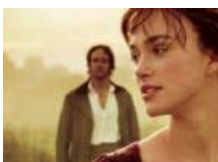




Jane Austen



Dress shop interior of 1818.



Jane Austen

(1775-1817)

One of **the greatest of all novelists of manners**, Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, the seventh of eight children. Her father was the rector of the parishes of Steventon and Deane in Hampshire, and the parsonage of Steventon remained her home for the first twenty-six years of her life.

Jane studied at the Abbey School at Reading, and then completed her education at home.

The years of her youth were free and happy, even though **her life was spent in a very limited environment**: Hampshire, Kent, Sussex and Somerset. Jane was a lively, graceful girl, who enjoyed the social life that her small world provided; she was a brilliant conversationalist, an accomplished dancer, and a prodigious letter-writer. She soon developed the qualities of a **keen observer of human society**, and English country society of neither the lowest nor the highest stratum, with the balls and visits, gossip, shopping and similar trivial matters, offered the material of her novels.

Very little is known of her own sentimental life. She seems to have had a very romantic love with a young man who had no money or position and was therefore compelled to go abroad and seek fortune. He never returned (he seems to have died of some malady like yellow fever). This personal experience, so tender and so sad, may have inspired the story of Ann Elliot in her novel *Persuasion*.

She began writing very soon -she was not yet sixteen- and her first production consisted of parodies of current literary fashions. In 1795 she completed a novel in the form of letters which later provided the basis of *Sense and Sensibility* (incorrectly translated into Spanish in the film version), the first of her works to be published, in 1811. In the years 1796 and 1797 Jane Austen wrote *First Impressions* which was later developed into *Pride and Prejudice*, and was published in 1813. Her last novel, *Northanger Abbey*, appeared after her death.

In 1801 her father retired to Bath, and on his death in 1805 his wife and two daughters moved to the neighbourhood of Southampton.

From 1803 to 1809 there was a pause in her literary activity; finally she moved with her mother and sister to Chawton, in Hampshire, and having once more a settled home she resumed work. *Mansfield Park* was begun in 1811; *Pride and Prejudice* was completed in 1812 and appeared in 1813. *Emma* was begun in 1814 and *Persuasion* in 1815.

By 1814 Jane Austen's authorship had become known, and the **Prince Regent** -to whom she dedicated *Emma*- **was one of her admirers**.

In 1816 her health began to fail, and in 1817 she went to Winchester in search of medical attention, but she died there after two months. Her body was buried in the north aisle of the cathedral.

Pride and Prejudice (1813)

Pride and Prejudice describes the small world of a few families living in a country village, engaged in their routine of visits, balls, walks, and gossip.

Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine, is one of the most charming of Jane Austen's characters. Through various incidents, some of which are funny, some serious, the events develop into happy conclusions: 'good' marriages, settlement of awkward situations, clearing up of all uncertainties. This is the beginning of the novel.



Home from the Races.



chaise and four:
carriage drawn by
four horses.

Michaelmas:
September 29th, St
Michael's feast day.

affect: influence,
involve.



engage for: bind
himself, promise to
do.

establishment:
settlement.

chuses: read *chooses*.

quickness:
intelligence,
cleverness.

abuse: treat badly.

vexing: annoying,
making me angry.



TEXT A

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

'My dear Mr Bennet', said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'

Mr Bennet replied that he had not.

'But it is', returned she; 'for Mrs Long has just been here, and she told me all about it'.

Mr Bennet made no answer.

'Do not you want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife impatiently.

'You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it'.

This was invitation enough.

'Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servant are to be in the house by the end of next week'.

'What is his name?'

'Bingley'.

'Is he married or single?'

'Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!'

'How so? how can it affect them?'

'My dear Mr Bennet', replied his wife, 'how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them'.

'Is that his design in settling here?'

'Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes'.

'I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr Bingley might like you the best of the party'.

'My dear, you flatter me. I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty'.

'In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of'.

'But my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood'.

'It is more than I engage for, I assure you'.

'But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general you know they visit no new comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for *us* to visit him, if you do not'.

'You are over scrupulous surely. I dare say Mr Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy'.

'I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference'.

'They have none of them much to recommend them', replied he; 'they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters'.

'Mr Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves'.

'You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least'.

'Ah! you do not know what I suffer'.

'But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood'.

Depend upon it:
don't have any doubt about it.
quick: intelligent, clever.
mean: (here) poor.
fancied herself:
imagined that she was.



'It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come since you will not visit them'.

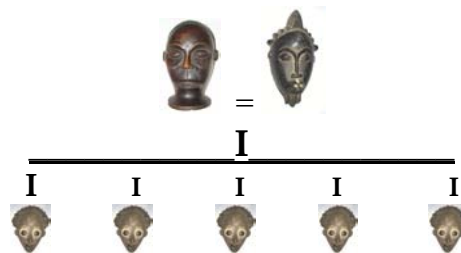
'Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all'.

Mr Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

(from Chapter 1)

TASKS

1. This is the diagram of the Bennet family. Use the information in the text and complete the family tree.



2. Write in a few words what Mr and Mrs Bennet are discussing about.

3. Underline the words and expressions related to the idea of property and state who they refer to.

4. Here are some examples of social classes typical of Jane Austen's time: aristocracy, peasants, middle-class, country gentry, working-class. Single out the social class referred to in the text.

5. Mr Bennet's answers reveal an inclination to keep his wife and daughters at a distance, and a modest opinion of them: "they are all silly and ignorant". He can also be teasing or even sarcastic when he pretends that he is interpreting things literally, or gives praises that are not authentic. Write down what you consider relevant examples of his sharp wit. How would you describe the relationship between Mr and Mrs Bennet?



beheld: saw.

6. The last paragraph is a comment on the different personalities of Mr and Mrs Bennet.

Who is this comment from?

Who is it intended for?

Point out the moments when the narrator intervenes to clarify or comment, and define this type of narrator.

Choose one or more from the adjectives listed below and state the attitude of the narrator to the characters.

amused	ironic	satirical	detached
scornful	shocked	indifferent	implacable
approving	sympathetic	pitiful	sarcastic

In spite of his apparent reluctance, Mr Bennet does visit Mr Bingley, and the Bennets can make friends with the new neighbours, Mr Bingley and his two sisters. The gossip, the small intrigues, the jealousies that soon arise can be easily imagined.

A ball is given, and Mr Bingley introduces his old friend Mr Darcy, a gentleman of noble family. Mr Darcy is a very handsome young man, and is rendered even more interesting by "the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year". But what a contrast between the two friends! Mr Darcy is not half so amiable as Mr Bingley. He only dances once with his friend's sisters, and spends the rest of the evening in walking about the room.

TEXT B

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between him and Mr Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes, to press his friend to join it.

'Come, Darcy', said he, 'I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance'.

'I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with'.

'I would not be so fastidious as you are', cried Bingley, 'for a kingdom! Upon my honour, I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life, as I have this evening; and there are several of them you see uncommonly pretty'.

'You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room', said Mr Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

'Oh! she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say, very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you'.

till... eye: till their eyes met.
slighted: snubbed, treated as unimportant.



such a study: they are talking of study of character.

'Which do you mean?' and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, 'She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me'.

Mr Bingley followed his advice. Mr Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him. She told the story however with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous.

(from Chapter 3)

TASKS

1. All the ladies present resent Darcy's behaviour. What, in particular, is considered unpardonable?
2. Even if Mrs Bennet is vexed about Darcy, she has a reason for satisfaction. Point it out.
3. Darcy explains the reasons for his behaviour to his friend Bingley: But perhaps there is also something else. Can you indicate what? (Hint: the title of the novel should help you). This character so far appears in a negative light. How does the reader receive this impression?
___ through the comments of the narrator
___ through the reaction of the other characters.
(Choose the appropriate answer).
4. What idea can the reader have of Elizabeth, at this point of the novel?

Mr Bingley and Jane soon fall in love with each other, and everybody expects that he will ask her to marry him.

The social life of the village is very active, and Elizabeth has several opportunities of meeting Mr Darcy. She tries to avoid his company and repeatedly refuses to dance with him, nevertheless he is impressed by the liveliness of her spirit, and by "the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow."

If Elizabeth is gaining ground in Mr Darcy's opinion, the same cannot be said of her mother. This is an example of her contributions to conversation.

TEXT C

'The country,' said Darcy, 'can in general supply but few subjects for such a study. In a country neighbourhood you move in a very confined and unvarying society'.

'But people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them for ever'.

'Yes, indeed', cried Mrs Bennet, offended by his manner of mentioning a country neighbourhood. 'I assure you there is quite as much of *that* going on in the country as in town'.

Everybody was surprised; and Darcy, after looking at her for a moment, turned silently away. Mrs Bennet, who fancied she had gained a complete victory over him, continued her triumph.



dine: have dinner parties.
breeding: politeness.

Georgian jewellery:



'I cannot see that London has any great advantage over the country for my part, except the shops and public places. The country is a vast deal pleasanter, is not it, Mr Bingley?'

'When I am in the country', he replied, 'I never wish to leave it; and when I am in town it is pretty much the same. They have each their advantages, and I can be equally happy in either.'

'Aye - that is because you have the right disposition. But that gentleman', looking at Darcy, 'seemed to think the country was nothing at all'.

'Indeed, Mama, you are mistaken', said Elizabeth, blushing for her mother. 'You quite mistook Mr Darcy. He only meant that there were not such a variety of people to be met with in the country as in town, which you must acknowledge to be true'.

'Certainly, my dear, nobody said there were; but as to not meeting with many people in this neighbourhood, I believe there are few neighbourhoods larger. I know we dine with four and twenty families'.

Nothing but concern for Elizabeth could enable Bingley to keep his countenance. His sister was less delicate, and directed her eye towards Mr Darcy with a very expressive smile. Elizabeth, for the sake of saying something that might turn her mother's thoughts, now asked her if Charlotte Lucas had been at Longbourn since *her* coming away.

TASKS

1. Focus on what Mrs Bennet says and find examples of inappropriateness - or impoliteness - and of ignorance.

2. How do the others react?

Which of these reactions responds to our own "prejudice" towards the British?

3. Can you see a connection with the title of the novel?

On various occasions Jane and Elizabeth's younger sisters behave foolishly and, to make matters worse, during a great ball at Netherfield Mrs Bennet uncautiously boasts of Mr Bingley's attachment to Jane and speaks of their marriage as if it was a definite matter. Mr Darcy, who sits opposite, overhears.

In the conviction that such a marriage would be imprudent, Darcy convinces Bingley to leave Netherfield and return to London. Life continues as usual in the village, but Jane suffers, and Elizabeth is puzzled about the sudden change in Bingley's behaviour.

Meanwhile she receives a proposal from Mr Collins, a distant cousin of Mr Bennet, who will inherit their estate. Much to her mother's indignation she refuses, and Mr Collins marries Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas.

After a few months Elizabeth goes to visit Charlotte in her new house, in another county. On this occasion she meets Mr Darcy, and one day, out of the blue, he proposes to her.

avowal: open admission.
detailed: mentioned with precision.
 dwelt on: spoken about.
the consequence he was wounding: the social rank he was offending.
recommend his suit: favour his request to marry him.



gravel: small stones mixed with sand, usually on the surface of paths.
copse: small wood.
said she: here Elizabeth is speaking to herself.
be at no loss: have no difficulty.

TEXT D

'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'.

Elizabeth's astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement, and the avowal of all that he felt and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He spoke well, but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation – of the family obstacles which judgement had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit.

In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger. She tried, however, to compose herself to answer him with patience, when he should have done. He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to conquer; and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded by her acceptance of his hand. As he said this, she could easily see that he had no doubt of a favourable answer. He spoke of apprehension and anxiety, but his countenance expressed real security.

(from Chapter 34).

TASKS

In spite of feeling flattered, Elizabeth is offended. What is insulting in Darcy's words and behaviour?

Elizabeth rejects Darcy who is terribly mortified and leaves.

Lydia, one of Elizabeth's younger sisters, elopes with a fascinating officer who turns out to be a nasty adventurer. The family is crushed under the terrible scandal, but somebody helps them find the young couple and induces the man to marry Lydia. Only later Elizabeth will discover that the mysterious benefactor is Darcy himself, who has never stopped loving her.

One day the young woman receives an unexpected visit from Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Mr Darcy's proud aunt.

TEXT E

They proceeded in silence along the gravel walk that led to the copse; Elizabeth was determined to make no effort for conversation with a woman, who was now more than usually insolent and disagreeable.

'How could I ever think her like her nephew?' said she, as she looked in her face.

As soon as they entered the copse, Lady Catherine began in the following manner: -

'You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither. Your own heart, your own conscience, must tell you why I come'.

Elizabeth looked with unaffected astonishment.

'Indeed you are mistaken, Madam. I have not been at all able to account for the honour of seeing you here'.

'Miss Bennet', replied her ladyship in angry tone, 'you ought to know that I am not to be trifled with. But however insincere *you* may choose to be, you shall not find *me* so. My character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness, and in a cause of such moment as this, I shall certainly not depart from it. A report of a most alarming nature, reached me two days ago. I was told, that not only your



allurements:
attempts to seduce.
drawn him in:
conquered him.



obliging: doing a
favour to.

incensed: angry.

sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that *you*, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr Darcy. Though I *know* it must be a scandalous falsehood; though I would not injure him so much as to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place, that I might make my sentiments known to you'.

'If you believed it impossible to be true', said Elizabeth, colouring with astonishment and disdain, 'I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far. What would your ladyship propose by it?'

'Your coming to Longbourn, to see me and my family', said Elizabeth, coolly, 'will be rather a confirmation of it; if, indeed, such a report is in existence'.

'If! do you then pretend to be ignorant of it? Has it not been industriously circulated by yourselves? Do you not know that such a report is spread abroad?'

'I never heard that it was'.

'And can you likewise declare, that there is no *foundation* for it?'

'I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. *You* may ask questions which I shall not choose to answer'.

'This is not to be borne. Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?'

'Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible'.

'It ought to be so; it must be so, while he retains the use of his reason. But your arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family. You may have drawn him in'.

'If I had, I shall be the last person to confess it'.

'Miss Bennet, do you know who I am? I have not been accustomed to such language as this. I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns'.

'But you are not entitled to know *mine*: nor will such behaviour as this, ever induce me to be explicit'.

'Let me rightly understand. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. No, never. Mr Darcy is engaged to *my daughter*. Now what have you to say?'

'Only this; that if he is so, you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me'. [...]

'If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere, in which you have been brought up'.

'In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal'.

'True. You *are* a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition'.

'Whatever my connection may be', said Elizabeth, 'if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to *you*'.

'Tell me once for all, are you engaged to him?'

Though Elizabeth would not, for the mere purpose of obliging Lady Catherine, have answered this question; she could not but say, after a moment's deliberation, 'I am not'.

Lady Catherine seemed pleased.

'And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?'

'I will make no promise of the kind'.

'Miss Bennet, I am shocked and astonished. I expected to find a more reasonable young woman. But do not deceive yourself into a belief that I will ever recede. I shall not go away, till you have given me the assurance I require'. [...]

'You can *now* have nothing farther to say', she resentfully answered. 'You have insulted me, in every possible method. I must beg to return to the house'.

And she rose as she spoke. Lady Catherine rose also, and they turned back. Her ladyship was highly incensed.

'You have no regard, then, for the honour and credit of my nephew! Unfeeling, selfish girl! Do you not consider that a connection with you, must disgrace him in the eyes of everybody?'

'Lady Catherine, I have nothing farther to say. You know my sentiments'.

'You are then resolved to have him?'

'I have said no such thing. I am only resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to *you*, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me'.

'It is well. You refuse, then to oblige me. You refuse to obey the claims of duty, honour, and gratitude. You are determined to ruin him in the opinion of all his friends, and make him the contempt of the world'.



'Neither duty, nor honour, nor gratitude', replied Elizabeth, 'have any possible claim on me, in the present instance. No principle of either, would be violated by my marriage with Mr Darcy. And with regard to the resentment of his family, or the indignation of the world, if the former were excited by marrying me, it would not give me one moment's concern - and the world in general would have too much sense to join in the scorn'.

'And this is your real opinion! This is your final resolve! Very well. I shall now how to act. Do not imagine, Miss Bennet, that your ambition will ever be gratified. I came to try you. I hoped to find you reasonable; but depend upon it I will carry my point.'

In this manner Lady Catherine talked on, till they were at the door of the carriage, when turning hastily round, she added,

'I take no leave of you, Miss Bennet: I send no compliments to your mother. You deserve no such attention. I am most seriously displeased'.

Elizabeth made no answer; and without attempting to persuade her ladyship to return into the house, walked quietly into it herself.

(from Chapter 56)

TASKS

1. Read the text and state the reason for Lady Catherine's visit.
2. Are the Lady's fears grounded on facts or are they only her suppositions? (Give evidence for your answer).
3. Why is she so upset at the idea of Darcy marrying Elizabeth?
4. Lady Catherine belongs to the upper classes, i.e. she is supposed to be a gentlewoman. However she is anything but 'gentle'. Find evidence in the text.
5. How would you describe Elizabeth's behaviour? Choose as many as you consider suitable; add more if you wish.
 - she hits back with determination
 - she defends herself
 - she is upset
 - she is polite but does not forget her dignity
 - she is overwhelmed by indignation
 - she never loses control of the situation and does not allow the other to overpower her
 - she does not hesitate to lie
 - she reacts with firmness and taunts the other
 - she answers honestly but keeps her ground and rejects some of the questions
 - she is elusive and mocking
 - other: ...



Lady Catherine rushes to her nephew, Mr Darcy, to relate her conversation with Elizabeth and put the young woman in a bad light, with the effect of giving him motive of hope: Darcy will later say to Elizabeth "I knew enough of your disposition to be certain, that, had you been absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine, frankly and openly".

Darcy repeats his proposal to Elizabeth, and now her answer is quite different. He has also removed his prejudices to Bingley and Jane's marriage, and the novel finishes with Mrs Bennet's raptures at having three daughters married in such a short time.

CRITICAL NOTES

"It is a truth universally acknowledged" that Jane Austen is one of the **major novelists in English literature**.

Chronologically she belongs to the romantic period, but her **realism, clearsightedness, balance in construction** place her in line with the tradition of the 18th century.

She wrote **novels of manners** - or domestic novels - giving exquisite portraits of the provincial middle-class and country gentry that she knew so well because they were her own social circle. The important moments of their life were visits, weddings, shopping, and polite chatting around the tea-table. New arrivals represented real events and were conspicuous subjects of conversation; they also offered opportunity for the most exciting of social occasions: a ball.

This was the world which characterized England before the Industrial Revolution. The clean, quiet little towns, the beauty of the countryside, the cheerful farms, form the ideal background of her stories.

Jane Austen was an acute observer, and nothing escaped her sharp eyes; envies, jealousies, ambitions and intrigues, follies and whims were captured and punctually recorded. She possessed at a high degree the ability to see right inside people, and described her small provincial world with the delicacy and precision of a miniaturist. The quiet, circumscribed life of that world was hardly touched by outside events like the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Great passions or exciting adventures never appear in her novels; with considerable self-criticism she only wrote of the life she knew.

Her world is a small one, but she gives such a neat and **precise analysis of man as a social being**, of the tensions between spontaneity and convention, that her world becomes a microcosm of life. A sitting-room or a ball-room is space enough, and the conversation of a few people provides interesting material to work on and draw characters with clear precision. With **irony, wit, keen and precise insight** she explores human emotion and behaviour, and with a few brief strokes she can convey a complete delineation of character. She never lashes out against her characters, but contempt for the silly, affected and stupid constantly emerges from her works. But while she can be sharp with mean, vulgar people, she is capable of human sympathy for those who are tolerant and amiable, no matter if not very clever.

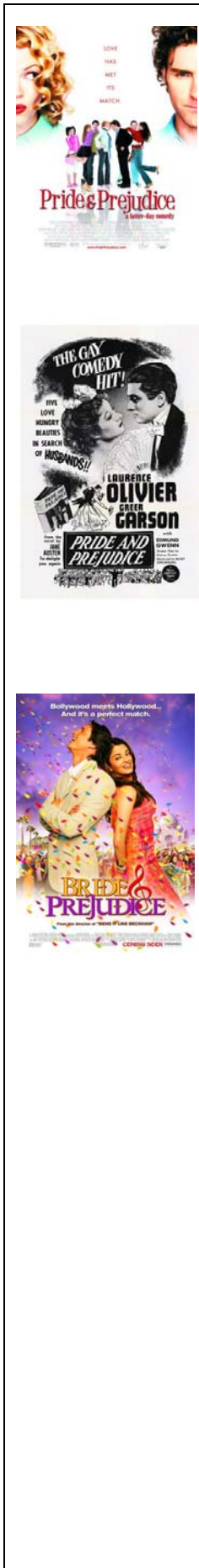
Each of her novels is a story about marriage, or better, about providing matches for her heroines; there can be misunderstandings and false starts, but in the end marriage rewards her pretty women: marriage for esteem and affection rather than romantic love, but also as social and financial settlement, because in her charming world women had no future but what their husbands could provide.

Her works give the impression of ease, but this is the result of careful thinking by the author. Jane Austen was a careful craftsman, conscious of the close and exacting discipline required by novel writing, and her professional awareness is confirmed by **her constant revision of her novels**, even when there seemed to be few or no chances of publication.

In her novels there is economy, mastery of tone and sense of structure. Her characters reveal themselves very largely through dialogue, which is only apparently the ordinary conversation of everyday life. Jane Austen is careful in the selection of an idiom suited to the person who is speaking.

The reader returns to her novels again and again, each time to find a wealth of wisdom and insight that escaped him on the previous reading and render her novels unforgettable.

Many consider *Pride and Prejudice* her masterpiece. The story develops in a spirit of sheer amusement devoid of bitterness. Elizabeth Bennet is one of the best creations of the writer, who confessed her predilection for this "delightful creature". She is clever, high-spirited and capable of great loyalty and generosity.



CONCLUDING TASKS

1. How are the characters' personalities and relationships revealed?

2. Jane Austen's novels were written between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. Decide if Jane Austen's works reflect the literary features of the romantic movement or not. Discuss with the class and your teacher and give reasons for your answer.

3. The following are the main features of Jane Austen's output.

- psychological insight
- re-creation of social background
- clear, balanced and elegant style
- irony/humour
- reading of human nature with all its positive and negative aspects, the selfishness, silliness, meanness, but also generosity, loyalty,...
- mastery (and restraint) of tone
- the careful structure of her novels
- the way narrative, description, dialogue alternate
- the narrative pace always moving.

Which of them do you find the most interesting? Reason your answer.

4. Why do you think Jane Austen's novels are classed as domestic novels, or novels of manners?