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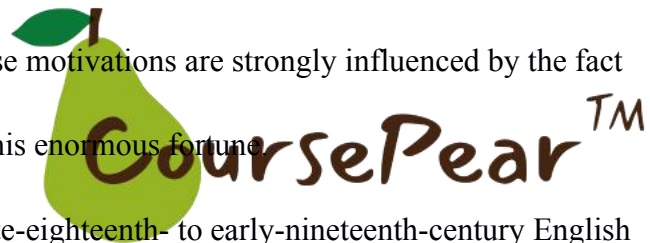
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Money Matters: Elizabeth Bennet's Marital Motives in Pride and Prejudice

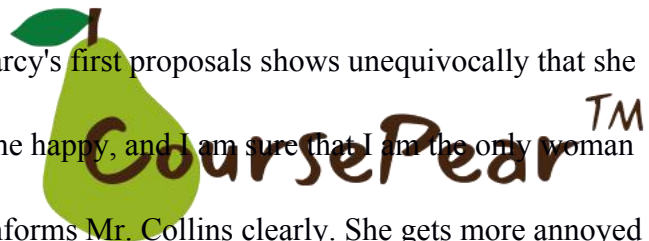
Throughout Jane Austen's book *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet seems to act on her own desires with more regard for her own emotions than her position's reality. Notably, Ms. Bennet declines two very secure marriage offers since she is not interested in marrying the men who approach her. Toward the novel's conclusion, Elizabeth reluctantly accepts Mr. Darcy's second marriage proposal. Her acceptance of his second proposal does not reflect their compatibility or of his character, as Austen may imply. Elizabeth gets more familiar with Mr. Darcy's money and how he utilizes it between the first and second offers. Whether it's beautiful furnishings or preserving the Bennet family's name, Mr. Darcy never fails to amaze Elizabeth with tangible riches expressions of his character. Although Austen makes reference to Elizabeth's independence and progressive character in choosing Darcy as her spouse, Ms. Bennet's primary motivations are socioeconomic in origin. These motivations are strongly influenced by the fact that Darcy's persona is inextricably linked to his enormous fortune.

The location of *Pride and Prejudice* in late-eighteenth- to early-nineteenth-century English society is critical for understanding marriage as more than a social construct. Marriage is a profession for the ladies in the book. Jane Austen makes no mention of the characters'



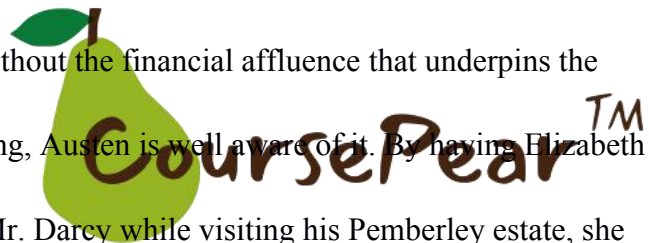
employment prospects. They may inherit money independently, particularly if their spouses or families die, as was the case with Lady Catherine. However, this is a rare occurrence since Lady Catherine is the only lady in the tale who is fully financially self-sufficient. Elizabeth lacks the economic means necessary to make independent decisions. Elizabeth has the choice of marrying or remaining quite humble in her old age. As a lady from the middle class with little resources and no inheritance, Elizabeth has a motivation to marry as a profession, much as Wickham does when he joins the military. Why would she then refuse not one but two offers from wealthy men? Elizabeth is twenty years old and therefore has the option of deferring marriage for many years, in contrast to Charlotte Lucas, who, at the age of twenty-seven, has a considerably narrower window of marriable years left. In contrast to Charlotte, who is regarded as very plain, Elizabeth is described as having a decent look. Darcy remarks on the "lovely black look of her dark eyes" and on her "light and attractive physique" (Austen 16). Elizabeth does not have an urgent economic obligation to marry due to her age and looks, and therefore has the option of deferring her own personal will.

Elizabeth takes decisions for her own pleasure in the absence of urgent economic obligations. Her response to both Mr. Collins's and Mr. Darcy's first proposals shows unequivocally that she dislikes both. "You could not possibly make me happy, and I am sure that I am the only woman on Earth who could" (Austen 82). Elizabeth informs Mr. Collins clearly. She gets more annoyed with each of his repeated pleas, obviously uninterested in him despite the fact that Mr. Collins will inherit her father's fortune and could give her a nice life. She feels the same way about Mr.



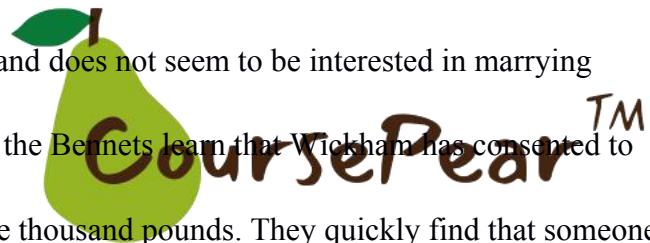
Darcy. "You could not have presented your hand to me in any manner that would have persuaded me to take it" (Austen 148), she informs him. Although Elizabeth is aware that Mr. Darcy is a wealthy man, she is uninterested in him because he stopped her sister Jane from seeing her love interest, Mr. Bingley. In this instance, the economic security provided by a rich spouse is in no way worth abandoning the family she loves.

Elizabeth had a change of heart regarding Mr. Darcy throughout the course of the book. Although she seems to joke about "It has been creeping up on me so gently that I'm not sure when it started. However, I think I must date it from the first time I saw his magnificent gardens at Pemberley" (Austen 286). After a deeper study of the text, it is clear that her humor has some reality. This joke about Elizabeth adoring Darcy's material riches is not completely baseless since it is on her first visit to Pemberley that Elizabeth reconsiders Darcy's marriage proposal for the first time. Elizabeth views Pemberley as a reflection of its owner but also of his means. Austen characterizes Elizabeth's assessment of Darcy's furnishings as "suited to its proprietor's wealth" (Austen 186). Although Elizabeth views Darcy's real possessions as a sign of his own taste, money and taste are not mutually incompatible. Darcy's choice in décor is beautiful yet unostentatious, which would be impossible without the financial affluence that underpins the things. Although this inseparability is unsettling, Austen is well aware of it. By having Elizabeth subsequently joke about falling in love with Mr. Darcy while visiting his Pemberley estate, she brings the reader's attention to Elizabeth's initial visit.



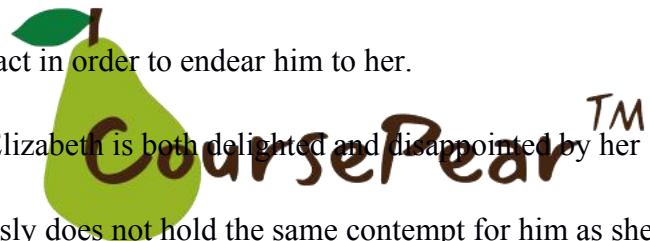
Elizabeth reconsiders her rejection of Darcy's marriage proposal many times at Pemberley. "And of this place,' she reasoned, 'I might have been mistress. I could have become acquainted by now! Rather than regard them as strangers, I might have delighted in them as my own'" (Austen 186) ponders she. Elizabeth is obviously interested in the material riches, comfort, and social progress that is residing in such a home would entail. It is important to notice that she is content to be in the estate's natural setting. Her pleasure at Darcy's house corresponds to the happiness she desires in marriage. Elizabeth emphasizes the significance of familiarity and ownership via the internal thinking process to which the reader is privy. It is not sufficient to be in the presence of Pemberley's magnificence and to take pleasure in its beauty. Elizabeth's thoughts shift to ownership of Pemberley's beautiful material possessions. If she can connect Darcy's possession of the tangible with him, he may not be as unmarketable as she had previously believed.

Mr. Darcy's last act for the Bennets also demonstrates how, despite his strength, Mr. Darcy's character is highly reliant on his enormous fortune. When Lydia goes away with Wickham, there is a high possibility that her rash decision will bring shame upon the whole Bennet line. Mr. Wickham behaves recklessly with his money and does not seem to be interested in marrying Lydia. However, they become skeptical when the Bennets learn that Wickham has consented to marry Lydia for an absurdly tiny dowry of five thousand pounds. They quickly find that someone has bribed Wickham to marry Lydia, thereby preserving the Bennet family's reputation. Lydia then informs Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy, a stranger to the Lydia-Wickham romance, was present at



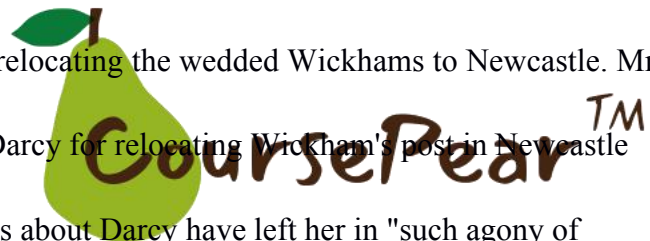
their wedding. Her aunt subsequently reveals to her that Darcy tracked down Lydia and Wickham, talked with them, and guaranteed a happy union. Lydia was determined to marry Wickham and Wickham expecting to earn his fortune via marriage. "There was nothing that needed to be done that he did not already do" (Austen 246). Mrs. Gardiner composes a letter to Elizabeth. Darcy's attempts to save Elizabeth's sister from social and economic ruin were undoubtedly a labor of love; he spent much time tracking down the lovers and negotiating a solution for both to be happy. Mr. Darcy, on the other hand, financially supported a couple with whom he was needlessly associated. Mrs. Gardiner tells Elizabeth in her letter that Lydia's uncle, Mr. Gardiner, would have made the same financial settlement just as quickly. Darcy, however, assumed the financial burden of reuniting Wickham and Lydia. Despite the fact that Lydia and Mrs. Gardiner were not meant to inform Elizabeth about Darcy's participation in the affair, she learns of it very soon. Mrs. Gardiner wrote of Mr. Darcy's action, "I considered him extremely sly;— he scarcely ever mentioned your name." However, slyness seems to be the fashion" (Austen 246). Mr. Darcy's "slyness," rather than his "selflessness" or "generosity," indicates that he had ulterior intentions in joining Lydia and Wickham. Mr. Darcy's cunning gives him a false feeling of humility, implying that he meant for Elizabeth to learn about his act in order to endear him to her.

Darcy's maneuver was very successful; Elizabeth is both delighted and disappointed by her aunt's favorable opinion of Darcy. She obviously does not hold the same contempt for him as she had after his first proposal to her. "Her heart whispered that he had done it for her... while she would not put herself as his primary incentive, she could think that staying partial to her would



aid his efforts in a cause involving her financial well-being" (Austen 248) Elizabeth contemplates. She feels relieved that she may be a factor in Darcy's decision to get involved in such an intricate and inconvenient plan. Darcy's participation in the Lydia-Wickham marriage, particularly if it is motivated by Elizabeth, demonstrates his riches. It is a method for him to show both his moral integrity and his financial success. Although Elizabeth does not explicitly mention the huge sum of money Darcy spent on the affair, his attempts demonstrate that he has a substantial amount of disposable cash. It's normal for a lady wanting future financial stability to watch Elizabeth's interest in Darcy grow.

Elizabeth may also view marrying Mr. Darcy as a way to escape her family's annoyances, which is partly indicative of a lack of refinement in comparison to the well-mannered Darceys and Bingleys. According to Austen, "had Elizabeth developed her judgment entirely on the basis of her own family, she could hardly have constructed a very pleasant image of marital felicity" (Austen 180). Elizabeth and Darcy are aware of the bulk of the Bennet clan's impure manners. Lydia is an egregious example since she flees with a guy who does not really want to marry her and then needs outside assistance to escape complete social disgrace. Darcy assists by separating Lydia from the rest of the Bennet family and relocating the wedded Wickhams to Newcastle. Mrs. Bennet is also quite harsh in her criticism of Darcy for relocating Wickham's post in Newcastle so far from the Bennet household. Her remarks about Darcy have left her in "such agony of humiliation" (Austen 257). While Mrs. Bennet is ignorant of Mr. Darcy's aid to her family, the reader and Elizabeth are aware of how impolite her remarks are in light of the amount of money



he contributed to their assistance. Her father is not much more etiquette-conscious. When he discovers Darcy's intentions for Elizabeth, he finds the situation amusing. Rather than discussing the incident with Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy prefers to make jokes about it, regardless of whether they are suitable. While the reader is aware of Elizabeth's embarrassment at her family's behavior, Elizabeth is unaware. With her disdain for their often impolite behavior, Elizabeth gradually distances herself from her family, only visiting them on rare occasions. Her marriage to Darcy provides her with a huge estate relatively close to Longbourne, allowing her to flee her family.

At the conclusion of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet's choice to marry Mr. Darcy is heavily influenced by his socioeconomic qualities. This is partly because Mr. Darcy's personality, concern for others, and expression of self via his house are intimately connected to his riches. Elizabeth's personality does not influence her marriage choices. She recognizes that pleasure is dependent not just on personality but also on the level of comfort afforded by financial riches and social status.

