

ICONIC QUOTES & SCENES

# The Best Quotes About Pride in the Novel

Analysis of Pride, Arrogance, and Self-Knowledge in Pride and Prejudice

---

Jane Austen • Pride and Prejudice • 1813  
[compress.aurorapdf.com](https://compress.aurorapdf.com)

## Pride in Pride and Prejudice: A Spectrum, Not a Flaw

Pride is the novel's first and most examined theme — it sits in the title, it drives Darcy's opening insult, and it governs the arc of both protagonists. But Austen's treatment of pride is far more sophisticated than simple condemnation. She distinguishes carefully between pride as legitimate self-respect and pride as social arrogance. The following are the novel's most significant quotes on this theme, with full analysis.

### Quote 1 — Mary Bennet's Definition

*"A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us."*

— Mary Bennet, Chapter 5

Mary's observation is the novel's philosophical anchor. Austen places this distinction in the mouth of her most pedantic, least socially perceptive character — which is itself a joke. Mary is technically correct, but she delivers the insight with no awareness of how it applies to the very conversation happening around her. Darcy is proud (high self-regard) but not vain (indifferent to others' opinions). Wickham is vain (obsessively performing charm) but not proud in any legitimate sense.

### Quote 2 — Elizabeth on Darcy's Pride

*"I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine."*

— Elizabeth Bennet, Chapter 5

This is one of Austen's most precisely constructed ironic sentences. Elizabeth frames her objection as a principled critique of Darcy's character — but the qualifier 'if he had not mortified mine' reveals that her objection is personal, not philosophical. She is wounded, not righteous. Her own pride has been injured at the Meryton ball, where Darcy declared her 'not handsome enough to tempt me,' and this injury will distort her judgment for the next two volumes.

### Quote 3 — Darcy's Self-Assessment

*"I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was right, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit."*

— Fitzwilliam Darcy, Chapter 58

This is Darcy's confession of moral failure — and it is extraordinary for its precision. He does not blame his upbringing (his principles were sound) or his nature (he knew what was right). He blames the absence of correction. No one ever challenged his temper, his condescension, his social arrogance — because he was too powerful to challenge. Elizabeth — uniquely — dared to challenge him, and this is why she is the

right match for him. She corrected what his wealth and rank could not.

### Quote 4 — Lady Catherine on Her Own Superiority

*"I am no stranger to the particulars of your youngest sister's infamous elopement...  
Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?"*

— Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Chapter 56

'The shades of Pemberley' is one of Austen's great comic phrases — the gravity of Lady Catherine's aristocratic self-importance compressed into six words of absurd grandiosity. Her pride is purely social, entirely external, and completely blind to her own vulgarity. In confronting Elizabeth, she inadvertently causes the very outcome she is trying to prevent, because her interference makes Darcy understand that Elizabeth has not rejected him.

### Quote 5 — Darcy's First Impression of Elizabeth

*"She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men."*

— Fitzwilliam Darcy, Chapter 3

This is the novel's original sin — the single sentence that sets the entire plot in motion. Darcy's pride here is not merely social snobbery; it is a failure of perception. He looks at Elizabeth and sees a social category (a country miss, not fashionable) rather than a person. The entire novel is the working-out of what that failure of perception costs him — and what it takes to overcome it.

### Synthesis: What Austen Argues About Pride

Austen's argument is subtle: pride is not inherently wrong. Darcy's pride — his refusal to perform charm, his directness, his high standards — is part of what makes him worth loving. What is wrong is pride without self-knowledge. The novel's moral arc is not the defeat of pride but its refinement: both Elizabeth and Darcy achieve a pride grounded in genuine self-understanding rather than defensive ego. This is what Austen means by 'a truth universally acknowledged' — the universal human tendency to mistake social performance for inner worth.

