



2010 Suggestions for Teaching *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
Adapted for the stage by Joseph Hanreddy and J.R Sullivan

Before seeing/reading the play

1. The original title of the book *Pride and Prejudice* was *First Impressions*. To what extent do first impressions influence your assessment of another person? How do you judge someone when you first meet him or her? In your opinion, what are some things that help to make a good first impression? What are some things that make a bad first impression? To what extent do you allow other people's first impressions (either good or bad) to influence you? Why or why not are first impressions always accurate or reliable?
2. Research the life and work of Jane Austen. List some of the major events in Jane Austen's life. List some of the major themes in her work. What were some of the impressions Jane Austen had of the society in which she lived? These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janelife.html#life1a>
http://www.jasna.org/info/about_austen.html
<http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/austenbio.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Austen
3. *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813, during the Regency Era in England (roughly between 1790 and 1837.) This era is also referred to as "The Age of Elegance". What events were taking place about that time? Be sure to include intellectual, social and artistic occurrences as well as politics and wars. These and other web sites provide information:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Regency
<http://www.gardnermysteries.com/index-regency.html>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1813>

4. Research the roles of men and women during the Regency Era in the British gentry, (the British upper class) as well as proper etiquette. How did women obtain status during the Regency Era? How did men? What did virtue mean during this period? What did honor mean? What behavior was expected of a lady? Of a gentleman? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.annemace.net/sample_websites/WOODARD%20M5%20Austen%20web%20project/html/time_period_culture.html

<http://www.regency.getifa.com/polite.html>

<http://www.janeausten.co.uk/magazine/page.ihtml?pid=625&step=4>

5. Research marriage and marriage law during the Regency Era in England. How important was it to be married legally? What was at stake? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_Act_1753

<http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~awoodley/regency/legalwomen.html>

6. In the Regency Era, what is a woman's reputation based upon? How can she lose her reputation? What are the consequences of losing her reputation? Who, besides the woman herself, suffers? Answer the same questions for a man. Comment on the disparities.

7. Research the leisure activities people engaged in during the Regency Era. What were the attitudes regarding work? What leisure options were available to women of the upper classes? What career options? What leisure options were available to men of the upper classes? What career options? This and other websites provide information:

<http://emilyhendrickson.net/regency/regency-crafts-and-pastimes/>

8. Dances during the Regency Era were popular places for social gathering. How did men and women interact during these dances? What sort of music was played? How do the dances of the Regency Era compare with the dances of today? These and other websites provide information:

<http://www.janeausten.co.uk/magazine/page.ihtml?pid=457&step=4>

<http://www.britainexpress.com/History/regency-dances.htm>

9. After “coming out”, young women were allowed to be courted by men. Research the process of “coming out” for young women and courtship. These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/mansfout.html>
<http://www.janeausten.co.uk/magazine/page.ihtml?pid=626&step=4>

10. Research inheritance law for British gentry in England in the 19th century. Define entail. These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/pptopic2.html#entail>
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/entail.aspx>
<http://www.janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2009/01/14/the-regency-estate-how-it-was-apportioned/>

11. Define pride. What is the difference between pride and vanity? When can pride be justified? When can pride be helpful? When can it be hurtful? What qualities and accomplishments in yourself are you proud of? In others? Why?

12. What is the origin of the word *prejudice*? What is the common definition? When can a prejudice be a positive thing? When negative? Name some of your personally held prejudices. What are their causes? Describe occasions when you have been the object of prejudice. This and other websites provide information:
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prejudice>

13. What is irony? Find examples of irony in *Pride and Prejudice* if you have read it, or in other novels, movies, plays and TV shows. Be sure to distinguish between irony and sarcasm. These and other websites provide information:
<http://www.examples-help.org.uk/irony.htm>
<http://www.isitironic.com/definition.htm>

Other Resources

Plays, Movies, TV

Pride and Prejudice, (1940) with Laurence Olivier

Pride and Prejudice, (1980) BBC

Pride and Prejudice, (1996) A&E

Bridget Jones's Diary, (2001)

Pride and Prejudice (2005) directed by Joe Wright

Books

Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen

Our Tempestuous Day, A History of Regency England, Carolly Erickson

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist-The Facts of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England, Daniel Pool

Jane Austen: The World of Her Novels, Deirdre Le Faye

Jane Austen and the Theatre, Penny Gay

After seeing/reading the play

1. After seeing the play, how do you feel that dramatizing the novel contributes to the story of *Pride and Prejudice*? What do you gain from seeing the play that you may not get from reading the book? What do you lose?
2. For each of the major characters, list two or three adjectives to describe him or her based on your first impression of them. Then list two or three adjectives describing your lasting impressions of each character. How have they changed from your first impressions? Why do you think the book's original title, *First Impressions*, might have been changed to *Pride and Prejudice*?
3. Refer to your notes on the Regency Era. How essential is this era to the story? What would be gained by setting the story in another time period? What would be lost? Write the story of *Pride and Prejudice* setting it in a different time period.
4. How do music and dance function in the play? How do they contribute to the experience of seeing it?
5. Refer to your notes on Jane Austen's life. How much of Jane Austen's life is present in *Pride and Prejudice*?

6. Identify the families in the play. Who is the head of each? How does the head guide the rest of the family? Describe the dynamics of each family. How are the families connected?
7. What does marriage mean to each of these characters: Mr. Bennet? Mrs. Bennet? Jane? Elizabeth? Lydia? Caroline Bingley? Mr. Darcy? Charlotte? Mr. Collins? George Wickham? Lady Catherine? What do their attitudes reveal to you about each of them? With which attitudes do you agree? With which do you disagree?
8. Refer to your notes on virtue and honor. How important is virtue in the story? How important is honor? How do virtue and honor affect one's reputation? List the characters in the play who are virtuous, who are honorable and who are neither. Citing examples, explain why.
9. One of the play's themes is appearance versus reality. Consider these characters: Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy, Jane, Mr. Wickham, Charlotte. How does each appear initially? How is each misunderstood because of appearance? In each case, what events reveal who she or he truly is?
10. What is Elizabeth's first impression of Mr. Darcy? What is Mr. Darcy's first impression of Elizabeth? How might you justify their first impressions of each other?
11. What does Elizabeth have to be proud of? In what instances does her pride serve her? When does it stand in her way? Answer the same questions for Mr. Darcy. Name other characters in the play that are proud. What causes their pride, and in each case how is it just or unjust? Answer the same questions regarding prejudice.
12. In a letter, Jane Austen wrote, "Pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked." Choose three characters (other than Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy) and describe their virtues and their imperfections.
13. Refer to your notes on etiquette for women during the Regency Era. At the first dance in the play, why does Elizabeth insist to Mr. Darcy that she has not moved to beg for a dance? Why is it important for her not to have seemed to do so?

14. Refer to your research on marriage laws and entail. On Mr. Bennet's death, what would happen to Mrs. Bennet and her daughters if none of the girls were married? What alternatives to marriage would be available to them in their financial and social circumstances? Aside from economic security, why else might Mrs. Bennet be so intent to have her daughters make a good match? What methods does she employ to make this happen?
15. Caroline Bingley and Mr. Darcy both try to circumvent a union between Mr. Bingley and Jane. What does each hope to gain by thwarting the match? Make a chart comparing and contrasting Jane and Mr. Bingley's courtship to Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's. In what ways are their courtships similar? In what ways are they different?
16. Why does Charlotte accept Mr. Collins's proposal? What does she gain by marrying him? What does she lose? How does she accommodate his shortcomings? What other choices are available to her? Make an argument defending Charlotte's actions. Make an argument against them. Write a short explanation of why or why not you would marry Mr. Collins if you were in Charlotte's position.
17. Compare the proposals made by Elizabeth's two suitors, Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy. What prompts Mr. Collins to propose? What benefits can he offer Elizabeth? Why does she turn him down? What benefits does Mr. Darcy offer Elizabeth? Why does she turn him down the first time and what makes her accept his proposal the second time?
18. Chart Elizabeth's view of Darcy, from initially disliking him to coming to love him. How much does her view change because of her own self awareness? How much because of changes in his behavior? What factors bring about these changes? Now chart Darcy's view of Elizabeth and answer the same questions.
19. What role does gossip play in *Pride and Prejudice*? What role do letters play? Identify instances of gossip in the play. Who gossips to whom and why? Identify the letters in the play. Who writes to whom and why? How do these forms of communication complicate incidents and relationships between characters? How do they help clarify them?

20. Put the characters in order according to his or her status and explain why you ranked them the way you did. List the characters that are attracted to someone whose status is similar to their own. List the characters that are attracted to someone whose status is different from their own. Note the marriages comprised of couples with different status. What happens to the person with the lower status in the marriage? What happens to the person with the higher? How does gender affect this?
21. Refer to your notes on marriage law during the Regency Era. Why is Lydia's elopement with Wickham seen as such a scandal? What danger threatens the Bennet family as long as Lydia and Wickham are not married? Why does their marriage change that?
22. What is the relationship of Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Burgh? What is the attitude of each toward the other?
23. Compare Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine. How does each behave in social situations? How does each regard her place in society? How does each regard her obligation to steer the lives of others? Compare the tact and sensitivity displayed by each.
24. The qualities in the play's (and novel's) title, pride and prejudice, are generally attributed to Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Consider the other pairings: Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, Jane and Bingley, Charlotte and Mr. Collins, Lydia and Wickham—as well as the failed pairings: Elizabeth and Mr. Collins, Caroline Bingley and Mr. Darcy, Wickham and Mary King, Wickham and Georgiana Darcy. Identify qualities that distinguish each of these couples—in the last instance, for example, one possibility would be “Self-Interest and Naïveté.”
25. Which characters make physical journeys in the play? Where does each go? For what purpose? How is the story moved forward by each journey?
26. What does Rosings represent? What does it mean to Lady Catherine? To Mr. Collins? To Mr. Darcy? To Elizabeth? What does Pemberley represent? What does it mean to Mr. Darcy? To Elizabeth?

27. Coincidences play a large role in bringing Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy together. List the coincidences. How does each change their relationship?
28. In the play, Mr. Darcy says to Mr. Bingley, "...It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." Explain what is ironic about this statement when uttered by Mr. Darcy. What would be the effect if it was spoken by Elizabeth? By Mrs. Bennet?
29. List the marriages in *Pride and Prejudice*, those that exist as the play begins, those that take place during the action and those that are promised as the play ends. Taking into account both emotions and finances, describe what brings each of the couples together. Which couples are likely to get along reasonably well after the play's end and why? Which seem destined for trouble and strife? Citing specific examples, explain why. Judging from the play, what factors does Jane Austen believe can bring about a good and happy marriage? What do you think it takes to have a good marriage?

Members of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Education and Publications departments—Amina Henry, Hilary Tate and Sarah Langan—created the "Suggestions for Teaching *Pride and Prejudice*."

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