

TEXTUAL EXAMPLES

# Examples of Pride and Prejudice in the Novel

Scene-by-Scene Evidence of Pride and Prejudice at Work

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Jane Austen • Pride and Prejudice • 1813  
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## Five Key Scenes That Show Pride and Prejudice in Action

The themes of pride and prejudice are not abstract in Austen's novel — they are enacted in specific scenes, specific words, specific moments of misjudgment and recognition. This guide identifies the five most important textual examples of each theme and explains exactly how Austen dramatises them.

### Example 1 — Pride: The Meryton Ball Insult (Ch. 3)

*...enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to  
young ladies who are slighted by other men."*

— Fitzwilliam Darcy, Chapter 3

This is the novel's original act of pride. Darcy refuses to dance with Elizabeth not because he dislikes her but because he is performing his social rank. The phrase 'give consequence' is revealing: in his world, a man of his status dancing with an unknown country girl elevates her — and he is unwilling to dispense this favour. This is pride as social economy: his attention is a currency he will not spend below his station.

### Example 2 — Prejudice: Elizabeth Accepts Wickham's Story (Ch. 16)

*...ner had established him at once in the possession of every  
virtue."*

— Narrator, Chapter 16

Elizabeth's instant acceptance of Wickham's account of Darcy is the novel's clearest example of prejudice in operation. She has already decided Darcy is arrogant and cruel; Wickham's story confirms this. She asks no probing questions, seeks no corroboration, notices no inconsistencies. Her prejudice has made her cognitively passive exactly where she should be most alert.

### Example 3 — Pride: Darcy's First Proposal (Ch. 34)

*...the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself  
...se condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?"*

— Fitzwilliam Darcy, Chapter 34

Darcy's first proposal is pride made audible. He declares love while simultaneously enumerating every social reason why loving Elizabeth is beneath him. The cognitive dissonance is extreme: he is trying to propose and maintain his social superiority simultaneously, and the result is a declaration of love that reads as an insult.

### Example 4 — Prejudice Overcome: Elizabeth Reads the Letter (Ch. 36)

*...who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have  
...ilities! Till this moment, I never knew myself."*

— Elizabeth Bennet, Chapter 36

This is the moment Elizabeth's prejudice collapses. Reading Darcy's letter, she is forced to confront the evidence she ignored, the questions she didn't ask, the conclusions she jumped to. The phrase 'I never knew myself' is the novel's most important admission: her prejudice was not just about Darcy — it was about a false self-image she had constructed around her supposed discernment.

### Example 5 — Pride Overcome: Darcy's Confession (Ch. 58)

*y life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was  
t taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles,  
follow them in pride and conceit."*

— Fitzwilliam Darcy, Chapter 5

Darcy's confession in the final proposal scene is the mirror image of Elizabeth's self-recognition in Chapter 36. Both characters have now achieved the self-knowledge the novel demanded of them. Darcy's pride has been not destroyed but corrected: he still has high standards, but he now applies them to himself as rigorously as to others. This is Austen's definition of mature pride — self-knowledge rather than self-congratulation.

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