

1. Work in groups and discuss the following questions:

- Is reputation and people's social status critical for you to appreciate them as individuals?
- To what extent are you influenced by first impressions? Explain giving examples.
- Which characteristics make a person 'significant', in your opinion?



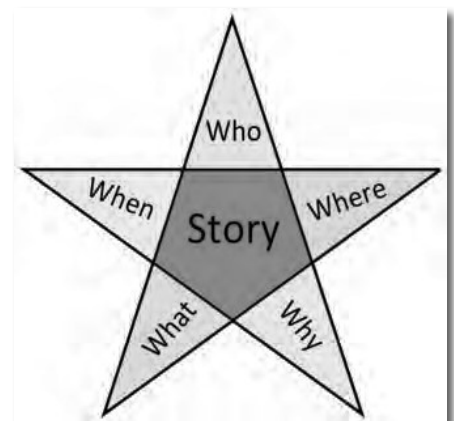
2. Read the plot summary of the novel and work in pairs to do the tasks below.

Mr Bennet is an English gentleman who lives in Hertfordshire with his overbearing wife and their five daughters; beautiful Jane, clever Elizabeth, bookish Mary, immature Kitty and wild Lydia. The family's future happiness and security depend on the girls' marriages since their house, after Mr Bennet's death, will be inherited by a distant cousin they have never met before. They all lead an ordinary life until the arrival of a rich gentleman in their neighbourhood. Mr Bingley, who rents a large house in order to spend the summer in the countryside, brings along his sister and his attractive, wealthy and proud friend, Mr Darcy. Love is soon in the air for one of the Bennet

sisters. Yet many trials and tribulations stand between the Bennet sisters and their happiness due to social status and class differences, gossip and scandals.

Pride and Prejudice is a story of romance between the spirited and lovely but poverty-stricken and prejudiced Elizabeth, and the pompous, proud and intriguing aristocrat Mr Darcy. The story charts the emotional development of the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, who learns from her mistakes, regrets having made hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between superficial and essential.

- Who are the main characters? Fill in the graphic organiser with basic information about the story.
- Which of the Bennet daughters seems to play a significant role in the book?
- Who seems to be important to Elizabeth from the beginning of the novel?
- Why do the Bennet sisters have to marry wealthy men?
- Why does Mr Bingley's arrival seem to be important?



# 7 Pride and Prejudice



3. Read the adapted summary of the first chapters of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and work in groups to do the tasks below.

**A.** The news that a wealthy young gentleman named Charles Bingley has rented the manor known as Netherfield Park causes a great stir in the neighbouring village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennet household. The Bennets have five unmarried daughters, and Mrs Bennet, a foolish and fussy gossip, is the sort who agrees with the novel's opening words: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." She sees Bingley's arrival as an opportunity for one of the girls to obtain a wealthy spouse, and she therefore insists that her husband call on the new arrival immediately. The Bennets invite him to dinner shortly afterwards, but he is called away to London. Soon, however, he returns to Netherfield Park with his two sisters, his brother-in-law, and a friend named Darcy.

**B.** Mr Bingley and his guests go to a ball in the nearby town of Meryton. The Bennet sisters attend the ball with their mother. The eldest daughter, Jane, dances twice with Bingley. Within Elizabeth's hearing, Bingley exclaims to Darcy that Jane is "the most beautiful creature" he has ever beheld. Bingley suggests that Darcy dance with Elizabeth, but Darcy refuses, saying, "she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me." He proceeds to declare that he has no interest in women who are "slighted by other men." Elizabeth takes an immediate and understandable dislike to Darcy. Because of Darcy's comments and refusal to dance with anyone not rich and well bred, the neighbourhood takes a similar dislike; on the

other hand, they declare Bingley to be quite "amiable."

**C.** Bingley has inherited a hundred thousand pounds from his father, but for now, in spite of his sisters' complaints, he lives as a tenant. His friendship with Darcy is "steady," despite the contrast in their characters, illustrated in their respective reactions to the Meryton ball. Bingley, cheerful and sociable, has an excellent time and is taken with Jane; Darcy, cleverer but less tactful, finds people dull and even criticizes Jane for smiling too often.

**D.** Bingley's sisters exchange visits with the Bennets and attempt to befriend Elizabeth and Jane. Meanwhile, Bingley continues to pay attention to Jane, and Elizabeth decides that her sister is very much in love with him but conceals it very well. Elizabeth says it is better for a young woman to be patient until she is sure of her feelings.

**E.** Darcy finds himself attracted to Elizabeth. He begins listening to her conversations at parties, much to her surprise. At one party at the Lucas house, Sir William attempts to persuade Elizabeth and Darcy to dance together, but Elizabeth refuses. Shortly afterwards, Darcy tells Bingley's unmarried sister that "Miss Elizabeth Bennet" is now the object of his admiration.

**F.** Miss Bingley spends the following night in a similar fashion, trying to attract Darcy's attention: first by reading, then by criticizing the foolishness of balls, and finally by walking about the room. Only when she asks Elizabeth to walk with her, however, does Darcy look up, and



then the two women discuss the possibility of finding something in his character to ridicule. He states that his only fault is resentment – “my good opinion once lost is lost forever.” Elizabeth replies that it is hard to laugh at a “propensity to hate everybody,” and Miss Bingley, observing Elizabeth monopolizing Darcy’s attention once again, insists on music. The next morning, Elizabeth writes to her mother to say that she and Jane are ready to return home.

**G.** In the evening, Elizabeth observes Miss Bingley piling compliments upon Darcy as he writes to his sister. The conversation turns to Bingley’s style of letter writing and then to Bingley’s impetuous behaviour, which entangles Elizabeth and Darcy in an argument over the virtues of accepting the advice of friends. Afterwards, Miss Bingley plays “a lively Scotch air” on the pianoforte, and Elizabeth again refuses to dance with Darcy. Her refusal only increases his admiration, and he considers that “were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger.” Miss Bingley, observing his attraction, becomes jealous and spends the following day making fun of Elizabeth’s family, inviting Darcy to imagine them connected to his proud and respectable line.



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