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With reference to ONE of Gilgamesh, Oedipus the King, Pride and Prejudice, or Ghost World discuss the importance of setting. How do the physical and social circumstances in which the protagonist finds him or herself define his or her character? Does it mirror his or her condition? Is it something he or she must escape in the quest for self? Or is it that to which he or she must return?

Social status is something that has always been valued in society. Whether it’s by comparing income, education, or occupation, people seem to be drawn to determining where they are in relation to others. In the time of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, . While writing her novels, Jane Austen would hide her manuscripts when guests approached to preserve her privacy at a time when a female’s entrance into the public was associated with a loss of femininity. (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pride/context.html>) Jane Austen uses irony repeatedly in Pride and Prejudice to expose the ridiculousness of the social circumstances at the time. Elizabeth is constantly struggling against her unfortunate social circumstances

Elizabeth’s family is of a lower social ranking, and she feels that she is weighed down by her family. Her mother often embarrasses her for her lack of intelligence, and her younger sisters are reckless and lack the manners of the upper class. Because of this, Elizabeth feels that others are quick to judge herself by her status and family and ironically herself is quick to judge others. Darcy is described as being “much handsomer than Mr. Bingley” and having around double the fortune, but is found to have too much pride that these features cannot save him (Austen 12). From the first time Elizabeth meets Darcy, she does not like him because he appears arrogant and obnoxious in his manners and actions. He refuses to dance with Elizabeth saying “she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt ME” and Elizabeth goes back and tells the story to her friends “with great spirit” (Austen 13). This reveals that she doesn’t take serious offense to what he has said, and she manages to let it roll off her enough to be able to tell her friends without being ashamed.

As mentioned in “The Fear of Alienation in Pride and Prejudice”, the society is divided into classes but the social boundaries do not seem to be clearly defined. Bingly earns roughly half the amount that Darcy does per year and he is not even from the landed gentry but they still share social equality. Mr. Bennet, who is from the landed gentry, on the other hand, is unworthy of becoming a relative through marriage due to the connections that he has.

Darcy and Elisabeth have complimentary traits

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