



Pride and Prejudice

Adapted by Christina Calvit
From the novel by Jane Austen

A Guide to the Play

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is intended for anyone who would like to enhance their appreciation and understanding of the Globe Theatre's production of *Pride and Prejudice*. The guide contains background information about the play, an introduction to the Globe's artistic team, a summary of the action in each scene, a few questions intended to encourage open-ended discussion, and some links to additional resources for those who wish to explore further.

Some of this guide's content may give you information about the play's plot that you'd rather discover yourself while experiencing the show. If you'd like to avoid any potential spoilers, you might want to wait until seeing the play before reading any further.

Teachers who are preparing their students to experience the play can provide them with this guide's discussion questions ahead of time -- or first allow them to see the production and then use the questions or other sections of the guide to facilitate further thought and discussion.

I hope this guide is both helpful and enjoyable to read. I welcome your comments and suggestions at mark.claxton@me.com.

Meet the playwright

Christina Calvit is an ensemble member of Lifeline Theatre in Chicago. She has adapted more than a dozen literary works for the theatre and her scripts have been produced throughout the United States and Canada.

Pride and Prejudice was a significant milestone for Calvit. Written in 1985, it represented her first attempt to move away from a literal, linear re-telling of a story into a more abstract, imaginative approach that would lend itself well to theatre's strengths as an art form.

Rather than attempting to include all of Jane Austen's significant characters, sub-plots and incidents, Calvit studied Austen's novel closely for its core themes, deepest tensions, and fundamental spirit, then retained those parts of the story that seemed essential.

"We want to present the work in a way that does not confuse the audience or tell too many stories and lose focus," Calvit told Lucia Mauro of Performink Online in a 2003 interview. "We're constantly paring down the text."

In Calvit's *Pride and Prejudice*, the playfulness of Jane Austen is retained in the very manner in which the story is told; characters appeal directly to the audience for advice or sympathy or confide in them with a juicy bit of gossip. Scene changes are written to be fluid and fast-paced.

In 1999, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival produced Calvit's adaptation, necessitating some rewriting. Director Jeannette Lambermont, Calvit said, "made me very conscious of whose story this is -a strong beginning and end - and consistent images running throughout."

Since successfully translating *Pride and Prejudice* for contemporary theatre audiences, Calvit has gone on to adapt such iconic literary works as Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

"Theatre allows you to be in this interesting state of balance between reality and unreality," Calvit told Performink Online. "You see the brick wall; you see the lights- you're aware of the contrivance. But at the same time you see the bones of theatre, you see the living flesh of the play."

Meet the artistic team

Marti Maraden (Director) is one of Canada's foremost theatrical actors and directors. From 1996 to 2007 she was the Artistic Director of the National Arts Centre English Theatre in Ottawa. From 2006-2008, Marti was Artistic Director of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. She directed the Globe's 2011 production of *The 39 Steps*.

Judy Wensel (Assistant Director) received her BFA in Acting from the University of Regina in the spring of 2009. She is also the Co-Producer of *Combat Improv*, Regina's monthly improv show. Judy was the recipient of the 2009 Mayor's Arts and Business Award for Emerging Artist, and has worked with Globe Theatre as an actor, director, and teacher.

Charlotte Dean (Set Designer) has worked in the theatre for over 25 years. She has designed sets and costumes for more than 100 productions in Canada and has received five Dora Mavor Moore Awards for Outstanding Design.

Emma Williams (Costume Designer) is a winner of the 2009 Olivier Award for her work on the Royal Shakespeare Company's productions of *Henry IV Parts I & II* and *Henry V*. She is the Globe's resident costume designer for the 12|13 Main Stage season.

Louise Guinand (Lighting Designer) has designed lighting for over 400 shows in theatres across Canada and in the U.S. including Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Shaw Festival, National Arts Centre, Canstage, Soulpepper, The Grand Theatre, and the Canadian Opera Company.

Marc Desormeaux (Sound Designer) has written countless scores and produced numerous soundscapes for theatres across Canada, the United States and Europe, including 10 seasons at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. Marc has also written scores for CBC Radio and the Bravo Network.

Lisa Russell (Stage Manager) has spent seven seasons at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and is a recipient of two Tyrone Guthrie Awards. Previous shows with the Globe include *Shout Sister*, *Marion Bridge*, and *A Doll's House*.

Diane D'Aquila (Mrs. Bennet) has been acting in theatre, film and television since 1972, and is best known for her stage appearances at the Stratford Festival. She originated the role of Elizabeth I of England in Timothy Findley's play *Elizabeth Rex* and won both an ACTRA Award and Gemini Award in 2005 for her performance in the play's television adaptation.

Lucy Hill (Jane Bennet) is a graduate of the Globe's 2008 Actor Conservatory Training

Program and has appeared in the Globe's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Alice Nocturne* and *Peter Pan*, among others. Lucy is a member of Regina's Combat Improv ensemble and often teaches improv through the Canadian Improv Games and the Globe Theatre School.

Daniel Maslany (Mr. Bingley) works as an actor and sound designer on the Globe's mainstage and in the Sandbox Series. He also performs in film and television. He co-produces Combat Improv. In 2008, he graduated from the Globe Theatre Conservatory and received the Mayor's Arts and Business Award for Emerging Artist.

Gordon S. Miller (Mr. Collins) is a graduate of National Theatre School and the Stratford Conservatory. He has appeared in many Stratford productions, including *The Three Sisters*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Gordon also appeared in the Globe's recent production of *Robin Hood*, playing the Sheriff of Nottingham.

Lauren Holfeuer (Elizabeth Bennet), **Rebecca Lascue** (Mary Bennet), **Christina Persson** (Kitty Bennet), **Alexandria Hartshorn** (Lydia Bennet), **Nathan Howe** (Mr. Darcy), **Nathan Coppens** (Colonel Fitzwilliam/Mr. Hurst/Mr. Denny), **Jenna-Lee Hyde** (Caroline Bingley/Mrs. Phillips/Lady Catharine de Bough) **Dakota Hebert** (Charlotte Lucas), **Chris Hapke** (Mr. Wickham) and **Bernadette Green** (Mrs. Hurst/Mrs. Gardiner) are all graduating members of the Globe's 2012 Actor Conservatory Training Program.

200 years old and going strong

This year, *Pride & Prejudice* achieves its 200th anniversary of publication. Remarkably, this comedy of manners, which features no overt sex or violence, no end-of-the-world scenarios, and no vampires, continues to top most reader surveys as one of the most beloved novels of all time.

Naturally, the question is: "Why?" And naturally, the world wide web has plenty of answers:

"The simple truth is that for millions of women around the world, Elizabeth Bennet is their alter ego. Elizabeth is modern, witty and empowered, despite the fact that she had most likely never heard of anything remotely like mascara, *Sex and the City*, or toothpaste, and had definitely never touched an iPhone."

Jennifer Duke
Upstart: The Magazine for Emerging Journalists
(*Read the full article* [here](#))

"Austen's strongest suit is her thorough knowledge and happy delineation of human nature. We can still, despite the vast differences between her society and our own, recognize ourselves in the ways her characters think and behave. We all know people as cleverly manipulative and outwardly affectionate as Miss Bingley; as self-involved as Lady Catherine de Bourgh; and as charming but as lacking in scruples as Colonel Wickham."

from the introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of *Mansfield Park*
Quoted in an essay about Jane Austen found at www.penguin.com

"The answer is simple: the story is timeless. Protagonist Elizabeth Bennet's problems are the problems of women in every age. Elizabeth is determined to save herself from unhappiness later in life by marrying wisely ... a goal many modern women can share. Elizabeth is embarrassed by the public behavior of her family, but is unable to impress upon them the inappropriateness of their activities. Family embarrassment is nearly universal and will be for as long as there are families. Elizabeth immediately forms a prejudice against Mr. Darcy after she hears herself insulted. Who among us doesn't judge another's character by our personal interactions?"

Leigh Jackson
[Yahoo! Voices](#)

Synopsis of the Play

Christina Calvit's script calls for fluid movement from one scene to the next; in fact, there are no "scenes" indicated in the script but only shifts of focus to a new conversation or location.

Act I

- We meet the townspeople of Meryton, who are buzzing about the recent arrival of **Mr. Bingley**, a well-to-do young bachelor who is to take possession of a local property.
- **Mrs. Bennet** rushes to find **Mr. Bennet** and insists that he pay Mr. Bingley a visit in hopes of attracting the young man's attention to one of their five daughters.
- The Bennet sisters, **Lizzy**, **Mary**, **Jane**, **Lydia**, and **Kitty**, prepare for the Ball at which the coveted Mr. Bingley will be present.
- At the Ball, Bingley arrives with his sisters, **Miss Caroline Bingley** and **Mrs. Howard Hurst**, **Mr. Hurst**, and a dark, handsome stranger named **Mr. Darcy**, who quickly becomes the talk of the Ball for his good looks, his wealth, and his distasteful arrogance. Mr. Darcy declines an invitation to make acquaintance with Lizzy, greatly insulting her pride.
- Meanwhile, Mr. Bingley seems to have been quite taken with Jane. Mrs. Bennet, naturally, does not fail to notice and relays the news to her husband. Jane and Lizzy also discuss the evening's success.
- The out-of-town party, with the exception of the smitten Mr. Bingley, all declare their boredom and disgust with the company of the good people of Meryton. As Mrs. Bennet orders Jane some new fashion accessories, everyone prepares for a second Ball, at the home of **Sir William Lucas**.
- **Charlotte Lucas** and Lizzy discuss Jane and Bingley's prospects while watching the two dance. Lizzy, meanwhile, has caught the stand-offish Mr. Darcy's eye, but, still stinging from his recent insult, she declines to dance with him. Jane receives an invitation to dine with Bingley and his company at Netherfield, and Lydia and Kitty are aflutter at the news that the officers of the militia regiment are to winter in Meryton.
- After a torrential rainfall during her horseback ride to Netherfield, Jane writes

home to say she is very ill and her hosts would not allow her to return home. Mrs. Bennet is delighted with this turn of events, but a concerned Lizzy determines to walk to Netherfield to pay her sister a visit.

- Jane and Lizzy spend five days at Netherfield, during which Lizzy and Darcy engage in much verbal fencing. Upon their return home, the family learns from Mr. Bennet that they are to be visited by his cousin **Mr. Collins**, who has the legal power to turn them all out of the Longbourne house upon Mr. Bennet's death.
- Mr. Collins arrives with a proposition that could save the Bennet girls from poverty: all he wishes is to marry Jane. Informed that she is likely soon to be engaged, Mr. Collins immediately turns his favour to Lizzy.
- During a walk into town, the girls meet two members of the militia, **Mr. Denny** and **Mr. Wickham**. During their introductory conversations, Bingley and Darcy enter, spot Wickham, and make a hasty exit. The girls are mystified by this behaviour, and Wickham warns Lizzy against having too high an opinion of Darcy. Lizzy is curious to know more of their history.
- Lizzy and Wickham converse again during a dinner party at the home of the girls' **Aunt Phillips**. Wickham relates that he was once a favourite godson of Darcy's father and that the old man's generous bequest to Wickham was nullified when Darcy found loopholes in the will. Lizzy is horrified by Darcy's cruelty.
- The long-awaited Netherfield Ball finally arrives. Much to the disappointment of Kitty and Lydia, Wickham does not attend. During a dance, Lizzy hints to Darcy about his treatment of Wickham but receives no explanation or defense. Mr. Collins, still lavishing his attentions on Lizzy, informs her that Darcy is a nephew of his wealthy patroness, **Lady Catherine de Bourgh**.
- Mr. Collins finally proposes to Lizzy and is not fazed by her repeated refusals. Mrs. Bennet, however, is furious with Lizzy for rejecting such an opportunity and vows never to speak to her again.
- Act I ends with two shocking revelations. Bingley has suddenly departed for London to marry Darcy's sister, and Mr. Collins has won the hand of Lizzy's good friend, **Charlotte Lucas**.

Act II

- The townspeople are buzzing about recent events and wonder what is to become of the Bennet sisters, now that Jane has been jilted and Lizzy has

refused marriage to the heir of their family home. Jane Bennet is hurt but philosophical about Bingley's apparent and sudden change of heart. She refuses to believe that Bingley's sisters may have turned him against her. Meanwhile, Wickham is now a regular visitor at the Bennet home as he courts Lizzy.

- It is the holiday season and the Bennet sisters welcome visitors, their uncle and aunt, **Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner**. The Gardiners invite Lizzy to join them during their upcoming summer travels. Confidentially, Mrs. Gardiner cautions Lizzy not to fall too quickly for Wickham.
- After paying a visit to Charlotte and Mr. Collins and meeting his patroness Lady Catherine, Lizzy has become a regular visitor at Lady Catherine's home and is eventually startled to encounter the Lady's nephew Darcy and his friend **Colonel Fitzwilliam**. During a private conversation, Fitzwilliam informs Lizzy that Darcy had recently saved Bingley from an "imprudent marriage." Lizzy, now believing it was Darcy who turned Bingley against her sister, is furious.
- Lizzy, in emotional turmoil, declines to join Charlotte and Mr. Collins on their regular visit to Lady Catherine. She is startled when Darcy arrives and stunned when he suddenly declares his love for her. Lizzy brutally dismisses him, citing his cruel treatment of Wickham and Jane. The two exchange angry words, and Darcy exits. Lizzy bursts into tears.
- Confused in heart, Lizzy takes a walk in the garden. Darcy enters and leaves her a letter containing two revelations: Darcy had discouraged Bingley from marrying Jane because he perceived that Jane herself was not wholeheartedly in love with his friend; and Wickham had, in fact, received a generous monetary settlement from Darcy and had then attempted to elope with his younger sister. Lizzy realizes she has made many unfair assumptions about Darcy, based on incomplete information.
- Lizzy returns home and learns that younger sister Lydia is to travel with family friend Colonel Forster to Brighton, where the militia - including Wickham - will be stationed for the summer. She tries to dissuade Mr. Bennet from allowing this sojourn, but he sees no danger in it.
- During their summer travels, Lizzy and the Gardiners visit Pemberley, one of Darcy's estates. Lizzy delights in the old home's beautiful gardens and its history. She encounters Darcy and is stunned by his change in demeanour and gentler attitude. Before she can give it much thought, though, she receives dreadful news from home: Lydia has eloped with Wickham and the two are nowhere to be found. Mr. Bennet has departed for London to find them. Darcy, offering his sympathies, takes his leave.

- Lizzy returns home to a distraught mother and sisters. Soon after Mr. Bennet returns from his fruitless search, the family receives a letter from Mr. Gardiner, informing them that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia on certain financial terms. Mr. Bennet is certain that his brother Mr. Gardiner has given Wickham considerable recompense already. The newly married couple return to Meryton and Lizzy learns from Mrs. Gardiner that in fact it was Darcy who provided the money for the settlement with Wickham.
- Bingley, accompanied by his sister Caroline and Darcy, makes a surprise return to Meryton. Shortly after, he proposes to Jane and is accepted.
- Lizzy receives a visit from Lady Catherine, who informs her that Darcy is engaged to her daughter. Lady Catherine wishes Lizzy to promise she will enter upon no engagement with Darcy. Lizzy refuses, the two exchange angry words, and Lady Catherine departs.
- Darcy arrives and immediately re-affirms his love for Lizzy. She immediately accepts it. The two, along with Bingley and Jane, are married in a double wedding.

Discuss and Explore

1. Why isn't this play - or Jane Austen's novel - entitled *Elizabeth and Darcy* or *The Trials & Tribulations of the Bennet Sisters*? Why *Pride and Prejudice*?
2. In the end, is Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy a victory for her independent spirit? Or is it a surrender?
3. What has changed the most about our views of marriage? What has changed the least from Jane Austen's time?
4. Jane Austen's novel features dozens of characters and numerous subplots, many of which remain in Christina Calvit's adaptation. How successful was this production in bringing this complex story to life?
5. Imagine you are designing the set for *Pride and Prejudice*, but for a traditional proscenium stage with a backdrop and the audience in front of the actors. How would your set differ from that of the Globe's production?

More information and resources:

Of course, there is Jane Austen's novel, which is required reading for anyone who enjoys a romantic comedy and a great starting point for those beginning to explore classic literature. The book has retained its popularity through the centuries because its beautifully drawn characters almost jump off the page.

You might also want to try Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma*, which some readers and critics rate even more favourably than *Pride and Prejudice*. The title character in *Emma* is another unforgettable, strong-willed, independently minded young woman, but richer and more spoiled than Elizabeth Bennet. Her attempts to play matchmaker for a friend land her in some comical - and yet very serious - romantic conundrums. *Sense and Sensibility* follows three sisters recently impoverished by bad fortune and taking very different approaches to matters of the heart.

For recent screen treatments of *Pride and Prejudice*, you can look for the 1995 television mini-series starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth or check out the 2005 big-screen release with Matthew MacFadyen as Darcy and Keira Knightley as Elizabeth.

Finally, you must at least flip through a few pages of Seth Grahame-Smith's parody *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which plants Austen's original text in an England overrun by the undead and ends with an epic battle between Elizabeth and Darcy and a field of zombies.