British Literature

*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

**Characters/Relationships:**

The Bennet Family – gentility (socially high ranked within their community, do not work for a living, employ servants, own property), not exceptionally wealthy, live outside the town of Meryton on their estate, Longbourne.

* Mr. Bennet – never saved money for the future, married young, makes fun of wife and daughters for being frivolous, hides in library often for privacy, favors second daughter
* Mrs. Bennet – loud, obsessed with her daughters’ future prospects, favors youngest daughter, gossiper
* Jane Bennet – oldest daughter, prettiest daughter, about 22-23 years old, pressured to make a good marriage, pleasant, kind, mild-mannered.
* Elizabeth Bennet – second daughter, independent, sharp-witted and occasionally sarcastic, 20-21 years old, likes to read, enjoys the outdoors, main character of the text.
* Mary Bennet – middle daughter, studious and determined to be accomplished (but lacks natural ability), least pretty of the daughters, not sociable, 18-19 years old
* Catherine (Kitty) Bennet – fourth daughter, follower, often whiny, 17-18 years old
* Lydia Bennet – youngest daughter, loud, lacks discretion, spoiled, flirty, stubborn, 15-16 years old.

The Bingley Party – Bingley’s are wealthy, but do not own their own estate. They rent an estate in the same neighborhood as the Bennet’s estate. They socialize with other wealthy and powerful people.

* Charles Bingley – young man, has family fortune and is eligible to marry, friendly, sociable, and easy-going (sometimes too easy-going).
* Caroline Bingley – single sister that is actively looking for a husband, educated, has a nice fortune, bit of a snob
* Louisa Hurst – married sister (to a Mr. Hurst), well educated, snobby
* Mr. Hurst – married to Louisa, drinks a lot
* Mr. Darcy – friend to Mr. Bingley, single and very wealthy, owns large estate (Pemberly) and has one younger sister, head of his family and eligible to marry, tall, handsome, but not friendly

The Lucas Family – neighbors of the Bennets, frequently interact with Bennets.

* Sir William Lucas – made money in trade and given honorary knighthood, bought estate in the country
* Lady Lucas – gossips with Mrs. Bennet
* Charlotte Lucas – friend with Elizabeth, 28 and looking for a husband
* Maria Lucas – younger sister, socializes with Bennet girls
* Several younger Lucas children

Other characters:

* Mr. Phillips – lawyer, married into Bennet family
* Mrs. Phillips – Mrs. Bennet’s sister and main gossip partner
* Mr. Gardiner – Mrs. Bennet’s brother, works in trade in London, kindly, fairly well off
* Mrs. Gardiner – younger wife, kind, close to older Bennet sisters
* Mr. Collins – Mr. Bennet’s cousin, 25 years old, clergyman, subservient to his patroness, odd, uncomfortably awkward and sometimes conceited
* Lady Catherine DeBourgh – wealthy, nobility, Mr. Collins’ patroness, very snobby, outspoken
* Anne DeBourgh – sickly daughter of Lady Catherine
* Georgiana Darcy – Mr. Darcy’s younger sister, 16-17 years old
* Mr. Wickham – soldier, socializes with Bennets (storyline to come)
* Colonel Forster – leader of militia presence staying in Meryton for the Winter

More details and relationships to be described as read.

In volume I, we are introduced to the main characters listed above. Elizabeth Bennet is our central character and her views and opinions will be prevalent throughout the text. Her interactions are important, so pay attention to the people she spends time with and the opinions she forms about them.

**Themes to take note of:**

* Class – nobility, gentility, merchants, clergy, working class. Pay attention to the characters who fall into these categories and how they interact.
* Marriage – marital expectations like social connections, dowries, and age differences. Look closely at marriages and potential matches.
* Gender roles – mostly, look at how women are portrayed. Female accomplishments, education, and voice in the text are worth a close look.

**Questions to complete in notebook for next class – I will check (graded as homework):**

1. The original title of the novel was “First Impressions.” After reading the first few chapters, what kind of first impressions do you have of the characters so far – list three characters and what you think of them, using details from the text. Then note the first impressions of several characters towards other characters – write down, using the text, three characters’ impressions of a character they are introduced to in these chapters.

2. The Bennets often complain about money, but they own property, employ servants, and none of the girls know how to cook, clean, or manage a household. What, then, is the problem in regards to Mr. Bennet’s fortune? Why does the gender of his children matter? Explain.