Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen (1775-1817)
- 7th of 8 children (6 boys, 2 girls)
- Parents came from established families, neither were wealthy
- Wrote to amuse family
- Never married
- Goal: paint vivid picture
- Age of Reason v. Romantic Age

Criticism

“[Austen’s novels] are highly prized not only for their light irony, humor, and depiction of contemporary English country life, but also for their underlying serious qualities”

While English novelists tend to write an a large scale, she chose her characters from the life in which she lived

Criticism

“Comment has been made, and justly made, on the perfect breeding and manners of those people in Jane Austen's novels who are supposed and intended to be well-bred.”

Among the best plotted novels in British literature

Formula: achievement of self-actualization

Use of irony, caricature and wit
Criticism

- Austen “exposes the economic basis of social behavior with an ironic smile”
  - Primogeniture
  - Collins & Lady Catherine, local reactions to Darcy

Caricature - a character whose personality is described in terms of a very small number of features, often grossly exaggerated

- True intent is to ridicule an entire group or social practice, not the individual
  - Mrs. Bennet
  - Miss Bingley
  - Mr. Collins

Feminist Perspective

- Elizabeth is literally handed from her father to Mr. Darcy
  - While Lydia loses virginity Elizabeth loses authority
  - Why is Pemberley so significant as Elizabeth changes her mind about Darcy?
“But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.”

Views of Marriage in Regency Era
- Mrs. and Mrs. Bennet
- Charlotte & Collins
- Austen herself, in letter to niece, regarding qualities of a good husband
  - “the one man in a thousand, where grace and spirit are united to worth, [and] where manners are equal to heart and understanding…”

FOR MORE FUN
- Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion
- www.permberley.com