

Characters

- **Elizabeth Bennet** – the second-eldest of the Bennet daughters, she is attractive, witty and intelligent – but with a tendency to form tenacious and prejudiced first impressions. As the story progresses, so does her relationship with Mr Darcy. The course of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is ultimately decided when Darcy overcomes his pride, and Elizabeth overcomes her prejudice, leading them both to surrender to their love for each other.
- **Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy** – Mr Bingley's friend and the wealthy owner of the family estate of **Pemberley** in **Derbyshire**, rumoured to be worth at least £10,000 a year. While he is handsome, tall, and intelligent, Darcy lacks ease and **social graces**, and so others frequently mistake his initially haughty reserve as proof of excessive pride (which, in part, it is). A new visitor to the village, he is ultimately Elizabeth Bennet's love interest. Though he appears to be proud and is largely disliked by people for this reason, his servants vouch for his kindness and decency.
- **Mr Bennet** – A logical and reasonable late-middle-aged **landed gentleman** of a more modest income of £2,000 per annum, and the dryly sarcastic **patriarch** of the now-dwindling **Bennet family** (a family of **Hertfordshire** landed gentry), with five unmarried daughters. His estate, Longbourn, is **entailed** to the male line. His affection for his wife wore off early in their marriage and is now reduced to mere toleration. He is often described as 'indolent' in the novel.
- **Mrs Bennet (née Gardiner)** – the middle-aged wife of her social superior, Mr Bennet, and the mother of their five daughters (Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine and Lydia). Mrs Bennet is a **hypochondriac** who imagines herself susceptible to attacks of tremors and palpitations (her "poor nerves") whenever things are not going her way. Her main ambition in life is to marry her daughters off to wealthy men. Whether or not any such matches will give her daughters happiness is of little concern to her. She was settled a **dowry** of £4,000 from her father.

In a letter to Cassandra dated May 1813, Jane Austen describes a picture she saw at a gallery which was a good likeness of "Mrs Bingley" – Jane Bennet. Deirdre Le Faye in *The World of Her Novels* suggests that "Portrait of Mrs Q" is the picture Austen was referring to. (pp. 201–203)

- **Jane Bennet** – the eldest Bennet sister. She is considered the most beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood and is **inclined to see only the good in others** (but can be persuaded otherwise on sufficient evidence). She falls in love with Charles Bingley, a rich young gentleman recently moved to Hertfordshire and a close friend of Mr Darcy.
- **Mary Bennet** – the middle Bennet sister, and the plainest of her siblings. Mary has a serious disposition and mostly reads and plays music, although she is often impatient to display her accomplishments and is rather vain about them. She frequently moralises to her family. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, Mary ended up marrying one of her Uncle Philips' law clerks and moving into Meryton with him.
- **Catherine "Kitty" Bennet** – the fourth Bennet daughter. Though older than Lydia, she is her shadow and follows her in her pursuit of the officers of the militia. She is often portrayed as envious of Lydia and is described as a "silly" young woman. However, it is said that she improved when removed from Lydia's influence. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, Kitty later married a clergyman who lived near Pemberley.
- **Lydia Bennet** – the youngest Bennet sister. She is frivolous and headstrong. Her main activity in life is socialising, especially flirting with the officers of the militia. This leads to her running off with George Wickham, although he has no intention of marrying her. Lydia shows no regard for the moral code of her society; as Ashley Tauchert says, she "feels without reasoning".^[5]
- **Charles Bingley** – a handsome, amiable, wealthy young gentleman (a *nouveau riche*) from the north of England (possibly **Yorkshire**, as **Scarborough** is mentioned, and there is, in fact, a real-life town called **Bingley** in **West Yorkshire**), who leases Netherfield Park, an estate three miles from Longbourn, with the hopes of purchasing it. He is contrasted with Mr Darcy for having more generally pleasing manners, although he is reliant on his more experienced friend for advice. An example of this is the prevention of Bingley and Jane's romance because of Bingley's undeniable dependence on Darcy's opinion.^[6] He lacks resolve and is easily influenced by others; his two sisters, Miss Caroline Bingley and Mrs Louisa Hurst, both disapprove of Bingley's growing affection for Miss Jane Bennet. He inherited a fortune of £100,000.^[7]
- **Caroline Bingley** – the **vainglorious**, snobbish sister of Charles Bingley, with a fortune of £20,000. Miss Bingley harbours designs upon Mr Darcy, and therefore is jealous of his growing attachment to Elizabeth. She attempts to dissuade Mr Darcy from liking Elizabeth by ridiculing the Bennet family and criticising Elizabeth's comportment. Miss Bingley also disapproves of her brother's esteem for Jane Bennet, and is disdainful of

society in Meryton. Her wealth (which she overspends) and her expensive education seem to be the two greatest sources of Miss Bingley's **vanity** and **conceit**; likewise, she is very insecure about the fact that her and her family's money all comes from trade, and is eager both for her brother to purchase an estate, elevating the Bingleys to the ranks of the gentry, and for herself to marry a landed gentleman (i.e. Mr Darcy). The dynamic between Miss Bingley and her sister, Louisa Hurst, seems to echo that of Lydia and Kitty Bennet, and of Mrs Bennet and Mrs Phillips, in that one sister of the pair is no more than a follower of the other: Caroline occupies the same position as Lydia does with Kitty, and Louisa the same position as Mrs Bennet with Mrs Phillips (though, in Louisa's case, as she is already married, she is not under the same pressure as Caroline). Louisa is married to Mr Hurst, who has a house in **Grosvenor Square**, London.

- **George Wickham** – Wickham has been acquainted with Mr Darcy since infancy, being the son of Mr Darcy's father's steward. An officer in the militia, he is **superficially charming** and rapidly forms an attachment with Elizabeth Bennet. He later runs off with Lydia with no intention of marriage, which would have resulted in her and her family's complete disgrace, but for Darcy's intervention to bribe Wickham to marry her by paying off his immediate debts.
- **Mr William Collins** – Mr Collins is Mr Bennet's distant second cousin, a clergyman, and the current heir presumptive to his estate of Longbourn House. He is an obsequious and pompous man, prone to making long and tedious speeches, who is excessively devoted to his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh.
- **Lady Catherine de Bourgh** – the overbearing aunt of Mr Darcy. Lady Catherine is the wealthy owner of Rosings Park, where she resides with her daughter Anne and is fawned upon by her rector, Mr Collins. She is haughty, pompous, domineering, and condescending, and has long planned to marry off her sickly daughter to Darcy, to 'unite their two great estates', claiming it to be the dearest wish of both her and her late sister, Lady Anne Darcy (née Fitzwilliam).
- **Mr Edward Gardiner and Mrs Gardiner** – Edward Gardiner is Mrs Bennet's brother and a successful tradesman of sensible and gentlemanly character. Aunt Gardiner is genteel and elegant and is close to her nieces Jane and Elizabeth. The Gardiners are the parents of four children. They are instrumental in bringing about the marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth.
- **Georgiana Darcy** – Georgiana is Mr Darcy's quiet, amiable and shy younger sister, with a **dowry** of £30,000, and is aged barely 16 when the story begins. When still 15, Miss Darcy almost eloped with Mr Wickham but was saved by her brother, whom she idolises. Thanks to years of tutelage under masters, she is accomplished at the piano, singing, playing the harp,

drawing, and modern languages and is therefore described as Caroline Bingley's idea of an "accomplished woman".

- **Charlotte Lucas** – Charlotte is Elizabeth's friend who, at 27 years old (and thus beyond what was then considered prime marriageable age), fears becoming a burden to her family and therefore readily agrees to marry Mr Collins to gain financial security, having seized the opportunity to claim his attentions after Elizabeth turns down his proposal. Though the novel stresses the importance of love and understanding in marriage, Austen never seems to condemn Charlotte's decision to marry for security. She uses Charlotte to convey how women of her time would adhere to society's expectation for women to marry even if it is not out of love, but convenience.^[8] Charlotte is the daughter of Sir William Lucas and Lady Lucas, neighbours of the Bennet family.
- **Colonel Fitzwilliam** – Colonel Fitzwilliam is the younger son of an earl and the nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Lady Anne Darcy; this makes him the cousin of Anne de Bourgh and the Darcy siblings, Fitzwilliam and Georgiana. He is about 30 years old at the beginning of the novel. He is the coguardian of Miss Georgiana Darcy, along with his cousin, Mr Darcy. According to Colonel Fitzwilliam, as a younger son, he cannot marry without thought to his prospective bride's dowry.

