

Reece Schatz

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**Abstract:** Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, demonstrates that a person's manners and amiability were not determined from their birth or rank in society, but through the ways in which they act and conduct themselves toward others. My analysis of the novel's free indirect discourse alongside the speech and behaviors of the upper class characters, Fitzwilliam Darcy, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and the aspirational, William Collins, in comparison to their social inferiors, show how their sense of pride, obsession with social distinctions, and belief of superiority satirize the 19<sup>th</sup> century's belief of how propriety and civility should be displayed. By situating the novel in the context of early nineteenth-century ideas about manners, I show how Jane Austen's use of free indirect discourse is at the service of her critique of the upper class.

**"The greatest civility": Politeness, Manners, and Human Worth in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice***

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the interactions of Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, Mr. William Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, demonstrate that a person's manners and amiability, regardless of their class, are not determined from their birth and rank, but through the ways in which they act or conduct themselves toward others. In this paper I will be using examples of free indirect discourse and the behavior of Jane Austen's characters to argue how a high social rank does not equate to an amiable personality. For example, Mr. Darcy's snobbish pride negatively impacts the way he conducts himself in front of those he views as socially inferior. His elitist upbringing made it difficult for him to put on an amiable appearance for people he did not know or respect, and it is not until later he understands the folly of his actions. Mr. Collins on the other hand represents over-studied civility and envy toward the aristocracy. Austen demonstrates this through the use of the narrator's free indirect discourse, his name dropping, and constant approbation of Lady Catherine. Finally, Austen satirizes Lady Catherine to represent the exclusive and pretentious aristocrats of her time who valued social rank beyond everything else. Lady Catherine demonstrates that social status was of the utmost importance, and personal

qualities were of a lesser concern. This becomes clear when analyzing the narrator's use of free indirect discourse that accurately describes Lady Catherine's unconciliatory personality. This characteristic of hers is further reinforced when observing her impolite behavior towards the Bennets. Analyzing the free indirect discourse of the novel is important because Austen uses the narrator to describe one character through the disposition of another, yet at other times, the narrator delivers more honest descriptions of events and characters. With this variance in storytelling, it is important to know when not to take the narrator's words at face value and instead observe the character's behaviors first, before accepting or rejecting the narrator's judgment through the opinion of another character. Furthermore, by analyzing the behavior of Austen's characters, it is also easy to see how she was criticizing the upper class's belief of superiority through the arbitrary basis of social status alone, as Austen believed that human worth should be assessed not by rank, but by a person's amiability and manners.

According to R.S. Neale, British society in the 19th century valued class structures because they indicated who was of a higher pedigree, status of wealth, and who wielded more authority. Class was often seen as a representation of superiority and because of this, those of the upper classes were often obsessed with social distinctions. To many aristocrats, a person's value was depicted through the vanity of their social standing, wealth, and connectivity to other powerful figures. Such notions led some members of the aristocracy to believe that matters of manners and amiability were unnecessary and wasted upon those who lacked distinction. This is because some aristocrats believed they could not be matched when it came to possessing "all at once, great skill, great learning and a high reputation" (15). Similarly, Neale mentions that this aristocratic belief was "one of those most important features in the social state of England" (15). It was apparent that Jane Austen held these elitist idealisms in contempt because throughout

many of her novels, she often satirized the over-studied civility and the self-centered attitudes that many of her upper class characters portrayed. Furthermore, a Jane Austen specialist, Paula Byrnes insists “Austen’s loathing of hypocrisy and snobbery,” led her to believe “that sincerely good manners are bound up with goodness of heart rather than social status” (300). Another specialist of Jane Austen and the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Juliet McMaster, further clarifies the snobbery of the upper class explaining that, even those who were of newly acclaimed riches were not considered to be upper class until a few generations had passed, because it was believed they did not share the same manners or tact as the traditional aristocratic families, nor did the people of “new wealth” own an estate. They had to prove themselves to be of similar lifestyle and manner for several generations (119).

There was also the matter of how politeness was viewed during this time. When it comes to politeness, there were two popular approaches to achieve it. There was an external way of “being polite” and an internal way. External politeness “viewed the body as a canvas on which the perfect appearance of politeness could be painted while carefully hiding the true inner self behind it” (Ylivuori, 75). This was an artificial strategy to appear polite while one’s inner self may have been the contrary. Internal politeness was the “locus of adopting polite manners was not the body, but the mind. Since the body was transparent to the point of painful honesty, it would be useless, in the moralist view, to try to polish external manners without inner virtue” (75). This idea was a more honest approach to living where one would actually attempt to not only display politeness, but act out of goodness too. Historian Keith Thomas further explains that there was an expectation of how to conduct oneself in front of others too, and these principles were constantly reiterated in books of advice that the rich would have frequently read. These books repeatedly stated that, “To one’s superiors, one should display deference and respect; to

one's equals, one should be open, generous and frank; to one's inferiors, one should be affable and condescending" (66). "Affable," means to be kind and easy to converse with, while "condescending" means to depart from the privileges of superiority by a voluntary submission; to sink willingly to equal terms with inferiors. These were essential social etiquettes that many strictly aspired to adhere to in early 19<sup>th</sup> century England.

It is also important to define exactly what free indirect discourse means in this paper. Literary theorist, Dorrit Cohn elegantly describes it as a narrative technique that "maintains the third-person reference and [past] tense of narration, but like the quoted monologue, it reproduces verbatim the character's own mental language" (LaCapra, 133). What this means is that free indirect discourse allows the author to combine the description of a third person narration with the limitations or thoughts of a first person narrator. Free indirect discourse can often be applied as a kind of "litmus test to confirm the validity of a reader's apprehension that a narrative sentence belongs to a character's rather than to a narrator's mental domain" (133). An example of this is when the narrator describes Mr. Darcy as "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and every body hoped that he would never come there again" (Austen, 8). This passage is not the narrator's opinion nor is it necessarily the truth, but is described using the opinions of the Meryton attendees of Hertfordshire. The attendees who observed Mr. Darcy believed his manners were exceptionally poor and therefore had disdain for him in the same way that he had no interest in appeasing them due to their class distinction. Thus, the narrator, through free indirect discourse, shares the ill opinion of Mr. Darcy to the reader as if it were factual. This free indirect discourse is important when reading Austen because she uses it to deepen her reader's relationship with the characters; however, if not read closely it can deceive the reader into taking the narrator's description at face value. For instance, if the narrator uses free indirect discourse to

describe a character, it is important not to immediately believe how the narrator describes them but to hold off on the narrator's description and analyze them for ourselves. It is important to make evaluations as separate and as free from the narrator's conclusions as possible. That being said, there will be times where the free indirect discourse's description will be correct, and other times where it will be revealed that a character is not like the narrator's description of them at all.

Mr. Darcy is the most explicit example of a character whose manners have shown that class alone does not grant amiability in the eyes of those from a lower rank. Through free indirect discourse, the narrator complicates Mr. Darcy as he is described in several different ways throughout the novel. He begins as being described as a highly disagreeable man whom few seem to get along with, but by the end of the novel, he is described as a polite and civil gentleman. Though, despite the narrator's changing depictions of Mr. Darcy, it is still important to point out that he is a character who greatly showcases the irrelevance of connection between class and amiability. Mr. Darcy is the richest of all characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, making ten thousand a year. He is the prime example of how a man who was born with every privilege in the world does not mean he will always be perceived as polite and courteous. Manners in the early 19th century required constant attention and adjustments to one's environment. The social and moral values always needed to be modified to present social situations and it was not an easy task to constantly live up to the various social expectations of society. As historian David Price mentions, "it demands a constant state of watchfulness and self-awareness on the part of the individual" (268). It was this lack of self-awareness that Mr. Darcy failed to identify during the ball held at Meryton. It is not clear if Mr. Darcy realized he was acting in such a disagreeable manner, but those of the middle class who understood he belonged to the upper class, observed his behavior to be belittling towards them. He seemed disinterested in interacting with anybody

who was not an equal in social status to himself. Thus, Mr. Darcy was described through the novel's free indirect discourse as "proud," "above his company," and "above being pleased" (8). His behavior was far from the affable and condescending mannerisms that many books would have suggested he behave. Mr. Darcy was not acting reprehensibly because he was rude, but because he is embedded in the ideals of class and rank of the period, he cannot make an effort in treating social inferiors whom he does not know with amiability. After all, some nobles during this time period thought that those in a lower station of life could not be expected to be treated with kindness (Thomas, 74). It is because of these beliefs that the people at Meryton viewed Mr. Darcy as having a "most forbidding, disagreeable countenance" (Austen, 8). By examining these descriptors, we can get a better idea of how the people at Meryton view Mr. Darcy. He is described as "forbidding" which depicts him to be prohibiting to speak with or unapproachable and intimidating. His "disagreeable countenance" means his demeanor or manner towards others expressed ill will and a dislike for others, making his amiability nonexistent. Unlike Mr. Bingley, who treated those at the Meryton ball with respect, Mr. Darcy exhibited no attempts to be seen as polite, his manners came clear to the attendees of the ball that he saw them as his social inferiors and neither his wealth nor rank was able to save him from the disdain of those living in Hertfordshire.

Although some people may argue that Mr. Darcy would have treated the people of a lower class at the Meryton ball with respect had he known their character, I argue that Mr. Darcy's natural disposition is that of a prideful man who does not adhere to the mannerisms of his class that would have portrayed him in a more amiable light. The word that depicts Mr. Darcy the most is "pride" as it comes up several times throughout the novel. Pride means having an excessively high opinion of one's own worth or importance which gives rise to a feeling or

attitude of superiority over others. This sense of pride is even more evident after he is encouraged by Mr. Bingley to dance and he responds by saying, "At an assembly such as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room, who it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with" (9). His words, "insupportable" and "punishment" reveal that the women in attendance at the ball are all women of the middle class, none of which are of a high enough social standing to appease his standards as his sense of pride leads him to consider dancing with the women he is unacquainted with as again, a "punishment." Mr. Darcy does not fake politeness like other upper class characters either. At the ball, during an exchange of words with Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy describes Elizabeth's beauty in a blunt and offensive term as "tolerable," yet, not good enough for him, even though he was aware that she could hear him. It is a clear representation that the opinions of those who he believes to be below him were meaningless at this point in the novel and it showed his disregard for behaving amiably in the presence of those of lower classes. While he may feel superior, moments such as this one cannot be excused by his shyness or lack of social skill. His words were designed to define his insensitivity to his social inferiors. With this social distinction in mind, it is understandable the attendees at the Meryton ball viewed Mr. Darcy as rude and disagreeable. In many cases, he was. Though some readers may argue that Mr. Darcy would treat these strangers differently if he knew their character, I argue that those of Meryton were not entirely wrong about their perception of Mr. Darcy's prideful disposition because even when he proposes to Elizabeth, he reminds her that he is of an upper status.

Mr. Darcy continues to act self-conceited and snobbish after he proposes to Elizabeth showing that he conducts his manners on his prideful nature which showcases that an elitist upbringing does not grant amiability. After Elizabeth refuses his hand in marriage, Mr. Darcy

says to her, “Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations, whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?” (134). Here his word choice of “inferiority” serves to remind Elizabeth that as far as her social status and connections are concerned, she is inadequate to Mr. Darcy. He further exemplifies this by stating how shameful he has felt about his hope of marrying her by rhetorically asking her, if she expected him to “rejoice” about his feelings toward her, or if she thought he would “congratulate” himself for falling in love with a woman whose value is significantly lower than his own. It is during this scene that Mr. Darcy once again reveals the snobbery he has attained from his elitist upbringing. Her refusal to marry him had hurt his pride and he was surprised that she would refuse him even though his social position was beyond hers in terms of “connections,” wealth, and property. But Elizabeth did not refuse him because of his wealth, but because of the way he treated her as being unequal to himself and the way she had observed his lack of amiability at Meryton. Of course, her perception of him had also been misguided due to her discussion with Mr. Wickham, but if Darcy had conducted himself properly at Meryton to begin with, this misconception would never have taken place.

It is not until after Elizabeth confronts Mr. Darcy about his “arrogance,” “conceit,” and his “selfish disdain of the feelings of others” does Mr. Darcy appear to make the effort of learning one’s character before making prejudiced assumptions based not only on wealth and status, but on a moral high ground as well. For example, when he later encountered Elizabeth and the Gardiners at Pemberley he treated them as equals rather than inferiors. The narrator through free indirect discourse discloses, “Mr. Darcy invited him, with the greatest civility, to fish there as often as he chose ... offering at the same time to supply him with fishing tackle” (173). It is here that Mr. Darcy becomes a respectable and well liked character. It was



Elizabeth's confrontation that allowed Mr. Darcy himself to realize that his ideology about inferiority was a negative byproduct of his rank and he therefore was able to correct his behavior. However, I would argue that until this point in the novel, his actions were whole-heartedly attached to the prideful belief that those of the lower social classes were not only inferior in terms of wealth and status, but that he believed them to be morally inferior as well.

Another character, Mr. Bingley, Mr. Darcy's friend, is also from a similar high-rank social class however, unlike Mr. Darcy, he does not regard those from a lower class in an inferior manner. The narrator, using free indirect discourse describes Mr. Bingley as "lively and unreserved," as his "amiable qualities must speak for themselves" (8). What is most striking about this comparison is that although Mr. Bingley is wealthy, he does not let it affect neither his pride nor his vanity like Mr. Darcy does. He treats those at Meryton as his equals and his affability and condescending nature causes him to be very well received by the people in Hertfordshire. It should be noted, however, that Mr. Bingley is also far less affluent than Mr. Darcy and is not a member of the aristocracy. Mr. Bingley's father earned his considerable fortune through trade, which Mr. Bingley inherited. Trade was not considered to be a respectable occupation because the gentry felt threatened by the large changes that were coming with the industrial revolution. This prejudice leaves Bingley excluded from the aristocracy, but his manners and amiability remain in top form, showing that such behaviors are not exclusive to people of high pedigree and aristocratic rank. This is further supported through the narrator's free indirect discourse at Meryton which depicts Mr. Darcy's manners as "haughty, reserved, and fastidious" although "well bred," they were nonetheless, "not inviting" (12). In this quote, "well bred" means a person from a highly regarded family who demonstrates good upbringing or education through courteous or refined speech and behavior. Yet, even though Mr. Darcy has

been raised in an upbringing of good propriety, his manners are nonetheless received by others of lower standing as cold and unwelcoming. A stark contrast to the reception Mr. Bingley received by the attendees at Meryton. This highlights the fact that amiability is not determined from their rank. Furthermore, this proves that Mr. Darcy is an excellent example of an upper-class character who lacks the generosity to treat others with mutual respect, unlike Bingley, who would be widely considered as "inferior" to Mr. Darcy in terms of class distinction. It is as Byrne stated in her critique titled "Manners," that "To be well born was not necessarily to be well bred" (304). Or in other words, rank does not buy friendly manners.

While Mr. Darcy represented the resentful pride of the upper class, Mr. William Collins exhibits over-studied civility and envy for the aristocracy as he is a member of the middle class. This importance of rank and distinction becomes explicit in the case of Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine. To be established as the highest social figure in a room was to command the attention and respect of those who shared their space. People from a higher rank believed these social distinctions help them get their own way. Nobody epitomizes this desire of higher social status more than Mr. Collins who is a consistent name-dropper of his connection to Lady Catherine. Mr. Collins liked nothing more than to speak of his prestige by proxy: "Mr. Collins was eloquent in her praise. The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner" (48). This was a subject that Mr. Collins was delighted to speak about because it allowed him to elevate his status among the Bennet family. By speaking of his close relationship with Lady Catherine it allowed him to look more like an equal to a member of the aristocracy. The narrator describes some of what Mr. Collins had shared with the Bennets in regard to his prestigious relationship with Lady Catherine. Through free indirect discourse, it was learned that Lady Catherine "had also asked him twice to dine at Rosings, [her estate] and had sent for him only the Saturday before, to make

up her pool of quadrille in the evening” (48). This shows how Mr. Collins believes that an esteemed woman such as Lady Catherine genuinely enjoys his company, giving his own rank more distinction or refinement as a direct effect.

While Mr. Collins believes himself to be a part of the upper-class to which Lady Catherine belongs, the narrator reveals how mistaken he is, and instead shows the distinction of his social inferiority. The reader is also notified through free indirect discourse that Lady Catherine “had always spoken to him as she would to any other gentleman: she made not the smallest objection to his joining in the society of the neighborhood” (48). While this information at first appears to be Lady Catherine’s support of Mr. Collins, it can be read differently too. The text says that Lady Catherine spoke to Mr. Collins “as she would any other gentleman” which is nothing worthy of praise. It does not actually make him sound as refined and high class as he believes. If Lady Catherine spoke about him in a manner of praise and amiability, it would be commendable, but otherwise Mr. Collins is no more noteworthy than any other gentleman. Also, we learn that Lady Catherine made not “the smallest objection to his joining in the society of the neighborhood,” not that she sponsored or directly supported his integration. Once again, this passage initially sounds as if she welcomed him, but only because it follows the mentioning of his dining with Lady Catherine and his self-aggrandizing praise of her character beforehand. If Lady Catherine had specifically invited Mr. Collins to join the neighborhood, it would show approval and an appraisal of his character and rank. The fact that he is so frequently invited to dine with Lady Catherine is more than likely due to his estate’s close proximity to her, which he notes, “The garden in which stands my humble abode, is separated only by a lane from Rosings Park, her ladyship’s residence” (48). As well as his constant praises of her, it is clear that Mr.

Collins' efforts to feel like a part of the upper-class were nonetheless satirized as the narrator portrays his social inferiority.

Instead of gaining the affirmation from Lady Catherine that she viewed him as an equal, Mr. Collins's relationship with her is built on his recognition of her superiority. The two share a symbiotic relationship in this way. Lady Catherine likes to be praised for her high social rank, and Mr. Collins gets to brag about his connection to her. For example, Mr. Collins, unable to resist speaking about her, shares with Mr. Bennet how he managed to get in her good graces. Mr. Collins explained, "I am happy on every occasion to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies. . . . These are the kind of little things which please her ladyship, and it is a sort of attention which I conceive myself particularly bound to pay" (49). With his strategy of constantly gushing over her, it is no wonder why Lady Catherine likes to keep him around. He is a consistent confirmation of her rank and superiority complex. However, Mr. Collins is also obviously desperate to impress the Bennet family, as he cannot speak enough about Lady Catherine's prestige and the nature of his acquaintance with it. While this is not necessarily rude behavior, it is certainly a desperate attempt of vanity, or at least; a show of self-conceit and desire for admiration.

Mr. Collins' over rehearsed manners were something Austen satirizes the most when it comes to his false pretensions of the upper class. We can see that Mr. Collins's over studied behavior is not recommended by Austen because through an observation of Mr. Collins, the narrator explains, Mr. Bennet could see "His cousin was as absurd as he had hoped, and he listened to him with the keenest enjoyment, maintaining at the same time the most resolute composure of countenance" (49). The narrator here is channeling Mr. Bennet's thoughts through free indirect discourse by using the word choices of "absurd," "keenest enjoyment," and the fact

that Mr. Bennet maintained a “resolute composure of countenance” that reveals to the reader how Mr. Collins is being mocked without realizing it. The fact that Mr. Collins is so clueless only exemplifies how much of a buffoon he really is for his over-studied civility, such as his premeditated “elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions” (49). It is this type of behavior that many critics such as Paula Byrne believe that Jane Austen detested. Byrne claims that Austen, “was exasperated by – and made comic capital out of excessively ceremonious behavior and over studied civility” (297). The comic capital is blatantly apparent in her description of Mr. Bennet’s discreet amusement of Mr. Collins’s absurdity and the limitless enjoyment of listening to his cousin’s admitted previously studied civility.

One would think that the upper class would excel in the subject of manners considering the advantages they received in their education of propriety. However, this isn’t the case at all with many of the upper class characters in the novel. For instance, Lady Catherine grew up in an aristocratic society and had access to governesses and all the books she could ever hope to acquire. With this access to education it would be hard to believe she does not know how to properly conduct herself in different forms of company. Lady Catherine would be well aware that there is an expectation that she should behave affably and condescending to her inferiors, but she clearly prefers the advice of the 17th century writer, Timothy Nourse instead. Nourse argued that, “it was a mistake for a gentleman to try to win the common people ‘by civilities’: Too many of the lower orders, he warned, were ‘very rough and savage’... The best way was ‘to bridle them and to make them feel the spur’” (Thomas, 74). Essentially advocating that the upper class needs to remind their inferiors that they are lesser beings rather than treating them as if they were equals. Therefore, Lady Catherine's manners were deliberately cold and intimidating. She gave short responses to her hostess at Longbourne if any at all, and refused to accept any refreshments

before she abruptly demanded she speak with Elizabeth in private. Mrs. Bennet on the other hand who is from a lower social standing, treated Lady Catherine with perfect deference and respect, just as the lesson books would have advised. She held her composure in front of Lady Catherine by expressing civility and good manners despite not having been as well educated on the subject of propriety as Lady Catherine would have been. Showing again, that rank has nothing to do with a person's amiable qualities and manners.

Lady Catherine rarely exhibited courteous behavior and her character reveals her to be consistently suppressing those she regards as inferior. Lady Catherine does not pretend to be anybody's equal, nor does she care to be polite in the presence of those she believes to be inferior to herself. Clearly, ignoring the expectations someone of her class is supposed to adhere to. During Elizabeth's first meeting of Lady Catherine at Rosings, the narrator's free indirect discourse informs the reader of Elizabeth's thoughts which stated Lady Catherine's "air was not conciliating, nor was her manner of receiving them, such as to make her visitors forget their inferior rank. She was not rendered formidable by silence; but whatever she said, was spoken in so authoritative a tone, as marked her self-importance" (113). Although Elizabeth, through her discussion with Wickham already had a preconceived notion of Lady Catherine's personality, we quickly learn how accurate this description is. The word that stands out most is the term conciliating. According to the *English Oxford Dictionary*, "conciliate" means to gain goodwill and esteem by acts which soothe, pacify, or induce friendly feelings. This event shows how Lady Catherine fails to even be externally polite. If she were, her air would have been inviting and her body expressions would exude respect and courtesy. Instead, Lady Catherine finds it prudent to make clear to her guests that they are inferior people rather than allow them to feel at ease. Her lack of conciliation is a product of her social class and deployed as a means to show her inferiors

that she “is not to be trifled with” (241). This is just one of her multiple methods of displaying her superiority and intimidation. Lady Catherine does not fake politeness for the sake of vanity either. She, like many aristocrats of the period, did not find it important to behave politely to anyone that belonged to a lower social status. This is because their manners and values in her opinion, were deemed inferior and invalid to her own.

When Lady Cathrine travels to Longbourn to object to the rumors of Mr. Darcy’s proposal to Elizabeth, her character is perceived as a figure of hypocrisy due to her ill-mannered reserve showcasing that once more, status does not guarantee civility. Not only does Lady Catherine object to Elizabeth’s enjoining of the upper class, but upon her arrival Lady Catherine entered the room with “an air more than usually ungracious, made no other reply to Elizabeth’s salutation, than a slight inclination of the head, and sat down without saying a word” (240). Once again we see Lady Catherine failing to live up to the aim of external politeness. She does not attempt to fake it like many did during this time through a false exhibition of good virtue and morals. However, what is striking here is the way Mrs. Bennet receives her. Although Lady Catherine is purposefully provoking Elizabeth and her mother, Mrs. Bennet is nothing but kind to her in return. No sentence sums up the difference in politeness better than through the free indirect discourse where, “Mrs. Bennet, with great civility, begged her ladyship to take some refreshment; but Lady Catherine very resolutely, and not very politely, declined eating any thing” (240). At least when in the presence of those who are of a higher social class, Mrs. Bennet understood the importance of performing formalities to try and appease the social expectations of Lady Catherine’s rank. If Mrs. Bennet failed to meet these expectations, it would harm her family’s image and reputation which had always been of great importance to her. Sadly, these actions are in vain because the conditions of politeness were ignored by Lady Catherine when

she was in “inferior” company, which just so happens to be nearly everyone she meets. It is a marked example of how behavior and rank are not one in the same. Socioeconomic status does not automatically make somebody well mannered. While it may be something that can be easily learned, it is not always performed. A lesson, it seems that the middle-class valued more than their “superior” counterparts in the upper echelons of British society. Mrs. Bennet in this interaction was clearly the figure who had a goodness of heart. Her counterpart resembles the position of the loathsome figure who is hardly more than a face of hypocrisy and snobbery. Social status again is dispelled as the epitome of fine manners and virtue. Even Mr. Darcy, after reflecting on his treatment of others, begins to adhere to the expectation of behaving affable and condescending to his inferiors. He recognized the flaws of his character and appropriately addressed them. Something Lady Catherine seemed unwilling to do. She clearly believed that if she is in the presence of an inferior, her behavior towards them is irrelevant and the need to be amiable is no longer an expectation she must abide by.

Status in the case of Lady Catherine, meant more than a person’s character. Lady Catherine cared more about whether or not somebody was respectable based on their social class, and willingness to affirm her belief of her own superiority. However, McMaster writes, “In Jane Austen’s world, human worth is to be judged by standards better and more enduring than social status; but social status is always relevant” (125). This statement is referring to Jane Austen’s belief that human worth should be judged not by social status alone, but rather by a person’s character. It is not as if social status can be completely disregarded, after all, social hierarchies were an important part of British culture, but it is a person’s civility, amiability, and manners that should be the measured qualities that take precedent over social status. Something that an aristocrat such as Lady Catherine was unwilling to accept or capable of understanding.



Lady Catherine not only does not practice the strategy of external politeness, but she fails to live up to the quality of internal politeness too as her character serves as satirical representation of the elitist aristocracy. Lady Catherine has always been a member of the upper class and because of this, she believes her class permits her a large moral and societal high ground in which other people cannot even begin to judge or censure her. Exploiting this aristocratic ideology further, Lady Catherine believes she is allowed to do, say, or act anyway she wants whilst those who are inferior cannot. This shows that she behaves like she is superior to all others and clearly believes it too. This much is evident when she warns Elizabeth that if she marries Mr. Darcy, she will be “censured, slighted, and despised, by every one connected with him. Your alliance will be a disgrace” (243). This is hardly something someone who is internally polite or even remotely virtuous would say to another. She says all this to Elizabeth simply because she is a member of the middle class and not the aristocracy, and the very thought of someone of Elizabeth’s rank joining her family is a repulsive thought to her. With this ideology in mind, Lady Catherine is clearly written in the novel as a representation of the haughtiest of the aristocracy, and is therefore mercilessly satirized by Jane Austen and her disapproval of such elitist behavior.

In England, social hierarchies were built to perpetuate the belief that the aristocracy and the upper class are a superior group of people in comparison to the working class. It was ingrained into society for families to value money, and associate it with propriety and elegance. So much so, that the rich are excused of all their misdemeanors and ill treatment to the middle and lower classes. Social status remains to be of the highest importance to the upper class, so much so that the opinions of the people who live below their means, are disregarded of any importance or worth of politeness. Jane Austen is aware of this social issue and by narrating her

story with free indirect discourse and by thoughtfully designing the way her characters behave, she is able to show her readers how class is actually a baseless attribute that in no means equates to good manners, amiability, or politeness. In this novel, a person's worth is not measured by their social class, but through their genuine characteristics and their treatment of others.

### Annotated Bibliography

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This is the novel my entire project is based upon. I am using and analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* and the character it portrays and the free indirect discourse as a way to describe how Jane Austen writes her characters in a fashion that shows the disconnects between the belief of superiority in the aristocracy in comparison to those who are part of the lower social classes. Jane Austen appears to write her aristocratic and upper class characters in a criticizing manner that shows not only their belief of superiority but snobbery as well and how protective they are about their pride and vanity. Often times seeking confirmation from those who they believe to be below them.

Byrne, Paula. "Manners." *Jane Austen in Context*, edited by Janet Todd, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 297–304.

This source comes from Paula Byrne who is a biographer and an award winning British non-fiction writer. She is an expert on Jane Austen and the culture of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. This chapter gives a brief explanation of proper manners and how Austen was interested in how manners were morally revealing. This article is helpful to me because one of the overlying themes of my essay is about how the rich do not utilize these manners to their full advantage and what it says about their belief in superiority to the lower classes.

LaCapra, Dominick "Narrative Practice and Free Indirect Style." *Madame Bovary on Trial*, Cornell University Press, ITHACA; LONDON, 1982, pp. 126–149. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt207g637.9](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt207g637.9). Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

This source is a great resource for defining different styles of narrative prose. This source specifically helps me understand the complexities of free indirect discourse and provides a definition by a few different literary theorists that have been helpful for me to incorporate into my paper. I think this is an important source because so much of my paper already is focused on free indirect discourse and this journal article will help me understand what is so important about it and how it is pivotal to my argument. It is also not focused specifically on Jane Austen so it gives me the freedom to articulate in my own words how it is deployed in *Pride and Prejudice*.

McMaster, Juliet. "Class." *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 115–130. Cambridge Companions to Literature.

Juliet McMaster is a Canadian scholar of eighteenth and nineteenth-century English literature, and a specialist in Jane Austen. This article covers the ideas of class and how it was viewed and what it meant in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century of Britain. This chapter explains how were regarded at the top the hierarchy, what were considered “respectable” professions and the complications of being included into the upper class. This article also mentions some notable information about titles and social distinction. This is a helpful resource to me because my I get into great detail about class distinctions when analyzing Mr. Collins and there is a lot of useful information that is useful in regards to Bingley’s situation as a wealthy gentleman and has information I have also put to use in relation to Lady Catherine.

Neale, R. S. “Class and Class-Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century England: Three Classes or Five?” *Victorian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1968, pp. 5–32. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3826429](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826429). Accessed 23 Apr. 2021.

R.S. Neale was the foundation Professor of Economic History at University of New England and he has written and edited several books about English history from a Marxist perspective. His article explains the differences between the class systems as well as how the hierarchy of these systems are run and what some the perspectives of the class systems were. It also includes information about authority, propriety, and the complications of being admitted into the upper class and regarded as an aristocrat. This is useful for me especially in regard to Lady Catherine who is an aristocrat through and through. It can help me identify some of her traits and how they pertain to her sense of superiority, use of authority, and ill-regard for the social classes ranked beneath her.

*OED Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed 23 April 2021.

English Oxford Dictionary is extraordinarily useful because it helps me identify key words from the passages of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Many words change over the course of time so it is important to check into the history of these words and see how they were used and the different contexts of meaning they may have held in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This helps mitigate any sort of misrepresentations or unclear interpretations of the free indirect discourse of the novel as well as the dialogue between characters.

Price, Martin. “Manners, Morals, and Jane Austen.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1975, pp. 261–280. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2933070](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2933070). Accessed 23 Apr. 2021.

Martin Price was an American literary critic and scholar who specialized in 18th-century English literature and thought. The main idea of this article is to examine how Jane Austen's introduction of characters tends to stress qualities that are not directly visible but will shape and account for the behavior that follows. This is an incredibly important source for me to look at because much of what it analyzed in his essay pertains to the free

indirect discourse that Jane Austen uses in her novels. Much of what I analyze and argue for in my essay is focused on Austen's free indirect discourse as well, so Martin is a great person to read about and learn from in order to improve my own work. His article is also valuable as it reveals interesting information about the interactions between class and the constant pressure good behavior has on members of society.

Thomas, Keith. *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England*. Yale University Press, 2020.

Keith Thomas, is a historian who is an expert on manners and civility in early modern England. Since so much of my paper is based on politeness, manners, and amiability, this makes him an incredible source for my paper. I will use his work as part of my historical framework to show how and why Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine are considered impolite and do not behave in an amiable manner. This will help me support my arguments about how they do not adhere to the social norms they are expected to comply with despite having received the education to know how and when they should do so.

Ylivuori, Soile. *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities, and Power*. Taylor and Francis Group, 2019.

Dr. Soile Ylivuori is a history professor at the University of London with a focus on eighteenth century Britain. The main focus of her book is on how women were treated and expected to behave during the eighteenth century in a patriarchal society. It focuses specifically on what the social expectations were, and the ways women were supposed to achieve them. This book was useful for me, because there is an entire chapter focused on politeness and the different attitudes some woman took to achieve it. I use this source to provide historical context of what politeness looked like during the time of Jane Austen's writing and attached the information to my historical context section of my writing.