

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

Jane Austen's Life ° Jane Austen was born on December 16,

in 1775 at Steventon, a tiny village. Her father was a minister of the place. The family was very close, and Jane had a particular closeness to her sister Cassandra. Jane was educated at home. She lived a calm, quiet and uneventful life. Occasional private theatricals and rare visits to the fashionable town, Bath and London broke the monotony of her home life. She began to write at an early age. She died at Winchester in 1817 and was buried in the cathedral. She was a bright, attractive little woman, whose sunny qualities are unconsciously reflected in all her books.

Her Works ° Sense and Sensibility (1811), Pride and Prejudice (1813), Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1816), Northanger Abbey (1818), Persuasion (1818).

Pride And Prejudice

Themes ° The major theme of the novel is the importance of marriage to individuals and society. Throughout the novel, the author describes the various types of marriages — marriage out of economic compulsions, marriage due to sensual pleasure. We can also find the marriage of Jane and Elizabeth are the outcome of true love.

between well-matched persons.

As a minor theme Austen stresses that a person cannot be judged by his/her outer being. During the course of the book, several characters are not properly judged, for good conduct does not necessarily mean good character, just as a pretty face does not indicate a pure soul.

Background :

Social and Cultural Background : Most novels show the customs and values of a particular society, often criticizing it. *Pride and Prejudice* is, thus, set among the several middle and upper classes who are landowners. None of the major characters works, for these moneyed classes live entirely on their income from rents and inheritances.

Class distinctions in Jane Austen's time were in fact very rigid. The land-owning aristocracy belonged to the highest rung of the social ladder, and all power was in their hands. Next in rank came the gentry. The new prosperous industrialists and traders (like Mr. Gardiner) were gradually rising as a class, but had still not won the right to vote. The lowest in English society were the workers and laborers.

The women of the time led a largely

restricted life. For the poor and the lower-class women, there was ample work in the home and in the fields to keep them busy. But for the ladies of the landed upper-classes, life was one big round of dances, dinners, cards and visits to friends and relatives. They were not required to do any household work. Women's education in the nineteenth century was restricted to the daughters of a few families of the upper classes. Rich and noble families (like that of Lady Catherine de Bourgh) engaged governesses educating their daughters or sent them away to boarding school, but most women were self-educated at home.

Jane Austen turns her attention in entirely to the things she knew: family and values. Because at her time communication of mail and news was slow, and there were no daily newspapers. As a result, the outside world does not play a part in Austen's novels.

Travelling in Austen's time was accomplished in horse drawn carriages, and a family's social status was determined by its kind of carriage. Because carriages were slow, travel was limited.