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Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Check off study guide questions as you answer / discuss them.

Pride and Prejudice is not an action story; it is a study of personalities and social traditions. Concentrate on the people and how they act.

When we hear the word *prejudice* today, we automatically think of racial conflicts. In 1790's England, the prejudices are social. Most of the characters in this story belong to the gentry class. This term "gentry" applies to any family in which the money to live on is inherited, not earned on a daily basis.

_____ 1. Give examples of how the different levels of income affect the way the characters in this book treat each other.

Royalty	King, Queen, and their family
Nobility	Lords and Ladies. The heads of these households have been "knighted"
Gentry	Any family who has enough money on deposit to live off the interest. The income may be large, or it may be barely enough to get by on, but the man is a gentleman if he doesn't have to work to support his family.
Working class	anyone who works at a profession or a business. The working class includes doctors, lawyers, shop owners, etc.
Domestic class	servants, can be housekeeper, cook, butler, gardener, groom, etc.

- The main characters are the Bennet family. Mr. Bennet committed a huge social error in marrying Mrs. Bennet. He was the son of a gentleman; she was not the daughter of a gentleman. Since she was very pretty, Mr. Bennet married her even though she had not had the upbringing and training a gentleman's wife should have had.

_____ 2. Pay close attention to the manner in which Mr. Bennet treats his wife and his daughters. Does he treat them the way other gentlemen treat the women in their families?

_____ 3. How do Mrs. Bennet and her daughters behave? Do they act as other gentlewomen behave?

_____ 4. What one characteristic in a man is Mrs. Bennet interested in when it comes to finding husbands for her daughters?

- Another main family is the Bingley family. Mr. Bingley and his sisters Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are quite wealthy. Apparently their parents are no longer living, Mr. Bingley is the head of the house, Mrs. Bennet announces that she has heard that Mr. Bingley is worth 5,000 pounds a year. (Approximately 10,000 U.S. dollars in 1790.) This is a great deal of money. Be aware of how this income affects the Bingleys' attitudes.

_____ 5. How do the Bingley sisters treat those they think are socially beneath them?

_____ 6. How do the Bingley family treat one another?

_____ 7. Is this family really better off socially than the Bennets?

- Another key family is the Darcy family. Mr. Darcy is worth 30,000 pounds a year. (You can do the math) He is extremely wealthy. Be aware of how his wealth affects his relationships with others.

_____ 8. Darcy appears very proud. By the end of the story you should realize that yes, he is proud of his family and his wealth, but he is also very shy. Explain which you think controls his actions more, his pride or his shyness.

_____ 9. Darcy has a sister who is ten years younger than he is; describe how they treat each other. Do they treat each other this way because of pride, wealth, or shyness?

- Mr. Gardner is Mrs. Bennet's brother, he is a businessman. He's probably wealthier than the Bennets, but he is in a lower social class because he works for his money.
- Mrs. Phillips is Mrs. Bennet's sister; her husband is a lawyer. In those days, lawyers were not as highly regarded as they are today, especially since it was a job.

_____ 10. Be aware of the way men and women treat each other, and how they act in social and home settings. How is this behavior different than the way we treat each other today?