



ELIZABETH BENNET

Table of Contents

ELIZABETH BENNET CHARACTER PROFILE	2
'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' AS A COMING-OF-AGE STORY	2
COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STORIES VS BILDUNGSROMAN	3
COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE: INTERPRETATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS	4
COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE: EXAMPLE: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE BY JANE AUSTEN	4
COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE: FURTHER EXAMPLES	5
ELIZABETH BENNET'S DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO THE COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE	5





[BACK TO START](#)

ELIZABETH BENNET CHARACTER PROFILE

Elizabeth Bennet, the spirited and independent protagonist of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, strikes a captivating balance between charm and intellect. Although she is considered less beautiful than her sister Jane, whom she cherishes deeply without a hint of envy, Elizabeth's strength lies in her spirited and independent nature, traits quite unusual for a young lady of her time. She embodies the self-respect and dignity inherent in being a 'gentleman's daughter,' and she displays an impatient disdain for pretention and stiff conventions.

However, Elizabeth isn't completely dismissive of societal norms; she understands and appreciates the importance of propriety and good taste, a wisdom that Lydia, with her disregard for decent conduct, lacks. Elizabeth's father cherishes her above his other daughters, and she possesses his quick wit, a trait that sometimes leads to an overconfidence in her intellectual abilities.

Elizabeth's 'lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous' gives her an attractive aura, making her well-liked among women, such as her aunt and Charlotte Lucas, and admired by men. Although she prides herself on her discernment, her judgment is not always accurate, a fact evidenced by her misunderstanding of Charlotte Lucas's motivations.

Darcy's harsh comments at the Meryton ball offend Elizabeth, and she responds by developing a stubborn prejudice against him, a prejudice she maintains despite evidence to the contrary. She falls for the deceptive charm of the handsome and plausible Wickham, refusing to see beyond her initial judgments. However, from the moment she receives Darcy's enlightening letter, her perception begins to change, leading her to realise her pride and prejudice.

Elizabeth's romantic interactions with Wickham and Colonel Fitzwilliam are tinged with an undercurrent of her preoccupation with Darcy. Although she intellectually acknowledges her misconceptions about Darcy much earlier, it takes her longer to reconcile her feelings towards him. As Darcy begins treating her as his equal, her feelings towards him shift from hatred to love.

Defying expectations of her youth, Elizabeth holds her own against Lady Catherine's imposing rank, refusing to be intimidated. She employs her sharp wit to out-argue Lady Catherine and displays moral courage in defying her. Elizabeth, despite her faults, embodies a generosity of spirit rather than meanness. She is fair-minded, willing to admit her errors, and she evolves towards a mature self-understanding by the novel's conclusion.

[BACK TO START](#)

'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' AS A COMING-OF-AGE STORY

The 'coming-of-age' story plot structure is a narrative that focuses on the personal growth and development of the protagonist as they transition from adolescence to adulthood, often symbolising the transition from ignorance to knowledge.





- This type of story often follows a young person as they navigate the challenges and difficulties of growing up, facing obstacles and making decisions that will shape their future.
 - The term coming-of-age refers to the process of reaching a point in life when one is considered to have reached maturity and is ready to take on the responsibilities of adulthood.
 - In a 'coming-of-age' story, the protagonist embarks on a journey of self-discovery, learning important lessons about
 - themselves,
 - their place in the world,
 - and their relationships with others.
 - This type of plot structure often highlights themes such as
 - identity,
 - independence,
 - responsibility,
 - and the search for meaning and purpose in life.
- It is a popular genre in literature, film, and other forms of media, as it appeals to a wide audience and is relatable to many people's experiences of growing up and discovering who they are.

COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STORIES VS BILDUNGSROMAN

"Coming of age" story and "bildungsroman" are two terms often used interchangeably to refer to a genre of literature that explores the growth, development, and self-discovery of a young protagonist. However, there are some subtle differences between the two.

A "coming of age" story typically focuses on a particular stage in a character's life, often adolescence, where they experience personal growth and maturation, often as a result of significant life events or relationships. These stories may also explore themes such as identity, independence, and first love. They tend to be more focused on the character's emotional journey and their individual development rather than broader societal issues.

On the other hand, a "bildungsroman" is a German term that means "novel of education" or "novel of formation." It is a more specific type of "coming of age" story that follows the character's entire life journey from childhood to adulthood. These stories typically explore themes such as the struggle for self-discovery, the search for identity, and the maturation of the character's intellect and morality. The protagonist's growth and development are often shaped by the cultural, social, and historical context in which they live.

In summary, a "coming of age" story is a more general term that refers to stories about young characters' personal growth, while a "bildungsroman" is a specific type of "coming of age" story that follows the protagonist's entire life journey, often exploring broader societal issues.





COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE: INTERPRETATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

"Coming-of-age" stories can be interpreted or presented in a variety of different ways, depending on the writer's

- style,
 - perspective,
 - and intended audience.
 - Here are a few examples of different interpretations and presentations of the coming-of-age genre:
1. **Coming-of-age in a specific time period or cultural context:**
 - a. Many coming-of-age stories are set in a specific time period or cultural context, such as the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s, and explore the challenges and experiences of growing up in that era.
 2. **Coming-of-age in a fantastical or surreal setting:**
 - a. Some coming-of-age stories take place in a fantastical or surreal setting, such as a magical realm, a dystopian world, or an alternate universe, and explore the protagonist's journey to maturity within that context.
 3. **Coming-of-age as a journey of self-discovery:**
 - a. In some coming-of-age stories, the protagonist embarks on a journey of self-discovery, learning important lessons about themselves, their place in the world, and their relationships with others.
 4. **Coming-of-age as a journey of social and political awakening:**
 - a. Some coming-of-age stories explore the protagonist's journey towards social and political awareness and activism, as they come to understand the issues and challenges facing their community and work to make a difference.
 5. **Coming-of-age as a journey of personal and spiritual growth:**
 - a. Some coming-of-age stories focus on the protagonist's journey towards personal and spiritual growth, as they explore their own beliefs, values, and sense of purpose in life.

These are just a few examples of the many ways that the coming-of-age genre can be interpreted and presented. The versatility of the genre allows writers to explore a wide range of themes, perspectives, and styles, making it a rich and diverse genre that continues to evolve and capture the imagination of audiences.

COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE: EXAMPLE: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE BY JANE AUSTEN

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen is a novel that fits the criteria for a coming of age story, as it follows the journey of its main character, Elizabeth Bennet, as she matures and learns important life lessons. The novel is set in early 19th century England, and it revolves around the lives of the Bennet family and their interactions with the wealthy and aristocratic Bingley and Darcy families.

The novel begins with the introduction of the Bennet family and their five daughters, each with their distinct personality and character traits. Elizabeth, the second eldest daughter, is intelligent, witty, and fiercely independent,





with a strong sense of justice and a disdain for the rigid societal norms of the time. As the story progresses, Elizabeth's journey of self-discovery and personal growth is depicted through various conflicts, challenges, and revelations that she faces.

One of the key themes of the novel is the societal pressure on women to marry well and secure their future. This theme is reflected in the relationships and interactions between the characters, as well as the societal norms and expectations that they must adhere to. Elizabeth's journey of self-discovery is closely linked to her struggles with these societal norms and her desire to break free from them.

Through her interactions with the male characters in the novel, particularly Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth learns valuable lessons about love, relationships, and the importance of looking beyond initial impressions and prejudices. The novel's title, *Pride and Prejudice*, reflects the key themes of the story and the character flaws that Elizabeth must overcome in her journey towards maturity and self-awareness.

The plot structure of a coming of age story has a significant impact on the reader, as it allows for a deeper exploration of the characters' personalities and motivations. By following Elizabeth's journey of self-discovery, the reader is able to connect with her character on a more personal level and empathise with her struggles and challenges. The novel's focus on character development and personal growth also allows for a more nuanced exploration of the societal and cultural norms of the time, and their impact on the lives of the characters.

In conclusion, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen is a coming of age story that follows the journey of its main character, Elizabeth Bennet, as she learns important life lessons and matures as a person. The novel's focus on character development, societal norms, and personal growth makes it a timeless classic that continues to resonate with readers today.

COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE: FURTHER EXAMPLES

- *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
 - *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
 - *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
 - *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
 - *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles
 - *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green
 - *An Inspector Calls* by J.B. Priestley
 - *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
 - *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett
 - *Pigeon English* by Stephen Kelman (bildungsgroman)
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ELIZABETH BENNET'S DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO THE COMING-OF-AGE PLOT STRUCTURE





Elizabeth Bennet's coming-of-age journey in "Pride and Prejudice" is deeply connected to her evolving understanding of herself and the world around her, particularly her changing perceptions of Mr. Darcy. Here's a rough timeline of key moments in Elizabeth's development:

- **Introduction of Character and Status Quo (Chapter 1):** Elizabeth Bennet, along with her family, is introduced, setting the social context of the story. "She is a beauty...I am sure I saw such an eye, both for a man of the cloth and a stranger, as Miss Elizabeth possesses."
- **Call to Adventure/Inciting Incident (Chapter 3):** Elizabeth overhears Mr. Darcy refusing to dance with her, which sparks her prejudice against him. "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me."
- **Rejection of the Call (Chapter 19):** When Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth, she rejects him, choosing to remain single instead of marrying for security, defying societal expectations. "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so."
- **Meeting with the Mentor (Chapter 24):** After learning about Mr. Wickham's accounts of Mr. Darcy's alleged wrongs towards him, Elizabeth's prejudice against Mr. Darcy deepens, solidifying her initial judgments.
- **Crossing the Threshold (Chapter 34):** Mr. Darcy confesses his love to Elizabeth and proposes to her, but she vehemently rejects him due to her prejudice. "You could not have made the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it."
- **Tests, Allies, and Enemies (Chapter 35):** Elizabeth reads Mr. Darcy's letter explaining his actions towards Mr. Wickham and his reasons for discouraging Mr. Bingley's relationship with Jane, causing her to reassess her judgments. "How despicably I have acted! I, who have prided myself on my discernment!"
- **Approach to the Inmost Cave (Chapter 43):** Elizabeth visits Pemberley, Darcy's estate, beginning to appreciate his character and regret her rejection. She is surprised to hear from his housekeeper, "I have never had a cross word from him in my life, and I have known him ever since he was four years old."
- **Ordeal (Chapter 46):** Elizabeth learns about Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham, a situation that could ruin her family's reputation. She is devastated, fearing this incident might estrange her and Darcy forever.
- **Reward (Chapter 50):** Mr. Darcy arranges a marriage between Lydia and Wickham, saving the Bennet family's reputation. Elizabeth starts to realise her love for Darcy. "He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is."
- **The Road Back (Chapter 58):** Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth again, and this time, she accepts. "I love you. Most ardently."
- **Resolution (Chapter 61):** Elizabeth marries Mr. Darcy, and they live happily at Pemberley. "Elizabeth's mind was too full for conversation, but she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view."

Through the course of the novel, Elizabeth develops from a young woman with set prejudices to someone who learns to question her initial judgments, embodying the quintessential coming-of-age journey.



