

Pride and Prejudice (Teen Classics)

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<blockquote>

"Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her."

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With all the forces of the world conspiring to keep Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet apart, how will fate manage to bring them together? It certainly won't be easy if they're fighting it every step of the way. But theirs is a love that was meant to be, despite all the odds against them.

One of the most captivating love stories of all time, Jane Austen's enduring masterpiece is beloved by generation after generation. Beautifully presented for a modern teen audience, this is the must-have edition of a timeless classic.

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

Next to the exhortation at the beginning of *Moby-Dick*, "Call me Ishmael," the first sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* must be among the most quoted in literature. And certainly what Melville did for whaling Austen does for marriage--tracing the intricacies (not to mention the economics) of 19th-century British mating rituals with a sure hand and an unblinking eye. As usual, Austen trains her sights on a country village and a few families--in this case, the Bennets, the Philips, and the Lucases. Into their midst comes Mr. Bingley, a single man of good fortune, and his friend, Mr. Darcy, who is even richer. Mrs. Bennet, who married above her station, sees their arrival as an opportunity to marry off at least one of her five daughters. Bingley is complaisant and easily charmed by the eldest Bennet girl, Jane; Darcy, however, is harder to please. Put off by Mrs. Bennet's vulgarity and the untoward behavior of the three younger daughters, he is unable to see the true worth of the older girls, Jane and Elizabeth. His excessive pride offends Lizzy, who is more than willing to believe the worst that other people have to say of him; when George Wickham, a soldier stationed in the village, does indeed have a discreditable tale to tell, his words fall on fertile ground.

Having set up the central misunderstanding of the novel, Austen then brings in her cast of fascinating secondary characters: Mr. Collins, the sycophantic clergyman who aspires to Lizzy's hand but settles for her best friend, Charlotte, instead; Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr. Darcy's insufferably snobbish aunt; and the Gardiners, Jane and Elizabeth's low-born but noble-hearted aunt and uncle. Some of Austen's best comedy comes from mixing and matching these representatives of different classes and economic strata, demonstrating the hypocrisy at the heart of so many social interactions. And though the novel is rife with romantic misunderstandings, rejected proposals, disastrous elopements, and a requisite happy ending for those who deserve one, Austen never gets so carried away with the romance that she loses sight of the hard economic realities of 19th-century matrimonial maneuvering. Good marriages for penniless girls such as the Bennets are hard to come by, and even Lizzy, who comes to sincerely value Mr. Darcy, remarks when asked when she first began to love him: "It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley." She may be joking, but there's more than a little truth to her sentiment, as well. Jane Austen considered Elizabeth Bennet "as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print".

Readers of *Pride and Prejudice* would be hard-pressed to disagree. --Alix Wilber
Cambridge Literature is a series of literary texts edited for study by students aged 14-18 in English-speaking classrooms. It will include novels, poetry, short stories, essays, travel-writing and other non-fiction. The series will be extensive and open-ended, and will provide school students with a range of edited texts taken from a wide geographical spread. It will include writing in English from various genres and differing times. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen is edited by Richard Bain, Vice Principal, North Shields Community Technology College, North Shields.

Other Books

Sense and Sensibility, Part of Penguin's beautiful hardback Clothbound Classics series, designed by the award-winning Coralie Bickford-Smith, these delectable and collectible editions are bound in high-quality colourful, tactile cloth with foil stamped into the design. Marianne Dashwood wears her heart on her sleeve, and when she falls in love with the dashing but unsuitable John Willoughby she ignores her sister Elinor's warning that her impulsive behaviour leaves her open to gossip and innuendo. Meanwhile Elinor, always sensitive to social convention, is struggling to conceal her own romantic disappointment, even from those closest to her. Through their parallel experience of love - and its threatened loss - the sisters learn that sense must mix with sensibility if they are to find personal happiness in a society where status and money govern the rules of love.

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