

Chapter notes and activities 2

Chapters 1–12

Bingley's first month at Netherfield

Summaries of Chapters 1–6

Chapter 1

Mrs Bennet, whose main purpose in life is to see her five daughters successfully married, is excited by the arrival of Mr Bingley, a single and rich young man, at Netherfield Park. Her husband does not share her excitement and expresses reluctance to introduce himself to Mr Bingley, seeming to have little interest in family affairs.

Chapter 2

Mr Bennet takes pleasure in teasing his family by keeping them ignorant of his visit to Netherfield Hall. Mrs Bennet's irritation at her plans for her daughters being blocked changes to delight when Mr Bennet tells the family he has already visited Mr Bingley.

Chapter 3

Mr Bingley returns Mr Bennet's visit, but tension is built up as the girls only see him from a distance, so until they meet him at the Meryton assembly all the information they have is local gossip. At the ball, general opinion of Mr Bingley as agreeable and attractive is confirmed; his friend Mr Darcy, however, is judged to be proud and unfriendly. He slights Elizabeth by refusing to dance with her but she, unlike her mother, does not take his comments to heart and mocks his attitude. Mrs Bennet is delighted about Jane's success with Mr Bingley.

Chapter 4

In this chapter Jane and Elizabeth are contrasted, as are Bingley and Darcy. Jane's is a kind, uncritical nature, ready to see only good in people. Elizabeth, however, is more intelligent, more observant and more critical of people's failings. Jane is impressed by Bingley's two sisters. Elizabeth is more judgemental: since they have had all the upbringing and privileges of ladies they should act the part, but Elizabeth does not think they do. Bingley and Darcy are also presented as opposites, Bingley being less clever, but more 'amiable' than Darcy, who is 'haughty and reserved'. Their opinions of the ball are very different: Bingley enjoyed himself and thought the company was pleasant, while Darcy looks down on the type of person, and the entertainment offered, at a public ball.

Chapter 5

The Bennet women discuss the ball with their friends, the Lucases. Mrs Bennet boasts of Jane’s success at having danced twice with Bingley. Almost everyone except Jane agrees that Darcy’s pride is unacceptable, however Charlotte Lucas feels that his social rank gives him the right to be proud and Mary also expresses an opinion that pride and vanity are different things. A theme of the novel is thus introduced.

Chapter 6

The Bennets and the Bingley sisters become better acquainted. Caroline and Louisa appear to like Jane and Elizabeth, though Caroline declares the rest of the family to be ‘intolerable’. Jane takes pleasure in their friendship, though Elizabeth remains cool towards them. Charlotte Lucas warns that Jane must show her feelings if she wishes to encourage Bingley. She has a cynical view of marriage (‘Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance’) while Elizabeth has ideals, believing that marriage should be based on mutual understanding. Darcy begins to admire Elizabeth’s looks and lively personality. She is surprised by his attention and refuses to dance with him, thus gaining revenge for his insult of her. Miss Bingley is very jealous about Darcy’s changed opinion of Elizabeth.

1 The theme of marriage and money

The first sentence of the book is important. Whenever Austen says that ‘everybody’ thinks something, she is being ironic. Look out for this later in the novel.

Why is it ironic to say every rich young man is searching for a wife?

2 The Bennet family — first impressions of characters

Note down a piece of evidence about a key characteristic of each member of the Bennet family.

- Mr Bennet: sarcastic

- Mrs Bennet: stupid

- Jane: pretty

- Elizabeth: clever

- Mary: studious

- Lydia and Kitty: boisterous

3 Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy

Collect contrasting first impressions from the account of the Meryton assembly in Chapters 3 and 4.

- Mr Bingley

- Mr Darcy

4 The theme of pride

Chapter 5 introduces the Lucas family. Do you agree with Charlotte Lucas' comments about Darcy's supposed pride (pp. 17–18)?

Whole-text activities 9

Characters: Elizabeth's other suitors — Mr Collins and Mr Wickham

All novels in the romantic genre include a love rival (or two) for the heroine's affections. They have a range of reasons why they turn out to be unsuitable as husbands.

The Reverend William Collins

- is a truly comic character
- is a fool made almost grotesque by exaggeration
- is a character which goes beyond caricature to satire

From the moment he introduces himself in his letter to Mr Bennet, Mr Collins is presented as a strange mix of pompous self-importance and cringing deference to his social superiors. His obsequious admiration for Lady Catherine and all she does makes him blind to what she really is. His total lack of self-knowledge and any kind of self-awareness leads him to behave in a manner which is highly embarrassing to those around him; of this he is totally oblivious.

- 1 Focus on three parts of the novel where the humour is almost painful as Mr Collins' words and behaviour make you smile and squirm at the same time. Complete the chart with suitable quoted evidence and your own comments.

The event	The smile moments	The squirm moments
a Proposal to Elizabeth (Chapter 19, pp. 85–87)		
b At Hunsford (Chapter 38, pp. 167–68)		

The event	The smile moments	The squirm moments
c Letters about Lydia, (Chapter 48, p. 227 and Chapter 57, p. 280)		

Mr George Wickham

- is a contrast with Collins’ depiction as a comic suitor
- is competition for Darcy
- is good-looking
- is charming
- is easy company

Wickham singles out Elizabeth for his attentions, taking her into his confidence with the story of how Darcy denied him the promise of a career in the church. Mrs Gardiner warns Elizabeth not to become too involved with him because it would not be wise to become too close when the lack of money on either side would prevent them from marrying. She is right to be cautious, because Wickham next transfers his interest to a Miss King, who has just inherited a fortune.

Now the truth begins to surface: Darcy reveals how Wickham lost the promised inheritance, by choosing ‘a life of idleness and dissipation’ rather than a career in the church. Wickham then attempts to get his hands on Georgiana Darcy’s fortune by eloping with her. Thwarted in that, he tries his hand at a military career, which comes to a dishonourable conclusion when he succeeds in eloping with Lydia, leaving behind him a muddle of unpaid gambling debts in Meryton and Brighton.

Darcy’s virtues, such as his morally unimpeachable character, his honesty, his loyalty, his integrity are all the more striking by comparison with the dastardly Wickham.

2 Work with a partner. Make a list of ten things Wickham does which are bad (from lying, to gambling, to deceiving young girls). Rank in order with the worst at number 1 — for example, *downright immoral* (1) to *irresponsible* (10).

1 _____	6 _____
2 _____	7 _____
3 _____	8 _____
4 _____	9 _____
5 _____	10 _____

3 Compare your list with that of another pair and discuss any differences between the two lists.

Exam practice 1

Assessment Objectives

Exam and controlled assessment tasks are marked using the Assessment Objectives for English Literature. These are the same for each of the five English Literature specifications offered to schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Candidates will be required to demonstrate their ability to:

- respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations (AO1)
- explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings (AO2)
- make comparisons and explain links between texts, evaluating writers' different ways of expressing meaning and achieving effects (AO3)
- relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts; explain how texts have been influential and significant to self and other readers in different contexts and at different times (AO4)

AO1: knowledge and understanding of the content of the text

Candidates respond to texts critically: means you must say what you think of the novel and why. Show you can analyse the text. **Imaginatively** means you are expected to show a creative, original response.

You are asked to **select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations**. This involves careful choice of evidence from the text and giving your views on how effective the evidence is by analysis and evaluation. This AO also takes into consideration how clearly and coherently you write your answer.

Look at the part of the story where Elizabeth first arrives at Hunsford parsonage (Chapter 28, pp. 122–25).

- Rewrite the comments below in a style appropriate for a formal essay.
- Support each point with suitable quoted evidence or textual reference.
- Comment on the significance of the evidence — be **critical** and **creative** in your explanations.

1 When Liz arrives at the vicarage, she soon sees that Bill Collins is still behaving like a total jerk.

a Evidence:

b Significance of the evidence:

2 Charlotte is well shown up by her hubby and gets out of his way as much as poss.

a Evidence:

b Significance of the evidence:

3 Bill C is a nerdy bore who bangs on about stuff and counts everything and that.

a Evidence:

b Significance of the evidence:

4 Bill really goes for it when he bigs up Lady C, as if he's the one gets the respect.

a Evidence:

b Significance of the evidence:

5 It is well funny when Lady C arrives and Liz is really sarcy about all the excitement.

a Evidence:

b Significance of the evidence:

AO2: understanding and commenting on use of language

Candidates explore language, structure and form: the word ‘**language**’ refers to Austen’s choice of words, or style. For example, when Elizabeth visits Pemberley, Austen emphasises the unspoilt beauty of the grounds by use of phrases like: ‘a stream of some natural importance...without any artificial appearance...neither formal nor falsely adorned...’ (see pp. 187–88). These details do more than just describe, they make a judgement about Darcy’s character and taste; here language choice is also communicating an abstract idea.

The word ‘**structure**’ refers to the overall shape of the novel, as discussed in the ‘Plot and structure’ section of the accompanying *Philip Allan Literature Guide*. The way the plot unfolds over a year with a link between the events and the seasons is part of the novel’s structure.

The word ‘**form**’ is concerned with the genre of the text: Austen chooses to write in the form of a novel, rather than, say, a play script, but she is influenced by the form of the epistolary novel and she is contributing to the form of the modern romantic novel.

AQA-type higher-tier theme question

Referring to the relationship between Mr Bingley and Jane and between Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas, what positive and negative aspects of marriage does Jane Austen present in *Pride and Prejudice*? Remember to write about the society they live in.

Example answer

1 Introduction immediately contextualises the theme of marriage — good as AQA give marks to this — though even more important in WJEC and Edexcel answers.

2 Focus on question — it is clear where this answer is going.

3 Expression is maybe less formal than might be expected, however the views expressed show strong personal involvement with the task.

4 Good knowledge of text with well-chosen short quotations.

Jane Austen wrote 'Pride and Prejudice' in the late eighteenth century, and after about ten years of rewriting and perfecting the story, it was finally published in the early 1800s. During this time, people had a very different perception of marriage and what it meant than we do today. In Austen's lifetime, upper-class marriage was often more of a business arrangement than a romantic gesture, as the couple, and their families, had to take into consideration things such as money and social standing more so than love.¹ In the story there are several marriages presented with very different outcomes, some positive, some negative. The two which are the focus here are Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley, and Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins.²

One of the worst marriages in literature is that of Mr Collins to Charlotte Lucas. They are hardly compatible in any way: Charlotte is presented as being clever and sensible, whilst Collins seems to be a complete idiot, frankly!³ He is an unpleasant man, a strange mixture of 'servility and self-importance' is how Mr Bennet judges him on the basis of the letter of introduction he wrote, and he is accurate in his assessment. Collins has a comfortable living as a clergyman and the social standing that goes with his position. He spends most of his time talking about his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, presumably thinking that her very high status as a titled lady reflects well on him. His proposal mainly comes about because Lady Catherine has said he 'must marry...an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high' and he feels it 'a right thing...to set the example of matrimony in his parish.'⁴

Mr Collins seems to have no feelings of affection towards anyone in particular: he is interested in Jane at first, impressed by her looks, but moves easily enough 'from Jane to Elizabeth...soon done — done while Mrs Bennet was stirring the fire' when her mother tells him she will soon be engaged.

It becomes painstakingly clear that anyone who wished for love, or even fondness, could not marry him, especially when Elizabeth is about to be proposed to by him and is desperate to escape, ‘Dear madam, do not go. I beg you will not go.’ What follows is agony for her as he explains in great detail how Lady Catherine has instructed him to find a (useful) bride, which is insult enough — and when he finally comes to mentioning love (‘the violence of my affection’) he is more than a page into the more pressing reasons why she should accept.⁵ He cannot believe that she refuses him and complains to her mother. However he soon moves on again when he realises she has actually said no.

5 Very sound summary backed up with quotation.

His status as a clergyman ensures that he does manage to find a wife: Miss Charlotte Lucas is plain and in her late twenties making her undesirable as a bride, but this does not matter to Mr Collins as the main reason he is trying to find a wife is because Lady Catherine told him to. Charlotte sees him as her one and only chance: ‘I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home ...’⁶

6 Sound focus on the theme of marriage and various views about it.

All Charlotte wishes to marry for was a roof of her own over her head, and she also felt that her ‘chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.’ Their marriage is one of convenience and security. When Elizabeth visits them in her new home at Hunsford, it is clear that Charlotte is happy with her domestic arrangements, mainly by keeping out of her embarrassing husband’s way. She encourages him to spend much time in the garden and has chosen a sitting room for herself at the back of the house to dissuade her husband from wishing to spend time there. ‘When Mr Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout...’⁷

7 Pros and cons of the marriage investigated with good textual reference.

Mr Collins seems to be oblivious to his wife’s reluctance to be in his presence: he believes them to ‘have but one mind and one way of thinking...We seem to have been designed for each other.’ The irony of his total lack of understanding of his wife in turn amuses and disturbs the reader. Like Elizabeth when she leaves, it seems ‘melancholy to leave her to such society’. However, as Jane Austen continues ‘...she had chosen it with her eyes open...her home and her housekeeping...had not yet lost their charms.’⁸ At the end of the book Mr Collins hints in a letter to

8 Neat point made about authorial judgement.

Mr Bennet that she is pregnant. Best not to dwell on the unpleasant thoughts about this news: Charlotte may not have a loving marriage, but there is no doubt she will be a loving mother and will find satisfaction in the role.

Jane Bennet's marriage to Charles Bingley is of a very different kind. They are very well matched as characters from the moment they meet — in many ways they seem more like the conventional romantic hero and heroine of the story, for Jane is very beautiful and kind, though her family has little money. Mr Bingley is handsome, amiable, also kind and is very rich.⁹ This is a perfect match as they both have similar gentle and easy-going temperaments and both have strong feelings for each other that will probably amount to love.

Jane's fault is her ability to conceal her deepest feelings, and early in the novel Charlotte Lucas warns her of this very early on in her acquaintance with Bingley:

'...there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten a woman had better show more affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister, undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on.'¹⁰

She is absolutely right, for this is the reason that Darcy separates the couple. He is appalled by her family's behaviour and her mother's boasting that Jane and Bingley will soon be engaged at the Netherfield ball, but the real reason he takes his friend away is that he fears there is no real love on Jane's side and she is merely a fortune hunter.¹¹ Their months apart are caused by this lack of forcefulness in either of them too. Bingley is simply too easily persuaded by his friend that he is better to stay in London and look again, though he clearly never loses his feelings for Jane. When he next meets Elizabeth some eight months later he builds her hopes for Jane by saying 'in a tone which had something of real regret', that it 'was a very long time since he had had the pleasure of seeing her...We have not met since the 26th of November, when we were all dancing together at Netherfield.' The exactness of his memory shows the nature of his affection for her.¹²

9 Literary context — showing understanding of genre.

10 Good knowledge of text to back up comments about the nature of courtship.

11 Sound analysis of the significance of events.

12 Detailed knowledge of relevant parts of the plot — focus still strongly on the question.