



Pride and Prejudice
English – Leaving Cert
Quick Notes

Pride and Prejudice

Summary: Chapter 1-5

1

The novel begins with a conversation about the news of a wealthy young gentleman renting out the manor estate known as Netherfield Park. This gossip causes the neighbouring village of Longbourn to go into an uproar, especially the Bennet household. The gentleman in this case is named Charles Bingley, and the five Bennet girls were very keen to meet him, as were their mother, for the five were all unmarried. Mrs Bennet, a fussy gossip, sees Bingley's arrival as a perfect opportunity for one of her daughters to get married and obtain a wealthy spouse; "a single man of great fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!" (5).

2

She therefore insists that her husband call upon Bingley immediately, and Mr Bennet torments his wife and daughters by pretending to be indifferent to doing so. However, he does eventually meet with Mr Bingley without their knowing. When he finally reveals his secret to his wife and daughters, after much teasing, they are overjoyed; "Well, how pleased I am! And it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now" (8). But he disappoints them by eluding their barrage of questions about Bingley's character.

3

Mrs Bennet still curious about Mr Bingley, with the assistance of her five daughters, probed Mr Bennet for information in varying ways. A few days later, Mr Bingley returns Mr Bennet's visit, though he does not meet Mr Bennet's daughters; they however, caught a glimpse of him from the upstairs window. To rectify this, the Bennets invite him to dinner shortly after his visit; however, he is called away to London and cannot make it. However, when he arrives he brings with him his two sisters, his brother-in-law (the husband of the eldest), and another young man, a friend named Mr Darcy. Mr Bingley and his guests go to the ball in the nearby town of Merton, in which the Bennet sisters also attend, with their mother, and it is there that they all finally meet. While sitting out a dance Elizabeth (the second eldest Bennet sister) overhears Bingley say to Darcy that Jane (the eldest Bennet sister) is "the most beautiful creature [he] ever beheld!" (11). Bingley then notices Elizabeth

sitting behind Darcy and comments that “there is one of [Jane’s] sisters sitting down behind [him], who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable” (11) and he suggests that Darcy and Elizabeth should dance. Darcy refuses, he feels she is “tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt [him]” (11) and that he is “in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (11-12). Elizabeth takes immediate dislike to Darcy because of his comments and his refusal to dance with anyone not rich or well bred; the neighbourhood at large takes a dislike to him also. Though the neighbourhood agree he is more handsome than Mr Bingley, Mr Darcy is quickly judged as "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world" (10) because of his reserve and unwillingness to dance with anyone outside of his own party. On the other hand, Bingley is the golden boy, and he is judged to be entirely amiable. He danced first with Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's friend, but the only person with whom he danced with twice was Jane. At the end of the evening, upon returning home, Mrs Bennet attempts to explain the event of the ball in great detail to Mr Bennet, but he is indifferent and even annoyed by her comments, insisting that she be silent about the matter; If he had any compassion for me ... he would not have danced half so much!” (12).

4

When Jane and Elizabeth are finally alone, Jane, who had been cautious of her praise for Bingley before, expresses her admiration for him to her sister. Elizabeth approves of him, however, she does point out to Jane that she never sees the fault in others. She is “a great deal too apt, to like people in general” (14). For example, Elizabeth is critical of the somewhat snobbish behaviour of Mr Bingley’s sisters, however, Jane insists that they are pleasing in conversation. The narrator then gives some background to Mr Bingley: he inherited a hundred thousand pounds from his father, but, despite his sisters insistence, rents Netherfield Park as opposed to buy it. Bingley has a “steady” (15) long-standing friendship with Darcy, in spite of their opposite personalities. Bingley is easy-going and open, while Darcy is reserved and haughty. Their personalities are highlighted by their reactions to the Meryton ball: Bingley found the company at the Meryton ball to be quite amiable and was cheerful and sociable throughout, being very taken with Jane, while Darcy, more clever but less tactful, saw no one with whom he wished to associate with as he found them dull, and even though he assents to Jane's beauty, he criticises her for smiling too much. Bingley's sisters also tell him that they like Jane, calling her a “sweet girl” (16), and he feels “authorised by such commendation” (16) to think what he likes of her.

5

Sir William Lucas and his family live near Longbourn and are the Bennet's neighbours. Their eldest daughter, Charlotte, is a close friend of Elizabeth. The day after the ball Charlotte and her mother, Lady Lucas, visit the Bennet women and the ladies of the two houses discuss the events of the ball the previous night. They speak about the general admiration of Jane's beauty and Bingley's attraction to her. They decided that, though Bingley danced with Charlotte first, he considered Jane to be the prettiest girl there. They then go on to criticise Darcy for his pride and treatment of Elizabeth. Mary makes a remark about universality of pride in human nature and its differentiation from vanity and Elizabeth states that she will never dance with him. The consensus among the women is that Mr Darcy, despite his looks, family and fortune, is too proud to be likeable.

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