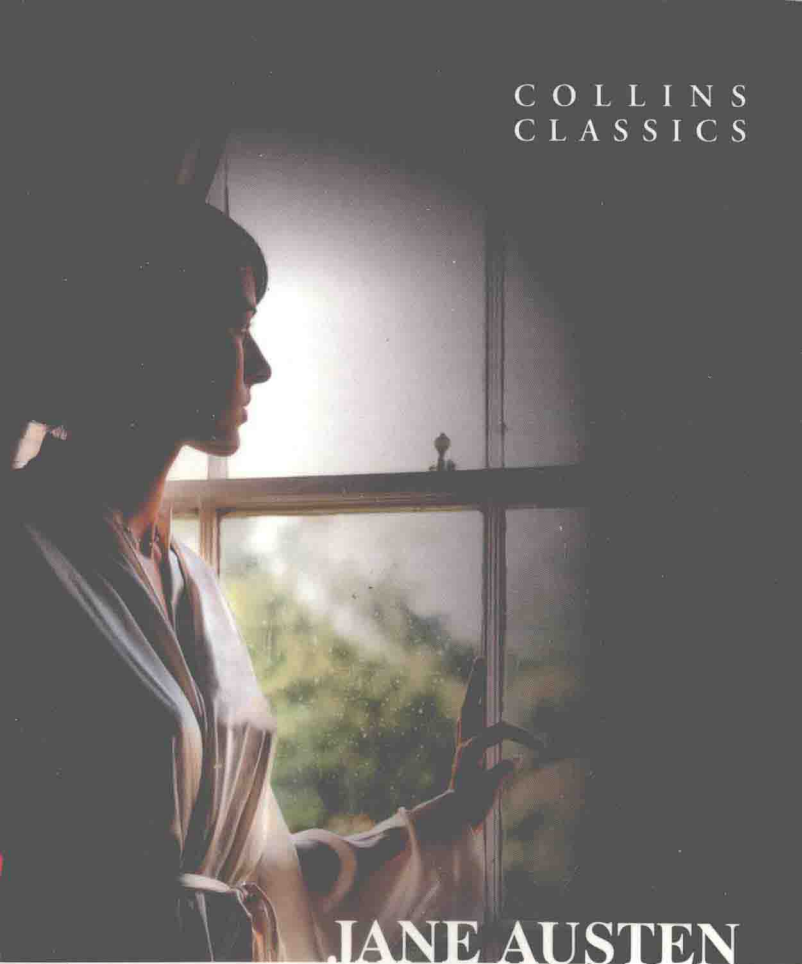


COLLINS
CLASSICS



JANE AUSTEN
Pride and Prejudice

**PRIDE
AND
PREJUDICE**

Jane Austen

COLLINS
CLASSICS

Harper Press
An imprint of HarperCollins *Publishers*
77-85 Fulham Palace Road
Hammersmith
London W6 8JB

This edition published 2010

Jane Austen asserts the moral right to be
identified as the author of this work

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-0-00-735077-3

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc



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Classic Literature: Words and Phrases adapted from
Collins English Dictionary

Typesetting in Kalix by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,
Grangemouth, Stirlingshire

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History of Collins

In 1819, Millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon*. Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*, however it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly 'Victorian' in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication of travel books, scientific books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of 'books for the millions' was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a million

in their year of publication. In the same year, The Everyman's Library was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments, plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

Life & Times

About the Author

Jane Austen was born into a moderately wealthy family in 1775, during the reign of King George III. Her family was typically large as was customary at the time in order to counter the possibility of early death by producing many offspring. She had five older brothers, one older sister and a younger brother.

Austen was born in a small village in Hampshire, England, named Steventon, where she lived until 1800. She would read out her early attempts at novels to her family and refine and hone the words based on their response. In this way she completed first draft manuscripts of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, although they were originally titled *Elinor and Marriane* and *First Impressions* respectively. She also wrote the manuscript for *Northanger Abbey* in this way, which was initially given the name *Susan*.

In 1800 Austen's father, William George Austen, decided to move to the City of Bath. At that time, it was normal for unmarried daughters to live with their parents, so Austen found herself moving to a Georgian city, having previously known only a rural life. Despite her association with Bath, it seems that urban society did not really suit Austen, and her output as a writer fell away for the next few years, until she returned to the countryside. Austen's father died in 1805, leaving the family financially insecure. Austen's mother, Cassandra, took Jane and her sister, Elizabeth Cassandra, to Southampton in 1806, where they were based with her brother Frank and his wife. Finally, in 1809, Austen's brother Edward offered the three of them a cottage in his grounds at Chawton, another village in Hampshire.

With new found security and a more settled lifestyle, Austen found herself able to write once more. By 1811 she had become a published novelist with *Sense and Sensibility*. There followed, *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813, *Mansfield Park* in 1814 and *Emma* in 1815. At about this time Austen began to feel unwell and suffered from

a progressive disease, which saw her health decline. She continued to write but became increasingly infirm until she succumbed in December 1817 at the age of 41. Her final novel, *Persuasion*, was published posthumously along with *Northanger Abbey* shortly after her death. There is also a seventh, incomplete, manuscript named *The Brothers* or *Sanditon*, which she started to write in 1817, even though her health was deteriorating

There has been considerable speculation about the nature of Austen's illness. The two most likely culprits are Addison's disease and Hodgkin's lymphoma, both of which were described and named later in the 19th century. It is known that she suffered bouts of fatigue and difficulty in walking. She eventually died in the City of Winchester and was laid to rest in Winchester Cathedral.

The wind of change was so strong following Austen's short life that her novels fell out of favour quickly with the onset of the Victorian era. Her books continued to sell, but they were not considered fashionable, as people gravitated towards the gritty realism portrayed by Dickens, Hardy and their contemporaries. The public wanted to read about characters exposed to the harshness of life without privilege, as opposed to Austen's characters whom were generally rather comfortable and concerned themselves with matters of little real consequence.

Austen was actually using elements of her own, relatively comfortable life to weave her tales of fiction, so to her they were genuine situations and circumstances worthy of analysis. She also never married, so her angst was focussed on pondering matters of the heart. In many ways she lived vicariously through her characters, allowing them to experience the intimacies that she craved, but that eluded her all of her life.

Austen's Literary Genre

It is interesting to note that many contemporary authors choose to give their novels period settings as their plots often rely on rules of formality and etiquette and characters must behave in a certain way to ensure that a narrative will work. Jane Austen was living and

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writing in a time when such rules were part of polite society and can be seen as the originator of this plot device. It is fair to say that societal rules reached their zenith of priggishness during Austen's lifetime. It was all about defining oneself in terms of class and wealth, so that there were very clear guidelines about what one should and should not do and how one should behave.

Austen was herself born into a family at the lower end of the English hierarchical stratum known as the gentry, which was situated beneath the nobility. In modern terms she would have been considered well educated and privileged. This gave Austen a certain vantage point as a writer, for she rubbed shoulders with people both above and below her on the social scale.

Austen was a humanist and made it abundantly clear that she thought little of the notion that some people were better or worse than others simply through accident of birth. In essence, her literature is defined by her desire to express that it is what goes on inside a person that matters above and beyond other concerns. Austen makes theatre of the absurdities that she observes in polite society because she has an innate cynicism, but she always avoids being vitriolic in her prose.

It is this delicate balancing act between crafting an engaging narrative and passing comment with subtle allegory that made her novels a success then and now. Austen expertly translates her criticism of the human condition into witty and insightful prose. Through her satirical eye, the characters become relevant to the reader as they recognise elements or traits of themselves or others in the disparate personalities. Although such psychological connectives were more pertinent in society at the time that Austen was writing, they still resonate today because people frequently gravitate towards societal rules, albeit in a less formalized way. Therefore, it is still easy to relate to Austen's stories through the experiences of her characters and the situations and events that arise in her novels are timeless and emotive.

Austen was not, however a romanticist. She was at the cutting edge of English literary fiction, just as the artist Joseph Turner was at the cutting edge of English painting. Both were born in the same

year, 1775, and both used their creativity to document the modern world they knew. Austen is often described as a sentimental novelist, because her themes are primarily about the exploration of human feeling and emotion. This was a concept relatively new to society at the time, not least because everyday life hadn't yet afforded people the luxury of the leisure time necessary for such self-indulgences. Indeed, during Austen's lifetime it was still only the wealthy with time on their hands. Most were far more concerned with the hardships and realities of making a living and raising a family. That is largely why Austen's novels focus so much on the upper echelons of society, as only the idle rich were not preoccupied by such matters of survival.

Austen's life was short, but it spanned the turn of the 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution was in full spate. After her death, English literature made way for a new genre, realism, which saw novelists using their prose to illustrate the lives of the common man, woman and child who struggled to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, rife with disease, poverty, injustice, criminality and urbanization. Had Austen lived longer perhaps she would have responded and adapted to these new trends.

PRIDE AND
PREJUDICE

VOLUME ONE

CHAPTER 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

'My dear Mr Bennet,' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'

Mr Bennet replied that he had not.

'But it is,' returned she; 'for Mrs Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.'

Mr Bennet made no answer.

'Do not you want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife impatiently.

'*You* want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.'

This was invitation enough.

'Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.'

‘What is his name?’

‘Bingley.’

‘Is he married or single?’

‘Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!’

‘How so? how can it affect them?’

‘My dear Mr Bennet,’ replied his wife, ‘how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.’

‘Is that his design in settling here?’

‘Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.’

‘I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for, as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr Bingley might like you the best of the party.’

‘My dear, you flatter me. I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.’

‘In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of.’

‘But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.’

‘It is more than I engage for, I assure you.’

‘But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general you know they visit no new comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for *us* to visit him, if you do not.’

‘You are over scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.’

‘I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better

than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference.'

'They have none of them much to recommend them,' replied he; 'they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.'

'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.'

'Ah! you do not know what I suffer.'

'But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood.'

'It will be no use to us if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them.'

'Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty I will visit them all.'

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 develope. 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.

CHAPTER 2

Mr Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid, she had no knowledge of it. It was then disclosed in the following manner. Observing his second daughter employed in trimming a hat, he suddenly addressed her with,

‘I hope Mr Bingley will like it, Lizzy.’

‘We are not in a way to know *what* Mr Bingley likes,’ said her mother resentfully, ‘since we are not to visit.’

‘But you forget, mamma,’ said Elizabeth, ‘that we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs Long has promised to introduce him.’

‘I do not believe Mrs Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her.’

‘No more have I,’ said Mr Bennet; ‘and I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you.’

Mrs Bennet deigned not to make any reply; but unable to contain herself, began scolding one of her daughters.

‘Don’t keep coughing so, Kitty, for heaven’s sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces.’

‘Kitty has no discretion in her coughs,’ said her father; ‘she times them ill.’

'I do not cough for my own amusement,' replied Kitty fretfully.

'When is your next ball to be, Lizzy?'

'To-morrow fortnight.'

'Aye, so it is,' cried her mother, 'and Mrs Long does not come back till the day before; so it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself.'

'Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr Bingley to *her*.'

'Impossible, Mr Bennet, impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?'

'I honour your circumspection. A fortnight's acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if *we* do not venture, somebody else will; and after all, Mrs Long and her nieces must stand their chance; and therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness, if you decline the office, I will take it on myself.'

The girls stared at their father. Mrs Bennet said only, 'Nonsense, nonsense!'

'What can be the meaning of that emphatic exclamation?' cried he. 'Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you *there*. What say you, Mary? for you are a young lady of deep reflection I know, and read great books, and make extracts.'

Mary wished to say something very sensible, but knew not how.

'While Mary is adjusting her ideas,' he continued, 'let us return to Mr Bingley.'

'I am sick of Mr Bingley,' cried his wife.

'I am sorry to hear *that*; but why did not you tell me so before? If I had known as much this morning, I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now.'

The astonishment of the ladies was just what he wished; that of Mrs Bennet perhaps surpassing the rest; though when the first tumult of joy was over, she began to declare that it was what she had expected all the while.

‘How good it was in you, my dear Mr Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved our girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance. Well, how pleased I am! and it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning, and never said a word about it till now.’

‘Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you chuse,’ said Mr Bennet; and, as he spoke, he left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife.

‘What an excellent father you have, girls,’ said she, when the door was shut. ‘I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me either, for that matter. At our time of life, it is not so pleasant I can tell you, to be making new acquaintance every day; but for your sakes, we would do any thing. Lydia, my love, though you *are* the youngest, I dare say Mr Bingley will dance with you at the next ball.’

‘Oh!’ said Lydia stoutly, ‘I am not afraid; for though I *am* the youngest, I’m the tallest.’

The rest of the evening was spent in conjecturing how soon he would return Mr Bennet’s visit, and determining when they should ask him to dinner.