

**CHARACTER PORTRAYAL: FEMALE CHARACTERS OF JANE AUSTEN'S
*PRIDE AND PREJUDICE***

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ABSTRACT

Pride and Prejudice is the most popular novel of Jane Austen, a British female novelist. Published in 1813, the novel made initial leaps of making female characters as protagonists. The silence of women in fiction, as dramatized by Jane Austen, also ignited controversy on their varying views on love and marriage. If characters have “flesh and blood”, they resemble real-life individuals, and then it is possible to assign categories on their actions in the remote past. In this study, five female characters are analyzed using the reception theory of Jauss. The theory links three important literary concepts: author, story and reader. While formalist critics argue that literature is structurally complete and analysis should not go beyond the text, Jauss stresses on the reader’s response on the text. The notion of “horizon of expectations” is a new dimension that gives the reader the freedom to interpret the text. Experiences on the author and story converge in the way meanings are deduced from the text. Three questions on character portrayal guide the interpretation of the novel. Using six strategies of characterization, the female characters are categorized based on their views on love and marriage. Briefly, Elizabeth Bennet represents women who believe in true love and marriage; Jane Bennet represents women who would settle for convenient partnership or popular marriage; Charlotte Lucas represents women who are rational about marriage; Mrs. Bennet represents women who would sacrifice love over financial security; and Lydia Bennet represents women who would choose sexual passion over love and marriage. Reflecting on these categories, have women changed throughout the centuries and across cultures? The reader believes each of the women is a unique individual. Jane Austen successfully created her characters to show their strengths and weaknesses. In the end, making the female characters alive as “mirrors” of the aristocratic families of 19th century United Kingdom, is too simplistic, but in truth, we can find semblances of their actions and intentions among women in the 21st century.

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