

Pride and Prejudice

The expectations of social classes serve as a blindfold; they inhibit a certain person or group from seeing, and therefore succumbing to their feelings for someone in a different social class. Specifically, the pride and prejudice of one group onto another prevents people from seeing and/or accepting their true desires. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austin writes of a society entirely revolved around the divide of social classes. On one side of the spectrum live the extremely wealthy and well connected. These people, like Mr. Darcy and the Bingleys (excluding Mr. Bingley), exude both pride of their standing in society and prejudice toward those seen as inferior. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the less-fortunate, those who like Elizabeth Bennet, feel proud of the work they have exhibited in order to get where they are as well as resentment toward those who do nothing but end up with everything. Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet must suppress their pride and prejudice, remove the blindfold society has placed upon them, and go after what they really want: each other.

Fitzwilliam Darcy enters *Pride and Prejudice* as a stereotypical member of a high-class society. He is pompous, judgmental, intelligent, and has zero regard for anyone in a lower class than his own. When he first fixes his eyes upon Elizabeth Bennet, he remarks to Mr. Bingley, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humor at present to give consequence to young ladies who are sighted by other men" (9). Darcy makes this statement at the Meryton ball,

where he feels substantially superior to his company. This is Darcy's blindfold. His preconceived notion on who should associate with whom prohibits him from looking past Elizabeth's place in society and seeing her not only as an equal, but a potential partner. Throughout the beginning of the novel, Darcy's pride has him on a pedestal, untouchable to those of a lesser rank. He feels he is far too "good" for the mere commoners, so he will give them nothing more than the time of day. Darcy; however, has a skewed perception on the meaning of good. He feels he is superior due to his wealth and connections, not his personality. Darcy's prejudice restricts him just as much as his pride. He has no reasoning behind his animosity in respect to lower classes; he just ignores them because he feels that is what he is supposed to do. Due to both his pride and prejudice, Darcy earns the reputation of "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world..." (8).

Elizabeth Bennet's pride and prejudice are no better than Darcy's. She is proud of her family and of her ability to be a strong-minded female in a very submissive time for women. After Darcy refuses to ask her to dance, Elizabeth comments, "I could easily forgive his pride, if he has not mortified mine" (17). Elizabeth, like Darcy, is too proud to allow herself to potentially fall for someone part of another class. Her prejudice works hand in hand with her pride. Her original reasons for disliking Darcy were superficial and irrational, such as: he's rich. Elizabeth stereotypes Darcy by implying that all rich people are bad and consequently, should not be liked. The blindfold of pride and prejudice for Elizabeth hinders her from seeing the similarities between herself and Darcy. They are both

extremely witty, honest, and quick-to-judge, but in order to discover these like traits, Darcy and Elizabeth must remove their blindfolds and disregard societal norms.

As two people from different worlds who must face adversity in order to be together, Darcy and Elizabeth sound like the characters of a quintessential love story. This is true, except for one small factor: Darcy and Elizabeth need to neglect more than just society's expectations; they must neglect their own. By the end of the novel, Darcy and Elizabeth are able to put their pride and prejudice aside in exchange for happiness. As the scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib wisely states, "What good is social class and status? Truthfulness is measured within. Pride in one's own status is like poison- holding it in your hand and eating it, you shall die."