

Jane Austen

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Jane Austen — Pride and Prejudice (1813)

Overview — the story in simple English

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet live at Longbourn with their five daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. Their property is under an entail (উত্তরাধিকার আইন — সম্পত্তি শুধু পুরুষ আত্মীয় পাবে), so after Mr. Bennet's death the estate will go to a cousin, Mr. Collins, not to the girls. Because of this, Mrs. Bennet's one goal in life is to get her daughters married to rich men. A wealthy young man, Mr. Bingley, rents the nearby house Netherfield, and he quickly falls in love with gentle, beautiful Jane. His friend Mr. Darcy is even richer but seems proud (অহংকারী) and cold; at a ball he insults Elizabeth by refusing to dance with her, and she forms a strong prejudice (পূর্বধারণা / কুসংস্কার) against him. A charming soldier, Wickham, tells Elizabeth false stories that Darcy cheated him, and she believes them because she already dislikes Darcy. Meanwhile the foolish clergyman Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth; she refuses, and he quickly marries her practical friend Charlotte Lucas, who wants only a safe home. Slowly Darcy falls in love with Elizabeth and proposes, but in an insulting, proud way — and she rejects (প্রত্যাখ্যান) him angrily. Darcy then writes her a long letter explaining the truth about Wickham, and Elizabeth realises how blind her prejudice has been. When the youngest sister Lydia runs away with Wickham (elopement — পালিয়ে যাওয়া), Darcy secretly pays Wickham to marry her and saves the family's honour. Elizabeth's feelings change completely; Darcy proposes again, humbly this time, and she accepts, while Jane marries Bingley. The novel ends with both proud Darcy and prejudiced Elizabeth corrected by love and self-knowledge (আত্মজ্ঞান).

 **One-line meaning: *Pride and Prejudice* shows that a happy marriage needs love, respect and self-knowledge — not just money or first impressions.**

Quick Facts	
Published	1813 (first drafted in the 1790s as <i>First Impressions</i>)
Genre	Novel of manners; domestic realistic comedy; courtship novel
Setting	Rural England (Longbourn, Netherfield, Rosings, Pemberley), around 1800
Narration / Form	Third-person narrator with irony; free indirect speech; much dialogue
Author's remark	Austen called the novel " <i>light & bright & sparkling</i> " and described her art as working on a " <i>little bit (two inches wide) of ivory</i> " (from her letters)

Themes & Technique

- Love and Marriage.** This is the central theme: the novel presents at least five marriages as case studies (উদাহরণ). Charlotte–Collins shows marriage for security, Lydia–Wickham shows marriage from blind passion, the Bennets show a mismatched marriage, while Jane–Bingley and especially Elizabeth–Darcy show the ideal: love joined with respect and

understanding. In the exam, always argue that Austen tests every kind of marriage and approves only the union of affection and good judgement.

2. **Pride and Prejudice (the title theme).** Darcy's pride of rank and Elizabeth's prejudice, born of wounded vanity (আহত অহংবোধ), are the twin faults the plot exists to cure. Both hero and heroine must pass through humiliation and self-discovery before they can marry. The title therefore names the moral education at the heart of the book.
3. **Money, Class and the Entail.** Because the Bennet estate is entailed away, the daughters' futures depend entirely on marriage; money pressure drives Mrs. Bennet, Charlotte and Wickham. Austen never lets us forget incomes — Bingley's five thousand a year, Darcy's ten thousand — showing how economics shapes romance in her society.
4. **Self-knowledge and Moral Growth.** Elizabeth's cry after reading Darcy's letter — "Till this moment I never knew myself" — marks the turning point (মোড়). Both protagonists grow: Darcy learns humility, Elizabeth learns to distrust first impressions. This makes the book an early psychological novel of moral education.
5. **Appearance vs Reality / First Impressions.** Wickham *appears* charming but is corrupt; Darcy *appears* proud but is generous. The original title, *First Impressions*, shows Austen's warning against judging by the surface (বাইরের চেহারা).
6. **Irony and Social Satire.** Austen mocks (ব্যঙ্গ করা) the marriage market, snobbery (Lady Catherine), servility (Mr. Collins) and folly (Mrs. Bennet) with a smiling but sharp irony. The famous opening sentence is itself ironic: it is not the single man who wants a wife, but the mothers who want him for their daughters.
7. **The Position of Women.** With no right to inherit the estate and no profession open to them, women like Charlotte must treat marriage as their only protection from poverty. Austen quietly exposes this injustice, while Elizabeth's refusal of Collins and of Darcy's first proposal asserts a woman's right to choose.

Narrative technique:

- **Third-person omniscient** narrator, but seeing mostly through Elizabeth's eyes (**limited point of view**), so the reader shares her mistakes and her discovery.
- **Free indirect speech** (মুক্ত পরোক্ষ উক্তি) — the narrator slides into a character's thoughts without quotation marks; Austen is a pioneer of this device.
- **Irony** — **verbal irony** (saying the opposite of what is meant), **dramatic irony** (the reader knows more than the characters), and **irony of situation** (Darcy marries the girl he called only "tolerable").
- **Dialogue** as the main tool of **characterisation** — Collins's pompous speeches and Mrs. Bennet's chatter reveal them completely.
- **Dramatic structure** — the novel moves in scenes like a play (balls, proposals, visits); Darcy's letter works as the turning point and Elizabeth's realisation as a moment of **recognition (anagnorisis)**.
- **Comedy of manners** and **realism** — no ghosts, no storms; only drawing-rooms, and yet complete human truth.

Key Quotations — memorize

1. "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." — the narrator, opening sentence (Chapter 1). The most famous ironic opening in English fiction.
2. "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me." — Darcy about Elizabeth at the Meryton ball (Chapter 3). The seed of Elizabeth's prejudice.
3. "I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine." — Elizabeth (Chapter 5). Proof that Elizabeth also has pride; the two title-faults belong to both characters.
4. "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance." — Charlotte Lucas (Chapter 6). The practical, loveless view of marriage that Austen finally rejects.

5. "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." — Darcy, first proposal (Chapter 34).
6. "You are the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry." — Elizabeth rejecting Darcy (Chapter 34).
7. "Till this moment I never knew myself." — Elizabeth after reading Darcy's letter (Chapter 36). The key sentence of the whole novel: the moment of self-knowledge.
8. "For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?" — Mr. Bennet. His ironic philosophy of life.

Exam tip: quotations 1, 5 and 7 are the three most useful — the first for irony and the marriage theme, the other two for the pride-prejudice and self-knowledge questions.

Critics' Views (safe to cite)

Critic	View	Use for
Sir Walter Scott	Praised Austen's realism — her rare power of making ordinary, everyday people and events interesting and true to life.	Realism, novel of manners, technique
Charlotte Brontë	Complained that Austen's world is like a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden — elegant but without passion or open country.	A counter-view on Austen's narrow range; the women question
D. W. Harding	Read Austen's comedy as "regulated hatred" — her satire quietly attacks the very society that enjoys her books.	Irony, social satire, Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet
Marvin Mudrick	Saw irony as Austen's instrument of both defence and discovery — Elizabeth's ironic detachment is itself tested and corrected.	The irony question; Elizabeth's character
Tony Tanner	Argued the novel is a drama of knowledge and recognition — Elizabeth must learn to see and judge truly before she can love.	Self-knowledge, first impressions, title
Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar	Feminist reading: beneath the bright comedy lies the heavy pressure on women to submit and marry in a patriarchal (পুরুষশাসিত) society.	Condition of women, the marriage market

Exam Q&A Bank

Part A — Reference to Context (5 marks)

1. "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." —  Very likely (this sentence opens the love-and-marriage theme, the most repeated Austen topic in the PYQ list)

This is the celebrated opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, spoken by the ironic third-person narrator at the very beginning of the novel (Chapter 1). The context is the arrival of the rich bachelor Mr. Bingley at Netherfield, which throws Mrs. Bennet and the whole neighbourhood into excitement, because every family with unmarried daughters regards him as their lawful property. The sentence pretends to state a universal philosophical truth, but the real meaning is reversed (উল্টো): it is not the rich single man who wants a wife, but the money-minded mothers who want the rich single man for their daughters. In one line Austen announces her two great subjects — marriage and money — and her chief weapon, irony. The sentence is significant because it sets the satirical tone of the whole book and introduces the "marriage market" world in which Elizabeth must search for a truer kind of love.

2. "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." — ★ Likely (the PYQ "How did Darcy declare his love for Elizabeth?" targets exactly this scene)

These words are spoken by Mr. Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* when he proposes to Elizabeth Bennet for the first time at Hunsford Parsonage (Chapter 34). The context: Darcy has long fought against his love because Elizabeth's family is socially inferior (নিচু) and often behaves foolishly; here his feeling finally defeats his pride. Yet the proposal is a strange mixture — he declares passionate love while insulting her relations, dwelling on her low connections and on his own struggle against the attachment. Elizabeth, already prejudiced by Wickham's lies and angry at Darcy's part in separating Jane and Bingley, rejects him with the famous reply that he is the last man in the world she could ever marry. The passage is significant as the dramatic climax of the pride–prejudice conflict: his pride and her prejudice collide openly, and the shock of this scene begins the self-examination that reforms them both.

Part B — Short Notes (5 marks)

Short note: Mr. Collins — ★ Likely (direct PYQ: "Discuss the character of Mr. Collins")

Mr. William Collins is one of Jane Austen's greatest comic creations in *Pride and Prejudice*. He is a young clergyman (পাদ্রি) and the cousin who will inherit the Bennet estate of Longbourn through the entail. Austen builds his character out of two qualities: pompous stupidity and servile flattery (তোষামোদ). He worships his rich patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, repeats her opinions as holy truth, and even prepares his little compliments in advance. His marriage proposal to Elizabeth is a masterpiece of comedy: he lists business-like reasons for marrying, never imagining that a poor girl could refuse him — and when she does refuse, he simply proposes to Charlotte Lucas within days and is accepted. Collins is therefore central to the novel's theme of marriage without love: his match with Charlotte shows marriage as a pure economic arrangement. Critically, he is a flat, humorous character used for satire — D. W. Harding's phrase "regulated hatred" fits Austen's treatment of him, for behind the laughter lies a sharp attack on snobbery, flattery of the great, and a marriage system that hands such a fool both a comfortable living and a sensible wife.

Short note: Irony in *Pride and Prejudice* — ★ Likely (direct PYQ: "Discuss the irony of 'Pride and Prejudice'")

Irony (বিদ্রূপ / বক্রোক্তি — saying one thing while meaning another) is the very soul of *Pride and Prejudice*, and it works on three levels. First, verbal irony: the famous opening sentence — "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" — pretends to praise a "truth" while actually mocking husband-hunting mothers; Mr. Bennet's whole conversation is ironic teasing of his wife. Second, dramatic irony: the reader gradually knows more than the characters — we sense Darcy's growing love while Elizabeth stays blind, so her confident judgements amuse us. Third, irony of situation: Darcy calls Elizabeth merely "tolerable," yet ends by marrying her; Elizabeth vows Darcy is the last man she could marry, yet becomes mistress of Pemberley; the heroine who laughs at others' blindness proves blind herself. Critics value this deeply: Marvin Mudrick saw irony as Austen's tool of defence and discovery, and D. W. Harding named her satire "regulated hatred." Irony is thus not decoration but Austen's method of moral education — it exposes vanity, tests judgement, and leads both heroine and reader from illusion to truth.

Part C — Essays (15 marks)

Essay 1: "Discuss the theme of love and marriage in Jane Austen's '*Pride and Prejudice*'." — 🔥 Very likely (appears in both Part B and Part C of the 2020 PYQ list, and heads the compiler's high-probability list)

Marriage is the beginning, middle and end of *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel opens with the ironic declaration that "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," and it closes with three weddings. My thesis is that Austen examines almost every possible motive for marriage — money, security, passion, and true attachment — through a series of contrasting couples, and finally approves only the marriage that unites love with mutual respect and self-knowledge.

The social background explains why marriage matters so desperately. The Bennet estate is entailed upon Mr. Collins, so the five daughters will be left almost penniless when their father dies. For women of the gentry (ভদ্র শ্রেণি) there was no profession

and no inheritance; marriage was the only honourable provision for an educated woman of small fortune. The feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar remind us that beneath Austen's bright comedy lies this hard pressure on women to marry or sink. Mrs. Bennet's noisy husband-hunting is vulgar, but in economic terms it is also, sadly, rational.

Against this background Austen arranges her case studies. The marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins represents marriage as pure business. Charlotte is plain, twenty-seven, and honest about her aim: "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance," she tells Elizabeth, and she accepts the ridiculous Collins simply for a comfortable home. Elizabeth is shocked, and through her shock Austen registers her own judgement: security without love or respect degrades the woman, and Charlotte must survive by arranging her days so as to see her husband as little as possible.

At the opposite extreme stands the marriage of Lydia and Wickham — marriage from blind passion (অন্ধ আবেগ) and vanity. Lydia elopes with a charming cheat without one thought of the consequences; the marriage is patched up only because Darcy secretly buys Wickham's consent. Austen shows the result coolly: the husband's affection soon cools into indifference, and the wife's lasts only a little longer. Closely related is the marriage of the Bennets themselves, a standing warning inside the family: Mr. Bennet married a pretty, silly woman, and his early captivation by youth and beauty ended in lifelong disrespect, ironic withdrawal, and a disordered home that nearly ruins his daughters.

Between these extremes come the two success stories. Jane and Bingley marry for genuine, gentle love, and theirs is a happy match; yet both are so soft and passive that their love almost fails when proud friends interfere. The true ideal is reserved for Elizabeth and Darcy, whose union must be earned. Darcy's first proposal — "In vain have I struggled... You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" — offers love still poisoned by pride of class, and Elizabeth rightly refuses it. Only after his letter, when she confesses "Till this moment I never knew myself," and after his quiet generosity in the Lydia affair, do pride and prejudice fall away. Their marriage joins affection, gratitude, esteem and clear judgement — and, significantly, Elizabeth marries the richest man in the novel only after she has twice proved she will not marry for money, having refused both Collins and Darcy himself. As Tony Tanner argues, Elizabeth must first learn to know — herself and Darcy — before she can rightly love.

In conclusion, Austen is neither a cynic nor a blind romantic about marriage. She admits the economic facts that drive Charlotte, mocks the mercenary market announced in her opening sentence, condemns marriages of mere passion or mere prudence, and holds up the Elizabeth–Darcy union as her ideal: love founded on self-knowledge, moral growth and mutual respect. That is why love and marriage is not one theme among many in *Pride and Prejudice* — it is the novel's whole design.

Essay 2: "Discuss the significance of the title of the novel 'Pride and Prejudice'." — 🔥 Very likely (appears twice in the 2020 Part C list and among the compiler's important topics)

A good title is a key that unlocks a book, and Jane Austen's title *Pride and Prejudice* names exactly the two moral faults (নৈতিক ত্রুটি) her plot exists to expose and cure. Austen first drafted the story in the 1790s as *First Impressions*, and the change of title is itself meaningful: the final title points not merely to hasty judgements but to the deeper weaknesses of character behind them. My thesis is that the title is doubly significant — on the surface, pride belongs to Darcy and prejudice to Elizabeth; on a deeper reading, both faults belong to both characters, and the novel traces how each is corrected through humiliation, self-knowledge and love.

On the simple level, Darcy embodies pride. Master of Pemberley with ten thousand a year, he enters the Meryton ball convinced of his own superiority and wounds Elizabeth with the words, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me." His pride of rank governs even his love: his first proposal insults the very woman he is asking to marry, dwelling on her family's inferiority and his own struggle. Elizabeth, on her side, embodies prejudice. Her vanity wounded at the ball, she fixes her judgement against Darcy and then reads every new fact through that fixed idea — believing Wickham's lies instantly because they flatter her dislike. The plot is thus a duel between his pride and her prejudice, reaching its crisis in the proposal scene where she declares him "the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry."

But Austen is subtler than this neat division, and here lies the title's deeper significance. Elizabeth too is proud — proud of her cleverness, her wit, her power of reading people; she herself admits early in the novel, "I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine." And Darcy too is prejudiced — against the Bennet family, against country society, against any connection beneath his rank. The two abstract nouns of the title therefore do not label two separate characters; they name intertwined

(জড়ানো) failings that hero and heroine share, and that many minor figures display in cruder forms — Lady Catherine's arrogance of rank, Mr. Collins's slavish worship of the great, Mrs. Bennet's prejudices of the marriage market.

The title also maps the moral movement of the novel. The turning point comes with Darcy's letter after the rejected proposal. Reading it, Elizabeth passes from prejudice to recognition: "Till this moment I never knew myself." The critic Tony Tanner has shown that the novel is essentially this drama of knowledge — Elizabeth must learn to see truly before she can love truly. Darcy undergoes the parallel cure: her refusal humbles him, and he proves his change by silent generosity, rescuing Lydia and the Bennet honour without seeking any credit. When the lovers finally unite, pride has been softened into proper self-respect and prejudice into just judgement — a beautifully balanced, symmetrical design in which the correction of one fault answers the correction of the other.

Finally, the title carries Austen's ironic social criticism. In her world, pride of wealth and family decides who may marry whom, and prejudice of class blinds society itself; D. W. Harding's famous phrase "regulated hatred" reminds us that Austen's comedy quietly attacks these social vices, not merely two individuals. The marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth, crossing the gap between grand Pemberley and modest Longbourn, is the title's final answer: love and reason together defeat pride and prejudice.

In conclusion, the title is perfectly significant. It announces the twin faults of the hero and heroine, the shared human weaknesses studied in every character, the process of self-knowledge that forms the plot, and the social satire that gives the comedy its depth. No other pair of words could better sum up the novel.

⚡ One-Page Revision Sheet

Item	Content
Story in 3 lines	Five dowry-less Bennet sisters must marry; proud Darcy and prejudiced Elizabeth clash, and she refuses his first proposal. His letter and his secret rescue of Lydia open Elizabeth's eyes; both are humbled and reformed. They marry for love and understanding, Jane weds Bingley, and the foolish or mercenary marriages around them stand as warnings.
2 must-quotes	"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." / "Till this moment I never knew myself."
2 backup quotes	"In vain have I struggled... how ardently I admire and love you." / "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me."
2 critics	D. W. Harding — Austen's comedy is "regulated hatred" (satire). Tony Tanner — the novel is a drama of knowledge and recognition.
Technique words	irony, free indirect speech, novel of manners, comedy of manners, realism, dialogue-characterisation, limited point of view, recognition (anagnorisis)
Top 3 likely essays	1) Love and marriage theme 🔥 2) Significance of the title 🔥 3) Irony in the novel ★ (keep Mr. Collins ★ ready as a short note)

Exam timing tip: in the 4-hour paper give each 15-mark essay a maximum of 45 minutes — put your thesis and one quotation in the first paragraph, so the examiner sees your best material even if time runs short.