Pride and Prejudice

By Kate Hamill

Adapted from the novel by Jane Austen

A Guide to: *Pride and Prejudice*

Written and Compiled by Sarah J Baker for
OpenStage Theatre & Company

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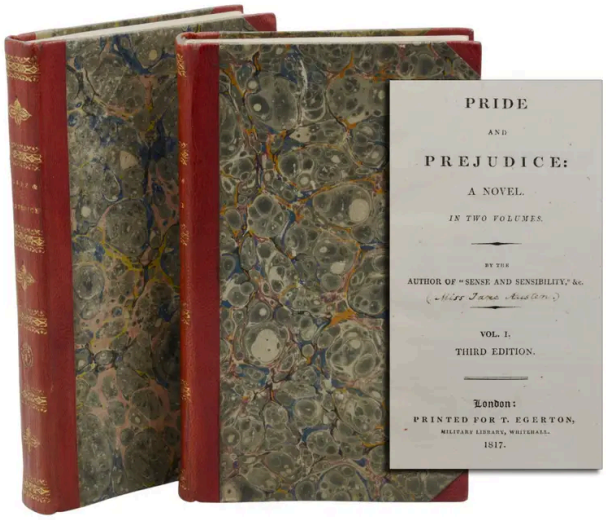
What’s the Story of Pride and Prejudice?

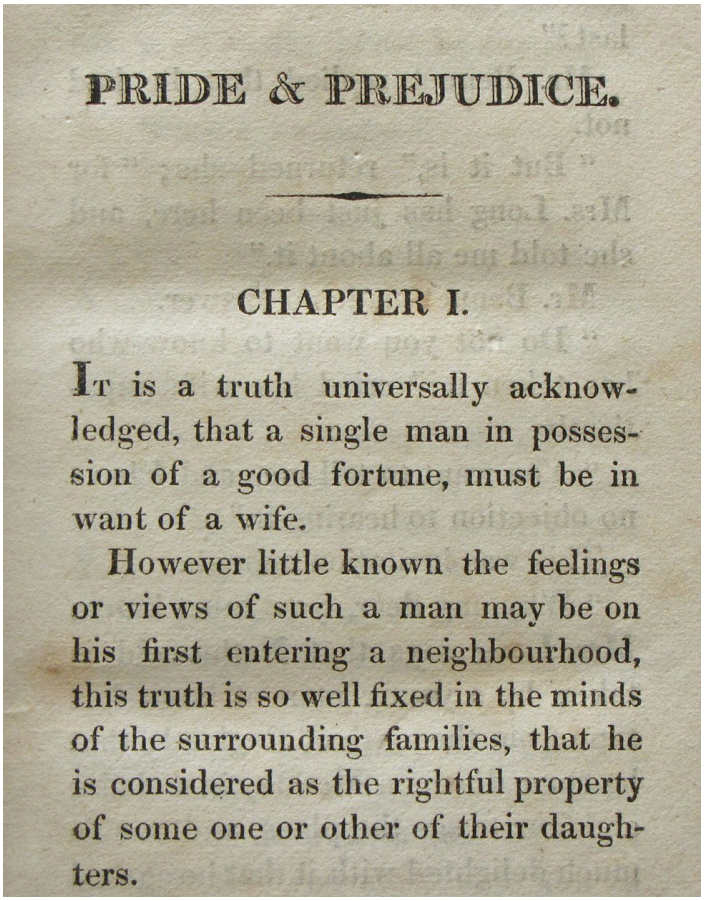
This isn’t your great-auntie’s Austen! Bold, surprising, and boisterous! The outspoken Lizzy Bennet is determined to never marry, but can she resist her enterprising mother, and society itself? Especially when that vaguely handsome, and impossibly aggravating Mr. Darcy keeps popping up at every turn! Literature’s classic romance, Pride and Prejudice, has never felt so theatrical, or so full of life as it does in this effervescent adaptation. Because what turns us into greater fools than the high-stakes game of love?This isn’t your great-auntie’s Austen! Bold, surprising, and boisterous! The outspoken Lizzy Bennet is determined to never marry, but can she resist her enterprising mother, and society itself? Especially when that vaguely handsome, and impossibly aggravating Mr. Darcy keeps popping up at every turn! Literature’s classic romance, Pride and Prejudice, has never felt so theatrical, or so full of life as it does in this effervescent adaptation. Because what turns us into greater fools than the high-stakes game of love?

Origins of Pride and Prejudice: The Novel and Adaptations



English author Jane Austen released her second novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, in 1813. Now with over 20 million copies sold, the novel has become one of the most popular Engligh literature stories of all time. Even 200 years after its release, the story is a favortie amongst many, spawning numerous adaptations and references in popular music, books, television, movies, and theatre. Notably there was a 1995 tv mini series adaptation featuring Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy and a 2005 movie adaptation featuring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth, Matthew Macfadyen as Mr. Darcy, Donald Sutherland as Mr. Bennet, Rosamund Pike as Jane, Jena Malone as Lydia, Carey Mulligan as Kitty, Tom Hollander as Mr. Collins, and Judi Dench as Lady Catherine.

Crafting The Novel



PRIDE & PREJUDICE.

CHAPTER I.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

Jane Austen began writing Pride and Prejudice in 1796, initially titling it *First Impressions*. She completed the manuscript by August 1797. Despite her father's efforts to have the novel published, it was rejected by London bookseller Thomas Cadell. Austen then focused on revising her earlier work, *Sense and Sensibility*, which was eventually published in 1811. Encouraged by its success, she revisited *First Impressions*, making significant revisions between 1811 and 1812. During this period, she changed the title to *Pride and Prejudice*, possibly to avoid confusion with other works that had similar titles.

The Play's Production History

In 2017, the Hudson Valley Shakespare Festival produced the world-premiere of Kate Hamill's *Pride and Prejudice*. Kate Hamill played the role of Lizzy Bennet, and her real-life partner Jason O'Connell played the role of Mr. Darcy. This run, directed by Amanda Dehnert, transferred to the New York and was produced Off-Broadway in a co-production of Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival and Primary Stages.

About Jane Austen

Jane Austen (1775–1817) was born in Steventon, Hampshire, England, the seventh of eight children in a lively and affectionate family. Her father, Reverend George Austen, was an Oxford-educated clergyman who supported Jane's literary pursuits by giving her access to a broad library and encouraging her early writing efforts. She began composing stories, plays, and sketches as a teenager—works now known as her Juvenilia. These youthful writings display the sharp wit and social insight that would later define her mature novels.

Austen drafted her first version of Pride and Prejudice—then titled First Impressions—in the late 1790s at the age of 21, though it was initially rejected by publishers. In the early 1800s, after moving with her family to Bath and later to Chawton, Austen revisited and revised her early works. Her first published novel, Sense and Sensibility (1811), was followed by Pride and Prejudice in 1813, which quickly became a favorite among readers and remains one of her

most enduring achievements. In Pride and Prejudice, Austen's masterful characterization of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, paired with her critique of social class and marriage conventions, showcased the wit and psychological depth that defined her style.

Writing anonymously, her books were initially published as "By a Lady". Austen released a total of six major novels, including Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1815), and the posthumously published Persuasion and Northanger Abbey (1817). These works reflect her enduring themes: the constraints placed on women in a patriarchal society, the importance of moral character, and the complexities of courtship and marriage. Despite living a relatively quiet and private life, Austen was deeply observant of the world around her, capturing the nuances of early 19th-century English country life with remarkable precision.

Austen's health declined in her early 40s, and she died on July 18, 1817, in Winchester. Although her authorship was not widely known during her lifetime, her literary reputation grew steadily in the years following her death. Today, Jane Austen is recognized as one of the foundational figures of English literature. Her novels continue to be celebrated for their enduring relevance, emotional depth, and sharp social commentary, securing her place among the most beloved and studied writers in the world.

About Kate Hamill

Originally from the farms and fields of upstate New York, Kate is an award-winning NYC-based actor/playwright. She still knows how to milk a cow - albeit not well (both she and the cow get verrry nervous).

She is deeply passionate about creating new feminist, female-centered classics, both in new plays and in adaptation - stories that center around complicated women. Her work as a playwright celebrates theatricality, often features absurdity, and closely examines social and gender issues - as well as the timeless struggle to reconcile conscience / identity with social pressures. As an actor, she tends to play people with intense drives and desires - truth-tellers, oddballs, and misfits.

Kate was named 2017's Playwright of the Year by the *Wall Street Journal*. She has been one of the 10 most-produced playwrights in the country for the last 7 years running, from 2017-2024; she is now the most-produced playwright in the USA. In both 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, she wrote two of the top 10 most produced plays in the U.S.; many of her plays have been produced

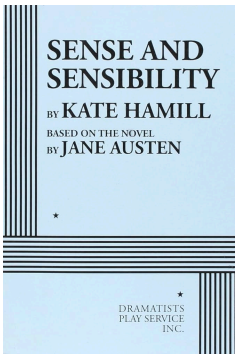
internationally. Future productions on the UPCOMING page, including 3 world premieres in '24/'25: *The Scarlet Letter* at Two River Theater, *The Light and The Dark (the life and times of Artemisia Gentileschi)* off-Bway at Primary Stages / Chautauqua Theater Company, and *The Odyssey* at ART. Her previously-produced plays include *Sense and Sensibility* (Bedlam; in which she originated the role of Marianne) - Winner, Off-Broadway Alliance Award; Nominee, Drama League Award; "the greatest stage adaptation of this novel in history" - *Huffington Post*. Other plays include *Vanity Fair* (The Pearl; in which she originated the role of Becky Sharp; Nominee, Off Broadway Alliance Award; WSJ Critic's Pick), *Pride and Prejudice* (Primary Stages / HVSF; in which she originated the role of Lizzy Bennet; Nominee, Off Broadway Alliance Award; "Best Theater of 2017", Huffington Post; WSJ Critic's Pick), *Little Women, Mansfield Park* (originated role of Mary Crawford), and *Dracula* (Classic Stage Company; originated role of Renfield; WSJ Critic's Pick); *Emma (*The Guthrie; Winner, best play, BroadwayWorld; Winner, best new play, BroadwayWorld); *Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson - Apt. 2B (*Kansas City Rep; originated role of Joan Watson.) and *The Little Fellow (or, the Queen of Tarts tells All)* at Cygnet Theater.

Biography and photo are from katehamill.com. Visit her website for full biography and more information.

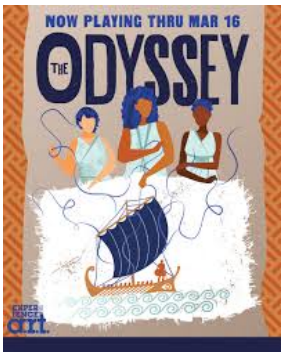
Additional Works by Kate Hamill

Kate Hamill has numerous plays and adaptations currently in development, as well as many that are highly produced and available for purchase. Visit Kate Hamill 's website to read a full list of her works.

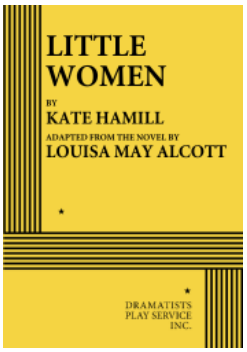
Sense and Sensibility



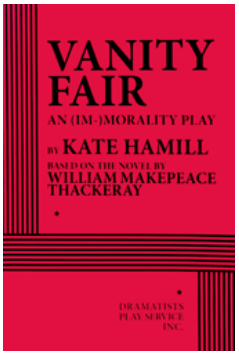
The Odyssey



Little Women



Vanity Fair (an im-morality play)



Emma

EMMA
BY KATE HAMILL
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JANE AUSTEN

TRW

The Scarlet Letter

THE SCARLET LETTER
BY KATE HAMILL

TRW

Dracula (a feminist revenge fantasy)

DRACULA
A FEMINIST REVENGE FANTASY, REALLY.
BY KATE HAMILL
BASED LOOSELY ON THE NOVEL BY BRAM STOKER

TRW

Discussion Questions

Before the Show

- ★ What do you already know about Jane Austen or the original story of Pride and Prejudice? What do you expect the tone of this play to be like?
- ★ Why do you think this story continues to be told over 200 years after it was written? What makes it special?
- ★ Have you ever judged someone too quickly, only to change your mind later? How did that affect your relationship? What have you learned from that experience?
- ★ What makes a story about love and family timeless?

After the Show

- ★ How did this version of Pride and Prejudice differ from what you expected? How did you feel about the adaptation?
- ★ Kate Hamill's adaptation is known for being energetic and comedic. How did humor change or enhance your understanding of the story or characters?
- ★ Which character surprised you the most, and why?
- ★ How do "pride" and "prejudice" influence the characters' relationships and choices?

- ★ What themes or ideas felt especially relevant to today's world?
- ★ How does this adaptation portray gender roles, and how might that reflect modern ideas or critiques?
- ★ Kate Hamill's adaptation often plays with theatrical conventions like doubling roles and breaking the fourth wall. How do these choices affect the story's tone, and what might they suggest about how we perform identity or social roles in real life?

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