

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

“Narratives have an underlying didactic purpose to instruct, challenge and elevate the audiences.” To what extent is this statement true of the texts you have studied?

Canonical narratives serve a didactic purpose that instigates one to deepen their understanding and expand their knowledge of beliefs, morals, different contexts and universal values. This allows for the exploration of existential questions of social conventions; thus, empowering individuals to undertake journeys towards self-reflection, self-actualisation and enlightenment. The case study ‘Pride and Prejudice’ by Jane Austen, the text ‘Letters to Alice’, by Fay Weldon and the film ‘Bridget Jones Diary’ by Sharon Maguire, all illuminate and explore universal values, that are projected through various significant characters. This proffers connectedness between people within and across cultures, communities and historical eras; inspiring change and a path towards ascertaining genuine personal awareness, enlightenment and elevation.

The case study ‘Pride and Prejudice’, by Jane Austen acts as a catalyst for our journey towards self-reflection and enlightenment. Jane Austen’s characterisation of the independently minded protagonist ‘Elizabeth’ challenges social expectations, encouraging readers to reflect, contemplate and discern the neoclassical values of her era. Elizabeth resists being limited by the categorisation of social class, whilst maintaining ‘good character’ and propriety. This is revealed when Lady Catherine De Bourgh demands Elizabeth to tell her if she is engaged to Mr Darcy, as Elizabeth states *“In marrying your nephew I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman’s daughter; so far, we are equal.”* By speaking back to Lady Catherine De Bourgh, we perceive that she is conscious of her own social disposition, challenging the social class system and the behaviour of an ‘ideal and reasonable woman’. This reinforces Austen’s aim as she explicitly informs us that individuals should not be judged nor limited by their social class as we recognise Elizabeth’s capacity to operate within her paradigm powerfully, with personal integrity. This allows Elizabeth to voice her personal opinions, depicting her as a heroine. Austen highlights the polarized experiences, allowing us to ascertain a deeper understanding of our choices in life, increasing our chance of reaching enlightenment and self- understanding.

Jane Austen reinforces the importance of reward through matrimony, and its potential to assist with social improvements, as character deficits can be remedied with a pairing that complements and improves one another. This is portrayed through the compatible relationship of Darcy and Elizabeth. With the use of the major technique bildungsroman, Austen focuses on the development of the protagonist Elizabeth and Fitzwilliam Darcy. In the novel, Darcy declares that he has made it his life’s work to avoid ridicule, this reflects on his character as he understands that there is room for personal growth and that an individual is susceptible to flaws. Ultimately, the audience is able to see that he has moral standards and is self-aware; however Elizabeth only manages to view the negative interpretation of Darcy’s character in a prejudice point of view.

Volume 2 of the novel reveals that when receiving Darcy’s letter Elizabeth chooses to acknowledge that she has been biased as she actively chooses to consider the new knowledge instead of ignoring it. Her change of behaviour and developing view of Mr Darcy portrays Elizabeth’s progressing self-formations, thus driving her personal development. Both characters initially develop and grow together as individuals, through self-reflection, demonstrating character development. Therefore Jane Austen establishes Elizabeth’s worth of Darcy and justification of the union, rewarding them with marriage. The compatible relationship and bildungsroman within both the characters allows the reader to reflect as

individuals and question their own ideologies. Consequently, enabling individuals to properly assess their place, expand their self-awareness and gain new insights and renewed perspectives of themselves.

The visual representation depicts a walnut with both the inner and outer shell. On the right-hand side of the image, the walnut is shaped like the human brain. The human brain acts as a representation of an individual's mind, which constitutes of the formation of thoughts, beliefs and the embodiment of a growing mindset, as a result of immersing one's self in canonical texts. Hence, allowing one to gain new knowledge and insights into beliefs, morals, different contexts and values. As the shell is uncovered it shows how individuals can be exposed to new ideas through reading and writing. Thus, reinforcing that individuals have the potential of attaining self-actualisation and enlightenment. The ring of leaves surrounding the brain represent continuous renewal and growth of an individual's attitude and perspectives, resulting in a heightened understanding of one's self and an appreciation of literature.

Context influences the way values of a text are presented and received. The text "Letters to Alice" by Fay Weldon illuminates the value of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, conveying the universality and the value of literature. Weldon explores the value of literature and its role in society through instigating self-reflection and an understanding of societal indoctrination, and how it impinges on an individual. Hence, the relationship of the texts and social pressure reshape our interpretations, providing insights into universal themes such as personal autonomy, with relevance to all contexts. Fay Weldon reinforces the importance of reading literature "*with a capital L*" and its significance in facilitating moral development and enriching the journey to self-actualisation. The metaphorical "*city of inventions*" supports the value of literature and its immortality and ability to transcend time and generations, establishing literature as a channel for contemporary audiences to receive 'moral guidance' and fulfilment. Through the use of characterisation Weldon fulfils her didactic purpose of directing Alice by stating "*you must read before it's too late*". This highlights the central importance of literature in its ability to proffer enlightenment and empower individuals to self-reflect.

Weldon reinforces that Literature transcends time and acts as a moral guide that leads to self-actualisation and enlightenment. The use of language devices in her post-modern novel mirrors Austen's epistolary form, in addressing and connecting the readers directly in order to advocate the significance of literature. The visual representation of the walnut casing reinforces the need to read canonical narratives and also demonstrates the fixed and indoctrinated mindset of individuals who do not read and write for enlightenment, and are therefore entrapped and limited, losing the chance to evaluate themselves and reach self-actualisation. Fay Weldon provides a modern polarised lens for the readers as she reinforces the notion of the reader and writer relationship and the importance in ascertaining the values of different contexts as it allows individuals to become more aware and understand Austen's neoclassical values and how they shape context through her novel, thus, sanctioning the great value of reading canonical texts. Consequently, the yellowish orange colour establishes a bright like mood which reinforces knowledge, illumination and enlightenment that the readers experience through canonical didactic narratives and the transformation of reading and writing on the reader. Therefore, Fay Weldon's epistles are set to reaffirm our perspective and advocate independence in the modern society. The didacticism of 'Letters to Alice' reshapes our attitude to *Pride and Prejudice* as it promotes enlightenment and facilitates moral development. Ultimately the light source in the background of the visual representation is a source of goodness and reality, thus accompanying transcendence into self.

Romance makes connections across history and helps us identify and understand the significant continuities and differences between novels and films in their context and their

appeal to modern individuals. The romantic/ comedy film Bridget Jones Diary is an appropriation of the novel Pride and Prejudice. The film both challenges and reinforces the neoclassical values of Jane Austen's era, targeting the contemporary audience, as it displays Bridget Jones with a lack of propriety, dress, language and courtesy, yet she is also depicted as an independent woman, who also desires love, just like Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice. The film presents the contemporary values of the 21st century, alluding to its artificiality by satirising the events that occur. This is revealed mainly through the protagonist of the film Bridget Jones, a single British woman, aged 32 years who is worried about her weight, troubles and fantasises about her boss Daniel Cleaver. However, she reflects on her experiences by writing in her diary. This didactic action allows us to reassess our values and beliefs and ignites natural curiosity, which is essential for self-growth, allowing individuals to shift their perceptions of life. Thus, leading to self-reflection and enlightenment.

The visual representation of the roots serve to represent branches reaching out to grasp new ideas, experiences and perspectives and hence the importance of deeply immersing ones-self in canonical texts. As an individual is required to dig deeper and engross themselves in more canonical narratives in order to be enlightened and reach self-reflection. Moreover, the magnifying glass on the right-hand side surrounding the open walnut symbolises the search and journey for understanding and self-actualisation.

Ultimately, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, Letters to Alice by Fay Weldon and the film Bridget Jones Diary influence the contemporary world, as they provide vicarious experiences which challenge individual's perceptions of the world. Austen's work provides insights into the value of narratives and how they can shape and influence our perspectives and ideals. Consequently, reading canonical texts allow us to form an appreciation and understanding of the world around us and hence leading to enlightenment.