

Character Analysis of Elizabeth and Darcy in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice."

(B.A.Eng.Hons.Part-2,Paper-4th.)

Elizabeth Bennet:

The protagonist of the novel, is portrayed as an independent and innovative woman of her time. She is the second eldest of the five Bennet sisters and shares a close relationship with her older sister Jane. Favoured by her father, Elizabeth is seen as her mother's least favourite. This comes as no surprise as Mrs. Bennet is extremely superficial and self-absorbed, the polar opposite of Elizabeth. Her younger sisters, Kitty and Lydia, are equally repulsive, shamelessly flirtatious with men of the local military outpost. Though very dedicated to her family, Elizabeth is often humiliated by their personalities.

A central theme within the novel is Elizabeth's limitation for marriage resulting from her family's social status. Elizabeth's mother throws a fit when her predetermined plans to wealthy wed each of her daughters clashes with Elizabeth's personal creed to marry for love, regardless of material wealth. One such example is when Elizabeth is proposed to by her imbecilic cousin, Mr. Collins. According to inheritance mandates of nineteenth century England, Mr. Collins is entitled to the family's entire estate upon Mr. Bennet's death. Elizabeth, however, does not love him nor ever could. She is often regarded as being too stubborn, socially rebellious, and judgmental, viewing those who do not share her same beliefs concerning marriage in a condescending light. This proves true when Elizabeth's dear friend, Charlotte Lucas, in turn marries the spurned Mr. Collins solely for financial security. Elizabeth disapproves of her friend's shallow and conformist decision, causing her to so eagerly court and proceed to marry him.

Just as she possesses critical opinions about select others, so too do others reciprocate the criticism and judgment for her. When faced with opposition, Elizabeth's quick and fiery tongue often gets the better of her. A key event in the novel that exemplifies Elizabeth's spirit transforms her life drastically. While attending a social gathering, Elizabeth is introduced to Fitzwilliam Darcy, a tall, handsome, and wealthy landowner.

Their meeting is spiteful and cruel. Mr. Darcy does not hesitate to insult and slight Elizabeth and her family. Somewhat uncharacteristically, Elizabeth musters the strength to internalize his words and remain silent; however, Mr. Darcy's insults give her reason to be prejudiced against him and his seemingly unjustifiable pride.

The rollercoaster of affairs involving two men in Elizabeth's life begin partially after her initial acquaintance with Mr. Darcy followed by that with a handsome and charming, yet impoverished soldier named George Wickham. Initially, Wickham captures Elizabeth's interest, however, he is deceitful about his past, portraying Mr. Darcy as the primary source of his suffering and misery. Elizabeth trusts Wickham's fabrication completely, only succeeding to fuel Elizabeth's increasing disdain for Mr. Darcy. In addition to Wickham's malicious tales, Elizabeth discovers that Mr. Darcy is responsible for the cruel end to the romantic relations between her beloved older sister Jane and Mr. Darcy's good friend, Mr.

Bingley. Elizabeth loathes Mr. Darcy as Jane is overcome with depression from the abrupt ending of her relationship with Mr. Bingley.

The turning point of the novel is marked by Mr. Darcy's shocking marriage proposal to Elizabeth. Naturally, she is stunned and even appalled at this, considering her preconceptions of his character. Elizabeth proceeds to charge Mr. Darcy with poor manners and ignoble character. Mr. Darcy eventually enables Elizabeth to see his true character as an honorable and respectable gentleman. Ironically, Elizabeth also comes to realize that all the characteristics she erroneously distained in Mr. Darcy truly belong to Mr. Wickham.

As time goes on, Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet's relationship only strengthens as they solidify a loving relationship. New obstacles arise between the two proud lovers, though, mainly stemming from social faux pas and class divides only true love can bond. Additionally, a dramatic scandal arises nearly eliminating any possibility of marriage between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth discovers that her impulsive sister Lydia has run away with George Wickham, without any intentions of marrying. Lydia's actions are certain to bring shame and dishonor to the entire Bennet family, such that no respectable man would be able to consider marrying the remaining sisters thereafter. Mr. Darcy rescues the Bennet family name by providing the financial means for Lydia and

Wickham to marry. It is only due to the audacious personalities of both Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth that the two are able to overcome tribulations caused by nearly every character involved: Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mrs. Bennet, George Wickham, the younger Bennet sisters and Mr. Bingley's sisters.

Elizabeth suffers the loss of hope after introspective reflection and painful confrontation of shallow social standards. She is devastated by the possibility that after reconsidering true nobility of Mr. Darcy's character, she could have lost him forever. It will take redeeming the seemingly irreversible and shocking scandal of Lydia and George Wickham's elopement for Mr. Darcy to prove his noble, selfless, and considerate character. He saves not only the Bennet family by making Lydia an honorable woman by offering Wickham enough money to entice him to wed the virtually penniless Lydia, despite his own personal grudge against the deceitful Wickham. The restoration of honor to the Bennet family provides for two more important marriages to take place: one between Jane and Mr. Bingley, and the other between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. In the end, Elizabeth has maintained her pride, yet is able to overcome her prejudice against Mr. Darcy, who initially sought to damage this pride upon meeting each other for the first time. Eventually, Elizabeth is forced to reconsider her prejudice attitudes, targeting the superfluous societal values as a whole, instead of the people who live by them.

Fitzwilliam Darcy:

Mr. Darcy is the second of the two protagonists in the novel. Over time as the story unfolds, the reader's perception of Mr. Darcy's transforms from malicious to benevolent. His position as the ideal match for Elizabeth becomes obvious, though once an unimaginable possibility. In addition to being educated and worldly, he is rich and handsome, claiming the adoration of various women throughout the novel. It is clear from the onset, however, that he is only interested in the very woman who despises him most, Elizabeth Bennet. Nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Darcy's rank in society is just below that of nobility.

Mr. Darcy praises and holds dear many things in his life. Among the most important are his sister, Georgiana and his estate, Pemberley. Pemberley proves a fitting symbol for Mr. Darcy throughout the novel. From afar, Pemberley appears to be a proud and arrogant residence. Upon closer inspection, however, it radiates natural warmth, beauty, and a solid foundation.

Mr. Darcy's family ties and relations, in addition to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are strong and formidable. As the only son of a well-established family, he inherits of the Pemberley estate and becomes the master of the family, especially of his adoring younger sister Georgiana Darcy. As her legal guardian, Mr. Darcy adopts a paternalistic role in Georgiana's life. Upon the death of Wickham's father, Mr. Darcy's father took the penniless Wickham under his wing and treats him like his own son. Wickham and Mr. Darcy mature together, both enjoying financial and social success at an early age. It soon became apparent, however, the conflicting characters of the two men. Where Mr. Darcy is honest, forthright, and hardworking, Wickham is discovered to be surreptitious, especially in regards to money, Mr. Darcy's father, Georgiana, and Elizabeth. In addition to being deceitful, Wickham is a philanderer and gambler.

A rift between the two childhood friends develops and quickly grows to irreparable proportions once Wickham decides to earn his fortune by eloping with young Georgiana Darcy. Georgiana was an heiress in her own right. Fortunately, Darcy due to his undying commitment to family and virtue, he succeeds in preventing the dishonorable elopement. Fortunately for Wickham, he decides not to publicly ruin him; instead, but he buys Wickham off, and thus severing all connections between them.

Unfortunately, Wickham's actions and an atrocious first impression form Elizabeth's repulsive opinion of Mr. Darcy. Ironically, her response to his hostilities and the obvious interest she shows in George Wickham only intrigue Darcy further, igniting within him a passion for Elizabeth. It is only after a fruitless and shocking proposal to Elizabeth, signifying the turning point of the novel, that Mr. Darcy receives the opportunity to clear his good name with his beloved, in addition to his dark past with Wickham and his influences on the relationship between Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley. Mr. Darcy does exactly this and slowly begins to win her affections. Despite humiliating himself by proposing and being rejected from one of inferior social class, he remains steadfast and determined to win Elizabeth's heart. His prejudice is proven through both his initial insulting comments to Elizabeth upon introduction, and by the reasons he offers to Mr. Bingley for ending relations with Jane Bennet. It is not long, however, before Mr. Darcy realizes that Elizabeth is far different from any of the solicitous women enamored with him.

Although both are quick to judge and initially are often blinded to the truth behind their pride and prejudices. Love escapes him. He is desirous not to wed or doom his days to an ordinary girl, but he is intrigued not only for Elizabeth's beauty, but her intellect, spirit, and wit as well. Elizabeth's bitter feelings towards him, and his own haughtiness seem only to deny any romantic prospects between the two. While Darcy hails from the upper echelons of society and family, Longbourn, Mr. Bennet's estate, is just barely profitable enough to admit the family into Mr. Darcy's social realm. Undoubtedly, Elizabeth's rejection of his proposal humbles Mr. Darcy tremendously.

Elizabeth's beauty claims Darcy's affections for her throughout the remainder novel, causing him to demonstrate his growing commitment to her, regardless of social standings and the family's harsh criticisms of him. Mr. Darcy finds himself in a peculiar situation, faced with the potential ruin of the Bennet family that Elizabeth had prophesized. He knows that the only way to save the family, as well as his romantic prospects with Elizabeth, is to aid Lydia Bennet, and the deplorable George Wickham.

The decision serves as a great burden upon Mr. Darcy's conscience as he is forced to choose between pride and charity. Darcy proves his benevolence as he proceeds to secretly funnel money to the Bennet through Mrs. Bennet's brother, Mr. Gardiner. In the process, Mr. Darcy is able to overcome any previous judgments, and even accepting Wickham as a prospective brother-in-law. With a renewed outlook, he offers his consent and support of Mr. Bingley and Jane Bennet's marriage, which Darcy had also previously delayed due to his critical opinions of their relationship. Mr. Darcy's patronage of the Bennet family as well as his romantic intentions are offered at a superficial cost to him, voiced by his disapproving aunt, Lady Catherine, a prude and narrow-minded woman. Lady Catherine is appalled at the alleged destruction of her family name that would result by admitting Elizabeth into her family. Instead, she considers her own sickly daughter, Heiress Anne de Bourgh, a far more fitting wife for Mr. Darcy.

In the end, however, Mr. Darcy is only too set on winning Elizabeth's heart. She regrets her initial harsh judgments of Mr. Darcy, and begins to see him with new eyes, the man of her dreams. Darcy, being the impressionable man that he is, holds few people in high esteem, and Elizabeth is one of them. She joins Georgiana, Mr. Darcy's dear sister, as the two most influential and precious elements in his life. Pemberly becomes the home to his new wife, Elizabeth. Mr. Darcy overcomes various internal battles, such as his arrogance, prejudice, and social restraints. Finally, he reaches a state of harmony between all the elements of his life including fortune, family, friends, and the very dearest to his heart, his new wife, Elizabeth.

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