INTRODUCTION NOTES TO PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

THE ROLE OF CLASS, MONEY, AND MANNERS
DICTION IN CHAPTER 1

Read over the language below found throughout ch. 1. Based on this list, what do you anticipate from the novel? How does this affirm/contradict what you know about the novel?

possession, fortune, rightful property, wife, establishment, scrupulous, consent, neighborhood, sarcastic, reserve, caprice, insufficient, vexing, business, single man, married or single, surrounding families, invitation, servants, chaise and four
SOCIAL CLASSES IN AUSTEN'S WORLD

Nobility/Aristocracy
- Enormous wealth (property)
- Men and women hold titles--passed on through families
- Political power

Country Gentry
- Mainly significant landowners
- "Land money" ranks higher than "earned money"

Urban Middle Class
- Upper-middle class
- No country land; members reside in the city

Leisure Class
- Inherited titles
- Land owners
- Clergy
- Military officers
- Higher-ranking lawyers

More distinct line, but still some crossing over with marriages

Blurry line
ANNUAL INCOME LEVELS FOR COMPARISON

*Darcy = £10,000
*Bingley = £5,000
*Mr. Bennet = £2,000
Big merchants = £2,000
Clergymen = £283
Skilled laborers = £55-90
Agricultural workers = £42

*Wealthy property owners lived off of the interest from their large fortunes. Returns on investment around this time were roughly 4-5%. Therefore, a man like Bingley lives off the interest of his £100,000 fortune (inherited from family).
THE BENNET FAMILY'S FINANCES

- At the time of their marriage, Mrs. Bennet received a settlement of £5,000, meaning when her husband dies, she and the children are entitled to equal shares of £5,000--not much (£200-£250 annually).

- The property/money Mr. Bennet inherited is entailed. With no male heirs, the entire Bennet fortune (minus Mrs. Bennett's settlement) will go to the nearest male relative--his cousin, Mr. Collins.

- Mrs. Bennet has reason to want to marry off her daughters. If her husband dies and none of their daughters are married, they will be nearly destitute and have to rely on her upper-middle class relatives to survive. No more £2,000 a year; no more status!
MANNERS AND SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

• Etiquette is EXTREMELY important in the world of country gentry.

• Women can do little without the aid/permission of men:
  * Single women rely on male relatives for money
  * Single women often "keep house" (managing the estate, not doing housework) for brothers/cousins before marriage
  * Women may not call on new male acquaintances without the family patriarch's first paying a visit

• Reciprocal visits were expected--there weren't many wealthy families in any given area

• Social calls and events were an important part of genteel life