

Mastering Literary Analysis
Class 10 - The Novel: *Pride & Prejudice*, Part III

Readings:

- *Pride and Prejudice*, through page 210 (Chapter L)
- "Introduction: The Comic Terrain" by Louise Cowan

Pre-Class Assignment (be sure to do this after you read through the lesson):

- As usual, bring to class three questions: a first level question, a second level question, and a third level question.
- Reading Questions:
 - Reflecting back on this reading and the rest of the novel, do the members of the Bennet family have anything in common? They seem so very different.
 - Take a look at the description of the Pemberley estate on page 163. This is a very 19th century description of what constitutes good taste. What are the elements here that come together to create aesthetic beauty? Are these elements present elsewhere in the novel?
 - Why does Elizabeth consider the praise of an intelligent servant (Mrs. Reynolds) so valuable?
 - Continue to pay attention to Elizabeth's feelings towards Mr. Darcy. What are the stages of her falling in love with him?
 - Page 193 - Why is Elizabeth ashamed of Mary's moralizing about Lydia?
 - Does Mr. Bennet learn from Lydia's escapade? Does he change? Why or why not?

Lesson/Discussion:

- ***Pride and Prejudice* Essay Prompt** - You have not yet finished reading the book, so you are not yet in a position to complete the process outlined below. This week, please study the prompt carefully and read through the process which you will begin next week after you finish the book. Do feel free to take time brainstorming how the prompt applies to what you have already read and find quotes or scenes which speak to the prompt.
- Your essay prompt is taken from a past ELA30 exam. This prompt is probably very different from other prompts that you have seen previously, and may not immediately relate to the novel. Your job is to carefully examine the prompt first to understand what its main concerns are and then to see how these concerns may be reflected in the novel. It is the opposite of most essay writing you have probably done at WISDOM for which you probably chose a topic that interested *you*. For the sake of this essay, you must learn to take interest in the novel from the perspective given in the prompt.

Prompt: Discuss the idea(s) developed by the text creator in your chosen text about the nature of motivations that direct an individual's course of action.

The finished paper should be 4-7 pages long.

- **Brainstorming - How to approach a prompt like this:** The process outlined below may seem too time-consuming to use in an actual testing environment, but if you get used to it and make this sort of line of inquiry a habit, it will serve you extremely well. All too often, students feel the press of time and jump too quickly to writing, but if you write before you think, you are unlikely to write anything of interest or depth.
 - First, you need to carefully read the prompt to understand it. Since films and other media are allowed in the ELA30 exam, the prompt will use the language of "text creator," thinking of all media (films, books, comics, etc.) that convey a message as a "text."
 - Dissect the prompt: It may help you to underline the key words and phrases in the prompt. What are they? Mark them. Make sure that you understand what these words mean; define them for yourself. What is a "motivation"? What might be meant by "the nature of motivations"? What is a "course of action"? Spend a few minutes considering these terms.
 - View the book from the lens of the prompt: Now consider how the concerns of the prompt are reflected in the novel. Begin with questions! Here are a few: "What are Elizabeth's motivations? Jane's? Charlotte's? Mr. Collins'? Lydia's? Lady Catherine's? Are their motivations what they think they are? Are these characters sometimes motivated by things outside their control? Are their true motivations sometimes different than what they think motivates them?" The most important questions are always ones of "so what? Why does this matter?" Always push yourself to questions of meaning. Spend some time brainstorming questions.
 - Now, go back and re-read the prompt. Then review the questions you've sketched out. Which ones particularly interest you? Which seem apropos to the main concern of the prompt? Take a few minutes very quickly answering those questions.
 - Next, re-read the prompt again and try to formulate, in a couple of sentences, an answer to the prompt that clearly and bluntly answers the concerns of prompt. You may find that there is some really fascinating question that answers half of the prompt—see how you can turn it to answer the whole prompt. Often students go wrong by not making sure that their essay is actually on topic. It doesn't matter how good your insights are if they are only tangential to what the question is really asking.
 - Now that you have an answer (which will be pared down to a thesis), quickly consider which parts of the book most strongly support your argument. Make sure you do not leave out parts of the book which may seem to contradict your view—a deep analysis of a book is one which takes into account the whole (even though you will never be able to incorporate, obviously, every little part of the book into the final essay). For example, it might be tempting to argue that Austen is arguing that the only good motivation for marriage is love based on compatibility. But what, then, do we do with Charlotte? Does Charlotte have a bad marriage? The reality in the novel seems a little more complicated.
- **Outlining:** Hopefully, at this point, you've got an answer to the prompt and have some places to look for evidence. The next step is to write a "thumbnail outline". Remember that a thumbnail outline is a basic sketch that only includes the most essential parts: the

thesis and supporting claims (sub-theses). Never skip this step, particularly when you are stressed for time.

- Look back at your answer from step 5. How can you say this in one, clear sentence? Spend some time trying to come up with a solid "working thesis"—a thesis which may not be beautiful but says clearly and strongly in one sentence what the central claim of your essay will be. Make sure it is a thesis that matters, that has a "so what?" Remember that a strong essay makes an argument about a book that makes something implicit in the book explicit.
- Now sketch out your supporting points (sub-theses). These are "mini-theses": they directly and clearly support your main thesis and make a strong and clear claim of their own which will require multiple pieces of evidence to prove.
- Order: Consider the order of your supporting points. Where should you begin? Is there an order implied in your thesis? Is that the best order?
- Detailed Outline: You may not have time for this in an exam situation, but you will for an out-of-class essay. In an exam, you should at least sketch out quickly what pieces of evidence you will use in each paragraph. In an exam, summarizing particular events counts as evidence since you typically do not have the book at hand. In an out-of-class essay, you will need to incorporate both summary and (most importantly) quotes. Please write an Oxford-style outline which includes the evidence (quotes) you will use in your essay. Each paragraph should have around three pieces of evidence; it may have two or it may have four, but six pieces of evidence means that the topic of your paragraph is probably too big and one piece almost certainly means the argument is too narrow.
 - Oxford-Style Outline Form Example (you would, of course, fill in the indicated content):

I. Thesis:

II. Body Paragraph 1: Thesis:

A. Quote 1:

B. Quote 2:

C. Quote 3:

D. Quote 4:

III. Body Paragraph 2: Thesis:

A. Quote 1:

B. Quote 2:

C. Quote 3:

IV. Body Paragraph 3: Thesis:

A. Quote 1:

B. Quote 2:

- You do not necessarily need to include notes for a conclusion, but you are free to do so if you would like. Note that there is nothing magical about three body paragraphs; the number of paragraphs should suit your argument (though again, if you only need two, your thesis is probably not complex enough; if you need eight, you're looking at writing a ten page paper, and that may not be what your teacher requested.)

- Remember that at no point in the essay writing process are your ideas set in stone. If, while you write your Oxford outline, you realize you need to tweak your thesis, do so. If you need to rephrase or completely throw out and alter a sub-thesis, do so.
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Post-Class Assignment:

- You will prepare to write the first draft of your essay next week according to the process outlined in the lesson. You do not need to write anything, but you are strongly encouraged to start brainstorming in preparation for your tutorial so that you know what questions you may have and so that your tutor can help you move forward.