



Pride/Prejudice

By Ann Herendeen
ISBN: 9780061966279

Introduction

Jane Austen's most popular novel has enthralled generations of readers, as proud Mr. Darcy meets his match in witty and prejudiced Elizabeth Bennet. But only now can the hidden story be told, of the two parallel loves that complicate this ideal romance: Darcy's controlling affection for the gentlemanlike Charles Bingley; and the sympathetic intimacy between Elizabeth and her more practical friend, Charlotte Lucas.

Written in a comparable "bright and sparkling" style, *Pride/Prejudice* "fills the gaps" in Austen's story, daring to imagine the full truth suggested by the original. What is Darcy's real motivation for preventing Bingley's marriage to Elizabeth's beautiful and virtuous sister Jane? How can Darcy reconcile his desire for Elizabeth with his determination to save his friend from a similar entanglement? And what is the disturbing history behind Darcy's tortured relationship with his foster brother, George Wickham?

Now *Pride/Prejudice* brings to light all the buried secrets, weaving a tale of intertwined passions that must be resolved through honesty and forgiveness, the humbling of pride and freedom from prejudice. In this retelling of a classic work, love truly conquers all.

Questions for Discussion

- Pride/Prejudice* is, of course, based on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. If you haven't read Austen's work, can you follow the story in *P/P*? Does it make you want to read Austen's novel to get the complete picture? If you have read Austen's work, does *P/P* make you want to go back and compare the two?
- A book like *P/P* is sometimes called "pastiche," meaning it imitates the style of an earlier work. If you've read any of Austen's novels, do you think the writing style of *P/P* is similar to Austen's? Are there some parts of the text of *P/P* that remind you of Austen's style, while others seem different? Do you think Herendeen was deliberately imitating Austen in some places? Why do you think a writer would or would not want to do that?
- The first version of *Pride and Prejudice* is thought to have been epistolary, a novel in letters (there's no surviving manuscript, so we'll never know for sure). In turning it into third-person narrative, Austen used a lot of dialog and little description, except when necessary, such as with Mr. Darcy's great estate of Pemberley. We learn nothing of people's clothing and little of their appearance, other than Elizabeth's "dark eyes and eyelashes," and that she's smaller than her sister Jane. In *P/P*, Herendeen has continued this style. Do you think this approach makes sense when writing a version of an Austen work? Would specific details of dress and other material culture spoil the timeless feel of the story? What about showing sexual activity? Does this "modernize" the story, or does it add a psychological dimension?
- Austen's novel has a number of characters that we rarely or never see in *P/P*, notably Elizabeth Bennet's parents and younger sisters. But in *P/P* we also meet some new characters who did not exist in Austen's story, such as the members of the Brotherhood of Philander (from Herendeen's first novel, *Phyllida and the Brotherhood of Philander*). How do these omissions and additions change the story? Why do you think Herendeen chose to move the focus away from Elizabeth's family and on to Mr. Darcy's social life in London?
- P/P* is a play on the idea of slash fiction, retelling original stories with same-sex relationships between the characters. The first slash, based on the original *Star Trek* TV show from the 1960s, seemed to arise from a genuine homoerotic subtext within that storyline, whereas some recent slash tries to make unusual or even forced pairings between the characters. How do you feel about the same-sex couples in *P/P*? Do you think they are suggested or supported by Austen's work?
- Some of the sex scenes between the men are relatively explicit, while the sexual relationship between Elizabeth and Charlotte Lucas is only referred to, never shown. Why do you think Herendeen chose to present the men's and women's "passionate friendships" so differently? Do you think this says anything about the ways in which men's and women's sexuality were valued two hundred years ago? Do Elizabeth and Charlotte really believe their relationship is "innocent," as Elizabeth claims in chapter 4?
- In Austen's works, issues of social class, money and property affect every other aspect of life, including love and marriage. In *P/P*, Herendeen portrays Mr. Darcy, the grandson and nephew of an earl, as sexually experienced with both men and women, while Mr. Bingley, the son of a wealthy tradesman, is enjoying his first sexual relationship with Mr. Darcy. Do you think this accurately reflects the ways in which the two men's backgrounds would influence their sexuality?
- In chapter 17 of *P/P*, Mr. Darcy says to Mr. Bingley, "We share the purest form of love, one that can exist solely between men/disinterested love whose only object is its own fulfillment, that looks for no advantage of money or condition." Based on the ideas of question 7, do you think this statement is true for its time? What about today? Do you think Mr. Darcy still believes this by the end of the novel?
- In chapter 16 of *P/P*, we learn from Jane Bennet that Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley make a distinction between two men "loving" each other and a man's "being in love with" a woman (or his wife). Do you think this distinction is valid? Why do you think Jane accepts this idea so easily while Elizabeth scoffs at it? Do you think Elizabeth has accepted it by the end of the story? If not, how does she come to

accept her husband's continuing love for his friend?

10. Herendeen portrays the character of George Wickham, Mr. Darcy's foster brother, as something of a bisexual whore, a man who will go with anyone, man or woman, for material gain. Do you think Wickham has a genuine sexual orientation or preference? When he claims to be in love with Elizabeth, do you find that believable? Is he capable of love? His early life, growing up surrounded by the Darcy wealth, but never to inherit, is given as a possible explanation for his deficiencies of character. Do you accept that? Do you think Mr. Darcy bears some responsibility for the exploitative relationship between them?

About the Author

Ann Herendeen, a native New Yorker and lifelong resident of Brooklyn, received a B.A. in English from Princeton University and an M.L.S. from Pratt Institute. She currently works as a cataloging librarian specializing in natural history. Ann's first novel, *Phyllida and the Brotherhood of Philander*, was published in 2008.