

Pride and Prejudice

Sample Analytical Paper Topics

TOPIC #1

Elizabeth's character is influenced by her relationships with other characters in the novel. Write an essay to show how she changes either in a positive or negative manner due to another's influence.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *The role of Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice is developed through the negative and positive influences of Jane, Darcy, and Mrs. Gardiner.*

II. Influences of Jane

A. Positive influences

1. She can be trusted for her honesty.
2. She will share sisterly confidences.
3. She possesses a forgiving quality.
4. She evinces the goodness of leading a moral life.

B. Negative influences

1. She never sees evil in others.
2. She keeps everything emotionally inside.

III. Influence of Darcy

A. Positive influences

1. He forces Elizabeth to analyze her feelings.
2. He makes Elizabeth grow in self understanding.
3. He makes Elizabeth change her emotional state.
4. He shows Elizabeth how her own pride and prejudices can be overcome.

B. Negative influences

1. He is quick to judge.
2. He often seems too proud and vain.
3. He is sometimes too reserved in speaking his mind.

IV. Influences of Mrs. Gardiner

A. Positive influences

1. She helps Elizabeth analyze her true feelings toward Darcy.
2. She provides an opportunity to put Elizabeth and Darcy together.
3. She shows by example how intelligence and rational thinking can work out problems.

B. Negative influences

1. She is sometimes naive about the Bennet family's lack of social class.
2. She is often too impressed by the upper class.

V. Conclusion: Jane, Darcy, and Mrs. Gardiner are three major characters who influence Elizabeth.

TOPIC #2

Austen interjects comedy into many of the novel's more serious moments. How do Mrs. Bennet, Mary, and Mr. Collins bring comic relief to some of the novel's dramatic scenes?

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *The comic sides of Mary, Mrs. Bennet, and Collins enable Austen to lighten some of the more serious moments in the novel.*

II. Mary

A. How is she portrayed?

1. She speaks like a textbook.
2. She is always the sister who thinks too much.
3. Her comments have little to do with a given situation.

B. Instances of comic relief

1. She has opinions about events that she knows little about.
2. She has her nose stuck in a book when serious discussions surround her.

III. Mrs. Bennet

A. Her comic contributions

1. Her dialogues with her husband are comical and ridiculous.
2. Her social blunders are so many that the reader begins to expect them.
3. She lacks logic.
4. When something goes wrong, she hides behind a fit of "nerves."

IV. Mr. Collins

A. His character and instances of comic relief

1. He thinks entirely too well of himself, and speaks with a false humility that is pompous, verbose, and long-winded.
2. His proposal to Elizabeth is for all the wrong reasons.
3. He fawns over upper-class women.
4. His letters are full of self-importance and nonsense.

V. Conclusion: Mary, Mrs. Bennet, and Collins provide comic relief.

TOPIC #3

The whole novel revolves around attitudes and reasons for marriage. Write an essay comparing and contrasting the marriages of Charlotte, Lydia, Jane, and Elizabeth.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *The marriages of four of the key characters and their pride and prejudices lead them to represent an era.*

II. Charlotte's marriage to Collins

A. Reasons

1. He has a title and an estate.
2. She is plain and unattractive.

3. She is 26 and nearly an old maid.
4. It is for convenience only.

III. Lydia's marriage to Wickham

A. Reasons

1. He is handsome and attractive.
2. He has a commission in the army.
3. She is 16 and in love.

IV. Jane's marriage to Bingley

A. Reasons

1. They both fell in love almost immediately upon meeting.
2. He has a title and money.
3. It is upward mobility for her.
4. They are well-matched.

V. Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy

A. Reasons

1. They share mutual love and understanding.
2. It is a social coup for Elizabeth.
3. They compliment one another.
4. They share trust and have confidence in each other.

VI. Conclusion: The marriages of Charlotte, Lydia, Jane, and Elizabeth reflect typical marriages of that period.

TOPIC #4

Letter writing is a lost art in the twentieth century. Today, we pick up the phone, or send e-mail messages by computer. Letters were usually written in the first person, and they communicated style, intelligence (or lack of it), and insights into character. Explain how Austen used letters to reveal the innermost thoughts of her characters and to express their personalities.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *Letter writing in Pride and Prejudice reveals a great deal about Collins, Darcy, and Mrs. Gardiner.*

II. Collins' personality as revealed by his letters

A. His personality is revealed by

1. His excessive verbiage
2. His pompous flattery
3. His insincere understanding or knowledge
4. His self-pride
5. His condemnation of others and self praise

III. Darcy's personality is reflected in his letters

A. He shows qualities not expressed verbally

1. His sincerity
2. His acknowledgment of faults
3. His perceptive analysis of others

4. His lack of guile or trickery
5. His honest devotion to those he admires

IV. Mrs. Gardiner's personality is revealed in her letters

- A. She is steadfast and intelligent with her perceptions
 1. She has almost a sixth sense about character
 2. She can intelligently come to conclusions regarding social situations
 3. She shows warmth and understanding
 4. She is critical but unbiased
 5. She offers hope and understanding

V. Conclusion: Collins, Darcy, and Mrs. Gardiner reveal their personalities and thoughts by writing letters.

TOPIC #5

Write an essay to show how the first impressions of major characters influence the plot and character relationships in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *The first impressions of Darcy, Elizabeth, and Lady de Bourgh affect the plot and structure of Pride and Prejudice by their influences on other characters.*

II. First impressions of Darcy

- A. Positive influences
 1. He exhibits good breeding.
 2. He is intelligent.
 3. He has pride in his worth.
 4. He seems loyal to his friends.
- B. Negative influences
 1. He seems to be vain.
 2. He criticizes those below his social status.
 3. He exhibits indifference.
 4. He has strong opinions.

III. First impressions of Elizabeth

- A. Positive influences
 1. She is accomplished in provincial society.
 2. She is a master of conversation.
 3. She is witty and well-mannered.
 4. She surpasses all of her sisters in intelligence.
- B. Negative influences
 1. She is quick to make a judgment of character.
 2. She is sometimes too outspoken.
 3. She can be deceived by charm.
 4. She acts before she thinks out situations.

IV. First impressions of Lady Catherine de Bourgh

A. Positive influences

1. She is wealthy and aristocratic.
2. She runs a “tight ship” within her household.
3. She oversees the care of her timid daughter.
4. She is knowledgeable of all social amenities.

B. Negative influences

1. She wants everything decided in her favor.
2. She is overpowering and strongly opinionated.
3. She forms immediate opinions on every subject.
4. She won't permit others to question her view points.

V. Conclusion: Elizabeth, Darcy, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh are three major characters whose first impressions influence the development of the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*.