

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

1. “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” This first line has become one of the most famous in English literature. In addition to setting the narrative in motion, how does this line alert us to the tone of the novel, and our role, as readers, in appreciating it? What does the line imply about women?
2. The book had the original, working title *First Impressions*. Why is *Pride and Prejudice* a better title? In what ways are Darcy and Elizabeth guilty of both pride and prejudice and how does this drive the action of the story?
3. Marriage, as something to be aspired to, is portrayed quite differently in the novel than existing marriages. What married couples do we see in the novel? How would you characterize these relationships?
4. How are Elizabeth’s wit and intelligence and independence first made clear in the novel? In what ways, during the course of the novel, is she the victim of her own intellect and independence? Are these features eventually responsible for her happy ending?
5. The love Elizabeth feels toward Mr. Darcy evolves and deepens largely without direct contact. Does that make you question that love? What causes these feelings of love? Are they realistic?
6. Why is Darcy so attracted to Elizabeth? When can we first sense this? Why does it take her so long to see it? Elizabeth’s attraction to Darcy arises very differently. Why is this important?
7. For much of the novel, Austen seems to be offering a fairly pointed critique of marrying for social considerations. But it’s also true that the happy marriages that bring the novel to a close are favorable by the terms of the society. In the end, both Elizabeth and Jane do marry “up.” Does this undermine the critique the book offers? Is it meant to be read ironically? Do you think that Austen is critiquing Elizabeth and Jane?
8. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel that many Austen fans read and reread. What keeps readers returning to the book once the suspense of whether or not Darcy and Elizabeth will end up together is taken away?
9. The works of Jane Austen have been the inspiration of numerous contemporary books and films, both adaptations and new original works. What universal themes in the novel resonate today?
10. The happy union between Darcy and Elizabeth is ultimately (and unwittingly) assured by Lady Catherine. How? Why is this master stroke of dramatic irony so satisfying for readers? Can you see how the roots of this irony are sown throughout the novel?

11. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel largely about love and relationships, but without any descriptions of passion. Do you think the novel's chasteness is more a reflection of the way people lived in that time and place or a reflection of what was acceptable in its literature or something specific to Jane Austen? Is the novel strengthened by this constraint?