***Pride and Prejudice***

***Volume 1***

***Chapter 7***

***Summary in Detail:***

* A militia unit arrives at Meryton for the winter. Meryton is a town about a mile from Longbourn, where the Bennets live.
* The two youngest Bennet girls, [**Catherine and Lydia**](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/pride-and-prejudice/lydia-bennet), are super excited about all the men in uniforms.
* Let's put it this way: If the military were a rock band, Catherine and Lydia would be the groupies plotting ways to sneak into the band's trailer.
* [**Jane**](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/pride-and-prejudice/jane-bennet) is invited to Netherfield to have lunch with Mr. Bingley's sisters, Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, and [**Mrs. Bennet**](https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/pride-and-prejudice/mrs-bennet) figures out a way to game that situation: Jane can go on horseback instead of in the carriage, so she'll have to stay overnight if it rains.
* It works—a little too well. Jane gets so sick from her drenching that the Bingleys urge her to stay until she recovers.
* Naturally, Lizzy walks three miles in the rain to Netherfield to check on Jane.
* Everybody at Netherfield is surprised to see her, but Mr. Darcy sure thinks she looks pretty with her cheeks all flushed from the walk.
* Jane is glad to see her, and Elizabeth even begins to like Mr. Bingley's sisters when she sees how affectionate they are towards Jane. They even ask Lizzy to stay overnight.

***Brief Summary:***

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Bennet has been left great fortunes by their ancestors. Mr. Bennet's property consisted of an estate of two thousand pounds a year, and would only be inherited by male heirs, so the estate would not be passed down to Mr. Bennet's offspring as it would have had their been a son in the family. Mrs. Bennet has a small income from her father, who had been an attorney, and a sister married to a Mr. Philips living in the nearby village of Longbourn. She also has a brother who has a trade business in London.

The two youngest daughters, Catherine and Lydia, often walk into Meryton in the morning to visit with their aunt and the milliner's shop in the town. At present, their excursions to Meryton furnish more gossip than usual, as there is a military regiment stationed there for the whole winter.

One day a letter arrives from Miss. Bingley, imploring Jane to spend the evening at Netherfield; the men are to dine with the officers in Meryton, and the women are in need of company. Jane asks permission to take the carriage, but Mrs. Bennet advises her to go on horseback. She reasons that it is likely to rain, and that if she is traveling by horseback she will be forced to spend the night in the event of inclement weather. It does indeed rain, and Jane arrives at Netherfield drenched and unwell. The following morning a letter arrives for Elizabeth from Jane, declaring that she is unwell. Miss Bingley has persuaded her to stay in bed at Netherfield until she is fit to travel. Elizabeth resolves to go to her, and sets out on foot. When she arrives, Jane is no better, but delighted that Elizabeth has come to visit her. It is decided that Elizabeth will spend the night at Netherfield.

The characters of Catherine and Lydia are not given much development in the novel thus far, the reason being that they are silly, arrogant girls, who, even for their young age are proclaimed by their own father to be "the silliest girls in the country," and "uncommonly foolish." Catherine is the older of the two, but Lydia is the instigator, and it is Lydia who will be the most affected by her own silliness in the course of the novel. It cannot be doubted where the two girls get their foolishness from; Mrs. Bennet herself seems to be uncommonly air headed and impetuous. Her rash decision to send Jane to Netherfield on horseback when it is sure to rain is just one example of this.

### *Analysis:*

In this chapter, Austen introduces the entail, an old British custom designed to keep a family estate within the bloodline. In this case, Longbourn can only pass on to a male heir. Because the Bennets have only daughters, they are likely to lose the estate to a distant relation upon [Mr. Bennet](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#mr-bennet)'s death.

[Lydia](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#lydia) and [Kitty](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#kitty) often visit their aunt, [Mrs. Phillips](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#mrs-phillips), in nearby Meryton. They increase the frequency of their visits after the arrival of a militia regiment because they enjoy flirting with the soldiers. Mr. Bennet often complains of his two younger daughters' foolishness, but [Mrs. Bennet](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#mrs-bennet) does not consider their obsession with the officers to be a cause for concern.

[Jane](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#jane) receives an invitation from the Bingley girls to dine at Netherfield. Mrs. Bennet instructs Jane to go on horseback, hoping that the rain will force Jane to spend the night and have an opportunity to interact with [Mr. Bingley](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#mr-bingley). Jane does not like her mother's scheme but has no choice but to go along with it. The plan works too well, however. Not only does the rain detain Jane at Netherfield, but she falls ill as a result of getting soaked on her ride there. The Bingley family expects Jane to stay at Netherfield until she recovers.

After receiving the letter informing the Bennets of Jane's illness, [Elizabeth](https://www.gradesaver.com/pride-and-prejudice/study-guide/character-list#elizabeth) insists on visiting her sister at Netherfield. She walks through the wet fields because there are no horses available. By the time she arrives at Netherfield, Elizabeth is disheveled and has mud all over her dress. The Bingley sisters are shocked by her messy appearance. Darcy, on the other hand, quietly notices that the exercise has improved Elizabeth's complexion. Meanwhile, Jane's condition has intensified and she cannot leave her bed. Elizabeth attends to her sister with great solicitude all day. Jane does not want Elizabeth to leave her side that evening, so Caroline invites the younger Bennet sister to stay the night at Netherfield.

***Critical Analysis:***The chapter opens with details about Bennet's finances, including the entail of the estate to a male Bennet heir, which will prevent any of the Bennet's daughters from inheriting it. Mrs. Bennet's family had lived comfortably on her father's income as an attorney, but her money alone will not provide much for her grown children.

The latest news from the nearby town of Meryton is the arrival of the militia, whose presence fuels the excitement of the younger Bennet sisters.

Jane is invited to visit Netherfield, the Bingleys' home. Mrs. Bennet sends Jane on horseback rather than in a carriage. The weather turns rainy, which delights Mrs. Bennet. Her ulterior motive was to ensure that if the weather turned bad, Jane would have to stay longer at Netherfield. Then the Bennets receive a letter saying that Jane is ill. Elizabeth becomes worried about her sister and goes to Netherfield in order to check on her. Her three-mile trek results in Elizabeth arriving with muddy skirts. Although the Bingley sisters are polite, Elizabeth senses their disapproval of her appearance. Darcy, however, is struck by her bright complexion, the result of her vigorous walk.

Elizabeth finds Jane to be quite ill and makes arrangements to stay at Netherfield to take care of her.

Details about Mrs. Bennet's family paint a fuller picture of the Bennets' status in society. [Mr. Bennet](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Pride-and-Prejudice/character-analysis/#Mr._Bennet) is a member of the landed gentry, though not a very wealthy one. Mrs. Bennet's family is respectable but not landed gentry, which gives fuel to Caroline Bingley's disapproval of her—ironic, given that the Bingleys themselves, though wealthy, are not landed gentry either. In fact, they merely rent Netherfield and do not own an estate.

The arrival of the militia reflects the novel's setting at a time when England feared a French invasion. These concerns are far from the minds of the Bennet daughters, however, who are more interested in the sudden supply of young men in town.

This chapter reveals the lengths to which Mrs. Bennet will go to ensure her daughters' marriages. Mrs. Bennet likes the idea of Jane being stuck at Netherfield, in proximity to [Charles Bingley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Pride-and-Prejudice/character-analysis/#Charles_Bingley).

Elizabeth is genuinely concerned about her sister. This reaction reveals the devotion and love that Elizabeth feels for Jane. Elizabeth's appearance on the scene is not good news for Caroline Bingley, who is predisposed to not approve of Elizabeth because of her own growing jealousy in regard to Darcy.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

Soon after, [Kitty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters) and [Lydia Bennet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters) are thrilled to learn that a military regiment is being stationed in Meryton. They make frequent visits to [Mrs. Philips](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters) to learn all they can about the officers. [Mr. Bennet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/mr-bennet) dismisses the girls as incredibly silly.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Compared to gentlemen like Bingley and Darcy, military officers offered a slightly less but still respectable option for marrying.

***Summary Part 2:***A letter arrives to [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/jane-bennet) from [Caroline Bingley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters) inviting her to visit. [Mrs. Bennet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/mrs-bennet) schemes to send Jane on horseback, even though it will rain, so that she will have to spend the night at Netherfield.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Mrs. Bennet is so desperate to get Jane married to a wealthy man that she's willing to risk her daughter's health by denying her shelter from the storm.

***Summary Part 3:***The next morning, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/jane-bennet) sends [Elizabeth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/elizabeth-eliza-lizzy-bennet) a letter explaining that she caught a bad cold in the storm. Elizabeth walks the three miles to Netherfield to care for Jane, arriving dirty and tired. Caroline later mocks Elizabeth's appearance, but [Darcy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/fitzwilliam-darcy) is moved by the glow of exercise on Elizabeth's face. [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/jane-bennet)'s condition soon worsens and [Elizabeth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/characters/elizabeth-eliza-lizzy-bennet) is invited to stay at Netherfield too.

***Analysis Part 3:***While Elizabeth displays great loyalty to her sister, her appearance strikes Bingley's sisters as undignified. Darcy might have thought the same thing before, but now his view of Elizabeth is influenced by his growing feelings for her.