***Pride and Prejudice***

***Volume 1***

***Chapter 2***

***Brief Summary:***

In keeping with his general perverse penchant for torturing his wife, Mr. Bennet does not tell her that he intends to visit Mr. Bingley, the new tenant of Netherfield Park, and she does not know of his visit until after he has made it. When he does reveal to them that he has made Mr. Bingley's acquaintance, it is done casually, in mockery of the eagerness of his wife and daughters. The evening after his morning visit, he comments to his second daughter, Elizabeth, that he hopes Mr. Bingley will appreciate the hat she is trimming. Resentfully, Mrs. Bennet replies that they have no way of knowing what Mr. Bingley liked. Elizabeth reminds her mother that they will meet him at the next assemblies, although Mrs. Bennet stubbornly refuses that anything good will come of it, as she had hoped to be the one to be able to introduce Mr. Bingley around to her friends at the assemblies, and now it seems it would be the other way around. Mr. Bennet sighs that if she will not introduce Mr. Bingley to her friend Mrs. Long, he would have to do it himself. Mrs. Bennet scolds her husband severely for speaking such nonsense, and declares herself sick of hearing about Mr. Bingley, to which Mr. Bennet in turn scolds her for not having told him that she was sick of Mr. Bingley before went to the trouble of paying him a visit. We are introduced to some of the characteristics of Elizabeth, Mary and Lydia. Elizabeth, Mr. Bennet's evident favorite and the second oldest daughter, seems to be the only daughter thus far with much intelligence. Mary seems to wish fervently to be intellectual, and spends her time reading, thinking and making extracts, but when called upon to say something sensible, she can think of nothing to say. Lydia seems preliminarily to be arrogant, outspoken and self-indulgent.

***Analysis:***The news that a wealthy young gentleman named [Charles Bingley](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pride/character/jane-bennet-and-charles-bingley/) has rented the manor known as Netherfield Park causes a great stir in the neighboring village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennet household. The Bennets have five unmarried daughters, and [Mrs. Bennet](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pride/character/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. [Mr. Bennet](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pride/character/mr-bennet/) torments his family by pretending to have no interest in doing so, but he eventually meets with Mr. Bingley without their knowing. When he reveals to Mrs. Bennet and his daughters that he has made their new neighbor’s acquaintance, they are overjoyed and excited.

***Summary in Detail:***

* [Mr. Bennet](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/pride-and-prejudice/mr-bennet) is one of the first men in the area to visit [Mr. Bingley](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/pride-and-prejudice/charles-bingley), but he does it behind his wife's back and teases his wife and daughters before letting the cat out of the bag.
* The news sends all the women into a tizzy. (That's the technical word for it.) When will Mr. Bingley return the visit? Should they ask him to dinner? What would they serve at dinner? Will he like their hats?

***Synopsis:***

* Mr. Bennet visits Mr. Bingley without telling his family and only mentions it nonchalantly a few days later. He had always intended to visit, but kept refusing in order to irk Mrs. Bennet. After his revelation, Mr. Bennet continues to annoy his wife - and their younger daughters, too - by refusing to answer any of their questions about the mysterious Bingley.
* ***Critical Study:***[Mr. Bennet](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Pride-and-Prejudice/character-analysis/#Mr._Bennet) teases his family but ultimately reveals that he has indeed already called on their new neighbor. Mrs. Bennet and her daughters engage in some light bantering about which of the sisters will be Bingley's favorite. Mrs. Bennet begins excitedly plotting Mr. Bingley's future visits to Longbourn.
* The conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet confirms that he enjoys being an irritant, pretending he hasn't visited Mr. Bingley when he has. This chapter, like the last one, also reflects the importance Mrs. Bennet places on following the rules of etiquette. Now that [Mr. Bennet](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Pride-and-Prejudice/character-analysis/#Mr._Bennet) has introduced himself to Mr. Bingley, the daughters are one step closer to an introduction as well—a key step in Mrs. Bennet's master plan to marry one of her daughters to him.

***Notes for AP Study:***This lesson covers the early chapters of 'Pride and Prejudice'. The great event of this segment of the novel is a social dance at Meryton. One chapter is devoted to the dance, and several to discussions of it, through which more is learned about the book's principal characters.

## In Which a Ball is a Big Deal

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| portrait |
| ***Jane Austen*** |

Understanding the social significance of dances in Regency England is a big help in reading *Pride and Prejudice.* For members of the gentry (or middle class), **balls** were key events in anyone's social calendar. They could be formal or informal, small or large, held in private homes or in public assembly rooms. Such events provided an opportunity for families to socialize, to meet new people, and, crucially, for young men and women of marriageable age to flirt in a socially sanctioned way.

As the pursuit of marriage forms one of the key topics of *Pride and Prejudice,* dances of all kinds understandably loom large in the novel. Chapters 3-5 are devoted to a public dance in the town of Meryton, and to discussions of it. Through the way people behave at the ball, and how they talk about it afterward, Jane Austen reveals more about the personalities of some of the book's central characters.

## New in the Neighborhood

The arrival of Mr. Bingley in the neighborhood sends ripples of excitement - and talk - through the early chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*. Representatives of all the local families go to visit him, in order to formally open their social acquaintance. In Chapter 2, we learn that Mr. Bennet was among the first of Mr. Bingley's visitors. As he and his wife have no fewer than five daughters, dependent on eventual marriage for their livelihood, this is a great event in Mrs. Bennet's eyes. Chapter 2 sees her husband teasing her, as usual, making references to Mr. Bingley without revealing that he has been to visit him.

Through family conversation, we meet (some of) the Bennet sisters, and get a sense of everyday life in the Bennet household. Austen makes use of everyday details in characterization. Lizzy is practical, reminding her irritable mother that they'll be sure to meet Mr. Bingley at the public dance in two weeks' time, whether or not their family has been introduced to him beforehand. Mary is serious-minded, but not very clever. Her father, in asking her opinion, says 'you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books, and make extracts.' But despite all her copying out of inspirational quotes, Mary is incapable of making a sensible reply on the spot. Of the two younger sisters, in their mid-teens, Kitty is self-conscious, while Lydia is confident to a fault. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet tease and bicker in what is clearly a long-standing pattern.

The patterns of local life are seen more fully at the much-anticipated ball. Here, Austen mocks both the snobbishness of the wealthy Bingley sisters and the pettiness of Meryton society. What sets this ball apart from others is, of course, the presence of Mr. Bingley. Anticipatory gossip reports 'that Mr. Bingley was to bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly. The girls grieved over such a number of ladies; but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing, that instead of twelve, he had brought only six... And when the party entered the assembly room, it consisted of only five altogether.'

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| standing about in a stupid manner |
| ***She is tolerable...*** |

At the ball itself, Jane is much admired by Mr. Bingley (they dance two dances together) and Mr. Darcy delivers one of the most famous insults in literature. Bingley notices that his friend's participation in the evening is limited to wandering morosely around the room, and encourages him to dance with Lizzy, rather than 'standing about in this stupid manner.' Darcy's reply is: 'She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me.' Ouch! Lizzy is understandably miffed, but characteristically laughs over the incident among her friends.

## Character and Conversation

The conclusion of the third chapter, and Chapters 4-5, are devoted to gossip about the ball, in which Austen's sly observations are often tongue-in-cheek. Mrs. Bennet can barely be restrained by her husband from recounting every detail of the dance. She is also indignant on Lizzy's behalf, making the sniffy remark that Mr. Darcy 'walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great!' She's not wrong.

Jane and Lizzy, once alone, exchange affectionate late-night confidences. Jane speaks for the first time, and reveals herself to be a total sweetheart. She's quite taken with Mr. Bingley, and Lizzy gives her sisterly seal of approval: 'He is certainly very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person.' Bingley, in the other late-night conversation of Chapter 4, is shown to be likewise attracted to Jane. Darcy says that she's pretty, but smiles too much (typical Darcy,) and Bingley's sisters say she seems sweet so Bingley feels 'authorized... to think of her as he chose.' This dependence of his on the judgment of others will be important throughout the novel.

In Chapter 5, the Bennets receive a visit from Lady Lucas and her daughters. As Austen dryly remarks, their morning-after discussion of any ball was 'absolutely necessary.' While Mrs. Bennet and Lady Lucas are subtly (or not so subtly) evaluating the impressions their marriageable daughters have made on the rich and single Mr. Bingley, the daughters have more relaxed conversation among themselves. Lizzy and her friend Charlotte Lucas are much more laid-back about Mr. Darcy's put-down than their mothers. Lizzy wryly observes, 'I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine.' Mary then chimes in to offer a definition of pride: 'Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us.' Both pride and vanity will shape the remaining events of the book.

## Lesson Summary

Chapters 2-5 of *Pride and Prejudice* introduce us to most of the novel's main characters. Jane Austen's gift for wry - and hilarious - social criticism is also on display, both in the description of the Meryton ball, and of conversations after it. The minute analysis of the **ball** by different groups after the event reveals much about characters and their relationships to each other, and about differences in social class. Bingley and Jane, both good-natured to a fault, are instantly attracted to each other. Lizzy is insulted by the supercilious Mr. Darcy, but, typically for her, laughs it off.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

Without telling his family, [Mr. Bennet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/mr-bennet) visits [Bingley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters). Back at home, Mr. Bennet teases his family by pretending to be uninterested in Bingley's arrival, only to then reveal his visit by asking [Elizabeth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/elizabeth-eliza-lizzy-bennet) when the next ball is scheduled and promising to introduce her to Bingley beforehand.

***Analysis Part 1:***

It was inappropriate for women to seek a direct introduction to men, so Mr. Bennet must initially act as the mediator. Mr. Bennet's visit shows that even he recognizes the importance of making a match.

***Summary Part 2:***[Mrs. Bennet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/mrs-bennet) is delighted and praises her husband and his little joke. She promises all the girls that they'll get a chance to dance with [Bingley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters).

***Analysis Part 2:***

An early sign of Mrs. Bennet's fickle character. She can snap from disapproval to approval.