

LOCATIONS & SETTINGS

# Longbourn in Pride and Prejudice

The Bennet Family Home — Security, Entailment, and Domestic Life

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Jane Austen • Pride and Prejudice • 1813  
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# Longbourn: Home as Both Shelter and Trap

Longbourn is the Bennet family's ancestral home in Hertfordshire, and it is simultaneously the novel's emotional centre and its central problem. It is where the family lives, loves, and argues — and it is the place they will be dispossessed of when Mr. Bennet dies. Longbourn is home as both shelter and trap: warm, real, and legally insecure.

## 1. The Physical Setting

Longbourn is an estate of approximately two thousand pounds per year — comfortable but not wealthy by the standards of the novel's upper characters. Mr. Bennet has a library where he retreats from domestic chaos; Mrs. Bennet has a drawing room where she receives callers and generates anxiety. The house is staffed by servants, has grounds for walking, and is within easy distance of Meryton — a world in miniature.

*of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that my years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character."*

— Narrator, Chapter 1

## 2. Mr. Bennet's Library: The Room of Retreat

Mr. Bennet's library is Longbourn's most symbolic space. He retreats there from his wife's nerves, his younger daughters' noise, and the relentless social performance of Hertfordshire life. It is the only space in the house that belongs to him entirely — and it is the symbol of his failure: he has retreated from his family duties into ironic detachment.

## 3. The Entailment: Longbourn's Shadow

Longbourn's beauty and comfort are shadowed throughout the novel by the entailment — the legal mechanism that will pass the estate to Collins on Mr. Bennet's death. Every ball, every morning call, every romantic possibility in the novel occurs against this background: the family's home is not truly theirs.

*ers happily settled at Netherfield, and all the others equally  
d, I shall have nothing to wish for."*

— Mrs. Bennet, Chapter 1

Mrs. Bennet's urgency is not vanity alone — it is fear. Longbourn's loss is a real, imminent threat. Her matchmaking, which the novel finds comic, is a survival strategy in response to genuine vulnerability.

## 4. Longbourn After the Marriages

At the novel's end, with Jane at Netherfield and Elizabeth at Pemberley, Longbourn is transformed. Mr. Bennet is a frequent visitor to both daughters; the threat of Collins's inheritance recedes into the background. Longbourn does not become secure — the entail remains — but it becomes less central. The daughters have built new homes, and Longbourn is no longer a trap.

