***PRIDE AND PREJUDICE***

**CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS**

**MR. FITZWILLIAM DARCY:** (Mid to late 20’s) Mr. Darcy is a little older than Mr. Bingley, and a great deal richer. He is tall, handsome and aristocratic in appearance, but his manner is cold and stiff. Like Lizzy, Darcy dances to his own drum, and (when he choses to speak) clearly says what is on his mind. His facial expressions (or lack thereof, at times) and his body demeanor often tell us even more than his words. He has loved Elizabeth from the moment they met, but for his own reasons, (much to do with his pride), remains silent and aloof. He is, however, the hero of the story, and ultimately the future husband of Elizabeth (after misconceptions, trials, and tribulations). Lizzy’s “prejudice”…, her initial and immediate judgment of Darcy as well as others…, and his “pride” (of wealth, family, and upbringing) bring us to “Pride and Prejudice”. Quoth Darcy: “In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You (Elizabeth) must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you. In declaring myself thus, I am fully aware that I am going expressly against the wishes of my family, my friends, and my own better judgment. The relative situation of our families makes any alliance between us a reprehensible connection. As a rational man, I cannot help but regard it as such myself, but IT CANNOT BE HELPED. Almost from the earliest moments of our acquaintance, I have come to feel for you a passionate admiration and regard…., which despite my struggles has overcome every rational objection. I beg you most fervently to relieve my suffering and consent to be my wife.” Elizabeth’s uncle stated of Darcy “It’s a pity the owner of Pemberton should be such a PROUD and disagreeable swan.” The actor who plays Darcy must walk the fine line between “unavoidably cold and stiff” and “unnecessarily arrogant and cruel”, for he is NOT the latter. He isn’t comfortable around most people. He is absolutely honest in all he says. He finds it hard to express delight, affection, or love. However, he is capable of FEELING these emotions. He finds it difficult to make friends, while his friend, Mr. Bingley, finds it easy.

**ELIZABETH BENNETT:** (Early 20’s) She is a beauty who also happens to have brains…, a modern girl born in 1800! She is more like her father than any of her sisters, and, although she does not know it, she is his favorite. However, we can easily see that she is just that. She is a strikingly pretty woman. She is brilliant. She “dances to her own drum”, which bothers her mama. She loves Darcy from the moment she meets/dislikes him. We know that, but it does not enter her conscious mind for quite some time. She embodies the “prejudice” in *Pride and Prejudice*, as she often tends to judge others rather impulsively, a trait she ultimately learns to deal with. Quoth Lizzy: “There are few people whom I really love, and even fewer of whom I think well.” Elizabeth has more in common with Mr. Darcy than she realizes. She goes on to say “The more I see of the world, the more I am dissatisfied with it”. Lizzy wishes she could think as highly of people as her sister, Jane. She is embarrassed and distressed by her mother’s actions, airs, and obvious matchmaking, but loyally conceals it, and attempts to cover her mother’s blunders. She has a quick temper, a proud spirit, and is unaffected and sincere. Mr. Darcy might have resisted her beauty because of her mother’s lack of taste. He cannot resist her beauty plus the fire and spirit that are a part of Elizabeth’s charm.

**JANE BENNETT:** (Mid 20’s) The oldest of the five daughters, Jane has always turned so beautiful and sweet a face on the world that much of it has been reflected back on her. Jane honestly believes that people are better than they are, and so is always ready to find a good excuse for any questionable act. Although docile and much under her mother’s thumb, Jane is by no means lacking in spirit. That is one reason why she is surely best friends with her sister Elizabeth (aka Lizzy/Eliza). Jane’s wisdom is sometimes a kind of “conscience” for Elizabeth and her other siblings. Jane falls quickly and desperately in love with Mr. Bingley, who loves her as much. She is “so composed that a man could never guess her real feelings”. It is that fact that makes Mr. Darcy (at first) believe that she really doesn’t care for his friend, Bingley.

**MRS. BENNETT:** (Early 40’s to mid 50’s) She is frivolous, irresponsible, and an inveterate matchmaker. She is often “over-the-top” in her silliness and desire to marry off her five daughters as quickly as possible to almost any eligible, well-to-do bachelor. Within, however, is a wife and parent who dearly loves her family. She is at once a source of great embarrassment to her family as she “throws” her daughters at prospective suitors. She prattles on about things of no real consequence. She does make foolish mistakes. However, she is not a complete fool. There is more to her than that. Her hair is elaborately done. She is always fashionably dressed. She is still pretty in a plump and florid way. It is easy to see why, 25 years ago, Mr. Bennett found her irresistible.

**MR. BENNETT:** (Mid 40’s to mid 50’s) He is a man of culture and taste, whose sense of humor has helped to carry him through some 25 years of marriage with his frivolous and irresponsible wife. There is a twinkle in his eyes, as he responds to the “over-the-top” silliness of his wife, as well as the needs/demands/moods/ situations of his five daughters. He often is well ahead of them, and in control. He is handsome, with graying hair and a courteous and pleasing manner. His manner of speaking varies from dry humor to elaborate sarcasm, yet he is devoted to the real interests of his family. He is the patriarch. His wife may complain at some of his decisions, but ultimately she and their daughters adore him and (most often) obey his wishes. He and Elizabeth have the most special relationship, as witnessed in various glances, conversations, and familial chemistry. She is indeed his favorite.

**MR. COLLINS:** (Early to mid 30’s) Mr. Collins is a self-enamored, self-absorbed, shallow young clergyman. He is pompous and pedantic, with absurdly formal manners. He is continually bowing and extremely servile whenever this is to his advantage. He will do what is best for himself, regardless of the consequences to others. He is a first cousin of Mr. Bennett, who easily sees through Collins’ overtures of family allegiance. Whatever is best for Collins at the moment is most important to him. Although he is capable of using any family members to further his ambitions, he is quickly and easily seen as a fool and user. Upon Mr. Bennett’s future death, Collins will be the male who will (by law) inherit the estate. He “has eyes” on Jane, Elizabeth, Charlotte, or whomever it is who is convenient for his purposes of marriage. He received his religious position through the graces of his benefactor, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and thus owes her complete allegiance. Whatever she says or hints at will be done by Collins. When Lady Catherine informs him that a young minister should be married, he takes it upon himself to find a wife.

**MR. CHARLES BINGLEY:** (Mid-20’s) Mr. Bingley is the “catch” of the county: handsome, moderately rich, and with charming manners that captivate everyone who meets him. He has eyes only for Jane from the moment he sees her. He is sensible, lively, and eager to approve of everyone he meets. In that regard, he is much like Jane. He will be the love of Jane’s life, and she will be the love of his. Bingley is consistent in his being “a good man, a pleasant man”. He is well tempered, well intentioned, and a completely dependable friend. Although he is well-to-do, he is in no way prejudiced or a snob.

**LYDIA BENNETT:** (15) Lydia, the youngest daughter, is self-absorbed, utterly frivolous, and irresponsible. She thinks of nothing but parties, officers, and clothes, as well as her whims and wants. She is not as beautiful as Jane or Elizabeth. Still, she is very pretty and pert, and could never imaginably lack a partner at a dance. She will go to any measure to get who she wants and do what she wants, even at chancing the reputation of her entire family. They love her dearly nonetheless. Like her sisters, she has many good attributes. She is a fun person to be with.

**MARY BENNETT:** (18) Mary is the middle daughter, and the “plain” one of the family, as well as an inveterate bookworm. Later, Mary will probably outgrow her extreme priggishness. Right now she is prepared to lecture almost anyone on practically any subject. Mary is smug and pedantic, in direct contrast to all of her sisters. She is, however, likeable. You are amused, rather than annoyed by her. She is a good person, but with very strong opinions. She enjoys playing piano and singing at parties. However, she has no talent to speak of. Her lectures often make others eager to leave her presence. She has little to no patience for her two younger siblings.

**CATHERINE BENNETT (KITTY):** (17) She is much under the domination of her irrepressible younger sister, Lydia. Catherine is slight and rather delicate in appearance. She has an engaging giggle when fun is in prospect, but, like her mother, she can be fretful and inclined to whine when things do not please her.

**CHARLOTTE LUCAS:** (27) Charlotte is Elizabeth’s special friend. Her manner is quiet and restrained, and she is sweet and reasonable, though lacking somewhat in feminine charm. She is getting to an age where (in those times) she has only a slim chance of marriage. Elizabeth feels completely comfortable confiding anything at all to Charlotte, and for good reason. When confronted with a prospective marriage, Charlotte looks more for convenience and security than love. Still, she remains a relatively happy and satisfied woman, even as the wife of Collins.

**LADY LUCAS:** (Mid-40’s to early 50’s) Lady Lucas is a good friend of Mrs. Bennett, though they are rivals in matchmaking, for Lady Lucas has a daughter (Charlotte) to marry off. In Act I, she has the pleased, complacent air of one who has sighted eligible masculine quarry first. She is ultimately a dear friend to the Bennett family.

**MISS BINGLEY:** (20’S) Miss Bingley is always fashionably dressed. Her surface good manners scarcely conceal her contempt for provincial society. She is proud and conceited, and her chief concern is that her brother shall make a suitable match. She has no hesitation in telling him just that.

**MR. WICKHAM:** (Mid to late 20’s) Mr. Wickham is a handsome young officer, and cuts a dashing figure in his smart British officer’s uniform. He has undeniable charm of manner, but is untrustworthy and insincere. He does his best to give his benefactor (Mr. Darcy) a bad name, in hopes of attaining what and whom he wants. He is very capable of using almost anyone, but most especially preys on young women. Lydia quickly falls for him. He has dark secrets, and there may or may not be hope for this couple. Wickham has all the appearance of goodness (of which he has none), while Darcy, being the opposite, is the misunderstood hero.

**LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH:** (50-s to 60’s) Lady Catherine is Mr. Darcy’s overbearing aunt, as well as Mr. Collins’ benefactor. She is the widow dowager type: expensively dressed, formidable, and superior in every manner. She has a title, and she uses it to always get her way, with those of lower rank having no say in any matter. When she walks, she sweeps; when she sits, it is as if she took her place on a throne. Quite obviously, she expects everyone to scurry at her least command. She hardly knows how to meet it when Elizabeth dares to defy her…, but she finally sweeps regally from the room without bidding her goodbye.

**HILL:** This part is extremely flexible. It may be played as a young servant girl in her teens, or as a quiet, repressed, elderly servant. However, the part may be played as a man servant. Hill is quiet, unobtrusive, and efficient.