



Understanding Pride and Prejudice: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (The Greenwood Press "Literature in Context" Series)

Debra Teachman

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This is the only book about *Pride and Prejudice* to combine both analysis of the novel and excerpts from significant primary documents of Austen's own time. These materials will help the reader to understand the complexities of both the novel and English society at the beginning of the 19th century, and to compare those issues to contemporary society. Teachman provides commentary and primary materials on inheritance, marriage, and women's roles in society at the time of Austen's life. Excerpts from 18th- and 19th-century etiquette books, moral treatises, histories of women, legal documents and commentary, newspapers, magazines, and collections of letters provide evidence of the social and legal differences between Austen's time and our own?enabling the reader to understand the legal, historical, social, and cultural context of the novel. Each section of this casebook contains study questions, topics for research papers and class discussions, and lists of further reading for examining the issues raised by the novel.

The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* turns on three aspects of early 19th-century English society: marriage as a social institution, inheritance laws and customs, and acceptable roles for women. Following a literary analysis of the novel, the casebook contains documents and commentary on the following topics: inheritance and marriage laws and customs, 18th-century views on marriage, the status of unmarried women, women's education and moral training, and issues in the 1980s and 1990s that can be contrasted with those in the novel. These documents illustrate the social and legal differences between Austen's time and our own that enable the reader to fully understand the archaic details of the novel. They also indicate the continuities between Austen's time and ours in their emphases on love, marriage, the importance of property, and arguments about the role of women. Among the documents are excerpts from Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, advice from a mother to her absent daughters, and a number of letters on the proper role of women, their education, and moral training. The final chapter of this book brings into focus the relevancies of Austen's fiction to present day readers and provides discussion of many of the issues of the novel as they are handled by law and the media at the end of the 20th century. This is an ideal companion for teacher use and student research in interdisciplinary, English history, and English literature courses.

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