

P&P Quote Analysis

by Lisa Tang

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Pride and Prejudice Quote Analysis

1. "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."

- The first sentence of the book introduces the satirical tone of the novel and Austen's social commentary
- Also addresses some of the book's themes, love and marriage
- Austen uses hyperbole and exaggerated diction, such as "universally" and "must" to criticize the emphasis on marriage of Regency society

2. "He was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend."

- Austen satirizes how quickly public opinion in a small town (and public opinion in general) can change
- She uses hyperbole again to exaggerate the difference between the two opposing views of Darcy's character
- Example of free indirect speech - we first see Darcy through the townspeople's eyes and come to believe that he is proud and arrogant

3. "Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us."

- One of the first times that the theme of pride is discussed
- Austen establishes it as a relatively positive trait in comparison with vanity, which influences us to see Darcy in a slightly better light
- This statement is made by Mary, who is usually not taken seriously by the other characters. This undermines some of the philosophical value of the quote; perhaps Austen does not want her own moralizing to be taken too seriously either

4. "I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any."

- I liked the combination of humor and social commentary in this quote
- Through Elizabeth's words, Austen satirizes the standards that Regency society imposes upon young women
- This is also one of the first witty exchanges between Lizzie and Darcy that forms the foundation of their relationship

5. "I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time."

- Elizabeth says this to Mr. Collins during his proposal. Her statement is extremely ironic, as Elizabeth ends up being 'one of those young ladies' and waiting for Darcy's second marriage proposal
- However, she is the one who initiates the conversation with Darcy the second time around - maybe Austen is saying that ladies should take more initiative in their marriages

6. "What are young men to rocks and mountains?"

- Elizabeth's comment upon being invited on a tour of the lakes by the Gardiners
- She says this after she's dissuaded from seeing Wickham and he moves on from her for a richer young lady
- The quote demonstrates her cynicism about love, but also reveals the fact that she's a bit bitter about Wickham seeing another girl

7. "How despicably I have acted!" she cried; "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities!... I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself."

- This quote signifies a moment of character development in Lizzie, after she reads and fully comprehends Darcy's letter
- The letter and Lizzie's epiphany also creates a change in her relationship with Darcy - it puts her on the way of slowly falling in love with him
- Her tone demonstrates her strong feelings of shock and anger towards herself
- It made me like Lizzie better and find her more sympathetic, as this is where she acknowledges her mistakes and gets over her own pride and prejudices

8. "I believe you thought her rather pretty at one time."

"Yes, but that was only when I first saw her, for it is many months since I have considered her as one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance."

- Conversation between Darcy and Caroline about Elizabeth after they all meet at Pemberley
- I liked the humor of this quote; Darcy is just as witty as Lizzie if he wants to be
- Demonstrates to the reader (but not to Lizzie herself) that Darcy is still in love with her
- Through Caroline's insults, Austen criticizes the social classes by showing that the upper classes were not always polite or worthy of respect

9. "For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour, he had been able to get the better of himself."

- This quote is Elizabeth's reflection that she is proud of Darcy's actions in the marriage of Lydia and Wickham
- Austen introduces a new context for the word pride, being proud of someone else, that contrasts the negative context pride has been presented in for most of the novel
- Just as Elizabeth grows to see pride as a potentially positive thing, she also comes to see the good qualities in Darcy's previously arrogant character

10. "Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery. My child, let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about."

- This quote is Mr. Bennet speaking to Lizzie about marrying Mr. Darcy
- I liked it because it's one of the rare moments that Mr. Bennet isn't joking; he has a very serious tone here
- Austen highlights the social problems of unhappy marriages in the Regency era through the example of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet
- The moment of gravity contrasts Elizabeth and Jane's happy endings and makes Austen's commentary stand out

P&P Quote Analysis

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3
