

# Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice": Relevance in Present Times

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## ABSTRACT

The novel "Pride and Prejudice" explores the ways in which Austen uses the theme of pride and prejudice to criticize the societal norms and values of her time. "Pride and Prejudice" is a novel set in 19th century England, and it tells the story of the Bennett family and their search for love and marriage. The novel explores the theme of pride and prejudice through the characters of Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy, who are initially drawn to each other but are separated by their pride and prejudice. Elizabeth's pride makes her misjudge Darcy on the basis of a poor first impression, while Darcy's prejudice against Elizabeth's poor social standing blinds him to her many virtues.

**Keywords:** Marriage, social norms, family, self reflection, social hierarchy, feminism.

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## INTRODUCTION

The focus on the ways in which the novel critiques the societal expectations and constraints placed on women during Austen's time. A woman's value is tied to her ability to marry well, and the ways in which Elizabeth Bennett resists this pressure. The novel suggests that pride and prejudice are not innate qualities, but rather learned behaviours that can be overcome through self-awareness and self-reflection.

The novel is still relevant in modern times because it explores universal themes and ideas that continue to resonate with readers today. The novel is set in 19th century England, but its themes of love, marriage, family, and social class are timeless and relevant to people of all ages and backgrounds.

One way in which "Pride and Prejudice" is relevant in modern times is that it explores the complexities of relationships and the challenges of finding true love. The novel tells the story of Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy, who are initially drawn to each other but are separated by their pride and prejudice. Their relationship is a complicated one, and it is only through their willingness to overcome their pride and prejudice that they are able to find happiness together. This exploration of the challenges and rewards of love is something that many people can relate to, regardless of the time and place in which they live. It offers valuable insights into the ways in which these norms and expectations continue to shape our lives today. The novel is set in a time when women were expected to be passive and dependent, and when a woman's value was tied to her ability to marry well. Elizabeth Bennett challenges these expectations, and her independent spirit and intelligence are met with resistance from the people around her. This exploration of the challenges faced by women who reject societal norms and expectations is still relevant today, as many people continue to struggle against these constraints.

Elizabeth's strong and confident personality, who defies the social conventions of her time, is at odds with Darcy's imposing and reserved nature, for whom education and social behaviour mean everything. The novel not only explores the social norms and conventions of the times, but also the immobility of the social classes.

In addition to explore the complexities of relationships and the challenges faced by women who reject societal norms, "Pride and Prejudice" is also relevant in modern times because it offers valuable insights into the ways in which social class shapes our lives and relationships. The novel is set in a time when social class was a major determining factor in people's lives, and it explores the ways in which this hierarchy affects the characters and their relationships. This exploration of the ways in which social class shapes our lives and relationships is still relevant today, as many people continue to struggle with issues of inequality and social mobility. These themes and ideas are timeless, and they continue to be relevant and applicable to people of all ages and backgrounds.

"Pride and Prejudice" is a novel that was published in 1813 and is set in England during the early 19th century. During this time, women had very few rights and were largely seen as property, with their main value being in their ability to marry well and secure a good financial situation for themselves and their families.

The novel follows the lives of the five Bennett sisters, who are all facing pressure from their mother to marry wealthy men in order to secure their financial futures. The main character, Elizabeth Bennet, is a strong-willed and independent woman who refuses to marry for money and instead chooses a partner based on love and mutual respect.

Elizabeth's refusal to conform to societal expectations can be seen as a feminist stance, as she is standing up for her own agency and defying the limitations placed on women by society. She also challenges the notion that a woman's worth is only in her ability to marry well, and instead asserts her own value as an intelligent and capable individual.

Elizabeth captivates us by the sparkling freshness of a girl next door. In the words of Jane Austen about Elizabeth, "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as appeared in print." Elizabeth is "not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia" and she is charming. The real charm is something elusive and indefinable. She has sobriety and depth and Darcy who at the first meeting finds her "tolerable" later says, "it is many months since I have considered her as one of the handsomest woman of my acquaintance."

Throughout the novel, Elizabeth faces many obstacles and challenges as she attempts to navigate the complex social landscape of the time. She is forced to confront her own prejudices and biases, as well as the prejudices and biases of those around her, in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of herself and the world around her.

In the end, Elizabeth's determination and refusal to be limited by societal expectations helps her to find true happiness and fulfillment, which can be seen as a victory for feminist ideals. Austen poses countless smaller obstacles to the realization of the love between Elizabeth and Darcy. In each case, anxieties about social connections and the desire for better social connections comes in-between the love. Darcy and Elizabeth's realization of a mutual and true love seems to imply that Austen sees love as something independent of these societal norms and can be achieved only by defying the hierarchical society.

The novel, set in early 19th century England, a time when the expectations placed on men and women were very different. The novel depicts a society in which a woman's reputation is of the utmost importance. A woman is expected to behave in certain ways. Stepping outside the societal norms makes her vulnerable to isolation. This theme appears in the novel, when Elizabeth walks to Netherfield and arrives with muddy skirts, to the shock of the reputation-conscious Miss Bingley and her friends. At other points, the ill mannered, ridiculous behaviour of Mrs. Bennet gives her a bad reputation with the more refined (and snobbish) Darcys and Bingleys.

Austen pokes gentle fun at the snobs in these examples, but later in the novel, when Lydia elopes with Wickham and lives with him out of wedlock, the author treats reputation as a very serious matter. By becoming Wickham's lover without benefit of marriage, Lydia clearly places herself outside the social pale, and her disgrace threatens the entire Bennet family. The fact that Lydia's judgment, however terrible, would likely have condemned the other Bennet sisters to marriageless lives seems grossly unfair.

The lines of class are strictly drawn. While the Bennets, who are middle class, may socialize with the upper-class Bingleys and Darcys, they are clearly their social inferiors and are treated as such. Austen satirizes this kind of class-consciousness, particularly in the character of Mr. Collins, who spends most of his time toadying to his upper-class patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Though Mr. Collins offers an extreme example, he is not the only one to hold such views. His conception of the importance of class is shared, among others, by Mr. Darcy, who believes in the dignity of his lineage; Miss Bingley, who dislikes anyone not as socially accepted as she is; and Wickham, who will do anything he can to get enough money to raise himself into a higher station. Mr. Collins's views are merely the most extreme and obvious. The satire directed at Mr. Collins is therefore also more subtly directed at the entire social hierarchy and the conception of all those within it at its correctness, in complete disregard of other, more worthy virtues.

Through the Darcy-Elizabeth and Bingley-Jane marriages, Austen shows the power of love and happiness to overcome class boundaries and prejudices, thereby implying that such prejudices are false, baseless, and superfluous. Of course, this whole discussion of class must be made with the understanding that Austen herself is often criticized as being a classist: she doesn't really represent anyone from the lower classes; those servants she does portray are generally happy with their lot.

Family is an integral theme in the novel. All of the characters operate within networks of family connections that shape their decisions and perspectives. For the female characters in particular, the influence and behavior of their family members is a significant factor in their lives. Because "the business of [Mrs. Bennet's] life was to get her daughters married", the Bennet sisters constantly have to navigate their mother's plans and schemes. While male characters like

Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley have much more social and financial independence, they still rely on the judgment and opinions of female family members like Caroline Bingley and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Individuals are judged according to the behavior of their family members, which is why Darcy points out to Lizzy that he is doing her a favour by proposing even though she comes with embarrassing family connections. The theme of family shows that individuals never lead totally autonomous lives, and that individual actions have wider communal implications.

Elizabeth Bennet considers herself to have very high standards of realisation, and she is often frustrated and disappointed by the way she sees others behaving. She complains bitterly to her sister, "The more I see of the world, the more am I dissatisfied with it, and every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters." She is truly a self realized person as she refuses to marry both Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy (when he proposes the first time): Elizabeth thinks it is very important to only marry a man she loves and respects, despite the pressure to achieve economic security.

By the end of the novel, Lizzy's commitment to integrity has been rewarded because she marries a partner who will truly make her happy. She has also come to see that she can sometimes be too rigid and judge too quickly, since she was initially mistaken about the nature and ethics of Wickham and Darcy.

The story takes place at a time when gender roles were quite rigid, and men and women had a very different set of options and influences. Marriage is a pressing question for female characters like Charlotte Lucas and the Bennet sisters because marriage is the only way women can achieve economic stability and autonomy. As upper-class women, they would not have been able to work to earn a living, or live independently. Marriage offered one of the only ways to move beyond their birth families. However, a woman's marriageability relied on an impeccable reputation for chastity, and for women like Georgiana Darcy or Lydia Bennet, a reckless decision to trust the wrong man could permanently ruin their future prospects. Lydia's elopement causes Lizzy to exclaim with horror that "she is lost forever." If Lydia is living with Wickham without being married to him, her reputation will be destroyed. The opening line of the novel, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." Clearly explains it.

Today, the words "Pride and Prejudice" can't be syntactically arranged in any other way, or thought of as something separate from Austen's novel, because, in a way, we all have a little bit of Elizabeth and a little bit of Darcy in ourselves. Maybe being so relatable is what makes it timeless. This story is much more than just captivating: it's human, global, and captures the very essence of human nature.

There's a truth in the novel that could be said at another time, at another place. And, while it isn't very clear, we all feel and sense it. The book stays with us and sensitizes that part of us given by the history of mankind, generation after generation, beyond space, time, and cultural and social bonds.

All the great struggles are there: the struggle for women's émanicipation, for societal freedom, for economic survival, the struggle against the conservative social and cultural conventions, against pride and prejudices, the struggle for love, etc. It's in genuinely living for what we feel, for what we are, where Elisabeth's, Darcy's, and our real struggle lies.

A story that embodies this can't be anything other than timeless, like its truth. This is the reason why it continues to be a current phenomenon. Even though the novel was published more than two hundred years ago is still relevant today.

For women, the most important aspect of their lives was their ability to marry well and secure a good financial situation for themselves and their families. This meant that women were often judged primarily on their appearance and their ability to attract wealthy suitors, and they were expected to be obedient and submissive to their husbands.

For men, the most important aspect of their lives was their ability to provide for their families and maintain their social standing. This meant that men were expected to be strong, confident, and in control, and they were given a great deal of power and authority in society.

The novel follows the lives of the Bennett sisters, who are all facing pressure from their mother to marry wealthy men in order to secure their financial futures. The main character, Elizabeth Bennet, challenges these societal norms by refusing to marry for money and instead choosing a partner based on love and mutual respect.

Throughout the novel, Elizabeth faces many challenges and obstacles as she attempts to navigate the complex social landscape of the time. She is forced to confront her own prejudices and biases, as well as the prejudices and biases of those around her, in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of herself and the world around her.

In the end, Elizabeth's determination and refusal to be limited by societal expectations helps her to find true happiness and fulfillment, which can be seen as a victory for feminist ideals. The novel thus highlights the role of society in shaping gender roles and expectations, and shows the limitations and inequalities that can result from these societal norms.

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