

OBJECTIVES

LITERARY APPRECIATION: Irony
VOCABULARY: Describing personalities
FUNCTION: Making plans
GRAMMAR: Exclamations
 To be to

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jane Austen (1775-1817) was one of England's first women novelists and she is often regarded as the greatest. She was the seventh child of a country parson. She herself never married but portrayed the activities of husband-hunting mothers with satirical wit. She wrote six novels only, all of them masterly. The excerpt here is taken from her first novel, which she wrote at 21.

GETTING READY

1. Do you know how a girl went about finding a husband in the 18th and 19th centuries?
2. In what way are things different today?

USEFUL WORDS

Describing personalities

ambitious
 gossipy
 humorous
 obnoxious
 prejudiced
 repulsive
 shameful
 talkative
 vain
 a man of few words
 intrinsic qualities / defects

Décrire une personnalité

ambitieux
cancannier
enjoué
énervant
intolérant
répugnant, repoussant
honteux
bavard
vaniteux
un homme taciturne
qualités / défauts inhérents

FUNCTION

Making plans

I plan to + V
 What I intend to do is to + V ...
 I'm going to + V
 I'm thinking of + V-ing
 I mean to ...
 She was determined to + V
 She intended to + V
 She wanted to + V
 She aimed at + V-ing

TEXT 1: A NEW NEIGHBOUR

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feeling or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

5 "My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let¹ at last?" Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here and she told me all about it."
 Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

10 "You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the North of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas², and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

- 15 "What is his name?"
 "Bingley."
 "Is he married or single?"
 "Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"
- 20 "How so! How can it affect them?"
 "My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them?"
 "Is that his design in settling here?"
 "Design! Nonsense! How can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of
 25 them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."
 "I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party."
 "My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be
 30 anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty."
 "In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."
 "But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood."
 "It is more than I engage for, I assure you."
 35 "But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not."
 "You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls;
 40 though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813

¹ To be let : *être loué*

² Michaelmas: *la Saint-Michel* (29 septembre)

SAY IT YOURSELF

1. Who are the two characters talking? What is their relationship?
2. What change has occurred at Netherfield Park? Why does it interest Mrs. Bennet?
3. What does Mrs. Bennet want her husband to do? Why?
4. Give one fact learnt from the text about each of the following:
 - the Bennets' new neighbour
 - the Bennets' children
5. Pick out in the first paragraph the words or phrases expressing the following ideas:
 - Few people know about this man's opinions.
 - Girls think this man already belongs to them.
 - People are so sure that they are right.

Literary Appreciation

• **Verbal irony** attempts to convey a certain meaning in words that at first sight appear to say exactly the opposite.
 • In **dramatic irony** a speaker may utter words that have a hidden meaning which the reader or spectator understands but of which the speaker himself is unaware.

6. This extract is the opening of the novel. The first sentence sets the tone. Study it in detail.

What sort of statement do the first six words make you think of? Contrast the style of the two parts of the sentence.

7. The tone of the first sentence is

- a) sentimental
- b) ironical
- c) dramatic
- d) tragic

Explain how you decided.

8. An author describing people can give an intuition of their character by

- a) describing their physique
- b) insisting on the clothes they wear
- c) revealing their conversation
- d) telling us about the milieu they live in

Which does the author do here?

9. Elsewhere in the novel Jane Austen describes Mrs. Bennet and says "The business of her life was to get her daughters married, its solace was visiting and news."

Say how this is shown here.

10. Say which of the following characteristics apply to Mr. Bennet and which to Mrs. Bennet:

obsessed / vain / taciturn / jealous / intelligent / talkative / ignorant / reserved / has a sense of humor / sarcastic.

11. From this first page of the novel guess

- who the main characters are going to be
- where the story is going to take place.

LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

1. Pick out all the sentences in which the modal *must* is used. Say whether it is a question of obligation / duty or deduction.

2. Jane Austen uses real, naturalistic dialogue. The way a person expresses himself or herself reflects his or her character. Show how this is true of this dialogue, contrasting the style of Mr. Bennet with that of Mrs. Bennet.

3. Translate, using either *must* or *to be to*.

a) Il faut que vous leur rendiez visite avant la fin du mois.

b) Il doit arriver la semaine prochaine.

c) Netherfield Park doit être loué.

TEXT 2: REFUSAL

The story takes place in the early 19th century. Mrs Bennet's dearest wish is to marry her five daughters. She has just learnt that Mr Collins, a cousin who is to inherit the Bennet property on Mr Bennet's death, has proposed marriage to Elizabeth, her second daughter, and has been refused.

The information startled Mrs Bennet.

"Lizzy will be brought to reason, Mr Collins," she said. "I will speak to her myself at once. She is a very headstrong foolish girl, and does not know her own interest; but I will make her know it."

5 "Pardon me, Madam," cried Mr Collins, "but if she is really headstrong and foolish, I do not think she would be a very desirable wife to a man in my situation..."

"Sir, you misunderstand me," said Mrs Bennet, alarmed. "Lizzy is only headstrong in these matters. In everything else she is quite a good-natured girl. I will go directly to Mr Bennet, and we will very soon settle it with her, I am sure."

She did not give him time to reply, and hurried instantly to her husband, who was in the library.

10 "Oh! Mr Bennet, you are wanted immediately. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr Collins, for she will not have him, and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have her." Mr Bennet raised his eyes from his book, and fixed them on her face with a calm unconcern.

"I do not have the pleasure of understanding you," he said. "What are you talking about?"

15 "Mr Collins and Lizzy. Lizzy declares she will not have Mr Collins, and Mr Collins begins to say that he will not have Lizzy."

"And what am I to do on the occasion?... It seems a hopeless business."

"Speak to Lizzy about it yourself. Tell her that you insist upon her marrying him."

"Call her down. She will hear my opinion."
 Mrs Bennet rang the bell, and Elizabeth came in.
 20 "Come here, child," said her father as she appeared. "I have sent for you on an affair of importance. I understand that Mr Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?" Elizabeth replied that it was.
 "Very well – and this offer of marriage you have refused?"
 "I have, Sir."
 "Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is not it so, Mrs
 25 Bennet?"
 "Yes, or I will never see her again."
 "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr Collins, and I will never see you again if you do..."

Adapted from Jane AUSTEN's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

UNDERSTANDING

1. Who are the main characters?
2. What are they talking about?
3. Who sides with whom? Why?
4. From what you have read, draw Mrs Bennet's, Mr Bennet's and Elizabeth's portraits.
5. Have you ever rebelled against your parents' authority? When? Why? How?
6. Do you think the problem of forced marriages is still valid today? Why? Why not?

Toolbox

• Nouns:

- authority, clash, victory
- prospects: *perspectives d'avenir*
- eligible young man: *bon parti*
- choice, refusal, reason for sth / V-ing
- motives, support: *soutien*
- nerve: *cran*

• Adjectives:

- amazed: *ébahi*, taken aback: *déconcerté*
- frustrated, disappointed
- selfish: *égoïste*
- obedient: *docile*, submissive, bold: *audacieux*
- independent, strong-willed, determined
- firm, tolerant, understanding, wise: *sage*, straightforward: *direct*, sensible: *raisonnable*

• Verbs:

- marry sb = get married to sb, settle down: *s'installer*, look forward to sth / V-ing: *attendre avec impatience*, expect sb to do sth: *s'attendre à ce que*, resent sth / V-ing: *ne pas admettre*
- interfere : *intervenir*, urge : *pousser*, compel = oblige = force, obey sb
- argue : *se disputer*, take into account : *prendre en compte*, take sides with : *prendre le parti de*, speak one's mind : *dire ce que l'on pense*.

GRAMMAR

• Exclamations

- ***what a, such a*** + groupe nominal
- ***how, so*** + adj. attribut
- ***what a fine thing for our girls!***
- ***I have never met such a gossipy woman!***
- ***How talkative she was!***
- ***She was so talkative!***

• To be to

- Cette expression indique que l'action est planifiée, prévue.
- ***He is to take possession before Michaelmas.***
 - ***Some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.***
- On la traduit en français par le verbe « devoir » ou « être censé » + infinitif.

React

1. Do you think 19 is old enough to get married nowadays? (200 words, LLV2 Polynésie Juin 2000)
2. Do you believe in love at first sight? (200 words)
3. What do you think about marriage and children? (200 words)
4. Is being independent the best way in a couple? (200 words, ESLV1 Amérique du Nord Juin 2000)