UNIT 4 : JANE AUSTEN: *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the life and works of Jane Austen
- enlist the contribution of Jane Austen into the gamut of British fiction
- analyse the context and background of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*
- discuss the story of the novel
- make an assessment of the significance of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* in the context of English fiction.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with one of the most prominent novelists of the late eighteenth century, namely Jane Austen and one of her best known works, *Pride and Prejudice*. You will be interested to know that Austen is one of the writers who played a significant role in reviving the literary genre of novel writing. The English Novel was in a deteriorating condition when Austen first came to the literary scene. Jane Austen, along with Sir Walter Scott, was the major exponent of this literary form during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Both these writers marked the life of this genre into an ever lively and dominant literary form during the nineteenth century which

has persisted till the present age. While reading this novel, you are to keep in mind that the 'manners' that the novel portray belong to the eighteenth century. As such, reading the novel today in the 21st century, we may find it difficult to relate to us. But at the same time, you will gain a wider scope to appreciate the novel as a work of art. However, as stated in the letters of Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the most favourite works of the author herself.

4.3 JANE AUSTEN: THE NOVELIST

The following sub-sections, while dealing with the life and works of Jane Austen, shall enable you to explore and become familiarised with this remarkable novelist in a detailed way.

4.3.1 Her Life

Jane Austen, the second youngest of the eight children of George Austen and Cassandra Leigh Austen, was born in 1775 at Steventon, Hampshire which is situated in the South of England. She was born into the eighteenth century society of England, and her writings show an inclination towards the early eighteenth century. It has to be mentioned that Austen lived and wrote well into early nineteenth century– an age of revolution. Interestingly, her love of the early generation was the focus of her works where she was seen to be least concerned about the politics or the ***Revolution*** of the day.



LET US KNOW

By ***Revolution***, reference is made to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution which was an epoch in the history of Britain. Though it spread to the rest of the world in the later centuries, Britain was the first to encounter it. As a result there was growth of cities, migration, and so on. Austen, however, loved to be a part of the country rather than the city. Reading the life of Jane Austen is very important for us because her writings are much influenced by the kind of life she led and the society she dwelt in.

Jane was closest to her brother, Henry and her only sister, Cassandra among all her ***siblings***. In fact, several correspondences between the sisters have been well recorded. Austen attended school for quite a brief period of time. But it was her family, especially her father, who played the key role in educating her wisely. She grew up acknowledging and observing the social ***mannerisms*** and customs that dominated her society during that period of time. As mentioned earlier, due to the growth of industrialisation, there came upon a divide in the society. On the one side there was the aristocratic section, while on the other side was the section of labourers or the working class. It needs special mention that with the rise of the middle class, sophistication dominated the society, especially the landed ***gentry***. This section of people became newly rich and sophisticated in their mannerisms. It was because most of their income directly came from the Church. Austen's father was also one of the beneficiaries of the income that flowed from the Church. A number of Churches owed their ***proprietorship*** to Austen's father. However, within a social class, distinction prevailed too. A person's status came to be determined by his wealth. Members of a certain class extended company only to those belonging to their own class. Austen was brought up in such a social ***milieu*** where the aristocats the noveu rich (or newly rich) class moved among their own circles.

As a child belonging to such a class, Austen's visit to the city was natural. But it was within the country that she spent her most comfortable and carefree days of her life. Rather than conforming to the contemporary period, Austen was attracted towards the ***Augustan*** writers. As such, her literary inclination was more towards the earlier generation rather than towards her ***contemporary*** literary scenario. England, during Austen's time, was not only affected by industrial revolution and economic differences, but was also torn between two wars- one with America and the other with France. However, her writings do not bear any trace of either the political condition or the economic change. It is rather the landed gentry in whom Austen took interest. She literally did not move beyond her own small world, full of characters cast alike such as the sophisticated ladies and gentlemen or dandies, particularly those belonging to the upper middle class.



Siblings: a person's brother or sister.

Mannerisms: a way of speaking or behaving.

Gentry: people of good social position, specifically the class next beyond the nobility.

Proprietor: a holder of property.

Milieu: a person's social environment.

Augustan: it refers to the distinctive period in English literature of the 17th -18th century which is marked by a refined classical style.

Contemporary: originating or occurring at the same time.



***Maria Edgeworth*:** (1768-1849) Maria Edgeworth was popular for her contribution to children's literature and celebration of Irish culture. Her works like *Letters for Literary Ladies* or "An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification" are expressions of her views regarding women and literature.

***Frances Burney* or Frances Burney** (1752-1840) was a notable novelist, diarist and a playwright of the late eighteenth century.



Disastrous: having unfortunate consequences or causing great damage.

Blow: an unpleasant or disappointing surprise.

Demise: a person's death.

Austen read widely and her literary works bear influence of women writers such as, ***Maria Edgeworth*** and ***Frances Burney*** among others. Apart from reading, Austen was very active when it come to dance. She was very fond of dancing as revealed through her letters to her younger sister, Cassandra. Austen took initiative in domestic works as well; it is known that Austen was good at needle works. The society provided her the scope to perform recitation and dance in social gatherings. Such gatherings, in the form of dinner party or ball dance party, were the source of inspiration of her novels. The characters in her novel are often inspired by this kind of parties where they mostly gain the advantage of searching their perfect match. Thus, Austen also followed the fashion of her day where the her favourite pastime was singing, dancing, visiting people, talking, etc. However, Austen's search for a husband was not a successful one. Unfortunately, despite being in love once, Austen could not marry because an accident took away her beloved's life. In fact, she was said to have rejected any marriage proposals that came her way. This is because Austen was against any "emotionally unworthy marriage." Both Austen and her sister, Cassandra led a spinster's life. Due to her helpful attitude, Austen was able to earn the sympathy of the society in which she dwelt and did not face the rebukes one would face in such a kind of society where marriage was of pivotal interest.

The period from 1801-1809 was stressful for Austen. Both her personal life as well as her career had tremendously changed due to her father's decision to leave Steventon for Bath. During this period, her father retired and the family moved to Bath. As you have already learnt, Austen was filled with a sense of belongingness to rural England. This shift from rural to urban England left Austen in a ***disastrous*** state of mind and particularly, her career as a writer ceased all of a sudden. Added to it was the death of her father which came as a further ***blow*** to her life. The family shifted to Southampton shortly after her father's death. Later her family was offered a cottage in rural England near Steventon in Chawton by by one of her brothers for good. The period from 1809 till her ***demise*** was the most fruitful one in her literary production. Her works gained so much popularity that it attracted the **Prince Regent**. Austen joyously dedicated her novel, ***Emma*** to him.

Austen's illness caused her death in 1817; she was probably a patient of cancer. This remarkable novelist who created an epoch during her age and also in the latter ages was buried in Wincester Cathedral. Her simple and not very extraordinary life came to an end, thus, leaving us with many valuable works which are discussed in the next section of this unit.

4.3.2 Her Works

As you have already noted that Austen was a lover of books, she found pleasure in reading the works of Dr. Johnson, Maria Edgeworth, etc. to name a few. Rather than the romantic veins which ***engulfed*** her contemporaries, she was always Augustan in her approach towards writing. Through her writings she asserts her love for the confined world in which she grew up and within which her life was circumscribed. The events or incidents that she wrote about in her novels are borrowed from the encounters in her own life. She started writing at a very tender age. Reading and writing formed her passion. Her works were previously compartmentalised into several volumes, each of which flowered gradually in the form of her novels. Her first completed work of Volume I is *Love and Friendship*. You may be interested to know that Austen also wrote a humorous history of England at that time called *A History of England* by a partial, prejudiced and ignorant Historian. She even attempted at writing plays which were performed and confined within her family.



***Engulfed*:** surround or cover completely.

***Epistolary*:** denoting the writing of literary works in the form of letters or correspondences.

She began to write Elinor and Marianne in 1796, which was later revised and popularly called *Sense and Sensibility.* This novel was written in an ***epistolary*** form and was published in 1811. During this period Austen also wrote *Lady Susan* (which later came to be known as *Northanger Abbey*). The novel under discussion, that is, *Pride and Prejudice* was initially titled as *First Impressions.* It was published in 1813, making Austen the most sought after writer of her times. As you have been informed in the previous section, the period from 1809 was the most productive period of the writer. During this period, Austen saw the publication of most of her novels. After much

of the turmoil in her life came to an end, she began to write again. The revival of a life that she longed for along with the country atmosphere contributed massively in finishing her works. The result was that readers were gifted with the novels like *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* (1817) and *Persuasion* (1817).

It is interesting to note that Austen strived for perfection in writing. The numerous revisions of her works throw light to such an end. Most importantly, Austen was a writer whose aim was to entertain her readers with the presentation of the reality that existed in the upper middle class of her society. As a writer, her concerns were confined within that particular class of society.

There are also records of the letters that were exchanged between Austen and her sister, Cassandra. The impression of Austen's letter can be summed up as follows: "[h]er letters teem with every possible kind of reference to books: simple reports of what she or the family is reading; opinions; quotations applied sometimes straightforwardly but more often with multiple layers of irony; affectionately joking reference to details from novels in which she treats them just like actual life" (Copeland et al 192). Thus, it may be seen as her ordinary comments teamed with the most extraordinary zeal for writing. Apart from these novels, she also wrote *The Watsons* that was published in 1871. *Sandition* is the unfinished work which was disrupted by her death.

As a whole, Austen has left behind not many works but the influence that she exerted is immense. Her surroundings mostly determined her literary temperament and as a result her writings became the realistic expression of such a society. The omission of any kind of political or historical references in her works show her love for the universal themes of marriage, family, courtship, etc.



LET US KNOW

Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott are two contemporary novelists whose role in the revival of the Novel form is

commendable. Austen's first published work, *Sense and Sensibility* and Scott's *Waverley* appeared in 1811 and 1814 respectively, creating epoch in British literary history. The most interesting fact is that these two writers are totally different in terms of their style in writing. Unlike Austen, Scott popularised the historical novel/romance depicting the "trauma and devastation of Scotland's colonial past" (Eagleton 96). The eighteenth century, thus, saw the growth of historical romance alongside Austen's realist fiction. These romances dealt with the nationalist sentiments of the people by 'cherishing or inventing myths about the nation's glorious past.' The pioneer of the historical romance is Sir Walter Scott whose *Waverley* (1814) novels established this genre as one of the dominant literary forms in the early nineteenth century British fiction.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Where did Austen receive her education?

Q 2: What are the six novels that Jane Austen wrote?

Q 3: What are the basic features of the letters written by Austen?

Q 4: Write a short note on Jane Austen as a novelist.

Q 5: What are the common themes that the novels of Austen incorporate?

4.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

In order to delve deeper into the novel, it is necessary that we know the condition that prevailed in England during the writing of this novel. By now, you must have noted that Austen's works are a reflection of the society in which she lived. That is why, it becomes important for us to be acquainted with the situation, both political and social, of London society of that time. Originally titled *First Impressions*, *Pride and Prejudice* was written during the Regency period. Now before we move on to discuss other details regarding the writing of this novel, let us first consider the Regency period which continued in England from 1810 to 1820. King George III, owing to his illness, was removed from the throne in 1810 and his son was established as Prince Regent by the Parliament. However, after the death of his father, Prince Regent was crowned King George IV officially.

This background is useful for a reading of Austen because the characters of her novels belong to this period. During the Regency period, the English scenario changed to a great extent because the middle class gained status as well as property. All this can further be related to the Industrial Revolution which has contributed immensely in changing the social structure of Great Britain. The manufacturing centers, due to industrialisation, affected the income of the people by making them rich. However, only a certain section of people like the middle class merchants gained wealth who were known as the landed gentry during that time. All the novels of Austen including *Pride and Prejudice* reflect the lives and manners of the people belonging to this upper ***stratum*** or the so- called landed gentry. It has to be noted that although a certain section of the society was benefitted, issues like class divide gradually dominated the society; it was an age of urbanisation. As a result, the economic and social scenario of Britain transformed where money became the sole factor of determining one's status and class. This changing social and economic condition led Austen to include ***monetary*** factor as one of the dominant issues of this novel. Also, this newly formed section of the society - the landed gentry, occupies a prominent place in her fiction. The inclusion of topics such as property or status very genuinely reflects the nature of the landed gentry during the eighteenth century.



***Stratum*:** class of society.

***Monetary*:** of or relating to money.

***Anonymously*:** without disclosing one's name, hiding one's identity.

Regarding the title of the novel, it is seen that Austen was influenced by Frances Burney. It is from one of her novels, namely, *Cecilia* (1782) that Austen borrowed the title '*Pride and Prejudice*' for her novel that was formerly titled as *First Impressions*. It has to be noted that publishing a work of art by any woman writer during Austen's time could harm one's social status which is why her first novel was published ***anonymously***.

4.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

The novel begins thus: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife". This single line sets the tone of the entire novel- that is, the search for a suitable partner with respect to conditions as wealth. Structurally, the novel is divided into three volumes (according to the Norton edition) Vol. I, II and III are again

divided into 23, 19 and 19 chapters respectively. For our convenience, we shall deal with the novel volume-wise.

Volume I :

There are altogether twenty three chapters in this volume. The first chapter is significant for the inclusion of the prime subject matter that will encompass the whole of the novel. This very chapter introduces us to the old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their daughters. It begins with the arrival of Mr. Bingley who is "a single man of great fortune" in the neighbourhoods of the Bennets and whom Mrs. Bennet considers "as the rightful property of one or other of their daughters". Here, we find the incompatible pair, the Bennets, trying to get their daughters married to a man of property. Indeed, what we come across in this chapter is a competitive society where everyone's main concern is to find a suitable match. Chapter 2 and 3 is about the social meeting of the Bennets and Mr. Bingley. A ball is arranged where Mr. Bingley arrives with his companions comprising his 'two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man' (7) who we later come to know as Mr. Darcy. Here we find a contrast in the characters of the two young men - on the one hand is Mr. Bingley who had every feature to charm a girl and on the other hand, his friend Mr. Darcy who is handsome yet not presented as a favourable young man. Indeed, Mr. Darcy's charm was difficult to resist but at the same time 'he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased' (8). An important facet that uncovers in this episode is the nature of Elizabeth Bennet who considers herself to be intellectually superior. Chapter 4-6 are significant so far as it throws light on the contrasting characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet on the one hand and Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley on the other hand respectively. It is Darcy's 'pride' which is reiterated in the novel and the 'prejudice' of all the other characters against him. Gradually a shift is visible in Darcy's pride against Elizabeth with his inclination towards her.

Due to Jane's ill health, she had to stay at Netherfield in Bingley's place, which Mrs. Bennet favoured a lot because of the possibility of Jane's marriage to Mr. Bingley. Elizabeth's visit to the Netherfield was out of her concern for her sibling, Jane Bennet. Unlike Jane, Elizabeth's character is

examined by Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst as being rude, proud and unrefined. Jane is thought of a better person than Elizabeth. We see that most of the time the women in the novel is engaged in the discussion of the other characters. This was basically the feature of the society in which the novel is set. The stereotypical love for ball dance or property is quite distinct from the conversation of the characters. As the novel is dialogic and we find the issues being discussed by the characters. However, Elizabeth's visit to Netherfield was encouraged by the surprise invitation to her family from the Bingleys. Despite bad weather she managed to reach there but this goes unappreciated on the part of both Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. Bingley's sister and Mrs. Hurst, unconvinced with Elizabeth, consider her as unrefined and thus comparable to a lower status. However, it is ***ironical*** that they consider her sister, Jane Bennet a suitable match for Mr. Bingley. Apart from this, the readers are also acquainted with the economic condition of the Bennets. They have an estate which is 'entailed to their male heir', Mr. Collins although they have five daughters. Through this example, Austen brings the economic realities to our notice. As mentioned above, women were not entitled to any kind of property rights during the eighteenth century.



Irony: to mean the opposite of what is being said in order to create a humourous ffect.

Boasting: talk with excessive pride and self-satisfaction about oneself.

Mocked: to treat with contempt.

Jane's illness led to her exclusion from the social meetings that Elizabeth was part of in Netherfield. Darcy’s admiration for Elizabeth increases with her choice of reading rather than playing cards since he stresses on cultivating one's mind with extensive reading. However, Darcy's admiration for Elizabeth is coupled with Miss Bingley's jealousy, who has a soft corner for Darcy and wants to marry him. In the next chapter Mrs. Bennet arrives at Netherfield and embarrasses her daughters for her silliness of ***boasting*** about country life. Mr. Bingley accepts Lydia's request of organising a ball. Elizabeth comments on Darcy and Bingley's character are altered as the plot of the novel progresses. This chapter is significant for it subtly points towards Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth.

Chapter 11 shows Austen's use of irony very distinctly. Elizabeth's prejudice and Darcy's controlled pride are ***mocked*** in this chapter. The next chapter marks the departure of the Bennet sisters from Netherfield along with hints about the possible love affairs of the two couples- Jane and

Mr. Bingley on the one hand and Darcy and Elizabeth on the other. In chapter 13, Mr. Collins visited the Bennets only to annoy them with his ***pompous*** nature. His arrival is not a pleasure to Mrs. Bennet particularly because he is the heir to their property, being the nearest male relation. It is to be noted that during Austen's time, it was not possible for a woman to be the holder of any property. For example, a family with only daughters like the Bennets had to transfer their property to one of their male relatives. The next chapters further describe Mr. Collins' attitude towards marriage, his indecisive and practical nature. He accompanies the Bennet sisters to visit their aunt at Meryton. On their way, they meet two army officers, Mr, Denny and his friend Mr. Wickham. They also meet Darcy and Mr. Bingley. An uneasiness pervades when Darcy and Mr. Wickham confront each other. However, their aunt Mrs. Philips gives them a warm welcome and plans to organise/ a party the next day.



***Pompous*:** characterised by cheap and vain display.
***Dismay*:** distress.

Chapter 16 is crucial to the plot because Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy' strengthens after she is informed of Darcy's past by Mr. Wickham. He also accuses Darcy of depriving him of the property that Darcy's father had intended to give him and condemns him for being jealous. The following chapter throws light on the ball dance and Elizabeth's prejudice. She finds Mr. Wickham attractive and wishes to dance with him. To her ***dismay***, Mr. Collins asks her to dance with him and becomes aware of his possible proposal for marriage. Very ironically Austen throws light on Elizabeth's character. In the following chapter, Elizabeth is disappointed to find Mr. Wickham absent in the ball. His absence has probable relations with Mr. Darcy's presence. Mr. Darcy surprises her by asking her to dance. It is interesting to note that though Elizabeth gets positive vibes from Jane regarding the character of Darcy, she sticks to her prejudice. In another occasion she does the same when Miss Bingley warns her of Mr. Wickham's deceptive character. Darcy also shows his pride and asks Elizabeth to end her analysis of others' characters. Chapters 19-23 deal with Elizabeth's refusal of Mr. Collins' marriage proposal, Mr. Collins' subsequent interest in Charlotte Lucas and the growing interest of Elizabeth in Mr. Wickham. Lady Catherine approves the marriage of Mr. Collins with Charlotte Lucas. This

marriage, however, affects Mrs. Bennet who regrets Elizabeth's decision of refusing such a good proposal. This volume ends with the alienation of Jane and Bingley.

Volume II :

The next volume begins with a letter from Miss Bingley assuring the arrival of Mr. Bingley. The letter also informs about the growing relationship of Mr. Bingley and Miss Darcy. In the first chapter of this volume, a contrast is revealed in the characters of Jane and Elizabeth. While Jane is shown to be practical, Elizabeth reveals herself to be a conservative and emotional being. The next chapter introduces the readers to Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. Mr. Gardiner is Mrs. Bennet's brother. Mrs. Gardiner is a sensible woman and plans to take Jane with her to London so that she may be comforted. Elizabeth's intimacy with Mr. Wickham worries Mrs. Gardiner. Chapters 2-5 highlight the description of Austen's themes such as money and marriage. Three important developments emerge- Charlotte's marriage with Mr. Collins, Mr. Wickham's reference for a rich heiress to Elizabeth and Jane's dying hopes of Mr. Bingley. After being rejected by Wickham, Elizabeth realises her fault. She meets her friend, Charlotte at Hunsford and is surprised to find her happy with Collins. Jane is sympathised for the critical phase of her life.

Chapter 6 deals with Elizabeth's visit to the Lady Catherine's place at Rosings. She is a sophisticated with a pompous nature and has been brilliantly painted with Austen's ***humour***. Elizabeth handles everything there with much confidence. In the next chapter, we find a changed Darcy who is able to impress Elizabeth delicately. He is shown to be neither a proud man nor a ***haughty*** person. Darcy's admiration for Elizabeth is overtly expressed in the party at Rosings. Both of them converse and become close. However, Lady Catherine boasts of her own daughter and irritates everybody. Chapter 9 sets the plot for Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth. However, Elizabeth shows least interest in him. But in the next chapter, Elizabeth doubts Darcy's role in separating Mr. Bingley from her sister, Jane. Darcy's friend, Fitzwilliam shares all this with her and she believes that Darcy has done this for his sister, Georgiana. The next chapter deals with Darcy's haughty proposal to



***Humour*:** the quality of being funny.

***Haughty*:** arrogant.

Elizabeth and her further rejection of the same. He justifies his haughty nature with the mention of lowering his status with his love for her. As you have seen that 'epistolary' technique has been used several times in the novel, chapter 12 can be cited as a good example. Through this technique, Austen clears the differences between the protagonists. Darcy's letter to Elizabeth settles their misunderstandings. This letter has been instrumental in changing Elizabeth's reaction to Darcy's character. Chapters 14-19 deal with Elizabeth's return to home and the realisation of her prejudice against Lady Catherine. Elizabeth leaves Hunsford and Rosings and returns home. She is disturbed by the comments made by Darcy on her family. Lydia informs Elizabeth of Wickham's split with Miss King, the rich heiress. Also, Lydia has been given space in these chapters. A maturity seems to enlighten the character of Elizabeth towards the end of this volume.

Volume III :

Chapter 1 begins with the description of Pemberly Woods: "The park was very large, and contained great variety of ground" (158). Elizabeth is filled with pleasure at the sight of it. She is astonished to meet Darcy at the park. Darcy is introduced to the Gardiners and is found favourable. Her earlier prejudice shakes as she finds Darcy to be a sensible and elegant person. Chapters 2-3 deal with the meeting of Elizabeth with Darcy's sister. The Gardiners found out Darcy's feelings for their niece. As a result Elizabeth rethinks about Darcy and whether to consider a second proposal from him. At Pemberly, the Bingley sisters show their impertinence in insulting Elizabeth. Miss Bingley's jealous and overt attack on Elizabeth is handled by her politely. The mutual respect between Darcy and Elizabeth develops in this episode. The next two chapters describe Lydia's ***elopement*** with Darcy which causes trouble to the Bennets. Lydia proves herself to be an insensible and impractical character. Also, Wickham's wicked nature comes to the front. There also seem to raise a question whether Wickham will marry Lydia or not. Elizabeth regrets for hiding Wickham's real character from the rest of the family. Chapters 6-9 deal with Lydia and her elopement. It also discusses the theme of marriage based on financial aspect. The runaway couple however was married and had returned to Longbourn after



***Elopement*:** to run away with a lover.

ten days. These two characters are shown to be devoid of a sense of shame and do not regret the trouble they has caused to the family. Chapter 10 reveals the development of Elizabeth's respect for Darcy. She learns from Mrs. Gardiner the role played by Darcy in tracing the runaway couple and settling things for them. Overwhelmed with joy, Mrs. Gardiner asks Elizabeth to consider Darcy seriously for marriage. All the pride and prejudice of the protagonists shatter as they discover each other. Chapter 12 is interesting because here it is Elizabeth who is frustrated for being unable to get close to Darcy. She fears being deceived by the reality. At the same time, the romance between Jane and Mr. Bingley develops again. In the next chapter, Jane and Mr. Bingley are engaged much to the excitement of the other characters. Chapter 14 highlights the theme of class-divide. Lady Catherine, depicting the aristocratic class, disapproves of Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy. The chapters 16-19 seem to focus on the conclusion of the novel. Both Darcy and Elizabeth admit their faults and shows gratitude to one another. She defends Darcy and ***reconciles*** her family to accept her marriage with him. The novel ends with Austen's social concern regarding marriage.



***Reconciles*:** to restore friendly relations.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Write a note on the social background of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

Q 7: What was the political situation that prevailed in England during the writing of this novel? Do you think the novel bears any witness to the politics of its day?



4.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through the sections above, you have learnt that Jane Austen is one of the finest novelists in the history of British fiction. In her novels, she juxtaposes both classical and romantic veins by portraying a 'disciplined'

and 'traditional' structure of society and at the same time delving deep into emotional notions such as love respectively. She can be called a realist in terms of the accurate representation of the manners and customs of her society in her works. In her novels, she never moves beyond the portrayal of her society yet the themes that her novels indulge in are to be appreciated for their universality. Generally speaking, her novels abound with themes of courtship, marriage, etc. and these themes, further marked by her own experience and observation, have resulted in creating a significant place for her among others in the history of English literature. Thus, in this unit, you must have read in sufficient detail about the life and works of Austen and gained a detailed idea on the background of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.



3.7 FURTHER READING

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2) Copeland, Edward and Juliet McMaster. (eds). (2011). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
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4) Eagleton, Terry. (2005). *The English Novel: An Introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
5) Meynell, Alice. (1905). "The English Women-Humorists". *The North American Review*. Vol. 181, No. 589 pp. 857-872.
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3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Austen attended school for quite a brief period of time. But it was her family, especially her father, who played the key role in her education.

She grew up acknowledging and observing the social mannerisms and customs that dominated her society during that period of time.

Ans to Q No 2: The six novels that Jane Austen wrote are *Sense* and *Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* (1817) and *Persuasion* (1817).

Ans to Q No 3: The basic features of Austen's letter can be summed up as follows: "[h]er letters teem with every possible kind of reference to books: simple reports of what she or the family is reading; opinions; quotations applied sometimes straightforwardly but more often with multiple layers of irony; affectionately joking reference to details from novels in which she treats them just like actual life".

Ans to Q No 4: Jane Austen is one of the finest novelists in the history of British fiction. In her novels she juxtaposes both classical and romantic veins by portraying a 'disciplined' and 'traditional' structure of society and at the same time delving in deep emotional notions such as love respectively. Austen is a realist in terms of the accurate representation of the manners and customs of her society. As a novelist, she strived for perfection in writing. The numerous revisions of her works throw light to such an end. She was a writer whose aim was to entertain her readers with the presentation of the reality that existed in the upper middle class of her society. As a writer, her concerns were confined within that particular class of society.

Ans to Q No 5: The common themes that the novels of Austen incorporate are marriage, family, courtship, etc.

Ans to Q No 6: The social scenario of Britain was in a state of transformation where money became the sole factor of determining one's status and class. This changing social and economic condition led Austen to include monetary factor as one of the dominant issues of this novel. Also, this newly formed section of the society - the landed gentry, occupies a prominent place in her fiction. The inclusion of topics such as property or status very genuinely reflects the nature of the landed gentry during the eighteenth century.

Ans to Q No 7: The political climate in Britain during Austen's time was not at all favourable. Britain was shattered by the defeat with her colonies in America on the one hand. On the other hand, there was the French

Revolution. However, you will be surprised to know that Austen's writings do not have any record of either the civil war or the revolution that accompanied Britain's history. The novel does not bear any witness to the politics of its day.



4.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the significance of Jane Austen as an English novelist with special reference to her fictional works.

Q 2: Give an account of the context of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

Q 3: Describe in your own words the gist of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

Q 4: Critically examine the contribution of Jane Austen as a novelist.

Q 5: To what extent does *Pride and Prejudice* depict the condition of eighteenth century London society? Explain.

Q 6: "Austen's works are a reflection of the society in which she lived." Discuss.

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