

## **Pride and Prejudice Summary of Chapters 27–34**

### **MJC ENGLISH, SEM –VI**

#### **Summary: Chapters 27–29**

In March, Elizabeth travels with Sir William Lucas to visit Charlotte and her new husband, Mr. Collins. On the way, they spend a night in London with Jane and the Gardiners. Elizabeth and Mrs. Gardiner speak about Wickham's attempts to win over Miss King. Mrs. Gardiner is critical of him, calling him a "mercenary," but Elizabeth defends him, calling him prudent. Before Elizabeth leaves London, the Gardiners invite her to accompany them on a tour, perhaps out to the lakes. Elizabeth gleefully accepts.

When Elizabeth arrives in Hunsford, the location of Mr. Collins's parish, the clergyman greets her enthusiastically, as does Charlotte. On the second day of her visit, she sees Miss de Bourgh, Lady de Bourgh's daughter, from a window. The girl is "sickly and cross," Elizabeth decides, and she imagines with some satisfaction Darcy's marrying such an unappealing person. Miss de Bourgh invites them to dine at Rosings, a mansion that awes even Sir William Lucas with its grandeur. At dinner, Lady Catherine dominates the conversation. After the meal, she grills Elizabeth concerning her upbringing, deciding that the Bennet sisters have been badly reared. The failure of Mrs. Bennet to hire a governess, the girls' lack of musical and artistic talents, and Elizabeth's own impudence are all mentioned before the end of the evening.

#### **Summary: Chapters 30–32**

Sir William departs after a week, satisfied with his daughter's contentment. Shortly thereafter, Darcy and a cousin named Colonel Fitzwilliam visit their aunt at Rosings. When Mr. Collins pays his respects, the two men accompany him back to his parsonage and visit briefly with Elizabeth and Charlotte. Another invitation to Rosings follows, and Colonel Fitzwilliam pays special attention to Elizabeth during the dinner. After the meal, she plays the pianoforte and pokes fun at Darcy, informing Colonel Fitzwilliam of his bad behavior at the Meryton ball, at which he refused to dance with her. Lady Catherine lectures Elizabeth on the proper manner of playing the instrument, forcing Elizabeth to remain at the keyboard until the end of the evening.

The next day, Darcy visits the parsonage and tells Elizabeth that Bingley is unlikely to spend much of his time at Netherfield Park in the future. The rest of their conversation is awkward, and when Darcy departs, Charlotte declares that he must be in love with Elizabeth, or he would never have called in such an odd manner. In the days that follow, both Darcy and his cousin visit frequently, however, and eventually Charlotte surmises that it is perhaps Colonel Fitzwilliam who is interested in Elizabeth.

#### **Summary: Chapters 33 & 34**

**“My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.”** Elizabeth encounters Darcy and his cousin frequently in her walks through the countryside. During one conversation, Colonel Fitzwilliam mentions that Darcy claims to have recently saved a friend from an imprudent marriage. Elizabeth conjectures that the “friend” was Bingley and the “imprudent marriage” a marriage to Jane. She views Darcy as the agent of her sister’s unhappiness. Alone at the parsonage, Elizabeth is still mulling over what Fitzwilliam has told her when Darcy enters and abruptly declares his love for her. His proposal of marriage dwells at length upon her social inferiority, and Elizabeth’s initially polite rejection turns into an angry accusation. She demands to know if he sabotaged Jane’s romance with Bingley; he admits that he did. She then repeats Wickham’s accusations and declares that she thinks Darcy to be proud and selfish and that marriage to him is utterly unthinkable. Darcy grimly departs.

#### **Analysis: Chapters 27–34**

Mrs. Gardiner tends to function as the voice of reason in the novel, and her criticism of Wickham counters Elizabeth’s unwillingness to question his purposes. Mrs. Gardiner ascribes a mercenary motive to Wickham’s interest in Miss King, whereas Elizabeth defends him by asking her aunt “what . . . the difference [is] in matrimonial affairs, between the mercenary and the prudent motive.” This does seem a fine question, and not one her aunt can readily answer. But in asking the question, Elizabeth seems to violate her own principles—she herself has already refused to marry Mr. Collins for social advantage, and she does so again when Darcy proposes. It appears that sympathy for Wickham leads Elizabeth to betray her conscience.

The visit to Rosings introduces Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who serves as another vehicle for Austen’s criticism of snobbery. Lady Catherine’s favorite pastime is ordering everyone else

about (“Elizabeth found that nothing was beneath this great Lady’s attention, which could furnish her with an occasion of dictating to others”). The only individual who dares to stand up to the haughty Lady Catherine is Elizabeth (unsurprisingly, as elsewhere she sees through the pretensions of pompous and arrogant people like Mr. Collins and Miss Bingley). When Lady Catherine criticizes the Bennet sisters’ upbringing, Elizabeth defends her family, “suspect[ing] herself to be the first creature who had ever dared to trifle with so much dignified impertinence.” The same dignified impertinence with which Elizabeth combats Lady Catherine’s preconceptions reappears later in her refusal to let Lady Catherine prevent her from marrying Darcy.

[Read more about Lady Catherine de Bourgh as an antagonist.](#)

Darcy’s proposal is the turning point of *Pride and Prejudice*. Until he asks her to marry him, Elizabeth’s main preoccupation with Darcy centers around dislike; after the proposal, the novel chronicles the slow, steady growth of her love. At the moment, however, Elizabeth’s attitude toward Darcy corresponds to the judgments she has already made about him. She refuses him because she thinks that he is too arrogant, part of her first impression of him at the Meryton ball, and because of the role she believes he played in disinheritting Wickham and his admitted role in disrupting the romance between Jane and Bingley.

Just as Elizabeth yields to her prejudices (she has not yet heard Darcy’s side of the story), Darcy allows his pride to guide him. In his proposal to Elizabeth, he spends more time emphasizing Elizabeth’s lower rank than actually asking her to marry him (“he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride”). This turning point thus occurs with the two central characters occupying seemingly irreconcilable emotional locations, leaving the reader, in the words of critic Douglas Bush, “almost exactly in the middle of the book, wondering if and how the chasm . . . can be bridged.”