. I come to tell you that I am engaged to Mr. Collins!

Elizabeth (*surprised*). Engaged?! My dear Charlotte... It is impossible!

Charlotte. Why are you surprising, my dear Lizzi? Do you consider it unbelievable that Mr. Collins can manage to get a woman's esteem only because he was not so lucky to deserve yours?

Elizabeth. But I wish you happiness, you know. But Mr. Collins is...

Charlotte (*offended*). I am not romantic, like you. I only want a comfortable house, and considering the character, social relationships and Mr. Collins' position, I am convinced that the possibilities to be happy with him are favourable as much as with any other person.

Elizabeth. Without doubt.

Charlotte. Try not to judge me, Lizzi.

Jane. If you are happy, we are too, Charlotte.

Charlotte. Come and see me in Hanford. Elizabeth, come. I will need you more than ever.

Elizabeth (*with a smile*). I promise you.

Charlotte exits.

Elizabeth (*to Jane*). I have an idea. Let us go to our uncles in London. Make Mr. Bingley aware that you are there. Charlotte was right when she said that you must have courage in love.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Hanford. House Collins.

After a month.

Elizabeth, Mr. Collins, Charlotte.

Elizabeth is wearing a dress for traveling and has a travel case in her hand.

Charlotte. Elizabeth, I am so glad to see you.

Mr. Collins. Welcome, Miss Elizabeth. I have great news. Our beloved Lady Catherine De Bourgh has invited us to dinner this evening. Can you believe us to be so lucky?

Elizabeth. May I unpack first?

Charlotte. I will help you.

Mr. Collins. Do not worry too much about which clothes you choose to dress in. Lady Catherine will not have less respect for you if you are simply dressed. She will appreciate that the difference in rank is preserved.

Elizabeth (*ironic*). Thank you, Mr. Collins, what you tell me encourages me.

Mr. Collins. And do not be late, dear.

He exits.

Charlotte. How are things, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth. Jane is in London. I have almost nobody to talk with.

Charlotte. And Mr. Wickham?

Elizabeth. He comes to visit me. My father has a weakness for Mr. Wickham.

Charlotte. And you?

Elizabeth. At the moment I am not in love with him; no, truly I am not. But he is the most pleasant man that I have ever known, without possibility of comparison. Now though he is far away...

Charlotte. Put this dress on. Lady Catherine is really a very wise woman and a very caring neighbour. My father will also be there.

Elizabeth. Mr. William?

Charlotte. Oh yes. It will be fun. *(She sits down.)* I am really happy to see you.

Elizabeth. Me too.

SCENE 2

Lady Catherine De Bourgh's House.

Elizabeth, Charlotte, Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine, Mr. Darcy.

Very richly furnished sitting room. Lady Catherine is sitting on a sofa.

Her daughter is sitting next to her. She looks weak. Sir William stands up.

Elizabeth, Charlotte and Mr. Collins enter.

Lady Catherine. So, are you Miss Elizabeth Bennet?

Elizabeth *(astonished that she has not greeted her friend)*. Yes, it is me.

Lady Catherine. This is my daughter Anne. Sit down, please. Miss Bennet, I know Mr. Collins expects to inherit your family's estate. And yet you and Mrs. Collins are still good friends. How pleasant this is.

Elizabeth. Ehm...

Pause.

Lady Catherine *(to Elizabeth)*. Come here, young child. Do you play and sing?

Elizabeth. A little bit.

Lady Catherine. Probably our instrument is superior than yours, but you may try it. Do you draw?

Elizabeth. No, at all.

Lady Catherine. Any one of your sisters?

Elizabeth. None.

Lady Catherine. It is very strange. Did your tutor leave you?

Elizabeth. We have never had a tutor.

Lady Catherine. No tutor! How is it possible? Five home-educated daughters without a tutor! I have never heard of anything like that.

Elizabeth. Those of us that wanted to study have always had the possibility.

Lady Catherine. You state your opinions very powerfully for a person so young. How old are you?

Elizabeth. With three younger sisters that are already adults, your ladyship can surely not demand that I admit my age.

Lady Catherine. I would like that you do what is asked of you.

Sir William. Please let me say that Miss Bennet dances in an excellent way. I saw her dancing delightfully with Mr. Darcy, your nephew.

Lady Catherine *(irritated)*. My nephew? He will tell me himself in person. He is here.

Mr. Darcy enters.

Lady Catherine. Dear Mr. Darcy.

Sir William. What a wonderful coincidence.

Mr. Darcy. A pleasant coincidence, I am sure of it.

Elizabeth (*astonished*). Extremely pleasant.

Lady Catherine. I take every pleasure of my nephew's company... My daughter is happy too. You may play, Miss Bennet.

Elizabeth sits in front of the piano and starts playing so that all the others characters turn to look at her, becoming curious. Mr. Darcy remains enchanted and goes towards her. Sir William does the same thing. Lady Catherine, on the contrary, distances herself and talks over the music with Charlotte.

Lady Catherine. Miss Bennet plays rather well.

*Lady Catherine, Collins and Charlotte chat among themselves.
The daughter only listens.*

Elizabeth (*to Mr. Darcy*). Do you wish to scare me, Mr. Darcy? You have to know that my courage grows with every attempt of intimidation.

Mr. Darcy. I am sure that I do not cause any fear in you. Experience tells me that you tend to exaggerate.

Elizabeth. If you dare to make these people think that I speak dishonestly, I will try with great pleasure to make them notice your flaws.

Mr. Darcy. I am not afraid of you, Miss Elizabeth.

Sir William. Which flaws? Mr. Darcy does not seem to have them.

Elizabeth. Do you remember how taciturn he was at your party?

Mr. Darcy. I do not have the talent of conversation with people I do not know.

Elizabeth. I have not the talent for playing the piano but, with practice, I could improve. Your conversation could improve with practice, Mr. Darcy.

Mr. Darcy. You are perfectly right. You have used your time much better.

Lady Catherine turns towards the piano.

Lady Catherine. What are you saying, Sir William? Let me hear it too.

Sir William. We are talking about music, Lady Catherine.

Lady Catherine. How boring. Dear nephew, come to talk to Anne.

Mr. Darcy distances himself from Elizabeth.

Sir William. I see that you are not very friendly with Mr. Darcy.

Elizabeth. We started getting to know each other in the wrong way.

Sir William. Do not be so strict with him. I have heard that he is very kind with his friends.

Elizabeth. When it is at his advantage, no doubt.

Sir William. No. He was very generous when he heard that his best friend, Mr. Bingley, talked about marrying carelessly.

Elizabeth. What was so imprudent in this marriage?

Sir William. There were objections about the woman's family and he convinced Mr. Bingley to leave with him.

Elizabeth. So it was him that separated them! Very kind by Mr. Darcy! Do you not understand, Sir William? The woman to whom Mr. Darcy objected was Jane. My dear sister, Jane.

Sir William. Maybe there are facts that we do not know.

Elizabeth. What facts there could be?

Lady Catherine. Miss Elizabeth, come here now.

Elizabeth. I cannot. I am sorry, but I do not feel very well.

Elizabeth exits. Everyone is astonished by such a gesture.

SCENE 3

*Lady Catherine's house. The park.
Elizabeth tries to calm herself. She sits under a tree.
Mr. Darcy arrives, running.*

Mr. Darcy. Miss Elizabeth, do you feel well? I was worried.

Elizabeth. There is nothing serious to worry about.

Mr. Darcy *(after a long pause)*. In vain I fought... against my will... against my reason. It did not help. My feelings cannot be repressed. You have to allow me to tell you with how much passion I admire you and I love you. It is difficult to me to admit loving someone that is, socially, inferior than me. This marriage will compromise completely my family. It will decrease my own social condition. However, I am ready to do this sacrifice because I love you.

Elizabeth. Sir, I am so sorry that I have caused you so much pain. However, I was totally unaware of the suffering I have inflicted upon you.

Mr. Darcy. That is all?

Elizabeth. Yes, Sir.

Mr. Darcy. At least I could be informed about why you are refusing me like this.

Elizabeth. Could I ask too why you have chosen to tell me that you like me against your will, against your reason and with the evident aim of offending me and insulting me?

Mr. Darcy. I thought that...

Elizabeth *(interrupts)*. Is this not enough to justify my unkindness, if I was unkind? But there were other provocations. You know well that there were.

Mr. Darcy. What are you talking about?

Elizabeth. How could I ever marry the man that ruined, maybe forever, the happiness of my sister? Can you deny to have done it?

Mr. Darcy. I do not want to deny. I did everything in my power to separate Mr. Bingley from your sister.

Elizabeth. And do you expect that I marry you?

Mr. Darcy. I do not regret to have done it. I did not see enough feeling between them.

Elizabeth. But Jane loves him!

Mr. Darcy. Yes, in her aspect and in her ways I read a general liking, to which, however, the capacity of showing the deepness of her feelings is not linked. A union so unexpected was therefore to be discouraged.

Elizabeth. You could have waited.

Mr. Darcy. No, if a great estate is at stake.

Elizabeth. My sister was not interested in money.

Mr. Darcy. She was not, but your mother was. She said it to all people she met. What was I supposed to do?

Elizabeth. This is not the only cause of my resentment. What can you say to me about Mr. Wickham? He must thank you for his misfortunes.

Mr. Darcy. His misfortunes? Yes, his misfortunes were really large.

Elizabeth. You destroyed every opportunity he had. You reduced him to poverty.

Mr. Darcy. He said that to you, truly?

Elizabeth. Yes.

Mr. Darcy. And you thought this of me; of me; that I am ready to sacrifice so much because I love you.

Elizabeth. If you think that other insults about my society position will convince me to marry you, then you are wrong. You are not a gentleman, Mr. Darcy.

Mr. Darcy. I do not have...

Elizabeth. You are the last man in the world that I could ever be persuaded to marry.

Mr. Darcy. If these are your feelings, forgive me to have wasted your time. I wish you health and happiness.

Mr. Darcy exits.

SCENE 4

Same place, a couple of hours after.

Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, then Mr. Collins and Charlotte.

Elizabeth is alone, sitting without moving.

Sir William enters.

Sir William. Dear miss Elizabeth, sorry to disturb you. This letter arrived for you... it is not signed.

Elizabeth. Is it not signed?

Sir William. Exactly. And, to avoid every kind of problem that a nameless letter could cause in this house, I ran immediately to you.

Elizabeth. Thank you. You are always very kind to me.

Sir William. I see you have been very unhappy lately. What do you think of visiting Derbyshire with me? Then I will accompany you to your parents' home.

Elizabeth. That would be wonderful, thank you.

Sir William exits. Elizabeth opens the letter.

Elizabeth *(reads)*.

"Do not be afraid, lady, to receive this letter, that contains a certain repetition of my feelings. However, I write you in the hope of defending myself from your accusations. Mr. Wickham, that you acclaim so much, ruined everything with his own hands. It was his decision to leave the parish. Moreover, he had asked for money to become a lawyer. I supplied him a generous amount of money and he left immediately for London. I do not know how he spent his money, but he did not become a lawyer and he also got into debt. Then, I got to know from my sister Georgiana that when she was only fifteen years old and attended school in London, Mr. Wickham convinced her to run away with him. His reason, I am sure of it, was our great fortune. I stopped his plan and since then I have always been far from him. I will try to find some occasions to put this letter on your hands this morning. I will only add, that may God bless you."

Mr. Collins and Charlotte enter. They surprised Elizabeth with the letter.

Elizabeth hides it quickly.

Mr. Collins. Lady Catherine was not completely herself. Her nephew, Mr. Darcy, had to go away suddenly, I cannot imagine for what reason. She doted on her nephew, as now she dotes on me.

Elizabeth. I have to go, too. I have really appreciated your company.

Charlotte. Will you return to your home?

Elizabeth. No, I want to visit Derbyshire first. Your father suggested I visit it. We are leaving together and then returning to my home.

Charlotte. Goodbye Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Goodbye.

SCENE 5

*Derbyshire. Pemberley.
Sir William, Elizabeth.*

Sir William. And this is the famous Pemberley of Derbyshire!

Elizabeth. I have heard of Pemberley. Of course! Mr. Wickham has talked to me about it! He was on the point of being Reverend and Mr. Darcy was the owner.

Sir William. He still is.

Elizabeth (*she stops herself*). Is he not present, at the moment?

Sir William. At the moment no, young lady.

Elizabeth. This is good to hear. How beautiful it is here.

Sir William. Do you want to visit the house?

Elizabeth. If it is possible.

Sir William. It is usually open to visit when Mr. Darcy is not at home. Here one does not miss art, does one not, my dear?

Elizabeth stops in front of Mr. Darcy's portrait.

Sir William. Ah, what a beautiful portrait of Mr. Darcy. Do you agree, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth. It is beautiful.

Sir William. He and his sister, Miss Georgiana, both are good-looking. I wonder if he ever could find a woman for himself, one day.

Elizabeth. Is he very demanding?

Sir William. No. He only expects from others what he does of himself. He has always been generous and kind.

Elizabeth. So you got to know him well during our stay in Hanford.

Sir William. Enough to affirm that he is a real gentleman.

Elizabeth. The gardens are so enchanting with sunlight. It would be a pity to miss them. I will go for a short walk.

Sir William. Feel free to wander.

SCENE 6

*Pemberley. The garden.
Sir William, Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, Miss Darcy, Mr. Bingley.
Elizabeth walks enchanted. Mr. Darcy enters.*

Elizabeth (*between himself*). But it cannot be him! I was told he was not here!

Mr. Darcy. What a pleasant surprise, Miss Bennet!

Elizabeth. Yes, Mr. Darcy. I am shocked. Pleasantly shocked. You have a wonderful estate. Absolutely fascinating.

Mr. Darcy. I am very attached to Pemberley. What brings you to the north?

Elizabeth (*after a pause*). The beauty of places.

Miss Darcy enters.

Mr. Darcy. Let me introduce you to my sister.

Georgiana. Miss Bennet, at last we meet. I have been told a lot about you.

Elizabeth. Really?

Mr. Darcy. It was Mr. Bingley that accompanied my sister.

Elizabeth. I will be glad to see him again.

Mr. Bingley enters.

Mr. Bingley. Me too, Miss Bennet. Tell me, Miss Elizabeth, how is your family?

Elizabeth. They are all fine.

Mr. Bingley. And Miss Jane? It seems so long since we last met.

Elizabeth. I think that it was...

Mr. Bingley. Last November. Eight months and twelve days ago.

Elizabeth. Your memory is very precise, Mr. Bingley.

Sir William enters.

Sir. William. There is a letter for you.

Elizabeth. It is from Jane. *(She reads and her face clouds.)* Something very serious and unexpected has happened. Lydia is ran away and the military authorities at Brighton said Mr. Wickham left with her. It is said that they went to Gretna Green in Scotland to marry. *(She reads last lines and starts crying.)* Can he really be so bad? After all, he has nothing to gain from us financially.

Mr. Darcy. I am really grieved.

Elizabeth. Jane is waiting for me at home. Sir William, we have to leave immediately. We are ruined and all the world will know it soon enough. Mr. Wickham carried Lydia away...

Darcy. I do not know what to say.

Elizabeth. ...And when he finds out that she has no riches to offer him, what will happen to them? What will happen to her? Oh, Mr. Darcy, I could have prevented this, if only I had said everything I knew.

Mr. Darcy. What, if anything, has been done to find her?

Elizabeth. Nothing yet. We have to find her. Goodbye.

Sir William and Elizabeth exit.

Mr. Darcy. Very well, Wickham.

SCENE 7

The Bennet's home.

*Elizabeth, Jane, Mrs. Bennet, and then Lydia, Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, Mr. Bennet.
Jane enter to find Elizabeth upset.*

Jane. Is our mother still in bed?

Elizabeth. Yes, Jane. What can we do to find Lydia?

Jane. Father is ready by now to saddle horses and follow Lydia to Scotland, if necessary.

Elizabeth. Jane, Mr. Wickham has big debts. He courted Lydia only for...

Jane. Everything will be fine, you will see!

Elizabeth. Father became very angry when he realised who Mr. Wickham really is. I have never seen him so angry before.

Mrs. Bennet enters.

Elizabeth and Jane. Oh, mother!

Mrs. Bennet. Oh, my nerves! Poor me! Oh, what will happen to us!

Mr. Bennet enters.

Mr. Bennet. A letter arrived.

He sits down without having the courage to open it.

Jane (*she takes the letter*). A signed letter... Mrs. Lydia Wickham!

Mrs. Bennet. Lydia has got married!

Jane (*she reads*). She has got married in London. Our uncle gave consent to the ceremony.

Mrs Bennet. Consent? Mr. Wickham did not inform himself about our family's property?

Jane (*she reads*). He writes that he is totally satisfied.

Elizabeth. Why on earth did our uncle give consent to the marriage when he knew that Mr. Wickham has debts?

Jane. It seems that he was informed that they were all paid in full. Moreover, he said also that the marriage has been paid for!

Elizabeth. That is strange.

Mr. Bennet. Yes, however it is truly a relief.

Jane (*she reads*). She writes that she is arriving here to greet us.

Mrs. Bennet. Here? It is a miracle. Who would have ever thought that? Lydia is married! I have to prepare a wonderful lunch.

Someone knocks at the door.

Mrs. Bennet. It must be Lydia! What a joy!

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet exit.

Elizabeth. Did you ever expect a finalé like this?

Jane (*she sighs*). We did not see our sister get married.

Elizabeth. Honestly it is better like this. The only thing that I cannot understand is: who paid in full Mr. Wickham's debts?

Jane (*she sighs*). Who ever did this was a real gentleman.

Elizabeth (*she looks at Jane*). I know that you wished to marry first... How do you feel?

Jane. Are you talking about Mr. Bingley? I do not think about him anymore. I know that he and Mr. Darcy have arrived again in Netherfield...

Elizabeth. Are they here?

Jane. ...And this news did not upset my heart... not even a little.

Elizabeth (*she laughs*). Jane, Jane... I know you too well to believe in what are you saying.

Lydia enters.

Elizabeth. Lydia! You are back. Is Mr. Wickham with you?

Lydia. My husband is outside and he is speaking with our parents... We will not stay here for a long time. I am a married woman now and I have no time to waste.

Elizabeth (*ironic*). I am sure of it.

Lydia. My very beloved Wickham is the best. But I do not want you to become jealous, dear sisters.

Elizabeth. So you are happy.

Lydia. I shall tell you all about my wedding!

Elizabeth. Maybe it is better to talk as little as possible about it.

Lydia. Come on! I am sure that Jane wants to hear it. Do not you, Jane?

Jane (*she tries to keep calm*). I can imagine. You may also say nothing.

Lydia. How strange you are! But I shall tell you anyway. I was so upset... Our aunt did not stop giving me lectures and kept talking as if she were reading a sermon and our uncle, who had to walk me down the aisle, was called for a certain business just before the ceremony. It seemed that the marriage would not be done. Luckily he came back in time... However, it would not have been necessary to postpone the marriage, because Mr. Darcy could have done it, too.

Elizabeth (*astonished*). Mr. Darcy!

Lydia. Oh, poor me! I have completely forgotten about it! It must be a secret!

Jane. What was Mr. Darcy doing at your wedding?

Lydia. Ok, I shall tell you. Mr. Darcy paid all my husband's debts...

Elizabeth. So it was him who saved all our family!

Lydia. Oh! Is that the time, already? We should have already left. Goodbye, Elizabeth, goodbye Jane. I will try to write to you, but, you know, married women do not have much time to write. You write me, you will have nothing else to do.

Jane. Goodbye Lydia.

Lydia exits.

Jane. After everything, Mr. Darcy has revealed himself to be generous and sensitive.

Elizabeth. Oh Jane, how wrong I was.

Mr. Bennet enters.

Mr. Bennet. What a day... And it is not finished yet.

Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley enter.

Elizabeth. Mr. Darcy? What a surprise!

Mr. Darcy. I was passing through and I thought that it was right to visit you.

Elizabeth. You did it well.

Mr. Bingley (*to Jane*). My dear Miss Bennet. It is such a pleasure to see you again.

Jane. For me too... For us.

Mr. Bennet. Elizabeth, let us leave Jane alone with Mr. Bingley.

Elizabeth (*she looks at Jane with a smile*). Sure.

Everyone exits.

SCENE 8

Same place. One hour later.

Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth, Lady Catherine.

Elizabeth and Mr. Bennet are alone in the sitting room.

Mr. Bennet. What a day! What a day! We have not even have lunch as it should be.

Elizabeth. I hope that the surprises are finished for today.

Mr. Bennet. And where is Jane?

Elizabeth. She is still talking to mother.

Mr. Bennet. Jane will marry Mr. Bingley... You know, their characters are very similar. They are so pleasant together, that they will never make a decision; they are so indulgent, that all the servants will take advantage of them; and so generous, that they will always spend more than their earnings.

Elizabeth. They love each other and that is the most important.

Someone knocks at the door.

Mr. Bennet. Who is this now?

Elizabeth. I do not know. Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley went into town.

Mrs. Bennet (*voice-over*). Madam?

Lady Catherine enters the room.

Lady Catherine. Lady Catherine de Bourgh! I have to speak with Miss Bennet.

Mrs. Bennet (*astonished*). With whom of Misses Bennet?

Lady Catherine (*she sees Elizabeth*). I hope you are fine, Miss Bennet. I imagine that this lady is your mother.

Elizabeth. Father, I introduce you to Lady Catherine.

Mr. Bennet (*to Elizabeth*). Interesting! (*To Lady Catherine.*) A pleasure to meet you.

Lady Catherine. This sitting room must be very uncomfortable on summer afternoons; all the windows face west.

Mrs. Bennet. I assure you that we never use it after lunch. Would you like a cup of tea, Madam?

Lady Catherine. I would like to talk to Miss Bennet alone.

Elizabeth. Go ahead. Everything is fine.

Mrs. and Mr. Bennet exit.

Lady Catherine. You know very well why I am here, Miss Bennet.

Elizabeth. I cannot explain to myself the honour in any way.

Lady Catherine. Miss Bennet, you should know, that I never joke.

Elizabeth. I would never take the liberty.

Lady Catherine. I have heard a rumour, very worrying, that you would marry my nephew, Mr. Darcy. I am sure that it is a shameful lie.

Elizabeth. So, if you are sure that it is a lie, what is the aim of your visit?

Lady Catherine. You must deny it publicly.

Elizabeth. Your visit will rather contribute to confirm it, if it is true.

Lady Catherine. Has my nephew ever made you a marriage proposal?

Elizabeth. Your ladyship asserted that it is impossible.

Lady Catherine. It must be. This union to which you aspire could never take place. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter.

Elizabeth. If it is so, you have no reason to suppose that he made a proposal to me.

Lady Catherine. Obstinate stubborn girl! My daughter and my nephew were destined one to each other with the support of every member of their respective families; desires; it was all decided at their births. And what should divide them? The imagined pretensions of a young woman without a name, without parenthood or riches. It is not tolerable!

Elizabeth. Whatever my family condition is, if your nephew has no objections to make, this must be of no interest to you.

Lady Catherine. Tell me, once and for all, are you engaged to him?

Elizabeth. No.

Lady Catherine. And do you promise me never to undertake such an engagement?

Elizabeth. I will never make such a promise. You have insulted me in every possible way. I pray that you leave this house. Lady Catherine, I have nothing else to say.

Lady Catherine. This is your final decision? Very well! From now on I will know how to act.

She exits.

SCENE 9

*The Bennet's house. The garden.
Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bennet.
Elizabeth is sitting under a tree.
Mr. Darcy arrives.*

Elizabeth. Mr. Darcy, have you walked all the way here?

Mr. Darcy. Yes.

Elizabeth. And how did this walk seem to you?

Mr. Darcy (*touched*). Long.

Elizabeth laughs.

Mr. Darcy. I know my aunt was here.

Elizabeth. Yes.

Mr. Darcy. How could I ever be forgiven for such a behaviour?

Elizabeth. After what you have done for Lydia, it is me that has to apologise. I thank you in the name of all my family for your generosity.

Mr. Darcy. But your family owes me nothing. As much as I respect it, I believe I thought only about you.

Elizabeth does not answer.

Mr. Darcy. You are too honest to make fun of me. If your feelings are still those that were last April, tell me right now.

Elizabeth. They are changed... They are the exact opposite.

Mr. Darcy. My affection and my desires are the same.

Elizabeth. So I accept your marriage proposal.

Mr. Bennet enters.

Elizabeth. Father!

She runs to him.

Mr. Bennet (*surprised*). Elizabeth? What are you up to?

Mr. Darcy. Mr. Bennet... Your daughter has just accepted to become my wife.

Mr. Bennet (*he feels like he is fainting.*). Wait...Wait a minute. (*He sits down.*) Lizzie, come closer. Are you mad, to accept that man? Have not you always detested him?

Elizabeth. I was completely wrong about him.

Mr. Bennet. Certainly, he is rich, certainly, and you could have dresses and carriages more elegant than Jane. But will they make you happy?

Elizabeth. Do you have other objections apart from thinking that I am emotionless?

Mr. Bennet. None. We all know that he is a proud and unpleasant man; but this means nothing if you really like him.

Elizabeth. Yes, I like him. I love him. He is not proud, father. I was prejudiced and therefore blind. You do not know how marvelous he is. One day I will tell it to you.

Mr. Bennet. If things are like this, he deserves you. I could never separate from you, my Lizzie, for somebody less worthy. Mrs. Bennet, Jane... Come here! This is really the day of surprises!

Mr. Bennet exits.

Mr. Darcy moves closer to Elizabeth. They kiss.

Elizabeth's voice

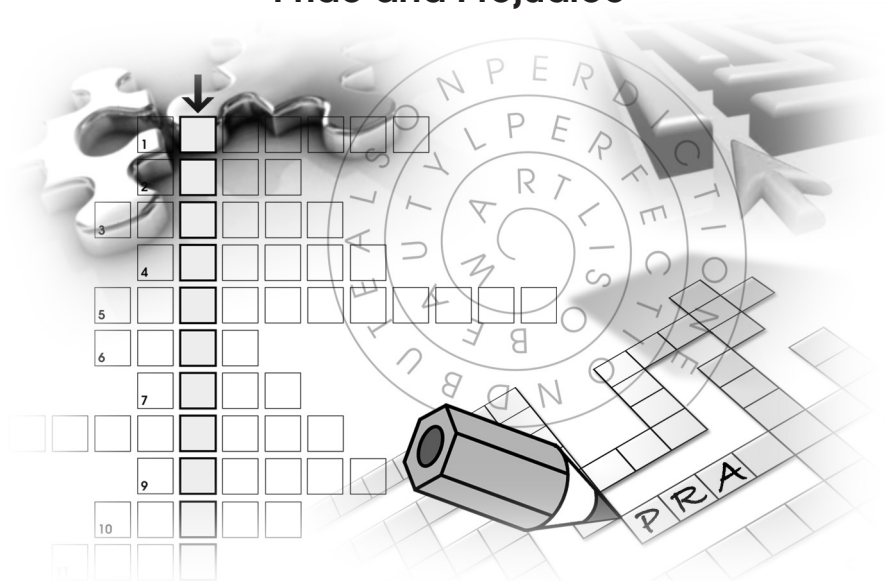
LOVE... IS AN EVER-FIXED MARK
THAT LOOKS ON TEMPESTS AND IS NEVER SHAKEN
IT IS THE STAR TO EVERY WANDERING BARK
WHOSE WORTH'S UNKNOWN ALTHOUGH HIS HEIGHT BE TAKEN
LOVE'S NOT TIME'S FOOL THOUGH...

THE END

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Practical exercises edited by Gianfranca Olivieri
Theatrical Season 2015/2016

Pride and Prejudice



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FILL IN THE FORM IN BLOCK LETTERS USING A PEN

Surname: Name: F ☐ M ☐

N.: Address:

Postcode: Town: Province:

Telephone: Mobile:

E-mail:

Date of birth:

School:

N.: Address:

Postcode: Town: Province:

Telephone:

English teacher:

Date Signature

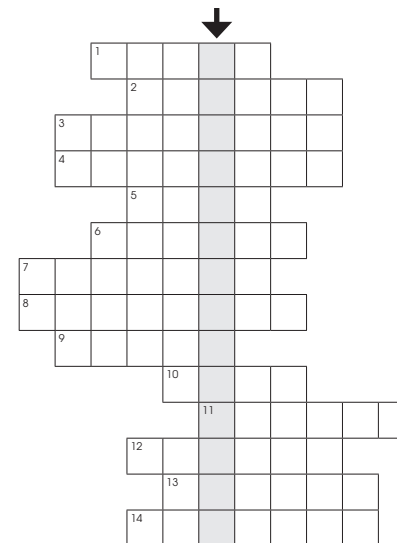
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1. PUZZLE

How can Mr. Darcy be judged?

Find the missing words in the sentences below, quoted from the text and write them in the puzzle.

1. Mrs. Bennet fears to be out of her home.
2. Mr. Collins is Mr. Bennet's
3. Mr. Bennet says that Lydia is one of the girls in the country.
4. Mr. Wickman and Mr. Darcy are not in relationship.
5. Mr. Darcy in full Mr. Wickman's debts.
6. Mrs. Bennet says that Mr. Bennet irritating her.
7. Mr. Bingley is a young man with a large
8. Mr. Wickman says that he was not destined for life.
9. Darcy says that Lizzy is not beautiful enough to him.
10. Lady Catherine's daughter is the of a very extended estate.
11. Mr. Collins was occasionally invited to by Lady Catherine.
12. Mr. Collins' rectory is very
13. Mr. Collins is a under Lady Catherine's protection.
14. Darcy hates



Now read the column under the arrow and you'll find the solution.

Solution: AN

2. RIDDLE

What does Mrs. Bennet wish for her daughters?

The words in box (C) are incomplete. Chose the two missing letters in box (A), write them in box (C) and write the remaining letter in box (B).

Example →

BOX (A)	BOX (B)	BOX (C)
Ⓐ U O	A	C O U P L E
R T C		_ U S _ O M
V I H		_ E A _ E N
C A S		E _ T _ T E
H B L		_ U T _ E R
E H F		_ R I _ N D
N U D		_ I _ N E R
H S O		M _ T _ E R
B I S		_ P R _ N G
A H I		B _ R T _ S
O N S		_ E A S _ N
H D E		N _ P _ E W

Now read, vertically the solution in box (B).

Solution:

3. LETTERS AND NUMBERS

How are Jane Austens' novels called?

In each sentence in box (A), quoted from the text, there is a missing word. Find it in box (B) to complete the sentences.

Example: ① You must have in love = **F**

SENTENCES BOX (A)	BOX (B)
① You must have In love.	L RANK
2 ...You can surely not demand that I my age.	E IMPERFECTION
3 My courage grows with every of intimidation.	N WASTE
4 My feelings cannot be	I REPRESSED
5 She on her nephew.	S PRESERVED
6 He from others what he does of himself.	V RESPECT
7 A married woman has no time to	F COURAGE
8 Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of	L DOTED
9 Once my is lost, It is lost forever.	A ADMIT
10 In every character there is a tendency to a particular	Y EXPECTS
11 My daughters are not under your	M ATTEMPT
12 Lady Catherine will appreciate that the difference in rank is	O CHANCE

Now match letters and numbers in box (C) and you'll find the solution.

BOX (C)											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
F											

Solution:

4. GRID

What is a prejudice?

In the list below there are 12 words linked to the word "prejudice". Find them in the grid (vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards). The remaining letters will give you the solution.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. CHAUVINISM | 7. INFLUENCE |
| 2. DISTORT | 8. RACISM |
| 3. BIGOTRY | 9. SEXISM |
| 4. INJUSTICE | 10. UNDERMINE |
| 5. PARTIALITY | 11. UNFAIRNESS |
| 6. INTOLERANCE | 12. PREJUDGMENT |

M	S	E	D	A	P	P	E	E	I
S	S	C	I	M	R	A	N	C	N
I	E	I	S	S	E	R	I	N	F
C	N	T	T	I	J	T	M	A	L
A	R	S	O	X	U	I	R	R	U
R	I	U	R	E	D	A	E	E	E
P	A	J	T	S	G	L	D	L	N
R	F	N	E	C	M	I	N	O	C
O	N	I	N	C	E	T	U	T	E
E	U	I	V	E	N	Y	D	N	I
D	E	A	Y	R	T	O	G	I	B
C	H	A	U	V	I	N	I	S	M

Solution:

5. A SPOT OF RELAXATION

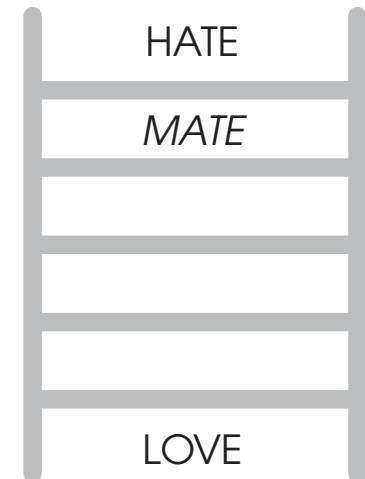
Let's turn hate into love!!

In the ladder below, start from hate and arrive to love in 4 steps. You have to change one word into another by changing one letter at a time. Each change must leave a real word.

Look at the example: **H**ATE - **M**ATE

STEPS

- 1 A man's friend.
- 2 A man or a boy.
- 3 A darkspot on the skin.
- 4 An action to do something.



TEXT ANALYSIS

- **The plot**

1) In what part of England and historical period does the story take place?

.....

.....

.....

2) Why does Mrs Bennet think it is necessary to find a suitable man for each of her daughters to marry?

.....

.....

.....

3) Why does Elizabeth think that Mr Darcy is responsible for Mr Bingley distancing himself from Jane at the beginning of the story?

.....

.....

.....

3) How many weddings are there in the story?

.....

.....

.....

- **The characters**

5) How many daughters do Mr and Mrs Bennet have? Name them in order of age, starting with the eldest.

.....

.....

.....

6) Who is the favourite daughter of Mr Bennet?

.....

.....

.....

7) To which character does the word "Pride" refer to? To which character does the word "Prejudice" refer to?

.....

.....

.....

8) What is Mr Collins' occupation? Describe his relationship with the Bennet family.

.....

.....

.....

- **Literary references**

9) Who was the author of "Pride and Prejudice"? Do you know the title of another well known novel he/she wrote?

.....

.....

.....

10) If you have seen the cinema or TV version of "Pride and Prejudice", what differences did you notice in comparison with the novel?

.....

.....

.....