

# **Eligible Study Guide**

**Eligible by Curtis Sittenfeld**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Eligible Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 – 36.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 37 – 73.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 74 – 109.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 110 – 146.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 147 – 181.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">43</a>



# Plot Summary

In Curtis Smittenfeld's modern retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, the five Bennet sisters lived with their mother and father in their family home in Cincinnati. Mary, Kitty, and Lydia, the youngest sisters, all lived there permanently, despite being in their twenties. The eldest two, Liz and Jane, 38 and 39 respectively, returned home from New York for the summer in order to care for their father, Mr. Bennet, who suffered a heart attack.

Chip Bingley, a doctor and a former contestant on a Bachelor style TV show called *Eligible* recently had moved to Cincinnati. Mrs. Bennet, keen for her daughters to get married, arranged for her daughters to meet him at a barbecue. At the barbecue, Liz overheard Chip talking to his friend Fitzwilliam Darcy. Darcy was very rude and dismissive about Cincinnati and Liz spread his comments to everyone else at the barbecue after making it clear to Darcy that she'd overheard him. Chip then asked Jane out on a date.

Liz discovered that Mr. Bennet, her father, was uninsured and his recent medical treatment had left him in so much debt that the family would have to sell their house. Liz arranged for Mary and Kitty to rent an apartment together and Lydia decided to move in with her boyfriend Ham.

Before she met Chip, Jane had been trying to get pregnant via a sperm donor. After discovering that she was pregnant, Chip decided to pull back from their burgeoning relationship and return to Los Angeles to film a special reunion series of *Eligible*. Meanwhile, Liz started a casual sexual relationship with Darcy, despite the fact that she professed to dislike him. The day Liz intended to leave Cincinnati, Darcy told her that he was in love with her. He did so in such an insulting fashion that Liz told him she wanted nothing to do with him.

Liz visited her friend Charlotte in San Francisco, where they decided to visit the Darcy family home, Pemberley. Unexpectedly, Darcy was there and he invited them to dine with his family. Darcy and Liz became closer during her stay in San Francisco until she was urgently called to return to Cincinnati. Lydia had eloped with her boyfriend Ham after her parents had responded negatively to the revelation that Ham was transgender. Back in Cincinnati, Liz received a text message from Darcy's younger sister Georgie which made Liz think that Darcy was dating Chip Bingley's sister Caroline.

Chip proposed to Jane, but explained that, due to his contract, they could either film their wedding for *Eligible* or wait another year. Jane agreed to appear on the show and all the Bennet family flew out to LA for the wedding. At the wedding, Liz discovered that Darcy had spoken to her parents about Ham in order to help them understand Ham's decision to change his sex. Caroline Bingley accused Liz of trying to steal Darcy from her. Liz switched off her and Darcy's microphones and asked him to marry her. He said yes.



When the Bennet family appeared on *Eligible*, the audience mislabelled Liz a hard-drinking party girl. In the final chapter, Mary reflected how silly it was that her sisters were so obsessed with men and concluded that she was happier pursuing her career, enjoying her hobbies, and remaining single.



# Chapters 1 – 36

## Summary

All page numbers refer to the Kindle edition.

Eligible is a modern day retelling of the Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* set in contemporary Cincinnati. The novel follows the lives of the five unmarried Bennet sisters and details the consequences of the arrival of Chip Bingley – a doctor and former contestant in a Bachelor style reality TV show called Eligible. The youngest three sisters Mary, Kitty, and Lydia lived at home with their parents, while the older two Jane and Liz, who lived in New York, were staying in Cincinnati for the summer to be with their father, Mr. Bennet, after his heart attack.

In Chapter 1, Mrs. Bennet expressed her wish that one of her daughters marry Chip Bingley and set about arranging an introduction. In Chapter 2, Mrs. Bennet told her five daughters they were going to a barbecue that Chip would be attending.

Chapter 3 gave background information about the lifestyles of the Bennet sisters. Mary, Kitty and, Lydia had never had jobs, but Jane was a yoga instructor and Liz worked as a journalist. In Chapter 4, the Bennets left for the barbecue. Chapter 5 revealed that Jane had been trying to get pregnant via sperm donation and that Liz was involved with a married man called Jasper Wick. Chapter 6 recalled the events of Mr. Bennet's heart attack, which resulted in Jane and Liz coming home to Cincinnati and finding the family home, known as The Tudor, in disrepair.

In Chapter 7, the Bennets arrived at the barbecue. In Chapter 8, Liz eavesdropped on Chip Bingley's best friend, a neurosurgeon called Fitzwilliam Darcy, as he disparaged the women of Cincinnati. She interrupted him to show her displeasure. In Chapter 9, Chip asked Jane to have dinner with him.

In Chapter 10, Liz discovered that the family's long-term housekeeper had died some time ago. Chapter 11 revealed the imminent arrival of Mr. Bennet's sister Margo and her step-son Willie who was a tech billionaire. Liz noticed in Chapter 12 that her sister Kitty had a talent for manicures. In chapters 13, 14, and 15, Jane got ready for her date with Chip, Lydia revealed she was dating a gym owner called Ham Ryan, and Mary showed Liz an article about Chip on a gossip website. In Chapter 16, Jane returned from her date with Chip and, in Chapter 17, she told Liz that Chip apologized for how rude Darcy had been at the barbecue.

In Chapter 18, Mr. Bennet asked Liz if she knew what Mary did on Tuesdays – the only time Mary was ever known to keep a standing schedule. He then asked if Mary was gay. Liz said she didn't know. Mr. Bennet expressed concern that Mary might be in a relationship that she feared her parents would not approve of. Chapter 19 saw Mrs. Bennet trying to set Mary up with her high school prom date.



In Chapter 20, Charlotte Lucas, Liz's childhood friend, invited the Bennet sisters were invited to a game night at her home. In Chapter 21, Liz offered to pay to hire new housekeepers but Mr. Bennet refused. In Chapter 22, all the sisters agreed to go to the game night. In Chapter 23, Liz spoke to her married boyfriend Jasper on the phone. Chapter 24 and 25 detailed the game night at Charlotte's house. The crude language her younger sisters used embarrassed Liz in front of Chip, Darcy, and Chips sister Caroline. Liz spoke with Darcy and passionately defended Cincinnati against what she felt to be his snobbish and superior attitude. Darcy left the party with Caroline Bingley.

In Chapter 26, Liz received a present of lingerie from Jasper and they spoke on the phone because he needed her advice about his career. Aunt Margo and Cousin Willie arrived at the Tudor in Chapter 27 and Liz agreed to give Willie a tour of Cincinnati. In Chapter 28, Chip came to dinner at the Tudor and explained that he had agreed to appear on the reality TV show "Eligible" because he had been trying to find love. In Chapter 30, Jane mused that she would like to move back to Cincinnati permanently. Liz agreed to join Jane at a dinner party at Chip's apartment.

In Chapters 30, 31, and 32, Liz stopped Kitty and Lydia from filming Willie while he slept, Mrs. Bennet asked Liz research Lydia's new boyfriend, and Liz took Willie around Cincinnati, where they bumped into Darcy at Liz's favorite fast food restaurant. In Chapter 33, Liz and Willie went for an evening stroll and had an awkward conversation. In Chapter 35, Jasper decided to do a story based in Cincinnati as an excuse to visit Liz. In Chapter 36, Liz told her father that she was worried her mother had an online shopping addiction.

## Analysis

The driving force in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is gossip spread through the social grapevine. *Eligible* adapts this force into the culture of celebrity gossip. The modern American society setting of *Eligible* is more diffuse than the tight-knit small circle of Jane Austen's English gentry. *Smittenfeld* replaces the one-to-one gossip of Austen's original with tabloid rumor. In this way, Chip Bingley arrives in Cincinnati with the same amount of fanfare as Mr. Bingley arrives in the countryside in *Pride and Prejudice*.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the unmarried status of the five Bennet sisters is a legitimate problem for the family as a whole. Due to the rules of primogeniture, Mr. Bennet cannot bequeath his house and fortune to any of his daughters, meaning that their financial security upon his death is entirely dependent upon at least one of the girls finding a husband. Rather than trying to duplicate the societal consequences of remaining unmarried in the 1800's, the author chooses to focus on the social consequences of being unemployed in the modern day.

In *Eligible*, the financial uncertainty of the Bennet family is not a result of the girls' lack of husband. Instead, the family struggles because Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia, have never worked. Liz makes it her mission during the novel to assist her



younger sisters in becoming financially independent from their father: a much more feminist perspective on empowerment than could be imagined in Jane Austen's time.

Employment becomes a wedge that divides the sisters into those who work, Jane and Liz, and those who spend the family fortune, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia. This dynamic mirrors the characterization of the sisters in *Pride and Prejudice*. While, due to the historical period of *Pride and Prejudice*, none of the Bennet sisters work, Lizzy and Jane are still the more responsible and mature.

The dilapidated state of Bennet family home, known as the Tudor, mirrors the family's financial state. The Tudor has fallen into disrepair while Liz and Jane have been in New York, but at this stage in the novel neither of the elder sisters realizes that this is a reflection of the dire financial situation facing their parents.

Mr. Bingley's arrival in Cincinnati is the catalytic event in the novel that sets the rest of the narrative into action, but it is the first meeting between Liz and Fitzwilliam Darcy that changes Liz's life and inspires her development as a character. Since the novel's narration is a close, third person that focuses on Liz, this meeting gains priority. No events occur in the novel without Liz being present. Consequently, the entirety of the reader's understanding of the novel relies upon Liz's presence. The reader learns of events only as Liz herself does. This uniting of reader and character bonds the two and fosters a sense of sympathy for Liz's troubles.

The first meeting between Liz and Darcy, in Chapters 7 and 8, depicts Darcy in a negative light. He is standoffish, rude, and critical of the people of Cincinnati. However, since the reader experiences these events from Liz's perspective, these chapters smother Liz's own vitriolic behaviour. She eavesdrops and then interrupts a private conversation between two close friends. Only later in the novel will Liz gain a new perspective on these events.

Although the pair disagrees with each other in person, the opinions Liz and Darcy express while they are apart foreshadow their future romance. Both of them utter the phrase "everything in moderation" and, although Darcy's characterization of Cincinnati offends Liz, she expresses equally negative opinions about the city when Jane contemplates moving back there in Chapter 30.

The discussion of Mary's sexuality in Chapter 18 and her longstanding mysterious Tuesday appointments hint at the possibility that she will come out to her family later in the novel. However, these hints are meant to mislead the reader, and the discussions of Mary's sexuality have nothing to do with her character. Instead, this detail foreshadows the revelations about Lydia's relationship with Ham.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Liz's romantic relationship prior to her involvement with Darcy and Lydia's controversial marriage are both with the same man, Mr. Wickham. In *Eligible*, the author chooses to split this character in two. The author splits Wickham into the characters Wick and Ham. Liz's initial love interest is with a character called



Jasper Wick and Lydia's controversial marriage is to a man called Ham. The splitting of this character is the biggest single change of the plot from the original.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Mrs. Bennet believe that Chip Bingley would be a good husband for one of her daughters?

## Discussion Question 2

Who behaves more rudely at the barbecue Liz or Darcy?

## Discussion Question 3

Are the Bennets a happy family?

## Vocabulary

ostensibly, contrary, indolence, hybrid, retrospect, attributed, facilitate, flurry, fixture, elude, genealogy, bureau, commencement, ascending, hospitable, orthopedist, unabashedly, indiscriminate, shindig, unchivalrous





# Chapters 37 – 73

## Summary

In Chapter 37, Liz went to Chip's dinner party where she spoke with Darcy and discovered that he had been at Stanford at the same time as Jasper, but that they did not like each other. In Chapter 38, still at the dinner party, Jane told Liz that Chip had bought her a mountain bike, but that she worried it was too extravagant a gift so early in their relationship and that she ought to refuse it. Darcy was surprised that Liz didn't know that Jasper had been kicked out of Stanford.

In Chapter 39, Cousin Willie revealed his desire to date Liz and tried to kiss her. Liz was appalled. In Chapter 40, Liz texted Charlotte about how weirdly Willie had behaved and confronted Jasper on the phone about his expulsion from Stanford. Jasper said he'd tell her all about it when he came to Cincinnati. Mrs. Bennet revealed, in Chapter 41, that she thought Liz should have been receptive to Cousin Willie's advances and, in Chapter 42, Charlotte Lucas agreed that she thought Willie would be a good boyfriend. In Chapter 43, Liz met Lydia's boyfriend Ham.

In Chapter 44, Mr. Bennet confessed to Liz that he did not have health insurance and that the treatment for his recent heart attack had left him in serious debt. This financial trouble explained why Mrs. Bennet was so keen for Liz to date the wealthy Willie. In Chapter 45, Chip told Jane he was in love with her and, in Chapter 46, Jane fainted and went to hospital. Jane told Liz that she was pregnant. Chapter 47 featured recollections from Liz about how kind Jane had been when they were children. In Chapters 48, 49, and 50, Liz rushed to the hospital, bumped into Darcy, and took Jane home. In Chapter 51, Liz confronted her mother about her online shopping addiction.

In Chapters 52 and 53, Jane waited anxiously to hear from Chip. In Chapter 54, Liz told Mr. Bennet that he would have to sell the Tudor to pay for his medical bills. In Chapter 55, Jane told Chip that she was pregnant from a sperm donor and he said that he needed time to think about their relationship. In Chapters 56 and 57, Liz started clearing out the basement and contacted a realtor whom she knew from school. In Chapter 58, Jane told Liz that she wanted to go back to New York. In Chapter 59, Kitty told Liz that there were things she didn't know about Lydia's boyfriend Ham and Liz told Kitty she should become a professional manicurist.

In Chapter 60, Jane received a text message from Chip telling her he'd gone to Los Angeles to film a reunion series of *Eligible*. In Chapter 61, Shane, a realtor, visited the Tudor and Kitty discovered that Liz was trying to sell the house. Charlotte Lucas told Liz that she had been talking to Cousin Willie on the phone during Chapter 62. In Chapters 63, 64, and 65, Jane found a job as a private yoga instructor living with a couple in upstate New York, Liz went with Mr. Bennet to the hospital to discuss lowering his medical bills, and Liz continued clearing out the basement. In Chapter 66, Jane told the others she was leaving and, in Chapter 67, Liz gave up on her attempts to interview a



famous feminist called Kathy de Bourgh. In Chapter 68, Liz tried to find out what Mary always did on Tuesday nights but Mary refused to tell her.

In Chapters 69, 70, and 71, Jasper arrived in Cincinnati, he and Liz bumped into Darcy at Liz's favorite fast food restaurant, and Shane called to say that he had found some buyers who were interested in viewing the house. In Chapter 72, Charlotte Lucas told Liz that she was moving to San Francisco to be with Cousin Willie. In Chapter 73, Liz went for a run and bumped into Darcy who was also running. She told him about her concerns for Charlotte and revealed that her family's finances were a mess. He listened sympathetically. Darcy asked if Jasper had revealed the reason why Stanford had expelled him.

## Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the author splits Austen's character Mr. Wickham into two characters, Jasper Wick and Ham. Consequently, Sittenfeld separately foreshadows Jasper's heartless treatment of Liz and Lydia's controversial marriage to Ham.

Liz's relationship with Jasper appears to be nothing more than an extra-marital affair. Jasper and Liz spend a lot of time together, speak on the phone often, and have sex, but Jasper remains married to his wife Susan, with whom he has a child. In an echo of the outdated, moralistic restrictions on women's finance and inheritance that haunts the characters in Austen's original, Jasper claims that he and Susan can't get divorced because Susan's wealthy Catholic grandmother would cut Susan out of her will. The reader never knows whether this inheritance issue is true or Jasper fabricates it in order to placate Liz continue his affair with her.

In Chapter 37, Darcy informs Liz of Jasper's expulsion from Stanford, foreshadowing Jasper's ultimate untrustworthiness. Liz thinks her relationship with Jasper is very close and honest. Subsequently, hearing about Jasper's expulsion from Darcy and not Jasper himself unsettles Liz. The revelation also heightens the reader's suspicion that Jasper is lying about his arrangement with his wife.

In Chapter 59, Kitty tells Liz that there are things that Liz does not know about Ham. Until this point, Ham and Kitty's relationship appeared uncontroversial. However, readers of Austen's novel who remember Mr. Wickham's dastardly comportment may have been suspicious of Ham from the start.

The character of Cousin Willie is the equivalent of Mr. Collins, who is also the cousin of the Bennet sisters, from *Pride and Prejudice*. However, unlike Cousin Willie, Mr. Collins expects to inherit the Bennet family home upon Mr. Bennet's death, explaining Mrs. Bennet's keenness for one of her daughters to marry him. Without a direct equivalent to masculine primogeniture in modern American society, the author struggles to explain Mrs. Bennet's interest in seeing Liz date Cousin Willie.

Mrs. Bennet is interested in Cousin Willie because he has made a vast fortune working in the tech industry in Silicon Valley. Cousin Willie's wealth could assuage the Bennets'



financial problems. The opportunity that Cousin Willie's interest in Liz presents to the family directly parallels opportunity that Mr. Collins's wealth presents in Austen's original. In Sittenfeld's retelling, Liz and Willie are step-cousins, rather than cousins. This change diffuses some of the unpleasantness of suggesting that first cousins should marry each other.

Mr. Bennet's confession in Chapter 44 that he has no health insurance serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it explains why the Tudor, the house itself, is dilapidated. Secondly, it sets Liz's plan to improve and interfere with her younger sisters' lives so that they can become financial independent and responsible into motion. Thirdly, it hints at the flaws in Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's political views. In Chapter 64, during Liz's attempts to get Mr. Bennet's hospital bills reduced, the reader learns that Mr. Bennet dislikes the Obama administration, but ironically suffers from a personal and financial crisis due to the lack of universal healthcare: a problem which Obama addressed. If Mr. Bennet had had his heart attack later in the year, Medicaid would have covered his treatment. Despite this fact, Mr. Bennet continues to dislike Obama. The novel further teases out the flaws in Mr. and Mrs. Bennets' political views when they must confront the idea of their daughter marrying a transgender man, Ham.

Another major change in the adaptation occurs to Kathy de Bourgh. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is a snobbish condescending character who, in her dislike for Elizabeth's social status, attempts to prevent Elizabeth and Darcy's romance. In *Eligible*, Kathy de Bourgh is a famous feminist scholar, who echoes the real-life feminist icon Gloria Steinem. Kathy is a supportive and inspirational force in Liz's life, rather than a destructive and malicious force as she is in Austen's original. This modification, along with the others, reflects Sittenfeld's desire to modernize *Pride and Prejudice* in order more directly to address pertinent social and political issues.

## Discussion Question 1

Why are the Bennet family finances in such a mess?

## Discussion Question 2

Do either Jane or Chip behave honestly or fairly during the early stages of their relationship?

## Discussion Question 3

In what ways are Liz and Darcy similar?

## Vocabulary

decor, artisanal, entreaties, transpired, turmoil, pompous, flirtatious, anesthesia, overwrought, determine, profoundly, indiscretion, quivered, insemination, recipient, feigned, immersed, heretofore, chagrined, credentials



# Chapters 74 – 109

## Summary

In Chapter 74, Liz saw Lydia and her boyfriend Ham after Lydia had introduced Ham to the Bennets. In Chapter 75, Mrs. Bennet criticized Liz for refusing to date Cousin Willie and said that Charlotte would never have to work another day in her life.

In Chapter 76, Liz asked Jasper why he was kicked out of Stanford. Jasper said he was a victim of political correctness and that his black female creative writing instructor had complained that a short story he had written was offensive. Jasper had faced a disciplinary hearing where Darcy was a student representative. Jasper said that his expulsion was Darcy's fault.

In Chapters 77 and 78, Liz's mother and her sisters discovered her plan to sell the Tudor and were outraged. Meanwhile Liz continued to clear out the junk in the basement. Lydia announced that she was moving in with Ham. Lydia told Liz that Ham would help her clear out the basement, which he did in Chapter 79. While clearing out the basement together, Ham asked Liz if her parents were Republicans.

In Chapter 80, Liz and Jane had dinner with Jasper who behaved obnoxiously throughout the meal. In Chapter 81, Liz and Jasper went back to Jasper's hotel room intending to have sex, but Jasper couldn't get an erection. Liz asked him if he'd been sleeping with someone else and he said yes, he was having another affair with a young woman from work. Jasper returned to New York the following morning. In Chapter 82, Kathy de Bourgh invited Liz to interview her in Houston. In Chapter 83, Jane performed a farewell ritual at the Tudor, the sisters' childhood home before she left for New York in Chapter 84.

In Chapter 85, Liz and Shane the realtor took Mr. and Mrs. Bennet to look at condos. In Chapter 86, Liz and Darcy bumped into each other again while running. Liz asked Darcy if he and Caroline Bingley were a couple and he said they used to be, but they had broken up a long time ago. The two argued good-spiritedly about Darcy's approach to his love life. Liz challenged Darcy to a race, which he won, and she suggested they should go back to his apartment and have "hate sex" and he agreed. In Chapter 87, they went back to Darcy's apartment and had sex.

In Chapters 88, 89, and 90 Liz ignored a text message from Jasper, Shane informed Liz that someone had made an offer on the house, and Liz went running on the same route in the hope of bumping into Darcy again but she didn't see him. In Chapters 91 and 92, Mrs. Bennet became distraught about the offer on the house and Mr. Bennet told Liz that she was free to go back to New York as he was feeling much better.

In Chapter 93, Liz saw Darcy on her run. He told her about his family: his parents were both deceased and he had a younger sister, Georgie, who was a big fan of Liz's writing.



Darcy wanted to sell the family home, but Georgie did not. Liz suggested they should go back to Darcy's apartment and he agreed.

In Chapters 94, 95, and 96, Lydia moved out of the Tudor to live with Ham, Shane continued to show Mr. and Mrs. Bennet potential apartments, and Liz googled Darcy's parents' estate which she discovered was worth around \$70 million. In Chapter 97, Liz considered telling Jane about what was going on with her and Darcy but decided against it. In Chapters 98 and 99, Liz told Kitty that she and Mary should find an apartment to rent together, and Mrs. Bennet continued to encourage Liz to find a man for Mary to date.

In Chapter 100, Liz and Darcy had sex again after meeting up by coincidence, but still had not exchanged phone numbers or email addresses. Darcy apologized for being rude to Liz when they first met. Darcy asked Liz if she wanted to have children and she said no. Darcy said he didn't want to have children either.

In Chapter 101, Shane organized an inspection of the Tudor for the new buyers and discovered there was a spider infestation, which caused the buyers to withdraw their offer on the house. In Chapter 102, Liz prepared the house to be fumigated. Mary and Kitty moved into an apartment for which Liz paid and furnished. In Chapter 103, Liz packed her things and moved out of the Tudor.

In Chapter 104, Liz walked the short distance from Mary and Kitty's apartment to Darcy's place.. Liz told Darcy she was leaving the following day and suggested that he should try online dating. In Chapters 105, 106, and 107, Shane the realtor asked Liz how old Kitty was, Kitty told Liz that Mary participated in a bowling league on Tuesday nights, and Jane revealed that it was Darcy who had convinced Chip to end his relationship with Jane.

In Chapter 108, Darcy appeared at Kitty and Mary's apartment to see Liz before she left. He told her that she was not beautiful, she was not as funny as she thought she was, and that her family was a disgrace, but that he was in love with her and could not stop thinking about her. Liz was hugely offended and told him she had no interest in being in a relationship with him. She accused him of splitting up Jane and Chip as well as getting Jasper expelled from Stanford. In Chapter 109, Liz found a letter from Darcy and Mr. Bennet drove Liz to the airport.

## Analysis

Chapter 110 contrasts Jasper's version of why he was expelled from Stanford with Darcy's version. These disparate accounts cause Liz's opinion of the two men to change accordingly. At first, Jasper and Liz get along well, while Liz and Darcy bicker endlessly. Despite how well she likes or dislikes them, Liz is instantly suspicious of Jasper's story while she automatically trusts Darcy's version of Jasper's expulsion. Although Jasper and Liz's dynamic is superficially better than her dynamic with Darcy, Liz's responses to the men favor Darcy over Jasper on issues such as trust, reliability,



and shared values. Although Jasper is superficially charming and Darcy is superficially rude, their cores are reversed and Jasper's behavior in the past reveals his deeply unpleasant personality.

Darcy's letter in Chapter 110 functions as a reversal of his initial encounter with Liz in which Liz overheard Darcy talking with Chip and immediately jumped to her own conclusions about Darcy as a person. Later, at Chip's dinner party, Darcy behaved in the same way by eavesdropping on Jane sharing her reservations about her relationship with Chip to Liz.

Since Liz's perspective filters the narrative, the reader is initially sympathetic with her outrage over what Liz overhears Darby saying at the barbecue. However, by showing the same behavior with Darcy in the role of eavesdropper and Jane in the role of the misunderstood speaker who believed she was speaking privately, both Liz and the reader experience the other side of interaction and realize how easy it is to misinterpret the words of strangers.

Liz's interview with Kathy de Bourgh reverses the dynamic between the characters of Lizzy and Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*. In the original, Catherine de Bourgh forbids Lizzy from marrying Mr. Darcy, whereas in *Eligible* Kathy's ruminations on her own romantic life help Liz focus on what is important in a relationship. Despite his unflattering first impression, Darcy is undeniably a more reliable life partner than Jasper. Liz feels comfortable being herself with Darcy.

Although Liz declines starting a relationship with Darcy, his actions prompt the permanent end of her relationship with Jasper in Chapter 115.

In the same vein of Liz's encounter with Kathy de Bourgh, the friendship between Liz and Charlotte carries the novel's proclivity for feminism that posits the stance that supportive relationships between women are as important as romantic relationships with men. Although Liz and Charlotte initially fell out with each other over Charlotte's decision to move to San Francisco to be with Cousin Willie, Charlotte's need for Liz's support in Chapter 116 quickly reestablishes their friendship.

The subsequent section of the novel set in San Francisco highlights the importance of female friendship. Liz and Charlotte have a great time together and Liz contemplates whether she may want to be in a relationship with Darcy after all. The girlish hysterics and excitement that Liz and Charlotte experience during their spontaneous trip to Pemberley in Chapters 119 and 120 contrast the cold, critical, and divisive behavior of Caroline Bingley who insults Charlotte's appearance at the croquet tournament in Chapter 125. This contrast displays the vastly superior relationships women can form with each other by being supportive rather than competitive.

There are two elements in the plot of *Eligible* that keep Liz and Darcy from rekindling their romance. The first element is Lydia's elopement and the second is the text message that Liz receives from Darcy's sister Georgie. These developments depart



from the original source material and both of them serve to dampen the plausibility of Liz's behavior.

Lydia's elopement with Ham in Chapter 128 and the ensuing fallout in Chapters 129 – 145 is a major departure from *Pride and Prejudice*, most especially because the existence of transgender people was not publicly acknowledged in 18th Century England. It is also a major change in the plot because of the reader's sympathy for Lydia and Ham. In the original, Lydia ran away from home with Mr. Whichkham who is untrustworthy and immoral. This change means that Lizzy's fear for the welfare of her youngest sister is a compelling reason for her to leave Pemberley and her burgeoning relationship with Mr. Darcy. In *Eligible*, the urgency of Liz's need to return to Cincinnati is unconvincing. As earlier chapters demonstrate how kind and supportive man Ham is, it seems unnecessary for Liz to return to Cincinnati so quickly that she can't even finish her breakfast date with Darcy before leaving. There is no reason for anyone to suspect that Lydia is in harm's way.

The second plot detail which serves to derail Liz's relationship with Darcy at this point is the text message from Georgie, which Liz interprets as meaning that Darcy is dating Caroline Bingley. However Liz's blind acceptance that Darcy instantly began dating Caroline Bingley after their cancelled breakfast date doesn't ring true, not least because Liz makes no attempt to verify if this is the case. The author makes reference to Liz's surprising lack of investigation here by frequently mentioning that Liz and Jasper used to work as fact checkers for a magazine in New York. Although Liz is diligent in her work, she shows less common sense in her romantic relationships. Not under the same social constraints of propriety as Lizzy in *Pride and Prejudice*, there is no compelling reason provided in *Eligible* to explain why Liz does not ask Darcy if he is dating Caroline.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Liz encourage her younger sisters to find jobs?

## Discussion Question 2

What role does Shane the realtor play in the novel?

## Discussion Question 3

How is Lydia's relationship depicted prior to the revelations about Ham later in the novel?





## Vocabulary

inordinate, genially, intercepted, countenance, pinnacle, accumulate, prohibitions, scullery, afflicted, miscellaneous, duration, devastated, acquaintance, surreptitious, excavations, contingent, diminish, exacerbate, prone, supercilious



# Chapters 110 – 146

## Summary

In Chapter 110, Liz read the letter from Darcy. Darcy wrote that he had overheard Jane telling Liz that she didn't want to accept the mountain bike because she felt less serious about the relationship than Chip, and that this led him to tell Chip he thought they wouldn't be a good couple. He explained that Jasper was not expelled for writing an offensive story during a creative writing class at Stanford, but because he had broken into his professor's office and urinated on her books and computer. Although Jasper was expelled solely for the charges of property damage, many who heard about the case, including Darcy, believed that Jasper's behavior had been racially motivated and intended to denigrate his black female professor, Tricia Randolph. In Chapter 111, Liz reread the letter over and over again.

Chapter 112 began Part 2 of the novel. Liz called Jane and told her about everything that had happened between her and Darcy. Jane said that Darcy was right to think that she had reservations about Chip. In Chapters 113 and 114, Liz went to interview Kathy de Bourgh who told her that she loved her husband because he was steadfast and supportive and she knew she could be herself around him.

In Chapter 115, Liz confronted Jasper on the phone about Darcy's allegations. Jasper defended himself by saying he was drunk and very immature at the time. Jasper asked Liz not to give up on him and she replied that she already had.

In Chapter 116, Charlotte called Liz to tell her that things weren't working out with Willie and she didn't know what to do. Liz agreed to visit Charlotte in San Francisco. In Chapter 117, Liz flew to San Francisco and thought about what it would be like to be in a relationship with Darcy. In Chapter 118, she called home to check on the fumigation.

Chapter 119 took place in San Francisco. Liz and Charlotte spontaneously decided to go and check out Darcy's family estate: Pemberley. The caretaker asked if either of them were Caroline Bingley and Liz lied and said she was. The caretaker told them to drive up to the house because Darcy was there. In Chapter 120, Darcy showed Liz and Charlotte around the house and invited them to have dinner there with him and his sister. In Chapters 121 and 122, Liz and Charlotte prepared for their dinner at Pemberley and then arrived there with Aunt Margo, her husband Frank, and Cousin Willie. Darcy's sister Georgie invited Liz and Charlotte to come back again for a croquet tournament the next day. In Chapter 123, Darcy and Liz almost spoke in private but they were interrupted.

In Chapters 124, 125, and 126 Charlotte and Liz returned to Pemberley, Caroline Bingley was rude about Charlotte's appearance, and Liz told Georgie about the farewell ritual Jane had performed at their house before they moved out. In Chapter 127 Georgie asked Liz if she liked Darcy in a romantic sense and Liz said that she did. Darcy asked



Liz to meet him for breakfast, which she did in Chapter 128. Liz received a text message from Kitty informing her that Lydia had eloped with Ham after Mr. and Mrs. Bennet had responded badly to the revelation that Ham is transgender. In Chapters 129 and 130, Liz cancelled her breakfast with Darcy and he drove her to the airport. Liz thought he seemed angry with her.

Chapter 131 detailed Mr. Bennet's discovery of a note from Lydia announcing she was eloping with Ham. Mr. Bennet and Kitty followed the couple to Chicago to try to stop the marriage. In Chapters 132, 133, and 134 Liz tried to educate her mother about what "transgender" means and why she didn't need to be upset about Lydia's marriage, while privately worrying that coming back to Cincinnati meant she'd missed her chance to reconcile with Darcy by leaving him with Caroline Bingley. In Chapter 135, Liz discussed the situation with Jane. In Chapter 136, Georgie sent Liz a text apologizing for what she said at Pemberley and saying she assumed that Liz had now heard from Darcy "about him and Caroline" (365).

In Chapters 137, 138, and 139, Liz text Lydia, who replied with a photograph from her wedding to Ham, and Mr. Bennet and Kitty returned from Chicago without ever having seen the newlyweds. In Chapters 140, 141, and 142, Liz asked Mr. Bennet to help Mrs. Bennet be more tolerant, Kitty told Liz that she'd known Ham was transgender all along, and all five sisters had a text message conversation where Lydia boasted that she was the first to get married. In Chapter 143, Liz obsessively reread the text message from Georgie and bought her parents a book called *Transgender 101*. In Chapters 144 and 145, Liz attended a party that Ham and Lydia threw to celebrate their marriage and Ham told Liz he was committed to having a good relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

In Chapter 146, Darcy sent Liz a message asking if he could buy her a drink at the weekend but Liz had already gone back to New York.

## Analysis

In Chapter 110, Liz read a letter from Darcy. Darcy wrote that he had overheard Jane telling Liz that she did not want to accept the gift of a mountain bike because she felt less serious about the relationship than Chip. With this conversation in mind, Darcy told Chip that he thought Chip and Jane would not be a good couple. He continued on to explain that Jasper was not expelled for writing an offensive story during a creative writing class, but because he had broken into his professor's office and urinated on her books and computer. Although Jasper was expelled solely for the charges of property damage, many who heard about the case, including Darcy, believed that Jasper's behavior had been racially motivated and intended to denigrate his black female professor, Tricia Randolph. In Chapter 111, Liz obsessively reread the letter.

Chapter 112 began Part 2 of the novel. Liz called Jane and told her about everything that had happened between her and Darcy. Jane said that Darcy was right to think that she had reservations about Chip. In Chapters 113 and 114, Liz went to interview Kathy



de Bourgh who told her that she loved her husband because he was steadfast and supportive and she knew she could be herself around him.

In Chapter 115, Liz confronted Jasper on the phone about Darcy's allegations. Jasper defended himself by saying he was drunk and very immature at the time. Jasper asked Liz not to give up on him and she replied that she already had.

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the first to get married. In Chapter 143, Liz obsessively reread the text message from Georgie and bought her parents a book called Transgender 101. In Chapters 144 and 145, Liz attended a party that Ham and Lydia threw to celebrate their marriage and Ham told Liz that he was committed to having a good relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. In Chapter 146, Darcy sent Liz a message asking if he could buy her a drink that weekend, but Liz had already gone back to New York.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What are the differences between Liz's relationship with Charlotte Lucas and her relationship with Caroline Bingley?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Does the Darcy family have a better life than the Bennet family? In what ways are their circumstances worse?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Mrs. Bennet disapprove of Lydia's marriage?

## **Vocabulary**

inscribed, misguided, incertitude, infatuated, dissuading, diligence, mediocre, lavishly, analytics, masochistic, tranquil, veneer, negligible, sincerity, inconsiderable, vibrant, nephrologist, promptly, temperamentally, implausible



# Chapters 147 – 181

## Summary

Chapter 147 began Part 3 of the novel. Chapters 147, 148, and 149, covered Mrs. Bennet's fundraising luncheon, an offer on the Tudor, and Liz's return to New York City. Chapters 150, 151, and 152 brought news to Liz that Kitty had been accepted into a course to become a manicurist and that Mr. Bennet had attended a history lecture with Ham. Liz tried online dating but did not enjoy it.

Liz returned to Cincinnati in Chapter 153 to oversee the sale of the Tudor and some school friends of Liz's were rude to Lydia and Ham. Back in New York in Chapter 154, Liz received a message from Mary saying she'd just seen Darcy and he had been oddly nice to her. In Chapters 155 and 156, Liz visited Jane for her fortieth birthday party and bumped into Jasper at a work event. Liz told Jasper that their relationship was over. In Chapters 157 and 158, Liz heard that her parents had taken Lydia and Ham to dinner at their country club and Mrs. Bennet told Liz that being transgender is just the same as having a birth defect.

In Chapter 159, Darcy asked Liz and Jane to have dinner with him in New York. Kathy de Bourgh wrote to Liz in Chapter 160 to thank her for the article Liz had written about her. When Liz and Jane arrived at the restaurant in Chapter 161, Chip was there. Darcy said he was only in New York to take them to dinner and had heard that Mr. and Mrs. Bennet were being more accepting of Ham.

In Chapter 162, Jane told Liz that Chip had asked her to marry him and she had said yes. Because Chip was still under contract with the reality TV show *Eligible* they would either have to wait a year before they got married or agree to have the wedding filmed as part of the show. In Chapters 163, 164, and 165, they agreed to the studio's demand, Chip went back to Los Angeles, and Liz and Jane discussed the wedding. In Chapter 166, Jane finally revealed she was pregnant and explained the wedding plan to the rest of the family, who would be paid \$30,000 each to participate. In Chapter 167, the Bennets went to Los Angeles.

In Chapters 168, 169, and 170, an *Eligible* producer interviewed Liz who accidentally revealed that she disliked Caroline Bingley, Liz warned Kitty and Lydia to be careful what they said in front of the cameras and crew, and Mrs. Bennet informed Liz that Darcy would be Chip's best man. In Chapters 171, 172, and 173, Liz got really drunk at the bachelorette party, Lydia told Liz that Darcy had intervened to help Mrs. Bennet come to terms with Ham being transgender, and Mary revealed that Darcy had offered to help her parents better understand transgender people after they'd bumped into each other in Cincinnati. In Chapter 174, Liz woke up with a severe hangover.

In Chapter 175, Caroline Bingley confronted Liz and told Liz that she and Darcy were supposed to be together and that he would be a fool if he chose Liz over her. In Chapter



176, Liz contacted Georgie to clarify what she had meant in her text message and Georgie said that Darcy and Caroline were not a couple. Georgie had been talking about a car crash in which Darcy and Caroline had been involved after Liz had left California.

In Chapter 177, Jane and Chip got married in front of the cameras of *Eligible*. Liz switched off her microphone and told Darcy to do the same. She told him that she was in love with him and asked him to marry her. He said yes. The producers appeared and made them switch their microphones back on.

Four months later, in Chapters 178 and 179, the Bennets saw the first episode of “*Eligible*” featuring Jane, during which the show claimed that she was pregnant with Chip’s baby, rather than mentioning the sperm donor. Two weeks after that, in Chapter 180, the episode featuring the whole Bennet family was aired. Although everyone else came across well, Liz was identified as a party girl. The show featured a montage of her drinking, dancing, and being a generally drunk mess. Caroline gave a tearful interview about being heartbroken over Darcy and it was announced that she would be the star of the next season of the show.

In Chapter 181, Mary went about her life, going to work and enjoying her bowling league. She was happy by herself and couldn’t understand why her sisters made so much fuss about men.

## Analysis

Part 3 of the novel does not have the same drive and tension as the earlier parts of the novel due to the changes made from the plot of the original. Whereas in *Pride and Prejudice*, the objections of Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy’s apparent engagement seem to be insurmountable obstacles to their relationship, there are no equally difficult factors preventing Liz and Darcy from being together. Indeed, at any stage during the Part 3, a simple phone call from Liz would be enough to clarify everything with Darcy.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy plays a central role in solving the Bennet family crisis involving Lydia’s elopement. However, in *Eligible*, as mentioned above, this crisis is diluted to the point of not being a crisis at all because Lydia’s husband is a kind and caring man. The crisis instead comes from the conservative attitudes of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in accepting transgender people. Although Liz’s desire to see her parents be more accepting of Ham and for their family to be united in their support for his marriage to Lydia is understandable, it lacks the urgency and severity of the situation faced by the Bennets in *Pride and Prejudice*. Consequently, Darcy’s attempts to assist the Bennets in *Eligible* are not particularly impressive and do not serve as an argument for why Liz would decide that he was the right man for her after all.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, feeling guilt over his own reluctance to reveal Mr. Wickham’s true nature earlier in the novel, Mr. Darcy takes it upon himself to track down Lydia and Wickham in London, facilitate their immediate marriage in order to safeguard Lydia’s



reputation, and provides some of his own money to his enemy Wickham in order to better support Lydia. Lizzy's discovery of Mr. Darcy's extraordinary act of kindness and generosity towards her family is an understandable reason for her to change her mind about him.

In *Eligible*, Liz discovers that during the bachelorette party in Chapters 172 and 173, he took her parents to lunch at their country club to explain transgender issues to them. Although by no means a self-serving act, it pales in comparison to the sacrifice and generosity of Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. In fact, Darcy's comparison of being transgender and having a birth defect offends Lydia and Ham.

The Bennets' participation in the reality TV show *Eligible* is the equivalent of the social judgement and gossiping that their family endures in *Pride and Prejudice* due to Lydia's controversial behavior and Lizzy and Jane's burgeoning romances with men who are much wealthier and better connected than they are. Instead of aristocrats from England judging them, the entire American public judges the Bennets of *Eligible* when their private affairs become a TV show.

Throughout the novel, Liz thinks of herself as being better informed, more realistic, and more intelligent than everyone, especially her family. Her father mocks this attitude in Chapter 109 when he comments that "It's remarkable isn't it ... that for decades at a time, I've stayed alive without your daily instructions" (285). During the filming of *Eligible*, however, she discovers that she would be better off listening to her own advice rather than trying to foist it onto others.

Unlike the rest of the Bennet family, Liz is the only one with any knowledge or understanding about reality TV. She is familiar with interview techniques used to make participants let their guard down and discusses a term called "Frankenbiting" – a process whereby sound editors take individual words spoken in an interview and put them together into a sentence which was never really spoken – with the "Eligible" producer in Chapter 168. Fearful that her family members' appearances on *Eligible* embarrass them, Liz goes out of her way to warn them all to be careful of what they say on camera.

Despite Liz's advice, the family continues to behave in exactly the way they usually do. Ironically, in spite of her warnings, Liz is the only character who the TV show misrepresents when it airs in Chapter 180. The producers splice together images of Liz drinking and dancing in an attempt to make her look like party animal a party girl and frame her relationship with Darcy as an act of cruelty towards Caroline despite the fact that Caroline is an unpleasant and mean-spirited character.

The author continues to put a modern feminist spin on the events of *Pride and Prejudice* through Liz's engagement and the final chapter featuring Mary's perspective. Unlike in traditional romances, Liz proposes to Darcy in *Eligible*, meaning that Liz stays as directly in charge of her whole life as she has been throughout, not needing to give up her assertiveness in order to get married. The final chapter also hints at a different view





of life, one in which women's lives need not revolve around their romantic interest in men.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Are the Bennets portrayed accurately on their episode of Eligible?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Liz's engagement differ from traditional romance stories?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Mary's attitude to life differ to that of her sisters?

## **Vocabulary**

contracted, withheld, anew, reciprocal, deviant, embarked, dwelling, demeanor, extenuating, morph, logistics, maelstrom, envisioned, exclamations, cacophony, hubbub, reconciled, facilitated, reconciliation, compatible

# Characters

## Liz Bennet

Liz Bennet is the protagonist of *Eligible*. The second eldest of the five Bennet sisters, Liz is depicted as being the most intelligent and practical of all of her sisters, but is not without flaws of her own. The first of Liz's main character flaws is her tendency to jump to negative conclusions about other people on the basis of very little information (the prejudice half of the source material's title). The second is her inability to apply the intelligence and common sense which she applies to her professional life to the questions she is presented with in her romantic life.

Liz allows her first impression of others to guide her in her opinion of them, staunchly standing by her initial prejudices even as evidence starts to appear to the contrary. Nowhere is this more true than in her relationship with Jasper Wick. Liz always found Jasper entertaining and charming and allowed this impression of him to overrule her suspicions that he was lying to her. In contrast, Liz's first meeting with Darcy allows her to convince herself that he is rude and unpleasant, ignoring any of his other behavior in their later meetings. Liz relies on information gathered through eavesdropping rather than getting to know Darcy better. Liz's reliance on first impressions and information that has been manipulated and taken out of context comes back to haunt her when she is treated in a similar fashion by the producers of the TV show *Eligible*: rather than giving a fair and balanced account of Liz to the American public, the producers take the decision to portray Liz as the party girl giving her a taste of her own medicine when it comes to jumping to conclusions about other people.

Liz is committed to helping her younger sisters Mary, Kitty, and Lydia, become financially independent from the men in their lives and succeeds in encouraging Mary to get a job and Kitty to begin training as a professional manicurist. However, Liz fails to apply her own professional knowledge (such as her experience working as a fact checker for a New York magazine) to her personal life, when she fails to verify the information given to her by Georgie, jumping to unfounded conclusions about Darcy's relationship status. This balances the two halves of the novel which focus on the importance of both career and romance for women: Liz is right to help her sisters see that there is more to life than the romantic pursuit of men, but also must herself learn that her romantic life deserves to be treated as seriously as she treats her career.

## Fitzwilliam Darcy

Fitzwilliam Darcy, known throughout the novel simply as Darcy, is the Liz Bennet's love interest. Darcy is initially depicted as rude and arrogant when Liz first meets him at the Lucas family barbecue and overhears him saying negative things about the city of Cincinnati and the people who live there. Because Liz's negative opinion about Darcy is based on superficial prejudices, his character does not go through any changes in the



novel. Instead, the changes in relation to Darcy are all about Liz's perception of him, rather than any growth or change in his own character. This contrasts with Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, who overcomes his own sense of pride alongside Lizzy Bennet overcoming her tendency for prejudice.

The process of Liz falling in love with Darcy involves her beginning to notice the many similarities between the two of them, which have been apparent to the reader throughout. Both characters speak in a similar way, repeating the phrases of the other in different contexts. For example, they both describe their attitude to diet as "Everything in moderation" (35, 106) and both characters express similar feelings about the inferiority of Cincinnati in relation to coastal urban centers.

The first sign that Liz's feelings for Darcy are changing is when she admits to Jane that – in the account of why Jasper was expelled from Stanford – she trusts Darcy more than she trusts Jasper. Later, Liz discovers that Darcy went out of his way to try to help her parents better understand transgender issues and heal the rift that was caused in the Bennet family by Lydia's marriage with Ham.

## Jasper Wick

Jasper Wick is Liz Bennet's boyfriend and a fellow journalist in New York. Jasper is the closest thing the novel has to a villain. However, he has very little impact on the plot. The casual nature of their relationship means that Jasper is no real impediment to Liz's blossoming romance with Darcy and the decision by the author to split the original character of Mr. Wickham into two separate characters, means that Jasper plays no part in the family crisis which follows Lydia's elopement.

Liz's gradual realization that Jasper is not a nice person coincides with her growing sense that Darcy is a much better person than she initially gave him credit for. Liz's decision to end her relationship with Jasper signifies that she is ready to enter into a mature, mutually respectful romantic relationship with Darcy, in contrast to the dishonest relationship she had with Jasper.

## Jane Bennet

Jane Bennet is the eldest of the Bennet sisters and the one to whom Liz feels closest. Before the novel begins, Jane was trying to become pregnant via a sperm donor and discovers she is pregnant after beginning a relationship with Chip Bingley. Jane is the most emotionally balanced of the Bennet sisters, which is symbolized by her profession as a yoga instructor.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the relationships between Jane and Bingley, and Lizzy and Darcy, are intricately connected. Darcy is responsible for separating Jane and Bingley, which Lizzy deeply resents, meaning that any romance between Darcy and Lizzy necessitates the healing of the relationship between Jane and Bingley. In *Eligible*, Jane and Chip are separated by the uncertainty caused by Jane's pregnancy, making their



romance a subplot that is almost entirely disconnected from the central romance between Liz and Darcy.

## Chip Bingley

Chip Bingley is a doctor who recently moved to Cincinnati who once appeared on the reality TV show *Eligible*. Chip is Jane's love interest. He is depicted as unreliable, uncommitted, and easily swayed by others around him, especially by his sister Caroline who repeatedly convinces him to pursue a career in television rather than a career in medicine.

Mrs. Bennet's interest in Chip Bingley is used to explore the theme of marriage and work, as Mrs. Bennet sees Chip's wealth and success as something that could provide one of her daughters with enough financial security to ensure that she would never need a job.

## Mr. Bennet

Mr. Bennet is the father of the five Bennet sisters. He has a dry, sardonic sense of humor and refuses to respond seriously to the situations which occur around him during the course of the novel. Mr. Bennet suffered a heart attack before the beginning of the novel which brought Liz and Jane back to Cincinnati to care for him, sparking the rest of the events in the narrative. Mr. Bennet's carelessness in regards to his health and finances mean that the Bennets have to sell their family home.

## Mrs. Bennet

Mrs. Bennet is the mother of the five Bennet sisters. She is depicted as a lighthearted, comic character despite expressing many racist, sexist, and transphobic views throughout the course of the novel. She is preoccupied with the wish to see her daughters get married as well as with a charity luncheon that she is organizing at her country club, two interests that take up the majority of her time. Mrs. Bennet married Mr. Bennet for his money and the couple does not enjoy each other's company or spend any time together.

## Mary Bennet

Mary Bennet is the third eldest Bennet sister. A longstanding family rumor that Mary is gay is proved to be false when it is revealed in the novel's final chapter that Mary simply has no interest in romantic relationships at all, with men or with women. Mary pursues academic interests and a love of bowling and finds her sisters' obsession with pursuing men bizarre.



## Kitty Bennet

Kitty Bennet is the second youngest of the Bennet sisters and the least developed of all the characters. Her main character trait is that she is good at painting her nails, a skill which Liz encourages her to turn into a profession when the state of the family finances is revealed. Kitty begins dating an African American man called Shane during the course of the novel, much to the dismay of her racist mother.

## Lydia Bennet

Lydia Bennet is the youngest of the Bennet sisters who believes her good looks will prevent her from having to financially support herself. After the younger sisters are forced to move out of the family home, she moves in with her boyfriend Ham who agrees to support her financially. After Ham reveals to Mr. and Mrs. Bennet that he is transgender, Lydia and Ham elope in response to their negative reaction to the news. Although Liz responds to her elopement as a severe family crisis, Lydia never seems particularly perturbed by her family's reaction and has no interest in trying to change anyone's mind.

## Caroline Bingley

Caroline Bingley is Chip Bingley's sister and Liz's rival for the affections of Darcy. Like Darcy and Liz, Caroline is snobbish and condescending about Cincinnati. Caroline is contrasted with Charlotte Lucas and Kathy de Bourgh, as an example of the destruction caused by women being competitive and critical of each other, rather than tolerant and supportive. At Chip and Jane's wedding, Caroline exaggerates her heartbreak over the relationship between Liz and Darcy in order to become the contestant on the following season of Eligible.

## Ham Ryan

Ham Ryan is Lydia's boyfriend. Ham is depicted throughout the novel as a kind, generous, and supportive man although it is never made clear (beyond her good looks) what has attracted him to the selfish, vain Lydia. Ham's decision to tell Mr. and Mrs. Bennet that he is transgender causes a rift in the Bennet family which is eventually smoothed over by Darcy, in turn paving the way for the marriage of Darcy and Liz.

## Charlotte Lucas

Charlotte Lucas is Liz's childhood best friend, who decides to move to San Francisco to begin a relationship with Liz's cousin Willie despite only knowing him for a few weeks. Charlotte is a symbol of the importance of female friendships and her request for Liz to



visit her to provide her with emotional support brings Liz and Darcy back together again after his unsuccessful declaration of love.

## **Cousin Willie**

Cousin Willie is the step-son of Mr. Bennet's sister Margot. He is a socially awkward tech billionaire who lives in San Francisco. Willie initially makes romantic advances towards Liz before setting his sights on her best friend Charlotte after Liz rejects him.

## **Georgie Darcy**

Georgie Darcy is a PhD student at Stanford and Fitzwilliam Darcy's younger sister. Georgie has anorexia, although this doesn't have any relevance to the plot, or change the outcome of the narrative in any way. Georgie's main function in the novel is to send Liz an ambiguous text message which Liz misinterprets as meaning that Darcy is in a relationship with Caroline Bingley.

# Symbols and Symbolism

## The Tudor

The Bennet family home, known as the Tudor, is symbolic of the family's approach to finances and the impending ruin brought about by Mr. Bennet's medical bills. Although the medical bills are the final straw in the family's financial hardship, their finances, like their home, have been in a state of neglect for many years. Just as the house has begun to succumb to damp patches on the wall, and a spider infestation in the basement, due to neglect, Mr. Bennet's refusal to properly protect the value of his inheritance, Mrs. Bennet's online shopping addiction, and Mary, Kitty, and Lydia's failure to make any attempt to become financially independent of their father have also caused gradual decay. The decay of both the house and the financial situation of the family are more apparent to Liz when she returns from New York than it is for the members of the family who live there permanently and who have become used to the state of the house and the state of their finances.

## Cincinnati

Cincinnati is symbolic of the English countryside from *Pride and Prejudice*. In the original novel, the countryside has the benefits of a closer community and stronger family bonds, but lacks the variety and excitement of the city. Likewise, in *Eligible*, Cincinnati represents Liz's childhood connections with her friend Charlotte Lucas and provides her with the opportunity to be near all of her family, but pales in comparison to the cultural and career opportunities available to her in New York. Although Liz professes to dislike Cincinnati, she is mortally offended by Darcy suggesting that he dislikes the city, revealing her own secret pride in her hometown.

## Reality TV

Reality TV is symbolic of the ageless enjoyment of gossip and a good story. Much has changed in the world since the times of Jane Austen, but the public's appetite for discussing well-known people and consuming romantic narratives has not decreased. Watching the show *Eligible* is deemed a trashy pastime in the novel, with many characters falsely claiming never to have watched it, but the author makes the argument that consuming this type of TV show is the equivalent to reading a classic novel about the romantic lives of strangers and shouldn't be accorded any less cultural respect.

## Skyline Chili

Skyline Chili is Liz's favorite fast food restaurant and is symbolic of her secret love for Cincinnati. Whenever Liz is called upon to show someone around the city, such as Cousin Willie and Jasper, she insists on taking them to experience the wonders of



Skyline Chili. The restaurant also symbolizes the fact that Liz and Darcy have more in common than she would care to admit, as she bumps into him there almost every time she visits the restaurant. Although Liz likes to think of Darcy as snobbish and highbrow, his love of her favorite fast food restaurant implies that there is more to his character than she initially gives him credit for.

## Spiders

The spider infestation in the Tudor is symbolic of all that is unspoken between members of the Bennet family. All of the Bennets are keeping a secret from at least one of their family: Mr. Bennet hides his financial troubles from everyone but Liz, Mrs. Bennet hides her shopping addiction, Liz hides her affair with Jasper, Mary hides her bowling, Jane hides her pregnancy, and Kitty and Lydia hide what they know about Ham. However, like the spiders that appear in the house throughout the narrative before the revelation of the infestation, these secrets are all hiding in plain sight and are eventually discovered by the other family members.

## Yoga

Yoga is symbolic of Jane's tranquility relative to the rest of her family. Unlike her parents and sisters, Jane has a balanced emotional outlook which allows her to deal with the trials and tribulations of her life without descending into the hysterics of her mother, the moodiness of her youngest sisters, or the sardonic detachment of Liz and her father. When Jane decides to leave the Tudor she does so after being offered a job as a private yoga instructor, making yoga something that offers her both emotional and material stability.

## Nail Polish

Nail polish is symbolic of Kitty's untapped potential. Because Mr. Bennet has always provided financially for his three youngest daughters, none of them have ever developed any interest in pursuing a career or supporting themselves financially. Liz's ideas about how Kitty could become more independent are sparked by noticing how talented Kitty is at painting her nails, which eventually leads to Kitty becoming accepted on a course to train as a professional manicurist.

## Bowling

Bowling is symbolic of all the experiences and richness of the world that is available to women everywhere that doesn't involve the romantic pursuit of men. Unlike the rest of her sisters, Mary has no interest in romance. Her main passion in life is her bowling league, which she attends every Tuesday in secret. Although the novel is largely devoted to the machinations of different romantic relationships between men and





women, the final word of the novel is left to Mary, and her perspective that romance need not be the be all and end all of a woman's existence.

## Stanford

Stanford is symbolic of the differences between Jasper Wick and Darcy. This is communicated through the different behaviors of Darcy and Jasper when it comes to discussing their association with Stanford. Jasper seeks to advertise himself as a Stanford alumnus by wearing a gaudy Stanford ring, despite the fact, as Liz later learns, he never actually graduated. In contrast, when asked where he went to college, Darcy replies that he "went to college in the Bay area" (116). When challenged by Liz about why he didn't just immediately say Stanford, Darcy responds that he doesn't wish to appear pretentious. Jasper seeks to boast about his non-existent accomplishments, whilst Darcy prefers to be modest about his real ones.

## Country Club

The country club attended by Mr. and Mrs. Bennet is symbolic of their old fashioned values and conservatism. After selling the Tudor, they decide to rent an apartment rather than buy one so they can still afford to keep their membership in the club, showing their unwillingness to let go of their old way of life. Darcy's desire to reach out to Mr. and Mrs. Bennet to help them better understand Ham takes place at the country club, showing Darcy's desire to meet them on their own ground and help to gently bring them into the future. Liz becomes aware that their attitude to Ham has changed when she hears news that they took Ham and Lydia for lunch at the club.



# Settings

## Cincinnati

Cincinnati is the main location in the novel and the home city of the Bennet family. The city is a symbol of the importance of family. In many ways, the novel is a love letter to the city of Cincinnati, spending long passages describing particular areas of the city, the specifics of the routes that Liz follows on her run, and the secret pride that Liz feels in the city. Although both Liz and Darcy profess distaste for Cincinnati in comparison to San Francisco and New York, they nevertheless choose to make their home in Cincinnati after their marriage.

## The Tudor

The Tudor is the name given to the Bennet family home, where all five sisters grew up and where, at the outset of the novel, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia still reside with their parents. The Tudor is in a state of disrepair which is communicated through the damp patch in the dining room and the spider infestation. The neglect to the Tudor is a reflection of the neglect of Bennet family towards their finances as a whole. Selling the Tudor is the first step towards all of the Bennet family beginning a new chapter in each of their lives.

## San Francisco

San Francisco is the location where Liz's childhood best friend Charlotte Lucas moves to pursue a relationship with Cousin Willie. It is also the location of the Darcy family estate, known as Pemberley. The weather and the food in San Francisco - as well as the opulence of Pemberley – allows Liz to soften to Darcy, as it makes her more understanding of why he might hold a negative opinion of Cincinnati.

## New York

New York is the location where Liz and Jane have chosen to forge their adult lives, separate from their family home in Cincinnati. The opportunities that are available to Liz in New York in terms of her career cannot be compared to Cincinnati, but ultimately she comes to realize that her family connections are more important to her, leaving New York to settle with Darcy in Cincinnati. New York is symbolic of Jasper Wick: Liz abandons the more exciting charismatic man and city, in favor of the man and the city, both of which makes a less positive first impression, but have a surprising number of benefits once you get to know them better.

## Los Angeles

Los Angeles is the setting where the Bennet family convenes to take part in filming a special episode of the TV show Eligible. LA is associated with artifice, misrepresentation, and the precedence of entertainment over truth, staying true to stereotypical associations about Los Angeles and the entertainment industry in general.



# Themes and Motifs

## Pride and Prejudice

The central motif of the novel is the author's attempt to update the characters and plot of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to take place in contemporary American society. The updates focus more on individual character traits than on the plot itself, which is only very loosely followed. The basic set-up of *Eligible* follows the model of *Pride and Prejudice* wherein the arrival of Mr. Bingley/Chip Bingley and his friend Darcy into the social circle of the Bennet family is the catalyst which sparks the rest of the events of the novel. In both the original and the adaptation, Jane ends up marrying Bingley and Elizabeth becomes engaged to Darcy. Other than these basic similarities, however, *Eligible* mainly abandons any attempt to update the intricate plot of *Pride and Prejudice*, focusing instead on updating the characters' personalities and interpersonal dynamics.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, a series of coincidences and connections between apparently unconnected characters occurs, which all weave together to form the various crises and complications of the narrative. After a brief flirtation with Mr. Wickham, Lizzy later discovers that he had planned to elope with Mr. Darcy's fifteen year old sister in an attempt to secure some of the Darcy family fortune for himself. In a desire to safeguard his sister's reputation, Mr. Darcy kept this fact to himself, making him feel guilty when Wickham goes on to elope with Lizzy's youngest sister Lydia. Mr. Darcy then personally secures the financial security of the newly married Wickham and Lydia out of a desire to assist Lizzy and her family. In *Eligible*, in contrast, the connection between Darcy and Lydia's elopement is entirely absent and his decision to become involved in the family drama is less emotionally compelling. Whereas in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Darcy's actions safeguard the status and future happiness of the entire Bennet family, in *Eligible* his decision to take Mr. and Mrs. Bennet out to lunch to explain what being transgender means, is a dramatically less compelling reason for Liz to forgive all of his previous rudeness.

The other notable change between the original and the adaptation, aside from the complexities of the plot, is the difference between the authors' attitudes to their female characters. *Pride and Prejudice* is very focused on highlighting flaws in the behavior of the Bennet sisters as they seek husbands: Lizzy is prejudiced, Jane is too diffident and slow to show her feelings to Bingley, Mary's studies isolate her from society, and Kitty and Lydia are superficial, vain, and immature. In *Eligible*, however, a much more forgiving attitude is taken towards the sisters and most of their life choices are endorsed by the novel, with the exception of Liz who must overcome her tendency to judge and peddle in gossip. This is reflected in the Bennet episode of the *Eligible* TV show, where all of the sisters are depicted positively with the exception of Liz.



## Passing Judgement

The main theme of *Eligible* is the perils of passing judgement and coming to snap conclusions about other people. This is introduced in the novel through the motif of “Eligible” the TV show, which has allowed all of the characters to form impressions of Chip Bingley without ever having met him. By the end of the novel, all of the Bennet family will be displayed to the rest of the American public in a similar fashion, allowing the public to judge the family and their behavior.

As well as being the central theme of the novel, making judgements is the main character flaw of the protagonist Liz. Liz’s tendency to peddle in gossip and rumor is introduced via a description of her job as a magazine journalist. Although Liz has undertaken very serious articles and investigations for the magazine “Mascara” – such as a visit to Saudi Arabia - it is her interview with a famous actress after an acrimonious divorce that people always want to talk to her about. The author demonstrates that Liz makes judgements about others and then spreads gossip about them in her personal as well as her professional life, during the series of chapters set at the Lucas family barbecue. Without knowing anything more about Darcy than that he refused to offer her a chair and that he didn’t like it when his colleagues in Cincinnati insisted on setting him up on blind dates, Liz felt happy to spread the information she’d obtained whilst eavesdropping to all of her friends and acquaintances, without making any attempt to understand the underlying motivations behind Darcy’s words and actions. Later, upon getting to know Darcy better, Liz discovers his reasons for his initial behavior and realizes that she was mistaken in her initial judgements.

Liz’s tendency to make judgements rather than investigate further when it comes to matters in her personal life, is contrasted with her background as a journalist, especially her time spent working as a fact checker at a magazine in New York during which time she learned to “Trust but verify” (457) what she was told by others. Unable to apply this knowledge in her personal life, Liz makes no attempts to verify the validity of Jasper’s arrangement with his wife, nor any attempt to verify the assumptions she makes about the text message she receives from Georgie which Liz interprets to mean that Darcy and Caroline Bingley are a couple. Liz’s judgements in these instances threaten to derail her happiness.

In an ironic twist at the novel’s conclusion, Liz is given the same sort of treatment during the Bennet family episode of “Eligible” as the treatment she gave to Darcy upon first meeting him in Cincinnati. The producers handpick certain phrases and behaviors and use them to paint an unflattering and inaccurate portrait of Liz as a person, just as Liz did with her snap judgements about Darcy at the barbecue.

## Race and Transgender Issues

The novel uses both race and transgender issues as a benchmark to judge the moral worthiness of the white, cis gender characters, without developing the transgender character of Ham, or any of the people of color within the novel, into fully-formed



characters who influence the plot. Ham is given very few character traits and no noticeable flaws during the early chapters of the novel: always being polite, helpful, and inoffensive, whilst expressing no obvious point of view or distinctive personality traits. Instead, his impact on the plot is entirely based on the fact that he is transgender, and his influence on events does not extend beyond provoking a reaction in the other characters.

The reaction of the other characters to Ham being transgender is used by the author as a reflection of their moral worthiness, especially in the case of Liz. Liz's desire for her parents to become more accepting of Ham (which she demonstrates through buying them a copy of a book called "Transgender 101") symbolizes the apparently superior, more tolerant, and more diverse attitude that Liz has adopted through living in New York. Likewise, other characters who the reader is encouraged to admire – such as Darcy and Jane – are comfortable with Ham's identity as transgender. In contrast, characters who the reader is encouraged to criticize and mock – such as Mrs. Bennet and Caroline Bingley – are intolerant of Ham.

The use of minority groups as a benchmark for the moral worthiness of privileged characters is continued through the discussion of race in the novel. All of the major characters are white and one of the only named speaking characters who isn't white – Shane the realtor – features in the narrative purely as an opportunity for Mrs. Bennet to express her racist viewpoint. The reader is informed of Mrs. Bennet's racism via her response to Shane, Liz's privately held view that her mother will dislike working with him because he's black, and Mrs. Bennet's later use of the outdated and offensive term "mulatto" (442) to refer to the possibility of Kitty having mixed raced children with Shane.

In contrast, characters who the reader is encouraged to identify and sympathize with are shown to have more positive relationships with black characters (although not to the extent that any of these black characters are given well-developed personality traits, important roles within the plot, or even names in some cases.) Liz feels more warmly towards her father and Kitty when she discovers that they both attended the funeral of their black former housekeeper Mervetta. The author attempts to make Chip's social group appear more diverse by commenting on the race of the unnamed guests at his dinner party ("an attractive woman, also black" [115]). Liz also interacts with an unnamed "slim, middle-aged black woman" (366) in the park after she has had her heart broken by Darcy.

Overall the novel seeks to use race and transgender issues as a way of praising the tolerance of some of its characters, whilst writing off the racism and trans-phobia of other characters as nothing more than a joke.

## Marriage

Marriage – its purpose, its meaning, and its value – is the central preoccupation of all of the characters in the novel. Through the female characters in particular, the author



seeks to give a more modern and diverse view on the nature of marriage than is given in the original text.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's marriage represents an old-fashioned and traditional viewpoint. Mr. Bennet financially supports Mrs. Bennet, who devotes her time to her family, charitable pursuits, and leisure rather than pursuing any employment of her own. Although charitable work is generally considered to be a positive character trait in modern day society, the author depicts Mrs. Bennet's charity as narcissistic and superficial rather than being of any real benefit to anyone. Further to the traditional financial dependence of the wife on the husband in this old-fashioned marriage, there is an absence of genuine emotional attachment between the pair. The implication is that their marriage is a financial arrangement created for them to raise their children, rather than something that was created out of any sense of shared values or emotional connection.

The five Bennet sisters, as well as Charlotte Lucas, all represent approaches to marriage and relationships which have a more modern flavor. At the outset of the novel, both Liz and Jane are pursuing their own fulfillment outside of the confines of marriage entirely: Jane by trying to conceive via sperm donation and Liz by having a relationship with a married man. Later, both of the elder sisters continue to embody changing attitudes towards marriage, when Chip agrees to raise Jane's baby as his own and Liz and Darcy agree that they do not want to have children at all when they are married. Lydia and Kitty's romantic relationships represent a more inclusive approach to marriage, in which people are not expected to only marry people from their own race, gender, or sexual identity. Kitty begins a relationship with Shane, who is African American, and Lydia marries Ham, who is transgender. Further to these depictions of a more inclusive approach to marriage is the lesbian couple with whom Jane goes to live after she discovers that she is pregnant.

The different ways that modern day women can find a partner to marry are also explored in the novel, through Charlotte's snap decision to move to San Francisco to try out a relationship with a man she hardly knows, Liz's less than satisfactory experiences using online dating apps, and Caroline and Chip Bingley both agreeing to participate in the reality TV show "Eligible" in the hopes of finding love. Although the attitude toward unconventional relationships in the novel is positive, the attitude expressed towards these unconventional methods of finding relationships is less so. Charlotte soon comes to doubt her decision to invite so much upheaval into her life for the sake of finding a man, Liz has much greater success forming a romantic bond with someone she has known socially than she has with online dating, and Caroline's desire to appear on "Eligible" is depicted as self-serving and insincere.

## Feminism

The novel's interest in feminism as it relates to romance, family, and career, is one of the driving factors of the changes made from the source material. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the economic dependence of women on men that was necessitated by social



attitudes at the time, meant that the Bennet girls needed to pursue marriage in order to secure their own safety and well being. In *Eligible*, the author puts more emphasis on the need for women to learn to support themselves as a matter of greater importance than the need to find a life partner.

In this way, Liz becomes more of a driving force in the lives of her sisters than Lizzy is in *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is Mrs. Bennet who most forcefully interferes in the lives of the Bennet sisters in an attempt to secure their economic future through encouraging them to marry well. Lizzy clashes with her mother in *Pride and Prejudice* because of her refusal of an offer or marriage which would have provided financial security for herself, as well as continued ownership of the family home for the rest of the family. In *Eligible*, it is Liz rather than Mrs. Bennet who is concerned with the long term economic welfare of the Bennet sisters, but rather than try to encourage them to find a man to take care of them, Liz encourages her sisters to become financially independent by pursuing further education and beginning their own careers: Liz encourages Kitty to apply for a training course to become a professional manicurist, and asks her friend Charlotte to recommend Mary for a job at Procter and Gamble. This is a case of the biological sisterhood of the Bennet family representing the symbolic sisterhood of the feminist movement, in which women work together in order to pursue their liberation.

Another major feminist theme in the novel is the attitude to competitiveness and criticism among women. In *Pride and Prejudice*, women are mercilessly competitive in their desire to secure the best possible marriages for themselves and for their families, which is an unsurprising attitude when so much of the basic welfare of women of this era was dependent on marrying well. In *Eligible*, with the central importance of finding a man who can provide financial support removed, there is less justification or sympathy for women who are competitive towards each other. Caroline Bingley is the character who embodies the destructive vision of women who fail to support each other, which is shown in her condescending attitude to Liz and the insults she makes about Charlotte's appearance.

*Eligible* replaces the character of Lady Catherine de Bourgh with the character Kathy de Bourgh, in the process changing the character from someone bent on the destruction of Lizzy's chances of happiness, to someone who offers supportive and mature advice to the younger generation. Kathy is modeled on real life feminist activist Gloria Steinem and many of the details of Kathy's life mirror similar incidences in Steinem's life.



# Styles

## Point of View

The narrative is written in the third person, past tense, from the perspective of Liz Bennet. No events are depicted in the novel without Liz being present and any important occurrences that take place without Liz are communicated to the reader via text messages, emails, or phone calls that Liz receives. This serves to align the reader with Liz, filtering all of the events in the novel through her perspective and her prejudices. This has the effect of keeping certain key plot twists as a surprise for the reader, because they are also a surprise for Liz: although other characters were aware of Charlotte's romantic attachment to cousin Willie and the fact that Ham is transgender, the reader is not made aware of these facts until one of these characters chooses to communicate this information to Liz.

The main effect of writing the story from the perspective of Liz is to conceal the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of Darcy. The success of this technique is dependent on the reader's familiarity with the source material of *Pride and Prejudice*. As readers of the original are already fully aware that Liz and Darcy will become romantically involved, Liz's complete lack of awareness of Darcy's feelings for her are a source of comic irony. In *Pride and Prejudice*, however, the story is told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator who informs the reader of Darcy's privately held admiration for Lizzy which is masked by his aloofness, making it less of a shock to the reader than to Lizzy when he declares his love.

Despite being told entirely from Liz's perspective, the reader is still guided towards seeing flaws in her logic and interpretation of events, most clearly in her attitude towards her relationship with Jasper. The discussion of their unusual romantic arrangement makes Jasper appear untrustworthy to the reader long before Liz realizes that he has been unfaithful.

## Language and Meaning

The language of *Eligible* mixes contemporary dialogue with a prose style which pays tribute to the language of the original novel. The opening chapter plays with this mixture of the contemporary and the classical, using old-fashioned stylized language in the description of a very modern "Bachelor" inspired reality TV show. Chip is described as appearing on "Eligible" "ostensibly with some reluctance" (1) and the female contestants of the show are said to have spent their time "fighting with and besmirching one another in and out of his presence" (1).

In contrast to the narration, the dialogue of some of the characters is notably modern, especially in the case of the youngest of the Bennet sisters, Kitty and Lydia. While playing charades, they say things that could in no way be mistaken as quotations from a



Jane Austen novel, for example: “Peeing everywhere! Shitting your pants!” (75) and “Exploding with diarrhea! ... Having your period!” (75).

In contrast, other characters, especially Mr. Bennet and Darcy, speak in a way which is closer to the old-fashioned style of the narration. On first hearing of Chip Bingley from his wife, Mr. Bennet remarks: “Given that this man is a stranger to us, you seem inordinately interested in the details of his life” (2). Darcy speaks in a similar articulate, formal style, when he responds to the news that Liz is single by saying “I suppose it would be unchivalrous of me to say I’m not surprised” (36). The sense of Darcy as being a character more suited to 18th Century England than contemporary Cincinnati is heightened by his choice of words when Liz rejects his romantic advances, “I apologize for misreading the situation so egregiously” (283), and by the description of his actions after he leaves: “Then – it was such a strange, old-fashioned gesture – he basically bowed to her” (283).

## Structure

The novel is told in a straightforward chronological order and split into three parts. Part 1, containing Chapters 1 – 111, introduces all of the characters and their backgrounds, begins the central romantic relationships between Chip and Jane and Darcy and Liz, and ends when Liz receives a letter from Darcy after refusing his attempts to begin a serious relationship with her. Part 2 covers Chapters 112 – 146, and depicts Liz’s visit to San Francisco, her return to Cincinnati and the fallout of Lydia’s elopement, and ends with her returning to New York and apparently ending things for good with Darcy. Part 3, which runs from Chapters 147 – 181, follows the reconciliation of Chip and Jane, the participation of the Bennet family in the filming of “Eligible”, and the reconciliation of Darcy and Liz.

The three parts are structured around three key moments in the development of the relationship between Liz and Darcy. The receipt of Darcy’s letter at the end of Part 1 is a key turning point in the novel because it reveals uncomfortable truths about Jasper’s character which allow Liz to finally let go of her relationship with him. Part 2 ends on Liz’s mistaken decision to forget about her burgeoning relationship with Darcy by returning to New York without trying to contact him in Cincinnati. Part 3 ends with the couple engaged and living together in Cincinnati.

The novel uses different locations to signify the different phases of the relationship between Darcy and Liz. During Part 1 in Cincinnati, they are initially at odds with each other, in San Francisco in Part 2, they learn more about each other, away from the impositions of Liz’s family, and in Part 3 Liz spends time in both New York and Los Angeles before deciding that her heart and her home remain in Cincinnati with Darcy.



## Quotes

My dear," said Mr. Bennet, "if a sock puppet with a trust fund and a Harvard medical degree moved here, you'd think he was meant to marry one of our girls.

-- Mr. Bennet (chapter 1)

**Importance:** Mr. Bennet reproaches his wife after she reveals that she wants Chip Bingley to marry one of her daughters. The quote reflects the fact that Mrs. Bennet sees marriage as a financial arrangement, rather than an affair of the heart.

Everything in moderation.

-- Liz and Darcy (8 and 33)

**Importance:** Although Liz and Darcy initially dislike each other, the author foreshadows their later relationship by having them say similar things and express similar opinions. In this case, both express the same opinion about dieting on separate occasions.

If Mary has a friend who she doesn't think she can bring to dinner, that'd be rather a shame," Mr. Bennet said. "Her significant other deserves to suffer as much as the rest of us.

-- Mr. Bennet (chapter 18)

**Importance:** Mr. Bennet reflects on the longstanding family rumor that Mary is gay. Although it transpires that this is not true, the quote shows that Mr. Bennet is more open minded about modern approaches to love and relationships than his family suspect that he is, which lays the ground for his eventual acceptance of Ham later in the novel.

There are reasons to live in Cincinnati besides Chip." "Name one. And don't say Cincinnati is cheaper, because everywhere is cheaper than New York." Jane smiled. "Yet you were outraged that Darcy doesn't like it here.

-- Jane and Liz (chapter 29)

**Importance:** When Jane contemplates moving back to Cincinnati, Liz argues with her. Jane points out Liz's hypocrisy in criticizing Darcy for expressing opinions which she herself agrees with. Once again, the author foreshadows Liz's romance with Darcy by showing how much the two characters have in common.

What I said at the Lucases' – and I hope you know you're an exceptionally brazen eavesdropper – is that I don't want to be set up on blind dates at the whims of my supervisors' wives. That's hardly putting a moratorium on all Cincinnati women.

-- Darcy (chapter 86)

**Importance:** Darcy criticizes Liz for taking his words out of context and making assumptions about his character even though she hardly knew him. This foreshadows what will happen to Liz when she appears on an episode of Eligible in which she is



misrepresented and ridiculed by people taking her words and actions out of context rather than trying to get to know what she is really like.

This idea you have that your judgement is better than everyone else's, that you alone should decide the fates of other people – the only question is if being a surgeon gave you a god complex or if your god complex is what led you to be a surgeon.

-- Liz (chapter 108)

**Importance:** When Liz criticizes anything about Darcy, she is always talking about a flaw that is equally a part of her own character. Liz makes decisions for the rest of her family out of the opinion that she knows best, but criticizes Darcy for behaving in a similar way with his own loved ones.

It's remarkable, isn't it," Mr. Bennet said, "that for decades at a time, I've stayed alive without your daily instructions?"

-- Mr. Bennet (chapter 109)

**Importance:** Mr. Bennet sardonically reminds Liz that, although her efforts over the summer have been appreciated, he and the rest of the family are capable of surviving without her. Her father teases her for having a god complex similar to the one she accuses Darcy of having.

There's a belief that to take care of someone else, or to let someone else take care of you – that both are inherently unfeminist. I don't agree. There's no shame in devoting yourself to another person, as long as he devotes himself to you in return.

-- Kathy de Bourgh (chapter 114)

**Importance:** The advice of famous feminist activist Kathy de Bourgh gives Liz an impression of the sort of relationship she should be aspiring to, laying the emotional groundwork for her decision to abandon her unfulfilling and one-sided relationship with Jasper in favor of a more mature and equal relationship with Darcy.

Lizzy, nothing could bring me greater happiness than to have you staying at my house, freaking out about a boy.

-- Charlotte Lucas (chapter 121)

**Importance:** Charlotte and Liz's antics when Liz visits San Francisco are a tribute to the immense value of female friendship, giving it equal importance in the lives of these women as their romantic relationships with men. Although Liz fears that her obsession with Darcy will spoil their fun, Charlotte reminds her that their friendship is an important and valued part of her life.

Never would she have leapt to a conclusion this way when writing an article, never would she have allowed a fact to be alluded to without clarification. Trust but verify – that's what she'd have done.

-- Narration (chapter 175)



**Importance:** Liz realizes that she has applied less common sense and intelligence to her love life than she has to her career when she reflects that she never tried to clarify the text message that she received from Georgie. Liz eventually learns to apply the same level of maturity to her romantic life as she does to her career and family relationships.

I've never really been a TV watcher," Mrs. Bennet said, and whether or not anyone else believed her, it was abundantly clear that she believed herself; she spoke with confidence and pleasure. She said, "I've always far preferred a good book."  
-- Mrs. Bennet (chapter 179)

**Importance:** Through the character of Mrs. Bennet, the author makes the comparison between romantic novels such as *Pride and Prejudice* and modern day romance-themed reality TV shows such as *The Bachelor*. Although one of these forms has more cultural credibility than the other, the author here suggests that both types of storytelling provide their audiences with the same thing.

It was Mary's firm belief that any woman capable of satisfying her own desires – which, though not all of them knew it, was any woman anywhere – would never need to disgrace herself in the pursuit of a man.  
-- Narration (chapter 181)

**Importance:** This quote is reminiscent of the famous opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (1). However, instead of focusing on the need for women to secure a husband in order to be financially secure, the updated line instead puts the focus on the ability of all women to provide for themselves in every way.