

**Mastering Literary Analysis**  
**Class 8 - The Novel: *Pride & Prejudice***

**Readings:**

- *Pride and Prejudice*, through page 61 (Chapter XVII)
- "*Pride and Prejudice* in its Literary and Historical Context"
- "Revision & Proofreading"

**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:**
  - Read the first paragraph of this novel a few times. Beginnings are essential. Where does Austen choose to begin this novel? What's going on in those first few sentences?
  - The title of this book is, obviously, *Pride and Prejudice*. Take note of direct definitions of these two terms from characters, and also take note of how these definitions line up with actions. What is "pride"? Is all pride bad?
  - Describe Mr. & Mrs. Bennet's relationship with one another and with their children. Appeal to at least three details from the text to support your claims. You needn't quote directly, but you may.
  - What do you think about Charlotte's statement about happiness in marriage on page 14?
  - Why do you think Mr. Darcy starts to take an interest in Elizabeth? Where does this begin?
  - On page 47 at the beginning of the new chapter, the narrator makes direct statements about Mr. Collins' nature by birth versus the way his education and rearing molded him. What do you think Austen is saying in this novel so far about to what extent "nature" versus "nurture" molds human character? Are there other factors as well?
  - Mr. Wickham: Take note of the direct statements of the narrator about him as compared to his words and actions. How do they compare? How do his words compare to his actions?

**Lesson/Discussion:**

- **This week you will begin taking notes in the "Pride and Prejudice" section of your notebook.** Remember the character pages you set up at the beginning of this course. You will use the following pages to take notes in the exact same way as you've been doing throughout the semester: Your reading notes on the left, class notes on the right.
  - **You will use the character pages to keep track of quotes, details, and your own thoughts about each of these characters** (making tabs out of small sticky notes might help you). For each of these characters, your goal is to figure out what makes them "tick," to borrow an old phrase. What motivates them? What is their background? What does Austen want us to notice about them? How do small

moments reveal their moral character? To remind you, those characters are: 1) Elizabeth, 2) Jane, 3) Lydia, 4) Other Bennett Family Members, 5) Mr. Bingley, 6) Mr. Darcy, 7) Mr. Wickham, 8) Charlotte, 9) Mr. Collins, 10) Mr. Wickham, 11) Mr. & Mrs. Gardiner

- **Tips for reading *Pride and Prejudice*:**

- As you read this novel, always ask yourself the following questions: 1) How does this moment further the plot? 2) If this moment/scene does *not* seem to obviously further the plot, why is it here? This is a novel made almost entirely of small moments. There are a few dramatic revelations, of course, but most of the book consists of the small doings of men and women within their homes and small social circles. They say small, petty things to one another, go on walks, visit their cousins—and that is about all. It is all rather *small*. Rarely does Austen draw attention to the import of events or comment directly. When her narrator does comment, reader beware!
- Think back to Lesson Three and the kinds of narrators. *Pride and Prejudice* is written with a limited omniscient third person narrator: The narrator's view is primarily restricted to Elizabeth's view.
- Learn to distinguish between direct statements of the narrator vs. how a character's speech and actions reveals his or her character. Sometimes the narrator will say things directly about a character, note these, but also take note of how the characters reveal themselves through words and actions.

- **In Media Res** - "In media res" is Latin for (roughly) "in the middle of things." This is an ancient literary technique which survives to this day. If you watch a contemporary movie or TV show, it typically will not begin, "Once upon a time, there was . . ." etc. It will begin with a car chase, or two strange people have a conversation in a cafe, or something else which does not have a background. You know, as the watcher, that the background/context will be supplied later. It's a kind of "teaser" to peak your interest and keep you watching. The writer/director are choosing to begin "in media res," in the middle of the action, rather at the beginning.

- *Pride and Prejudice* also begins "in media res"—in the middle of a conversation in the Bennet household. Jane Austen begins here to get you interested in this family and throw you into the middle of the primary "problem": how the Bennet girls will find husbands.

- **Noticing tone**

- **"Tone"** refers to the attitude that a speaker or writer takes towards his subject. We studied tone earlier this semester when we discussed **irony**. Austen uses *lots* of irony in this novel (as do her characters), and if you cannot pick up on a character's tone and use of irony, you will be very lost. For example, if you do not understand that Mr. Bennet generally uses a mocking and ironic tone (that his, his attitude is mocking and ironic) when he talks to/about his wife and daughters, you will miss much. Tone is something that takes a lot of practice to develop an ear for—rather like meter in poetry. As you read this novel, be on the lookout for characters' ironic tones particularly.
- Three types of irony which are all present in *Pride and Prejudice*:
  - Verbal irony

- Verbal irony, you will recall, is when the actual stated words mean the opposite from (or something very different than) the literal meaning of the words ("Good job, Grace," for example, when someone falls, face first, in a mud puddle). Many characters in this novel use verbal irony when they want to say something cutting but appear "nice."
  - Situational irony
    - Situational irony is another kind of irony in which the outcome of a situation is the opposite or completely different from what was expected.
    - One example from *Pride and Prejudice* is when Darcy first sees Elizabeth and says, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*." Of course, she will indeed prove quite tempting.
  - Dramatic irony
    - Dramatic irony is when the audience is aware of the true meaning of a character's words and actions in a way the character is not. The classic example of dramatic irony is from *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus is trying to find out who the murderer of the last king was . . . and the audience realized before he does that he is the man.
- **Figures of speech** - This course will not cover literary tropes and schemes in any great detail, but it is extremely helpful for future literary study to know that they exist. Tropes and schemes are "figures of speech," meaning they are particular arrangements of words or meanings.
  - A "**trope**" is a particular use or twist in the **use and meanings of words**. A trope uses a word in an unusual or unexpected way.
    - Two familiar tropes are simile and irony: "I work like a dog" (simile); "Good job, Grace" (irony).
  - A "**scheme**" is a creative twist on the usual **arrangement of words**.
    - "antimetabole" is a fancy word for a familiar device: repeating words, in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order. Example: "When the **going** gets *tough*, the *tough* gets **going**." Also, "Ask not what your **country** can do for *you*; ask what *you* can do for your **country**."
  - If you would like to learn more about this important element of rhetoric and literature, see these two resources:
    - <https://www.excellence-in-literature.com/figures-speech-schemes-tropes/> - This is a good introduction to tropes and schemes which goes into more detail.
    - <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/> - This is a very fun resource about rhetoric and includes an almost exhaustive dictionary of literary tropes and schemes
  - **Occupatio/Paralipsis** – There is a *lot* of subtle irony in this novel. Remember that verbal irony is when someone says the opposite of what they mean and that dramatic irony is when the audience knows that the character's actions are accomplishing the opposite of their intentions.

- One important form of irony to identify is **occupatio** (also called by the Greek name *paralipsis*). **Occupatio** is when someone says that they are not going to say something and . . . they say it anyway. *This happens all the time in public debate*. A candidate for some election might say something like, "I will not mention my opponent's drinking problem and financial conflict of interest." Well, you just did.
    - Another example from *Moby Dick*: "We will not speak of all Queequeg's peculiarities here; how he eschewed coffee and hot rolls, and applied his undivided attention to beefsteaks, done rare."  
—*Moby Dick*, "Breakfast"
  - In *Pride and Prejudice*, occupatio is one tool you can use to notice what a character is *really* up to. For example, on page 53, Wickham says, "I have no right to give *my* opinion. . . as to his being agreeable or otherwise. I am not qualified to form one. . . . But I believe your opinion of him would in general astonish. . . ." Here, he begins by establishing an "ethos" (an authority) for himself by being rather humble and admitting his partiality. He says that he has no right to give his opinion . . . and then he gives it. Keep an eye out for characters qualifying or discounting their own opinions in order to give those opinions more weight or to excuse themselves.
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**Post-Class Assignment:**

- This week, you will revise your essay from last week. Please follow the process from the handout carefully. Revision is not a superficial process of changing a few things; it means fundamentally reassessing your work and improving it.