Your notes

GCSE English Literature: revision notes

Pride and Prejudice

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Plot

- Mr and Mrs Bennet have five daughters and no son, so their house will pass to a cousin, Mr Collins. Mrs Bennet wants her daughters married well.
- Wealthy Mr Bingley falls for Jane Bennet. His proud friend Mr Darcy insults Elizabeth at a ball, and she believes Wickham's lies about him.
- Elizabeth refuses Mr Collins, who marries her friend Charlotte Lucas. She also refuses Darcy's first proposal. His letter then reveals the truth about Wickham.
- Lydia runs away with Wickham. Darcy secretly arranges their marriage to save the family's reputation. Elizabeth's view of him changes, and she accepts his second proposal; Jane marries Bingley.

Themes and context

- Pride and prejudice, marriage, class, money, reputation, and women's position in society.
- Published in 1813, in the Regency period. Women from the **gentry** could not work in professions and often could not inherit property, so marriage decided their future.

Form and style

- Austen uses **irony** and **free indirect discourse**, letting us see Elizabeth's thoughts while keeping a witty, critical narrator.

How to get top marks

- Use Austen's **irony**: the famous opening sentence means the opposite of what it seems to say.
- Write about marriage and money. Charlotte's choice shows what was at stake for women without fortunes.
- Show that both Elizabeth and Darcy change: the title applies to both of them.

Key terms

Entail	A legal rule passing an estate to the male heir, here Mr Collins.
Irony	Saying one thing but meaning another, often for humour.
Free indirect discourse	Narration that slips into a character's thoughts.
Gentry	Landowning families below the nobility.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Who will inherit the Bennets' house?
2. Why does Elizabeth dislike Darcy at first?
3. Who does Charlotte Lucas marry?
4. What does Darcy's letter reveal?
5. Who does Lydia run away with?
6. How does Darcy help the Bennets?
7. When was Pride and Prejudice published?
8. Why was marriage so important for the Bennet sisters?

Answers

1. Mr Collins
2. He insults her at a ball and she believes Wickham's lies
3. Mr Collins
4. The truth about Wickham
5. Wickham
6. He secretly arranges Lydia and Wickham's marriage
7. 1813
8. Women of their class had few other ways to secure their future

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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