

Notes for book groups

Pride & Prejudice is a book that many people first read at school and they remember it as a love story - indeed, P. D. James describes Jane Austen's stories as "Mills & Boon written by a genius". However when we later return to the story it is to find many different themes with love perhaps being less important than money and power. Below are some questions which we hope will enable you to explore the many facets of this book.

1. There are hundreds of editions of *Pride & Prejudice*. Look at your own copy and compare it with others. Does the way the book is presented influence how you feel about it? If so, why? Is it the picture, the typeface, the layout, the feel of the book? How important is presentation?
2. Would we really want Mr Darcy?
3. What do we learn about marriage from couples in the book (e.g. Mr & Mrs Bennet, Mr & Mrs Gardiner, Mr & Mrs Collins, Mr & Mrs Wickham, Mr & Mrs Hurst)?
4. What do we learn about relationships between siblings in the book (e.g. Bennet girls, Mr Darcy & Georgiana, Mr Bingley and his sisters, Mrs Bennet and her sisters)?
5. What roles do women have in society according to the book?
6. Is Mrs Bennet successful?
7. What role does scenery have in the story?
8. Why is the opening line so famous?
9. If you were Charlotte Lucas, would you have married Mr Collins?
10. Do all women see themselves as Elizabeth Bennet?
11. Is Mr Bennet a good father to all his daughters?
12. Is there any sex in *Pride & Prejudice*?
13. What do you consider to be the central theme of the book?
14. The original title for the book was *First Impressions*. What are the important first impressions? Which title do you prefer and why?
15. How much are we influenced by Elizabeth Bennet's view of people in the book?
16. Who do you think is the most comedic character? Do we laugh with them or at them?
17. How much do films and TV adaptations influence our perception of the characters in the book? Discuss whether you saw a film/TV adaptation or read the book first.
18. How old were you when you first read the book?
19. Would you like to meet any of the characters from the book? If so, whom?
20. What is the role of letters in the narrative?

PRIDE & PREJUDICE

Notes for book groups and societies to enable further exploration of the novel and the world of Jane Austen.



JANE AUSTEN'S
HOUSE MUSEUM

www.prideandprejudice200.org.uk

PRIDE & PREJUDICE

Beyond the Novel Notes for groups and societies

Here are some ideas of activities you could follow in order to further explore the world of *Pride & Prejudice* and of Jane Austen.

1. In *Pride & Prejudice* Jane and her aunt and uncle visit Pemberley as tourists looking round a grand house. Go on a trip to a local stately home and have a discussion afterwards about the differences in life then and now.
2. There are several references to reading in *Pride & Prejudice*. Meet to discuss what books you have enjoyed and have influenced you in your life - remember to include those books you read as a child. This is different from a usual book club as you would all be talking about different books, rather than comparing notes on the same one.
3. Take a walk in the countryside - and consider the similarities and differences that Elizabeth and Jane might find if they took a walk in the English countryside today.
4. There are many references in *Pride & Prejudice* to different skills that an accomplished lady would show. Meet up to share the skills you have - can anyone knit, embroider, paint, do calligraphy etc and would they be happy to share their skills?



5. Meet to do one of the skills together. In *Pride & Prejudice* the girls would sit together to do their sewing; meet at someone's house, or in a park on a sunny day. They would have discussed the latest local and national/international news whilst they were working together; you could too.
6. Find out about the plants and herbs that would have been around at this time and how the herbs were used. You could also research the recipes that were in use at the time and even have a go at making them - there are many modern interpretations on the internet.
7. Ladies and gentlemen of the time would have learnt to speak foreign languages. Find someone who speaks another language who would teach you a few phrases. If you cannot find someone, explore your local library and see if they have some language tapes you could use.

8. Letters were the only means of communicating with people who were far away in Jane Austen's time. Write a letter to someone - perhaps you could read your letters aloud in a group (as long as they are not too personal). You could even write letters to someone from the past.
9. When Jane Austen first received her copy of *Pride & Prejudice* she and Mrs Austen read it aloud to a neighbour, Miss Benn. Choose a novel and read it aloud together.
10. Take afternoon tea together. If you each arranged to bring one thing it would not be much work for anyone. Tea, at the time of Jane Austen, was a very expensive item (it cost more than gold!) and so taking tea was a very special event.

