

STRUCTURE**3.0 Objectives****3.1 Introduction: The Age****3.2 Introduction: The Novelist****3.3 Introduction: The Novel****3.4 A Synopsis****3.5 The Title****3.6 Let Us Sum Up****3.7 Key Words****3.8 Books suggested****3.9 References****Answers**

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Acquaint you with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*
- Enable you to appreciate it as a work of fiction
- Appreciate the novel as a genre
- Place a work in its social context

3.1 INTRODUCTION: THE AGE

The Georgian era into which Jane Austen was born, characterized for Britain by almost constant warfare abroad, was in many ways a transitional period. It saw the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, the shift from Enlightenment to Romantic trends in arts and letters, and the first whispers of feminist and abolitionist concerns in Western Europe. In this Age, we can see how literature at first reflected the political turmoil of the age and then when the turmoil was over literature seemed to develop a creative spirit which shows itself in the Romantic poets as well as in the prose writers like Scott and Austen. It has been pointed out by many that after the Elizabethan Age, this was probably the 'second most creative Age in English literature'. It is in this period that for the first time, woman assumed an important place in literature. This could be due to the fact that women were now given a chance at education and an opportunity to enter the intellectual life of the race.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

A. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words/phrases:

- a) The most creative period in English literature was the _____.
- b) Woman could assume an important place in literature because they had access to _____.
- c) The Age in which Jane Austen lived and wrote was called the _____.

3.2 INTRODUCTION: THE NOVELIST

Jane Austen (1775-1817) lived in the provincial surroundings of the south of England. With a careful education, this youngest daughter of a parson lived an uneventful life. She did not travel much and did not make any close friends. With the exception of an occasional visit to Bath, her whole life was spent in small parishes. During her life in the Steventon parsonage, she saw and knew closely the people of the different strata of the gentry class in and around the village --- the large landed proprietor and the clergyman, occasionally the military or naval officer, the retired tradesman, the village apothecary and the independent yeoman. It is these that comprise the material of her novels. She began to write at the early age though her writings were not published immediately. She wrote six novels of which two were published after her death. It is believed that she wrote for the pleasure of writing and not with any hope of publication. Her hours of solitude, reverie and concentration made her firmly declare that “an artist cannot do anything slovenly”.

Jane was educated at Oxford and later a boarding school in Reading. In the early 1800s, two of Jane’s brothers joined the navy leaving to fight in the Napoleonic wars; they would go on to become admirals. Her naval connections can be seen in novels like *Mansfield Park*; naval officers furnish the only exciting elements in her stories. After the death of her father in 1805, Jane returned to Hampshire with her mother and sister. In 1809, her brother Edward, who had been brought up by the Knights, invited the family to the estate he had inherited at Chawton. It was in the country house of Chawton, that Jane was able to produce some of her greatest novels.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Match the words in Column A with the appropriate words/phrases in Column B.

A	B
1) Jane’s father	a) Napoleonic wars
2) Jane’s brother	b) parson
3) Jane’s education	c) admiral
4) Jane’s age	d) Oxford

3.3 INTRODUCTION: THE NOVEL

Jane Austen’s works are:

- *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)

- *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
- *Mansfield Park* (1814)
- *Emma* (1815)
- *Northanger Abbey* (1818, posthumous)
- *Persuasion* (1818, posthumous)
- *Lady Susan* (1871, posthumous)

Unfinished fiction

- *The Watsons* (1804)
- *Sanditon* (1817)

Pride and Prejudice is Jane Austen's first novel to be published (1813).

Some scholars also consider it one of her most mature novels.

Austen began writing *Pride and Prejudice* under the title *First Impressions* in 1796, at the age of twenty-one. She probably wrote the first draft as an epistolary novel, meaning the plot unfolded through an exchange of letters. In 1797, Austen's father offered his daughter's manuscript to a publishing company, but they refused to even consider it. Between 1810 and 1812, Austen rewrote *Pride and Prejudice* for publication. While the original ideas in the novel came from a 21-year-old girl, the final version reflects the literary and thematic maturity of a thirty-five-year-old woman who had spent years painstakingly drafting and revising, as Austen did with all of her novels. *Pride and Prejudice* is the most popular of Austen's novels.

Jane Austen's novels are reflection of her outlook on life. She spent most of her life insulated from certain sections of society. Her close friends were mainly her family and those of similar social standing. It is not surprising then that her novels focused on two or three families of the middle or upper classes. Most of her novels were also based on the idyll of rural country houses that Jane was so fond of.

The strength of Jane's novels was her ability to gain penetrating insights into the character and nature of human relationships, from even a fairly limited range of environments and characters. In particular, she helped to redefine the role and aspirations of middle-class women like herself. Through providing a witty satire of social conventions, she helped to liberate contemporary ideas of what women could strive for.

Walter Scott said of her, "That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements of feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

State whether True or False:

1. All of Austen's novels were published during her lifetime.
2. Austen's novels have a limited range of characters.
3. Austen lived an insulated life.
4. Her novels have no satire.
5. Austen rewrote the novel and changed the title.

3.4 THE NOVEL: A SYNOPSIS

A novel is best appreciated by reading it in full. However, here a brief synopsis is provided. It is recommended that you read the novel in order to fully understand and appreciate this popular work of fiction.

Pride and Prejudice is set primarily in the county of Hertfordshire, about 50 miles outside of London. The story centres on the Bennet family, particularly Elizabeth. The novel opens at Longbourn, the Bennet family's estate. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet have five children: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia. When Charles Bingley, a rich single man, moves to the Netherfield estate, the neighbourhood residents are thrilled, especially Mrs. Bennet, who hopes to marry one of her five daughters to him. When the Bennet daughters meet him at a local ball, they are impressed by his outgoing personality and friendly disposition. They are less impressed, however, by Bingley's friend Fitzwilliam Darcy, a landowning aristocrat who is too proud to speak to any of the locals and whom Elizabeth Bennet overhears refusing to dance with her.

Bingley and the oldest Bennet daughter, Jane, soon form an attachment. Any serious relationship between the two, however, is opposed by Bingley's sisters (who do not approve of Jane as a wife for Bingley because of her mother's lower status) and by Darcy (who believes that Jane is indifferent to Bingley). Meanwhile, Darcy finds himself attracted to Elizabeth despite his objections to her family. He is drawn to her spirited wit and expressive eyes, and Caroline Bingley's jealous criticisms of Elizabeth can do nothing to lessen Darcy's admiration.

As Darcy grows more interested in Elizabeth, Elizabeth continues to despise him and is instead attracted to George Wickham, a handsome and personable militia officer. Wickham tells Elizabeth that his father worked for Darcy's father and that he and Darcy grew up together. Stating that he was favoured by Darcy's father, Wickham claims that Darcy disobeyed his father's bequest of a clergyman's revenue to Wickham out of selfish resentment. Wickham's tale makes Darcy appear not only proud but cruel, and Elizabeth accepts Wickham's account without question, disliking Darcy even more because of it. Elizabeth, already predisposed to think badly of Darcy, does not question Wickham's account. When Elizabeth tells Wickham's story to Jane, however, Jane refuses to think badly of either Wickham or Darcy, insisting that there must be some misunderstanding.

In the midst of Jane and Elizabeth's developing relationships, the Bennet family is visited by Mr. Bennet's cousin, William Collins, a clergyman who will inherit Mr. Bennet's estate when he dies because of a legal stricture known as an entail, which ensures that only a male can inherit the property. Full of apologies for the entail and praises for his patroness, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Mr. Collins informs Mrs. Bennet that Lady Catherine has instructed him to marry and that he plans to choose a wife from the Bennet daughters. He settles on Elizabeth, but is stunned and offended when she refuses him. She refuses, but it takes him a while to accept her rejection; he assumes she is simply playing coy (as he believes females do). Mrs. Bennet is extremely angry at Elizabeth for

refusing Collins, but Mr. Bennet is glad. Collins quickly turns his attention to Elizabeth's friend, Charlotte Lucas, who wants to marry for security rather than love, and the two are soon engaged and married. Elizabeth is disappointed in her friend for agreeing to marry such a silly man simply for the sake of financial security.

At the same time, Jane is dismayed to find out that Bingley and the entire Netherfield party has unexpectedly left for London. Caroline Bingley writes to Jane that they do not intend to return, and she predicts a match between Bingley and Darcy's sister, Georgiana, who is also in London. Although Jane quietly resigns herself to a life without Bingley, Elizabeth is angry for her sister and suspects that Bingley's sisters and Darcy are trying to keep him from Jane.

Elizabeth visits Charlotte at her new home in Hunsford, Kent, and meets Mr. Collins' patroness and Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, an overbearing woman who thrives on meddling in other people's lives. Soon after Elizabeth's arrival in Kent, Darcy visits his aunt with his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam. Darcy puzzles Elizabeth with his behaviour; he seems to seek out her company, but he never says much. One day, he surprises Elizabeth by proposing to her. Still repelled by his pride and believing Darcy is responsible for Bingley's separation from Jane and for Wickham's misfortune, Elizabeth refuses him. In the meantime, in Meryton, Wickham suddenly transfers his attentions from Elizabeth to Miss King, a woman who has recently acquired 10,000 pounds from an inheritance. The next day, Darcy gives her a letter explaining his role in influencing Bingley away from Jane and details about the facts of Wickham's situation. A careful examination of the facts reveals that Darcy, while proud, is innocent of wrongdoing, and leaving Elizabeth mortified at her discovery of how her own pride prejudiced her against Darcy. The letter is a detailed one: first, Darcy defends himself for dissuading Bingley from proposing to Jane. Not only were Jane's family connections low, but she did not seem to show any particular preference for Bingley. Darcy then details his side of the Wickham story. Before his death, Darcy's father asked Darcy to provide Wickham with a living, provided Wickham enter the clergy. Wickham, however, did not want to enter the clergy, and asked Darcy for 3,000 pounds to study law. Wickham soon squandered all his money on a dissolute lifestyle and then asked Darcy for another stipend, promising to enter the clergy this time. When Darcy refused, Wickham seduced Darcy's teenage sister, Georgiana. Before they could elope, Darcy intervened and saved Georgiana's honour.

After returning home for a month, Elizabeth goes on a trip with her aunt and uncle Gardiner to Derbyshire county, where they visit Darcy's estate of Pemberley. There they meet Darcy unexpectedly and are all surprised at how graciously he treats them. He calls on Elizabeth at her inn, introduces her to his sister, and invites her to Pemberley for dinner. Darcy is still in love with Elizabeth, and Elizabeth begins to have similar feelings for him.

In the midst of this promising situation, Elizabeth receives two letters from Jane telling her that Lydia has eloped with Wickham, causing Elizabeth and the Gardiners to leave for home immediately. Worse yet, the family fears that Wickham does not actually intend to marry her. Jane asks Elizabeth to return home immediately. As soon as Elizabeth reads the letter, Darcy arrives at the inn. In her frantic state, Elizabeth tells him what has happened. Darcy feels partially to blame, since he never publicly exposed Wickham's wickedness. Elizabeth fears that Lydia and the Bennet family are permanently disgraced and that her newly-discovered love for Darcy is hopeless. When Lydia is found, however, she and Wickham marry. After the wedding, Elizabeth discovers that Darcy was instrumental in orchestrating the marriage, thereby saving the reputation and marriageability of the other Bennet daughters.

Bingley returns to Netherfield and soon asks Jane to marry him. Jane, of course, accepts, and Mrs. Bennet's exultation is only lessened by her irritation at Darcy's occasional presence. Meanwhile, Elizabeth's happiness for her sister is interrupted by a visit from Lady Catherine De Bourgh, who has heard a rumour that Darcy and Elizabeth are engaged, which they are not. She lectures Elizabeth on the imprudence of such a match, and then demands that Elizabeth promise not to accept any proposal from Darcy. Elizabeth refuses, causing Lady Catherine to tell Darcy about Elizabeth's impertinence and to scold him about the folly of an engagement between them. Lady Catherine's description of Elizabeth's response to her demands gives Darcy hope that Elizabeth has had a change of heart. After returning from his trip, Darcy tells Elizabeth that his affection has not changed. She then reveals that her feelings have changed and that she would be happy to marry him. They discuss how and why their sentiments have changed since Darcy's first proposal. Darcy has since realized he was wrong to act so proudly and place so much emphasis on class differences. Elizabeth, meanwhile, accepts that she was wrong to judge Darcy prematurely and admits that she allowed her vanity to affect her judgment. He proposes again and Elizabeth happily accepts.

Both couples marry. The novelist ties the various threads by telling us what happened after that. After living in Netherfield for a year, Jane and Bingley move to an estate near Pemberley where Darcy and Elizabeth live. Lydia and Wickham tire of each other eventually and Lydia keeps asking her sisters for money. Kitty spends most of her time with her two elder sisters, and her education and character begin to improve. Mary remains at home to keep her mother company. Mr. Bennet is very happy that his two oldest daughters have married so happily, and Mrs. Bennet is glad that her daughters have married so prosperously.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

Answer In Short:

- a) Where is the novel set and who are the main characters?

b) What quality would you associate with Elizabeth?

c) Who is Collins?

d) What does Catherine de Bourgh want Elizabeth to promise?

e) Describe Wickham in 4-5 sentences.

3.5 THE TITLE: *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

It is interesting to note that Austen had first used the title 'First Impressions' for the novel, but later changed it to the present '*Pride and Prejudice*'. The first impression that we have of Darcy is that of a proud man and this makes Elizabeth dislike him especially as she contrasts him with the more gentleman-like Bingley.

As Mary says in Chapter 5, "human nature is particularly prone to [pride]." Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, pride prevents the characters from seeing the truth of a situation. Most notably, it is one of the two primary barriers in the way of a union between Elizabeth and Darcy. Darcy's pride in his social position leads him to scorn anyone outside of his own social circle. Meanwhile, Elizabeth's pride in her powers of discernment cloud her judgment. These two find happiness by helping each other overcome his/her pride. Outside of Elizabeth and Darcy, however, Austen seems pessimistic about the human ability to conquer this character flaw. A slew of secondary characters, like Mrs. Bennet, Lady Catherine, Mr. Collins, and Caroline Bingley, remain deluded by personal pride throughout the novel. A. Walton Litz comments, "in *Pride and Prejudice* one cannot equate Darcy with Pride, or Elizabeth with Prejudice; Darcy's pride of place is founded on social prejudice, while

Elizabeth's initial prejudice against him is rooted in pride of her own quick perceptions." Ultimately, both characters' egos drive them towards personal prejudice. Darcy has been taught to scorn anyone outside his own social circle and must overcome his prejudice in order to endear himself to Elizabeth. Similarly, Elizabeth's excessive pride in her discernment leads her to write Darcy off too quickly. Ultimately, they find happiness by recognizing the barriers that prejudice creates.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 5

Give Reasons for the Following Statements:

- a) Darcy's pride is based on social prejudice.
- b) Elizabeth writes off Darcy.
- c) The title is appropriate.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

The novel, set in a county town, addresses the most pressing issue of most families which is the finding of good husbands for their daughters. Delineating each character with an eye for detail, Jane Austen presents a realistic picture of that section of society into which she was born and lived. Her sense of humour and irony pervades the entire novel.

3.7 KEY WORDS

Solitude	the state or situation of being alone, a lonely or uninhabited place
Reverie	a state of being pleasantly lost in one's thoughts; a daydream.
Slovenly	(especially of a person or their appearance) untidy and dirty.
Idyll	an extremely happy, peaceful,
Penetrating	able to make a way through or into something., pungent, pervasive
Bequest	legacy, inheritance
Dismayed	cause (someone) to feel concern and distress.
Repelled	drive or force (an attack or attacker) back or away.

3.8 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. David Cecil: Jane Austen
2. Arnold Kettle: An Introduction to the English Novel
3. Andrew Wright: Jane Austen's Novels : A Study in Structure

3.9 REFERENCES

1. *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) (English)
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dYv5u6v55Y>
3. *Pride and Prejudice* (Hindi)
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6cs4hUxSAC>

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 6

Answer the following questions in detail.

- 1) Write a critical note on Jane Austen as a Novelist.
- 2) Write the Summary of *Pride and Prejudice*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 7

Write short notes.

1. Jane Austen's First title for the novel was 'First Impressions' what does it signify explain it with the justification of the title *Pride and Prejudice*.
2. Discuss Influence of the age on Jane Austen's Work.

ANSWERS

Check your Progress 1

- a) Elizabethan Age b) education c) Georgian era

Check your Progress 2

1-b, 2-c, 3-d, 4-a

Check your Progress 3

1-False, 2-True, 3- True, 4-False, 5-True