HOMESCHOOL CLASSICS

Pride and Prejudice

A FREE SAMPLE LESSON

Reading One — First Impressions

Volume One · Chapters I–V

3 pages from the integrated Student Edition

2 corresponding pages from the Parent & Teacher Guide

See how the reading, historical context, questions,
and teaching support work together.

PREVIEW ONLY · NOT FOR RESALE

Reading One — First Impressions

Volume One · Chapters I–V

Words in Context

Circumspection — careful judgment before acting; Mr. Bennet invokes it while teasing about introductions.

Vanity — concern about the opinion others have of us; Mary distinguishes it from pride.

Consequence — social importance or standing; Darcy refuses to grant Elizabeth importance by dancing with her.

Reading Check

1. Why is Mrs. Bennet so eager for Mr. Bennet to visit Mr. Bingley?
2. What does Mr. Darcy say about Elizabeth at the assembly, and how does she react?
3. How do Jane and Elizabeth differ in their first impressions of Mr. Bingley and his friends?
4. Why does Charlotte Lucas think Darcy's pride is understandable?
5. How does Mary Bennet distinguish between pride and vanity?

Look Closer

1. Austen opens the novel with the statement, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." How does the conversation that follows make this statement ironic?
2. Elizabeth forms an unfavorable opinion of Darcy after their first meeting. How might his behavior influence her judgment? What further evidence would help her judge his character more fairly?
3. Compare Jane's and Elizabeth's ways of judging other people. What are the strengths and possible weaknesses of each approach?

Writer's Craft — The opening's irony

Austen begins with a sweeping claim about a rich man's desire for a wife, then shows how eagerly families seek such a husband. Notice the difference between what the sentence declares and what the conversation reveals.

Regency Life — Marriage, Money, and Social Standing

In Regency England, marriage often involved more than affection. Family connections, financial security, and social position could strongly influence a person's choice of spouse.

For women of the Bennet family's social standing, opportunities to earn an independent living were limited. Marriage was therefore closely connected to economic security and expectations for the future.

Mr. Bingley's arrival creates excitement because he is unmarried, wealthy, and eligible. Mrs. Bennet sees an opportunity to secure a prosperous future for one of her daughters, while the neighborhood quickly begins forming opinions about the newcomer.

As you continue reading, notice how Austen uses these social expectations to create both humor and conflict.

Regency Life — The Rules of an Introduction

When Mr. Bingley arrives at Netherfield, Mrs. Bennet urges her husband to visit him. In the Bennets' social circle, becoming acquainted involved a formal introduction, often begun by a neighbor's social call.

Mr. Bennet's visit establishes an acquaintance with Bingley and opens the way for the households to exchange visits and invitations. Mrs. Bennet wants her daughters to meet this wealthy, unmarried newcomer, so what looks like a small courtesy matters greatly to her.

Austen makes the custom comic: Mr. Bennet has already paid the visit, but keeps his family in suspense. His joke works because everyone understands how much that introduction means.

Think & Discuss

1. Mrs. Bennet views Mr. Bingley's arrival as an opportunity for her daughters. How do financial concerns and the rules of introduction help explain her insistence that Mr. Bennet visit? Does understanding these customs change your view of his teasing? Use an example from Chapters I–II.

2. Darcy's behavior at the assembly makes a poor first impression. Is it fair to judge someone based on a single encounter? Explain your reasoning using an example from the novel.

3. Charlotte believes Darcy's rank and wealth help explain his pride, while Elizabeth resents his insult. How do their reactions show the difference between explaining behavior and excusing it?

4. In the opening chapters, characters often form opinions based on wealth, appearance, and social behavior. How does Austen challenge these judgments? Choose one character and support your answer with an example from Chapters I–V.

Writing & Activities

Choose one of the following activities.

1. **Pride and Vanity**

   Mary distinguishes pride from vanity in Chapter V. Explain her distinction, then apply it to Darcy and one other character. Write one or two paragraphs using details from Chapters I–V.

2. **First Impressions Journal**

   Imagine you attended the Meryton assembly. Write a journal entry describing Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy based only on what you observed that evening. Then explain how first impressions might be misleading.

Reading One — First Impressions

Volume One Chapters I–V | Student pages 16–18

Recognize how manners, money and wounded pride shape the first judgments of Darcy and Bingley.

Teaching Notes

Ask the student to distinguish an observed action from a conclusion about an entire character. Darcy really does behave rudely at the assembly; Elizabeth's resentment has a basis. The question is how far that evidence reaches. In Mary's distinction, pride concerns a person's opinion of himself or herself, while vanity concerns the opinion desired from others. Charlotte's explanation of Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's admission that he hurt hers make that distinction useful immediately.

Keep this discussion within Chapters I–V. Charlotte's advice about displaying affection comes in Chapter VI, in Reading Two. Mr. Bennet's wit is entertaining, but students may also notice how keeping his visit secret prolongs his wife's anxiety. Literary technique: Ask students to explain how Austen's opening sentence becomes ironic once Mrs. Bennet speaks.

Reading Check

1. Why is Mrs. Bennet so eager for Mr. Bennet to visit Mr. Bingley?

   Suggested answer. Mrs. Bennet hopes that Bingley, a wealthy unmarried newcomer, might marry one of her daughters. Mr. Bennet's visit would establish an acquaintance and help the households meet socially. *(I, I; I, II)*

2. What does Mr. Darcy say about Elizabeth at the assembly, and how does she react?

   Suggested answer. Darcy calls Elizabeth tolerable and says she is not handsome enough to tempt him to dance. She overhears him, feels slighted and later tells the story with amusement. The insult contributes to her dislike of him. *(I, III)*

3. How do Jane and Elizabeth differ in their first impressions of Mr. Bingley and his friends?

   Suggested answer. Jane admires Bingley's good humor and manners and is disposed to think kindly of his sisters. Elizabeth also likes Bingley, but questions Jane's tendency to see everyone favorably and is less impressed by the sisters. Neither sister initially admires Darcy's behavior. *(I, III; I, IV)*

4. Why does Charlotte Lucas think Darcy's pride is understandable?

   Suggested answer. Charlotte points to Darcy's appearance, family and fortune. She thinks someone with those advantages can be expected to think highly of himself. Her explanation reflects the importance she gives social position. *(I, V)*

5. How does Mary Bennet distinguish between pride and vanity?

   Suggested answer. Mary says pride concerns what we think of ourselves, while vanity concerns what we want other people to think of us. She argues that a person can be proud without being vain. *(I, V)*

Look Closer

1. Austen opens the novel with the statement, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." How does the conversation that follows make this statement ironic?

   Possible analysis. The opening claims that a wealthy single man must want a wife, yet Mrs. Bennet's conversation shows how urgently the neighboring families want him for their daughters. The supposed truth tells us more about their wishes than about Bingley's intentions. Mr. Bennet's teasing exposes that gap. *(I, I)*

2. Elizabeth forms an unfavorable opinion of Darcy after their first meeting. How might his behavior influence her judgment? What further evidence would help her judge his character more fairly?

   Possible analysis. Darcy's refusal to mix with the company and his insult give Elizabeth reasons to judge his manners unfavorably. Her injured pride may make that judgment harder to reconsider. Further evidence could include his behavior in different situations, his treatment of others and accounts that can be checked against actions. *(I, III; I, V)*

3. Compare Jane's and Elizabeth's ways of judging other people. What are the strengths and possible weaknesses of each approach?

   Possible analysis. Jane's generosity keeps her from rushing to condemn people, but can make her slow to recognize insincerity. Elizabeth notices faults and contradictions quickly, but her wit and confidence can encourage premature judgments. A strong answer recognizes strengths and limitations in both approaches. *(I, IV)*