

## Summary: Chapters 9–10

The next day, [Mrs. Bennet](#) arrives with [Lydia](#) and Catherine to visit [Jane](#). To [Elizabeth's](#) dismay, Mrs. Bennet spends much of her visit trying to convince [Bingley](#) to remain at Netherfield. During her stay, Mrs. Bennet makes a general fool of herself, first by comparing country life to the city and then by prattling on about Jane's beauty. Near the end of the visit, fifteen-year-old Lydia asks Bingley whether he will hold a ball at Netherfield Park. He replies that he must wait until Jane is fully recovered to hold a ball.

In the evening, Elizabeth observes Miss Bingley piling compliments upon Darcy as he writes to his sister. The conversation turns to Bingley's style of letter writing and then to Bingley's impetuous behavior, which entangles Elizabeth and Darcy in an argument over the virtues of accepting the advice of friends. Afterward, Miss Bingley plays "a lively Scotch air" on the pianoforte, and Elizabeth again refuses to dance with Darcy. Her refusal only increases his admiration, and he considers that "were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger." Miss Bingley, observing his attraction, becomes jealous and spends the following day making fun of Elizabeth's family, inviting Darcy to imagine them connected to his proud and respectable line.

That night, Miss Bingley begins reading in imitation of Darcy—a further attempt to impress him. She chooses her book merely because it is the second volume of the one that Darcy is reading. Of course, being uninterested in literature, she is quickly bored and says loudly, "I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of

any thing than of a book!—When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library.”

### **Summary: Chapters 11–12**

Miss Bingley spends the following night in similar fashion, trying to attract Darcy’s attention: first by reading, then by criticizing the foolishness of balls, and finally by walking about the room. Only when she asks Elizabeth to walk with her, however, does Darcy look up, and then the two women discuss the possibility of finding something to ridicule in his character. He states that his only fault is resentment—“my good opinion once lost is lost forever.” Elizabeth replies that it is hard to laugh at a “propensity to hate every body,” and Miss Bingley, observing Elizabeth’s monopolization of Darcy’s attention once again, insists on music.

The next morning, Elizabeth writes to her mother to say that she and Jane are ready to return home. Mrs. Bennet wishes Jane to stay longer with Bingley, and she refuses to send the carriage. Elizabeth, anxious to be away, insists on borrowing Bingley’s carriage and she and her sister leave Netherfield Park. Darcy is glad to see them go, as Elizabeth attracts him “more than he liked,” considering her unsuitability as a prospect for matrimony.

### **Analysis: Chapters 9–12**

The continuation of Elizabeth's visit to Netherfield accentuates the respective attitudes of Miss Bingley and Darcy toward their guest: jealousy on the part of the former, admiration on that of the latter. Elizabeth poses a separate threat to each of them. Miss Bingley fears her as a rival for Darcy's affection, and Darcy fears that he will succumb to his growing attraction to her despite the impracticality of marriage to one of such inferior rank and family. The anxiety created by class-consciousness thereby becomes a self-perpetuating, warping institution. Darcy, concerned that he may affect his own reputation by linking it to the poor reputation of another, tries to avoid talking to Elizabeth entirely on the final day she spends at Netherfield. He must tie himself up in a sort of logical knot; class-consciousness transforms Elizabeth, who is perfect for him, as something to be feared. Miss Bingley demonstrates how, once a class system develops, it maintains its coherence. Miss Bingley feels threatened by Elizabeth and knows she cannot compete with Elizabeth on the basis of her virtues or talents. Her means of defense is to bring class-anxiety to bear; by the luck of her birth, Miss Bingley has been stamped as superior. She now uses the entire social institution of class to maintain her superiority, even though all logic and experience show that superiority to be a lie.

In these chapters, the narrator portrays Miss Bingley as Elizabeth's opposite—foolish where the heroine is quick-witted, desperate for Darcy's attention while Elizabeth disdains him. Bingley's sister spends her energy attempting to conform to what she perceives to be Darcy's idea of a perfect woman. Her embarrassingly obvious flirtation makes her

a figure of amusement for the reader—she is a parody of the man-hungry, snobbish, upper-class woman. By toadying up to Darcy, she ends up losing him to Elizabeth, despite the fact that Elizabeth does not make any attempt to appeal to him. By showing Miss Bingley as a scheming rival for Darcy's love whose tactics are uninspired, the novel highlights Elizabeth's originality and independence of spirit, and suggests that these, not the laundry list of accomplishments that Darcy gives, are the qualities that Darcy truly desires in a woman. His rejection of Miss Bingley's advances, then, serves to improve the reader's opinion of Darcy, as his ability to admire a social inferior separates him from ultra-elitist snobs such as Miss Bingley.