

Pride and Prejudice Plot Summary

Conviction is a sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which was first published in 1813. You may refresh your memory of the plot by reading the brief summary below.

When **Mrs. Bennet** hears that an eligible bachelor, **Mr. Bingley**, has moved into the neighborhood, she hopes to see one of her daughters wed to him. **Jane** takes a liking to the friendly Mr. Bingley, but his friend **Mr. Darcy** appears arrogant and snubs Jane's sister **Elizabeth**. Despite this initial slight, Darcy soon becomes attracted to Elizabeth. Mr. Bingley's sister **Caroline** feigns friendship with Jane while abusing her relations behind her back.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth receives and declines a marriage proposal from her pompous cousin **Mr. Collins**, who eventually marries Elizabeth's best friend **Charlotte**. (Mr. Collins's patroness is **Lady Catherine De Bourgh**, Mr. Darcy's aunt.) While Mr. Darcy is in residence at Netherfield, Elizabeth also meets a young officer named **Mr. Wickham**, whose company she enjoys. The son of the elder Mr. Darcy's steward, Wickham tells Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy cheated him out of his fortune, thus deepening her ill impression of the proud man.

After a ball at Netherfield, the family suddenly quits the estate with no apparent attention of returning, leaving Jane heartbroken. Jane is invited to London to visit her **Aunt and Uncle Gardiner**, but Mr. Darcy conceals her presence from Bingley, whom he has persuaded not to court Jane because of her inferior connections. Mrs. Bingley calls on her, but she is very cold.

When Elizabeth visits her friend Charlotte, she meets Lady Catherine de Bourgh's other nephew, **Colonel Fitzwilliam**. Mr. Darcy also visits his aunt, and he issues Elizabeth an unexpected proposal, telling her he ardently loves and admires her, but also dwelling on the inferiority of her connections. To his surprise, Elizabeth refuses him, accusing him of ruining Wickham's chances of success and of keeping Mr. Bingley and Jane apart, and insisting that his haughty manner would have prevented her from accepting him even if he were not guilty of such acts. He later writes her a letter in which he admits to persuading Bingley not to pursue Jane, but he argues that Jane's regard for him was not obvious. In the letter, he also denies Wickham's charges and reveals that Wickham had attempted to elope with his sister for the sake of her fortune.

When Elizabeth returns to her home, her younger sister Lydia is clamoring to go to Brighton. Against Elizabeth's advice, her father allows Lydia to go. Elizabeth vacations with her Aunt and Uncle and, believing Mr. Darcy to be absent from Pemberley, they go to tour the great estate. There Elizabeth learns from the housekeeper that Mr. Darcy is a generous landlord. Elizabeth has a surprise encounter with Mr. Darcy, who returns to the estate ahead of schedule. He has clearly taken her criticisms to heart, and he has attempted to reform his character as a consequence. He shows himself very amiable to Elizabeth's aunt and uncle, and she begins to warm up to him. But meanwhile, she receives the terrible news that Lydia has run off with Wickham, an event that could ruin her family.

Mr. Darcy happens upon her just as she is reading the letter that contains the news. She returns home, certain she has lost Mr. Darcy's regard forever. However, Mr. Darcy secretly tracks down Wickham and arranges for him to marry Lydia quickly. Elizabeth learns of his role and is pleased when he returns with Bingley to Netherfield Park. But when the pair comes to call, Mr. Darcy shows no sign of his regard for her. Mr. Bingley, however, proposes to Jane, and the pair becomes engaged.

Soon after, Lady Catherine comes to call on the Bennets and insists that Elizabeth promise never to marry her nephew. She refuses to make any such promise. Darcy hears of her refusal, and when he next comes to call, he proposes to her a second time, and she accepts, his pride humbled, and her prejudices overturned.

Historical Context

Different scholars have assigned different dates to the events of *Pride & Prejudice*. *Conviction* follows the dating system that places the wedding of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet in the fall of 1812. *Conviction* opens less than one year later, in the spring of 1813. The novel is set in Regency England, against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars (with France) and the War of 1812 (with the United States of America). Below is an outline of historical events that provide a backdrop for the novel.

1807

Parliament passes a bill to abolish the slave trade

March 1814

Napoleon abdicates and is exiled on Elba.

December 1814

Treaty at Ghent ends the war of 1812

January 7, 1815

The British army lands at the mouth of the Mississippi and is routed to New Orleans, in the last battle of the War of 1812, after the war has ended.

February 16, 1815

The U.S. Congress ratifies the Treaty of Ghent

February 26, 1815

Napoleon escapes from Elba

March 17, 1815

Great Britain agrees to contribute troops to an invasion force to be assembled in Belgium near the French border

March 20, 1815

Napoleon again ascends to the throne.

March 26, 1815

Easter Sunday

June 18, 1815

Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo

1833

Slavery is abolished in the English colonies

Characters

Fitzwilliam Darcy (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Master of Pemberley, husband of Elizabeth, and brother and guardian of Georgiana Darcy. He is a reserved man, a generous landlord, and a devoted husband and brother.

Elizabeth Darcy (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Formerly Elizabeth Bennet, wife of Mr. Darcy, and sister-in-law of Georgiana. She is intelligent, witty, and outgoing.

Georgiana Darcy (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Sister of Mr. Darcy and a resident of Pemberley. She is intensely shy but intelligent and thoughtful.

Niles Davidson

A member of parliament and a suitor to Georgiana Darcy. He is conceited and persistent.

Colonel Fitzwilliam (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

A cousin of Mr. Darcy and Georgiana, and an acquaintance of Major Talbot's. In *Conviction*, he is sent to America during the War of 1812.

Major Arthur Talbot

A patriotic, dedicated military man and suitor to Georgiana Darcy. He is friendly and outgoing, and knows how to put Georgiana at ease.

Jacob Markwood

Son of Sir Robert Markwood and elder brother of Aaron Markwood. He abandons the study of the law in order to serve the church, and eventually receives the living at Kympton (which is in Mr. Darcy's power to award). He has had a falling out with his father over his refusal to marry a woman who did not truly love him, and he is still suffering the wounds of that unrequited love and the loss of his father's esteem. He is a sincere but unconventional minister.

Dr. Ramsey

The boofonish archdeacon who is sent to inspect the parish and who is suspicious of Jacob Markwood's style of ministry.

The Bishop

Jacob Markwood's Bishop, who appears for his installation and disappears soon after, only to arrive unexpectedly at the vicar's door to warn him against being too idealistic a minister.

Peter Bailee

Jacob Markwood's curate, and an admirer of Kitty Bennet. Mr. Bailee has chosen the ministry as a means of livelihood, and not because he feels a true calling. However, he is a dutiful and cheerful man, and serves his parish well.

Kitty Bennet (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Younger sister of Elizabeth Bennet and an occasional guest of Pemberley. She considers Peter Bailee to be beneath her and has set her sights instead on Aaron Markwood.

Aaron Markwood

Son of Sir Robert Markwood and younger brother of Jacob Markwood. He has an interest in Kitty Bennet but must struggle with his feeling that she will not support his abolitionist calling. He resents his brother for not pursuing the cause of abolition and instead choosing a more quiet calling as a vicar.

Sir Robert Markwood

Father of Jacob and Aaron Markwood. He is often ill and therefore cannot pursue his political dreams. An avid abolitionist, he hopes to see his eldest son pursue the cause, and overlooks the fact that Aaron is more fit for that particular calling.

Caroline Bingley (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Sister of Charles Bingley and occasional guest of Pemberley. When she learns Jacob Markwood has a potential fortune, she becomes interested in him—but his chosen profession as a mere vicar will not satisfy her.

Charles Bingley (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Friend of Mr. Darcy, brother of Caroline Bingley, and husband of Jane Bennet. He is an extremely affable and easy tempered man.

Jane Bingley (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Sister of Elizabeth and wife of Charles Bingley. She is a sweet, good natured woman.

Jonathan Bennet Bingley

Infant son of Jane and Charles Bingley.

Mr. Bennet (original *Pride and Prejudice* character)

Occasional visitor to Pemberley and father of Elizabeth, Kitty, and Jane. He is often sarcastic.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner (original *Pride and Prejudice* characters)

Uncle and Aunt of the Bennet girls. They serve as Kitty's guardian while she is in London and invite Jacob and Aaron to dine with them.

Hannah Elizabeth Darcy

Infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Darcy.