Pride and Prejudice

...And Timed Write 1
Claims about characters

Make your central claim about the author’s underlying statement about life, rather than simply making a claim about the way the characters act. Remember, include the “so what?” aspect in your thesis!
Jane Austen

(1775-1817)

• Her family was well-connected but not wealthy. (Her own social status, being relatively poor and unmarried, was precarious.)

• *P&P* was published in January 1813 and six months later, had become “the fashionable novel”.

• Austen’s novels were published anonymously until after her death in Bath, England.
Original working title was *First Impressions*. 

Title
Setting

Hertfordshire, London, and Pemberley, all in England at some time during the Napoleonic Wars (1797–1815)
Motifs and symbols

The word “picture” occurs frequently, in multiple senses:

• the sense of conjuring a mental image--derived from impressions

• painted portraits (which cannot exactly capture reality) → Elizabeth walks among the portraits hanging in Pemberly, and seeing the “striking resemblance of Mr Darcy” in one of them, stands in “earnest contemplation”, re-evaluating the man she had created a false picture of.
Themes

• Feminism→ Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) “To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted.” Austen, however, makes the claim that women’s independence of mind, opportunities for rational self-improvement, and marrying advantageously are entirely compatible pursuits. (1)

• Class differences (landed gentry [Lady Catherine de Bourgh], the rising metropolitan professional middle class [the Gardiners])

• Pre-judging and re-judging

• Substance as distinct from appearance

• Responsibility and duty (to others, to one’s class…)
Form

- Novel of manners
- Regency era (not a literary genre)
- Austen bridges Classic and Pre-Romantic eras, pre-Victorian; in a class of her own
Allusions

David Hume: “All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas.” — *Treatise of Human Nature* (1738)
Plot

A young man changes his manners and a young woman changes her mind.

Q: Is the Lydia/Wickham storyline essential to understanding the themes of the novel or is it a side plot?
Characterization

Elizabeth: lively, complex, reflective
• Consider the characters according to their self-awareness and ability to reflect (Elizabeth>Lady Catherine de Bourgh)
• Dialogue defines characters through the way they speak and are spoken about
Diction and Syntax

• Playful, flirtatious, ironic
• Note that Elizabeth and Darcy’s seduction is intellectual and aesthetic → the prose delights the reader in the same way.
If you loved Pride and Prejudice

http://www.pemberleydigital.com/the-lizzie-bennet-diaries/ (the first youtube series to win an Emmy!)
Sources


*The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*

edited by Edward Copeland, Juliet McMaster

Setting and Character in Pride and Prejudice

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