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**COMPLETE TEXT IN THIS GUIDE*

THE BIG BOW-WOW STRAIN I CAN DO MYSELF LIKE ANY NOW GOING, BUT THE EXQUISITE TOUCH WHICH RENDERS ORDINARY COMMONPLACE THINGS AND CHARACTERS INTERESTING FROM THE TRUTH OF THE DESCRIPTION AND THE SENTIMENT IS DENIED TO ME.
— Sir Walter Scott on Jane Austen

Unit 1—Lesson 2

Jane Austen

Introduction

Jane Austen was born in 1775, the sixth of seven children of the Reverend George Austen. The Reverend was relatively prosperous, and the family was comfortable in Steventon, Hampshire, England. Her father was a refined and educated man who taught Jane to read and write. At the time, it was not that common for women to be educated, and Jane was one of the most educated of that relatively small group. She read widely throughout her life. There is evidence that she became familiar with the works of Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Sir Walter Scott, and others while still a young woman. She was quite a prodigy when it came to writing. Some of her "juvenilia" (pieces written by a child or young person) have been published and show real wit and skill.

Jane seems to have lived a perfectly happy live among a loving and happy family. She made occasional visits to Bath, London, and Lyme, as well as the residences of her brothers. Any evidence that there were particular disappointments or occasions for sadness were edited from the letters Jane left behind after her death by her sister Cassandra. The family moved to Bath in 1806 because of Reverend Austen's health. After his death, in 1809, they moved to Chawton, back in Hampshire.

I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine.
—Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane's life seems remarkable only in its lack of any remarkable events. Jane was never married, though she was briefly engaged (for the space of about twelve hours or less). And it is this very lack of the remarkable in her best works that is one of the key compliments paid to Jane Austen's work, *Pride and Prejudice* in particular. Annabella Milbanke—later Lady Byron, the wife of the poet George Gordon, Lord Byron—wrote her mother in 1813, the year *Pride and Prejudice* was published, that it was

> . . . a very superior work. It depends not on any of the common resources of novel writers, no drownings, no conflagrations, nor runaway horses, not lapdogs and parrots, nor chambermaids and milliners, nor rencontres and

> disguises. I really think it is the most probable I have ever read. It is not a crying book, but the interest is very strong . . . I wish much to know who is the author or ess as I am told.

Sir Walter Scott also admired the way the ordinary had been made interesting, a trick he claimed he could not perform, depending instead on grand settings and actions. Even the Prince Regent, the future King George VI of England, was an admirer of Jane's writing and urged her to write a historical novel about his family, the House of Coburg. It is that very ordinariness that was Jane's goal. This genre has been called "books of manners" because the plot centers around the way people actually lived, their regular manner. And it is overcoming that manner, the limits of society, which is the chief underlying struggle.

Jane Austen died in 1817 of Addison's disease at the age of forty-two. Her works include *Sense and Sensibility, Mansfield Park, Emma, Northanger Abbey,* and *Persuasion,* all published within the last decade of her life. As was noted above, there were many people, including some great writers and other figures, who appreciated her work, especially for its portrayal of the ordinary. Others, though, including Charlotte Brontë and the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, found her work too confined and limited, probably also due to the very commonness of the people and situations she wrote about.

The Selection

Jane Austen had trouble getting her works published, despite the quality that several great writers and thinkers saw in them afterwards. The publication dates of her works do not reflect the order in which they were written. *Sense and Sensibility* was first written as *Elinor and Marianne* in 1795–96. *First Impressions* was written in 1797. It was refused without even being read by the publisher. *Elinor and Marianne* was rewritten as *Sense and Sensibility* in 1797–98 and *Northanger Abbey* was written in 1798–99. It was purchased by the publisher for £10, but never actually published. In 1809 *Sense and Sensibility* was rewritten again, and *First Impressions* was also rewritten as *Pride and Prejudice*. These two were finally published in 1811 and 1813 respectively. The original title of *Pride and Prejudice* gives us a very good idea of the author's purpose in writing this book and the theme she was attempting to explore.

While You Read

Here are some questions to keep in the back of your mind while reading *Pride and Prejudice*.

- How does Jane Austen introduce us to her characters?
- What methods does she use to demonstrate the kind of people they are?
- How often are the "first impressions" of Austen's characters accurate?
- Different characters in this novel have varying approaches to judging others, including the characteristics they seem to think the most important. Does Austen suggest that any of these methods are more correct than others?

Lesson Preview

Authors use many methods to introduce and define the characters they create. We will examine several of these.

Comprehension Questions

Volume I

Chapters 1–4

1. How many daughters do Mr. & Mrs. Bennet have?
2. What two attributes does Mr. Bingley have that make him particularly interesting to Mrs. Bennet?
3. What is Mrs. Bennet's main goal in life?
4. Why is Mr. Bennet's visit to Mr. Bingley so important to Mrs. Bennet?
5. When the characters go to "town," where are they off to?
6. Why isn't Mr. Bingley able to accept the dinner invitation from the Bennets?
7. Who does Mr. Bingley bring to the dance?
8. What are perceived to be Mr. Darcy's two best attributes when he attends the dance with Mr. Bingley?
9. What is seen as his chief failing?
10. What is Mr. Darcy's first impression of Elizabeth Bennet?
11. What is Elizabeth Bennet's first impression of Mr. Darcy?
12. What is Mrs. Bennet's opinion of Mr. Darcy?
13. How does Jane Bennet feel about Mr. Bingley?
14. How does Jane feel about Mr. Bingley's sisters?
15. How does Elizabeth characterize Jane's general outlook concerning other people?
16. As described in chapter 4, what is the basic difference between the opinions of Jane and Elizabeth regarding other people?
17. As described in chapter 4, what is the basic difference between Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy toward other people?

Chapters 5–12

1. Who visits the Bennets the morning after the dance to talk about it, Mr. Bingley, and Mr. Darcy?
2. What advice does Charlotte Lucas give Elizabeth about the way Jane should act towards Mr. Bingley?
3. What do we learn about Mr. Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth Bennet in chapter 6?
4. What are the two main attractions of the village of Meryton for the two youngest Bennet sisters, Lydia and Catherine?
5. What is Mrs. Bennet's plan in sending Jane to visit Netherfield on horseback?
6. Name one positive and one negative outcome of Mrs. Bennet's plan.
7. What are Mr. Bingley's sisters' true feelings for the various Bennets?
8. What seem to be Mr. Darcy's and Miss Bingley's feelings for each other?
9. Why does Mrs. Bennet refuse to send the carriage even when Jane's health has improved?

10. Who is not happy that Jane and Elizabeth Bennet leave Netherfield after five days?
    a. Jane Bennet
    b. Elizabeth Bennet
    c. Miss Bingley
    d. Mr. Bingley
    e. Mr. Darcy

CHAPTERS 13–15

1. What is the situation of the ownership of the Bennets' property, Longbourn, upon the eventual death of Mr. Bennet?
2. What is Mr. Collins' position or job?
3. What is Mr. Collins' relationship to Mr. Bennet?
4. What opinion do you think the reader is supposed to have of Mr. Collins?
    a. He is rather foolish.
    b. He is wise.
    c. He is very pious.
    d. He is kindly and generous.
5. What was Mr. Bennet's chief goal in having Mr. Collins visit and did he succeed in this aim?
6. What is Mr. Collins' estate called?
7. Who is Mr. Collins' patroness?
8. Is Mr. Collins' patroness married and does she have children?
9. How does Mr. Collins work to impress his patroness?
10. What are Mr. Collins' feelings concerning his patroness?
11. What was Mr. Collins' main plan in visiting Longbourn?
12. What attractive newcomer do the Bennet girls encounter on their walk into Meryton with Mr. Collins?
13. What curious interchange does Elizabeth witness involving Mr. Darcy?

CHAPTERS 16–23

1. Where do Elizabeth and Mr. Wickham first have the opportunity for an extended conversation?
2. What crime against himself does Mr. Wickham attribute to Mr. Darcy?
3. To what does Mr. Wickham attribute Mr. Darcy's ill treatment of him?
4. What is Mr. Wickham's stated opinion of Mr. Darcy's sister?
5. What connection exists between Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy?
6. What obligations does the connection lead to?
7. What is Jane's reaction to Elizabeth's account of Wickham's story?
8. What request does Mr. Collins make of Elizabeth while everyone is waiting for the ball at Netherfield?
9. What revelation does Elizabeth come to in light of this request?

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10. What is the main reason Mr. Wickham does not attend the ball at Netherfield?
11. What does Mr. Darcy ask of Miss Elizabeth Bennet at the Netherfield ball and what is her response?
12. What reason does Miss Bingley give for believing Mr. Darcy rather than Mr. Wickham?
13. What question did Mr. Collins put to Elizabeth the morning after the Netherfield ball and what was her response?
14. What was Mr. Collins' response to Elizabeth's answer?
15. What is Mrs. Bennet's reaction to Elizabeth's response?
16. What is Mr. Bennet's reaction to Elizabeth's response to Mr. Collins?
17. What is Mr. Collins' reaction to Elizabeth's response to his question after some reflection?
18. What news comes to Jane in a letter from Miss Bingley?
19. What request does Mr. Collins make of Miss Charlotte Lucas and what is her response?
20. What are Miss Lucas' opinions of Mr. Collins and of marriage?

Volume II

Chapters 1–8

1. What unhappy news does Jane Bennet receive in her second letter from Miss Bingley?
2. Who comes to visit the Bennets of Longbourn?
3. What suggestion do these visitors make?
4. What connection does Mrs. Gardiner have to Mr. Darcy?
5. What event occurs for Mr. Collins and Miss Charlotte Lucas?
6. What does Jane learn about Miss Bingley?
7. What does Elizabeth learn about Mr. Wickham?
8. Where and with whom does Elizabeth travel in March?
9. What plan does Mrs. Gardiner suggest?
10. When Elizabeth meets her friend Charlotte, does the new Mrs. Collins seem happily married?
11. Who is least impressed by Lady Catherine de Bourgh?
    a. Mr. Collins
    b. Mrs. Collins
    c. Sir William Lucas
    d. Maria Lucas
    e. Elizabeth Bennet
    f. Lady Catherine de Bourgh

12. What, apparently, is Lady Catherine de Bourgh's chief pleasure?
13. Who visits the rectory at Hunsford as soon as he shows up in the area?
14. During the gathering Sunday afternoon at Lady Catherine's estate, the Rosings, what excuse does Mr. Darcy offer Elizabeth for his seeming proud and disagreeable?
15. What is Elizabeth's rejoinder to Mr. Darcy's excuse?
16. Does the conversation between Elizabeth Bennet, Mr. Darcy, and Colonel Fitzwilliam contain any evidence of the near hatred Elizabeth claims to feel towards Mr. Darcy?

CHAPTERS 9–19

1. What actions on the part of Mr. Darcy have made Mrs. Charlotte Collins and Miss Elizabeth Bennet curious?
2. Who does Elizabeth repeatedly run into during walks in Rosings Park?
3. What does Colonel Fitzwilliam tell Elizabeth one day in Rosings Park about Mr. Darcy's actions as regards Mr. Bingley and Jane?
4. What question does Mr. Darcy ask Elizabeth when the rest of the group are drinking tea at Rosings with Lady Catherine and what was her response?
5. What does Mr. Darcy give Elizabeth the day after his proposal?
6. What does Elizabeth learn from Mr. Darcy concerning Mr. Wickham?
7. What is Mr. Darcy's first name?
8. What are Elizabeth's reactions to Mr. Darcy's letter?
9. How do the Bennet sisters, who have been visiting various parties, get home?
10. Does Jane believe Mr. Darcy's report concerning Mr. Wickham?
11. What do Jane and Elizabeth decide to do with their knowledge concerning Mr. Wickham?
12. Who is Mrs. Forster?
13. What invitation does Lydia Bennet receive from Mrs. Forster?
14. What opinion on this issue does Elizabeth share with her father?
15. How does Elizabeth disturb Mr. Wickham on the eve of his journey to Brighton with the regiment?
16. What is the plan for Elizabeth's summer trip?

Volume III

CHAPTERS 1–4

1. What site of special interest does Elizabeth visit while in Derbyshire?
2. Who do they meet during their visit?
3. What two aspects of Mr. Darcy's conversation are most striking to Elizabeth?
4. Who visits Elizabeth and the Gardiners the next day?

[*Continued*]

5. What are Elizabeth's impressions of Mr. Bingley's feelings?
6. What keeps Elizabeth awake that night?
7. Who, in turn, do Elizabeth and Mrs. Gardiner visit the following day?
8. Who is most jealous of Elizabeth Bennet?
   a. Mrs. Gardiner
   b. Miss Bingley
   c. Miss Darcy
   d. Mrs. Annesley
   e. Mrs. Hurst
9. What distressing news does Elizabeth receive in a pair of letters from Jane?
10. What is Mr. Darcy's reaction to the news in Jane's letters?

CHAPTERS 5–7

1. What does Elizabeth blame herself for in the Lydia/Wickham business?
2. Based on what Mrs. Bennet says to the Gardiners, what is she most concerned with in the whole Lydia/Wickham business?
   a. Where the two people are
   b. If they are married
   c. Lydia's wedding clothes
   d. Mr. Bennet getting injured fighting with Mr. Wickham
   e. Her own nerves
   f. All of the above
3. Based on the letter Lydia wrote to Mrs. Forster, what was her intention with Mr. Wickham?
4. Is Mr. Collins' letter of condolence either kind or comforting?
5. Will Lydia and Mr. Wickham get married?
6. What must be paid immediately and promised for the future to Mr. Wickham in order to assure a good outcome?
7. Is Mrs. Bennet happy about the arrangement made by Mr. Gardiner in the Lydia/Wickham business?
8. Does Mrs. Bennet seem to think Lydia has done anything wrong?
9. What are Mrs. Bennet's feelings toward Mr. Wickham now?
10. What seems to be Mrs. Bennet's chief concern after hearing Mr. Gardiner letter?

CHAPTERS 8–12

1. Does Mr. Bennet hold himself at all to blame for the financial situation of his family or the business Lydia and Mr. Wickham got themselves into?
2. What will Mr. Wickham and Lydia do after they are married?
3. Is there any sign of shame in either Lydia or Mr. Wickham for running away to London and living together for at least two weeks before their marriage?

4. Is there any sign of shame among the other Bennets for Lydia's and Mr. Wickham's actions?
5. What secret does Lydia reveal about the guests at her wedding?
6. What does Elizabeth learn about Mr. Darcy's involvement in Lydia and Mr. Wickham's marriage?
7. Besides the reason Mr. Darcy gave the Gardiners for his generosity, what other reason do the Gardiners attribute his actions to?
8. Does Mr. Wickham persist in trying to lie about his past to Elizabeth?
9. Who pay a surprise visit to the Bennets at Longbourn?
10. Is Jane pleased with the dinner party at Longbourn that included Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy as guests?
11. Was Elizabeth pleased with the same dinner party?

CHAPTERS 13–19

1. What question does Mr. Bingley put to Jane and what is her response?
2. What two purposes did Lady Catherine de Bourgh have in visiting the Bennets, and Elizabeth in particular, at Longbourn?
3. From whom does Mr. Bennet receive the letter he shares with Elizabeth the day after Lady Catherine's visit?
4. Why does he find it so amusing?
5. What question does Mr. Darcy ask Elizabeth and what is her response?
6. What was the effect of the interference of Mr. Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine?
7. Has Mr. Darcy changed?
8. What is the chief reaction of Jane and Mr. Bennet to Elizabeth's news about Mr. Darcy?
9. What is Mrs. Bennet's chief reaction to the news?

[*Continued*]

Literary Lesson: Characterization

How do you get to know the people that you know? How do you know what sort of people they are? How do you know if you like them or would rather not spend any time with them? How do you know if you would want to ask their advice on a personal matter, share an ice cream, ask for help on a math problem, watch a film together, form a club, plant a garden, go shopping, or anything? In short, how do you know anything about anyone you know?

The answer, of course, is that there are a variety of ways we learn about each other. We talk to each other and learn how we think and what we feel about different issues. We watch each other to see what sorts of things we do in various situations and how we act. We hear stories about people from others, which we can choose to believe or disbelieve (or something in between).

And an author must do the same things in order to let us, the readers, know about their characters. For us to care about the story the author is telling we must get to know the characters, whether we like them or not, and feel some connection or interest. How could we care anything for a story about people we don't know? It would be like coming into the middle of a conversation, not knowing what was going on, who was being talked about, or what the situation was all about. We would feel disinterested and at a loss. Another possibility in this situation is that we would get the wrong idea about someone being talked about. If all we had was a partial conversation on which to base our opinion of a third party, we could quite possibly jump to a conclusion about the person's actions or character that would be unwarranted or even the opposite of the conclusion we would reach if we knew more about, or heard other people talking about, him or her.

Pride and Prejudice is a particularly good book to use when talking about characterization and making judgments about others, positive or negative. Forming opinions about others is, in fact, one of the themes of this novel. It demonstrates the mistakes that can be made when opinions are formed about a person's character based on too little information or on attributes that don't relate to character, like what a person looks like.

Jane Austen presents her characters using a variety of methods. Most importantly, **she lets them speak**. This is the most immediate way we learn about people. She also carefully **describes the actions of her characters**. Next to hearing them speak, seeing what they do in numerous situations is one of the best ways of learning about someone. A third method of presenting her characters to us is to let **one character talk about and describe another**. In this way, if we are careful and pay attention, we can learn about both characters, the one who is talking and the one who is being described. Finally, at times Austen simply **tells us her own opinions** about her characters or describes them in such a way as we know what her own perspective is. Many good examples of each of these methods can be found in this book, and we will examine some of them here.

Characterization through Dialogue and Monologue

From the very first chapter, we begin to be introduced to the various members of the Bennet family. The book opens with a discussion between Mrs. and Mr. Bennet in which Mrs. Bennet informs her husband that a wealthy young man has rented a large estate and moved into the neighborhood. She wants her husband to visit the young man and make his acquaintance, since this is the first step to allowing the young Bennet ladies to meet the young man. It is only proper that the male head of the household should make the first contact.

This situation is explained in this opening conversation between the married couple, but much more than that is also made clear to the readers. We are introduced to these two characters in the way they speak and the way they think. We see Mrs. Bennet as being a bit fussy, a bit silly, and very concerned with getting husbands for her daughters. Mr. Bennet, on the other hand, is more composed, but takes advantage of his wife. He acts as if he doesn't understand what she is saying merely to frustrate and fluster her. It seems to amuse him to upset her in this way. At the end of the conversation he then complains at the way she is acting, even though he has goaded her wife into it.

> "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." (Volume I, chapter 1, page 7)

Many of the characters in this book are introduced to us by allowing them simply to speak and reveal their own personalities. For example, at the assembly when the neighborhood of Meryton is first introduced to Mr. Bingley, his sisters, and Mr. Darcy, the difference between Bingley and Darcy is demonstrated quite clearly by the following dialogue.

> "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."

> "Which do you mean?" and turning around, 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." (Volume I, chapter 3, page 12)

Here we see clearly that Mr. Bingley is a likable, friendly fellow who sees good in those around him and is eager to make sure everyone is happy. Mr. Darcy, on the other hand, is standoffish and proud. He does not see in the faces around him anyone good enough for himself.

But it is not only in conversation, talking about other matters and other people, that people reveal who they really are. In some cases, they will describe themselves and their own actions, and that can also be instructive. For example, sometime after overhearing Mr. Darcy's dismissive remarks about her, Elizabeth describes her own reaction and the reasons behind it. Her friend Miss Charlotte Lucas suggests that Mr. Darcy is a fine man with a lot of money and a great estate. He has a right to be proud, Charlotte says. Elizabeth responds to this by saying, "That is very true . . . and I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine." (Volume I, chapter 5, page 19) Here, Elizabeth Bennet acknowledges having some pride of her own; that sin is not all on one side.

Characterization through Action

We do not learn about people only by what they say; we also get to know the sort of people they are by the things that they do. For example, we can tell that Elizabeth Bennet is a very loving and concerned sister. In Volume I, chapter 7, she walks at least three miles from Longbourn, her home, to the Netherfield estate when she receives word that her elder sister Jane is ill. She is unconcerned by the mud and by the way she will look after such vigorous exercise; she just wants to get to her sister quickly.

Mr. Collins' self-importance and obliviousness to society is shown in the way he addresses himself to Mr. Darcy in Volume I, chapter 18, after learning Darcy is the nephew of his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He does not wait for Mr. Darcy to speak to him first, or even to be introduced, but addresses himself directly to Mr. Darcy. His argument is, essentially, that different rules apply to clergymen. It is clear from the way the scene is written and the reactions of the witnesses to, and participants in, Mr. Collins' actions that this is not the way the rest of the people at this gathering feel.

Even more dramatic actions occur when Mr. Wickham runs away with Lydia Bennet, a crime we learn of in a pair of letters from Jane to Elizabeth in chapter 4 of Volume III. Here he is finally demonstrated to almost everyone to be a cad and a villain. (Lane still holds out the hope that his actions have been misunderstood and he is a reformed character, despite what

Elizabeth has told of his past.) We eventually learn that he apparently did not seek to marry Lydia, but simply convinced the silly girl to this rash action. And immediately following on from this action, two other characters are demonstrated. Lydia, of course, is shown to be quite rash and unthinking. But Wickham's infamy allows Austen to demonstrate the profound change that has come over Mr. Darcy. He immediately sets out to right Wickham's wrong; and to do so puts himself in contact with a class of society, and certain people specifically, which he would never have considered dealing with prior to meeting Elizabeth and being scolded by her.

Characterization through the Opinion of Others

I am sure we all have friends whose tastes do not perfectly match our own. You can probably imagine a friend of yours describing with some excitement a book they have just read or a film they have just seen. These reviews may not always have the desired effect. "There were these great special effects and lots of explosions and stuff; it was the best film I've seen this year." "When I read that book I just cried and cried. The love story between the two main characters was just so real." Perhaps this is your kind of film or book, and perhaps it isn't. You can tell something about your friend by what they have to say about those experiences, though. You will learn pretty quickly if you can trust their opinion about films, books, or people.

Authors also use this sort of characterization. This method often has a double purpose. We can learn something about the person who is being described, but we also learn something about the person doing the describing. Look again at the quote above from chapter 3 of Volume I in which Mr. Bingley urges Mr. Darcy to choose a dance partner. Bingley describes the room as being full of charming and attractive young ladies, while Darcy seems to see about three and a half who meet that description (Bingley's two sisters, Miss Jane Bennet, and Miss Elizabeth Bennet—sort of). What can we tell about the young ladies in the room from these descriptions? Who are we more likely to agree with? Is Mr. Bingley's or Mr. Darcy's opinion more accurate?

The most striking example of third party characterization is the case of the story Mr. Wickham tells Elizabeth about his past dealings with Mr. Darcy in Volume I, chapter 16. We hear Mr. Darcy's crimes against Mr. Wickham explained at some length here, and not knowing any better, we must believe what we are told. The readers may not be quite as eager as Miss Elizabeth Bennet to believe all the worst about Mr. Darcy, since our pride was not hurt by his remarks, but we have little else to go on in the way of descriptions of Mr. Darcy's character. As it turns out, Mr. Wickham's comments here are eventually discovered to be lies, and then it is more his character than Mr. Darcy's that is exposed. We discover that he is the kind of person to invent falsehoods about one man to gain the sympathy and favor of a woman.

And while we are trying to decide what to make of Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham based on the story he has told, we are confronted with Miss Bingley's account of Wickham in Volume I, chapter 18. She insists that he must be the villain because his father was a servant, not a great

landowner like Mr. Darcy's father. Again, we are given two options. We can simply believe what Miss Bingley has to say, if we feel that her arguments are sound and that her opinions would match with our own. On the other hand, we could see what her remarks say about her. She is willing to judge innocence or guilt based solely on one's station in life—whether one's family has money and owns land or works for a family that does—rather than on the facts of the case (which she doesn't know). Does Miss Bingley's statement make us more or less likely to believe Mr. Wickham?

Characterization through the Author's Perspective

Finally, the most straightforward method of characterization is when the author tells us directly what a character is like. At the end of the first chapter, we receive a run- down on the character traits of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, confirming what we have been shown in the rather comical conversation they have just had about whether Mr. Bennet will visit the neighborhood newcomer, and very eligible bachelor, Mr. Wickham.

> 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. (page 7)

In chapter 15 on Volume I we are presented with the author's opinion of Mr. Collins at some length.

> Mr. Collins was not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society—the greatest part of his life having been spent under the guidance of an illiterate and miserly father—and though he belonged to one of the universities, he had merely kept the necessary terms, without forming at it any useful acquaintance. The subjection in which his father had brought him up had given him originally great humility of manner, but it was now a good deal counteracted by the self-conceit of a weak head, living in retirement, and the consequential feelings of early and unexpected prosperity. A fortunate chance had recommended him to Lady Catherine de Bourgh when the living of Hunsford was vacant; and the respect which he felt for her high rank, and his veneration of her as his patroness, mingling with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as a clergyman, and his rights as a rector, made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility. (pages 60–61)

We must not assume, however, that an author's description of one of his or her characters is necessarily the last word on the subject. This is made clear with the first description of

Mr. Bingley and the group of people he brings from London to attend the first assembly at Meryton:

> Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien—and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend. (Volume I, chapter 3, page 11)

In this description, Mr. Bingley's sisters seem fine, possibly quite nice, and Mr. Darcy seems irredeemable. As we learn as we move through the story, these descriptions may not be entirely accurate. And with that, we return to the questions that opened this lesson. How do we know anything about the people we know and the people we meet? We hear them talking about certain topics, see them perform particular actions, hear about them from others, and finally we must make up our minds what we think about them. This book contains at least two main lessons about this process. First, there are a wide variety of sources of information about people. Secondly, we must be careful about making up our minds about people too quickly or too early. We must guard against possible prejudice born of first impressions. We must take advantage of all the avenues of information open to us before making these judgments.

Writing Exercises

1. Write a dialogue between two people. Illustrate some significant facts about the character traits or personality of each. A significant fact is something more than whether they are on their way to work or what they had for breakfast. Let us know what kind of people these two are by what they say to each other.
2. Write a dialogue between two or more people in which the participants talk about another person who is not present. Make sure that each of the members of the conversation has a different opinion of that absent person. Let them explain why their opinions are different, including some facts or impressions of the other person based on the lesson you have just read.
3. Describe yourself in the third person (as if you were simply describing someone you know). Include at least one example of each of the methods described in this lesson. That is, include at least one quote of something you have said, at least one account of an action, at least one quote from someone else talking about you, and an "author's perspective" (a comment from you, the narrator or the profile). Each of these should demonstrate what sort of a person you are, and some significant elements of your character.
4. Write a paper in which you describe a time when you met someone for the first time. Let us know what your first impressions of that person were and what they were based on. Also let us know whether your first impressions were confirmed or overturned as you got to know that person better.

5. There are two pairs of characters with very differing views on how to judge others. One of these pairs is Jane and Elizabeth Bennet and the other is Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy. Choose one of these pairs and analyze the different approaches. Explain those elements of the various approaches that you find good or bad.

6. Pick a character from this book and describe them using the methods discussed in the lesson. Let us know what you think of them and why. Be sure to use a variety of details and types of information to make your picture of them as clear as possible.

Romanticism

This word is used several times in this course, but it doesn't just mean love stories. Romanticism was actually a literary, musical, architectural, historiographical (having to do with the way history is written), and artistic movement that started in the late eighteenth century and lasted to the mid nineteenth century. Romanticism was made up of a variety of elements, including those loves stories that the name implies, but it is unlikely that any particular artist or writer would include every one of those elements in any given work.

The Renaissance, beginning a couple of centuries earlier, had stressed science and order. The later Renaissance is called the Age of Reason or the Age of Enlightenment or the Neoclassical Era. This is the era when there was a very strong emphasis on knowledge and on the ability of the human mind to solve every problem. It was also the age of the two great revolutions of the eighteenth century, the American Revolution and the French Revolution. These revolutions had both been based on rationality and philosophy. Governance must lie in the hands of the governed, not be based on the superstitious belief in some sort of "divine right" that had meant that a person was fit to rule simply because of their family affiliation.

Romanticism was a rejection of that rationality. The Romantics felt that too much emphasis had been placed on the mind and that there was not enough recognition paid to the emotions. Romanticism emphasized the individual and his or her experiences. The Romantics were concerned with the subjective, personal, emotional, irrational, visionary, transcendent perceptions of each person. There were a number of ways that these emphases played themselves out in the creativity of the Romantic Era. There was a deepened concern for nature and natural beauty. There was a lot of concern for examining each personality and how it worked. This included the moods, passions, and inner struggles each of us go through. There was a lot of interest in the exceptional figure, be it genius or hero. It was a time when the calm, clear rules that had applied to art—and any significant sort of creation—were overthrown in favor of individual visions. There was a concern with the primitive, with folktales and legends, with stories of ethnic and national origins. This was another phase of the increased respect for the natural world. There was an interest in the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, and horror. These are all properties that appeal more to the emotions, which create an emotional, sometimes even a physical, response.

Applying this wide-ranging definition to the material contained in this course, we can see how very different things can be brought together under a single title. *Pride and Prejudice* is Romantic because it is concerned with the individual emotions of it main characters, as well as overturning the rigid social rules of the past. Jane Austen's work is very different from that of Sir Walter Scott, but Scott is also a Romantic. He writes about heroes and larger-than-life characters. He draws his material from folktales and legends. There is horror aplenty in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. This is also a study of an individual's emotional response to the world. Finally, *Jane Eyre* must confront the mystery of Mr. Rochester's house, exotic and remote, in order to reach individual fulfillment. All of these works fall, in some way or other, under the mantle of Romanticism.