

Money & Status in Pride and Prejudice

Notes from Tyler Knowles - Jan 2023

Pride and Prejudice - Money References

Mr. Darcy--annual income of at least £10,000 (p 12, 357, and see note 2 on 382)

Mr. Bingley--£100,00 (inherited) (p17) and £5,000 annual income (p 6, 329)

Mr. Bennet--;£2000 annual income (p 29) but estate is entailed

Mr. Collins--will inherit the £40,000-£50,000 estate of the Bennets at Mr. B's death

Mr. Wickham-- inherited £1000 from Mr. Darcy, Sr (p 195); £3,000 more from Darcy when he gave up his claim to become a clergyman (p 195); £10,000? (p106--"Wickham, of course, wanted more than he could get [from Darcy re Lydia]; but at length was reduced to be reasonable." Darcy also bought his commission £450 (p 307); his debts paid off by Darcy for "considerably more than a thousand pounds (p 307)." Darcy probably is the poorer by approximately £15,000 because of Wickham.

Lady Catherine--£s?? Huge estate Rosings and a "chimney piece" that Mr. Collins said cost £800 (p 74) (Consider that extravagance against what Elizabeth's annual income would have been if it were not for her marriage to Mr. Darcy.)

Miss Darcy--£50,000 inheritance(I can't find the page number)

Miss C Bingley--£20,000 inheritance (p 17)

Miss King--£10,000 inheritance (p 151)

Mrs. Bennet--£4,000 inheritance (p 29)

Elizabeth Bennet--£1000 settled on her (and other 4 Bennet girls)--to be rec'd at mother's death; Invested in 4% Government Funds her annual income would be £40.

Lydia Bennet--£1,0000 pounds given by Mr Bennet so she could marry; an additional £1,000 settled on her by Darcy also (p 307)=£2,000

To figure out annual income for the women, take their inheritance and multiply by .05 if they have more than £10,000 but by .04% if they have less. This is the rate of return on government funds into which inheritances were invested.

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After getting all of the above information and trying to figure out what such incomes meant as I did last year for *Sense and Sensibility*, I discovered Katherine Toran's essay "The Economics of Jane Austen's World" in *Jasna* (vol 36, no 1, Winter 2015) as many of you did in our session yesterday. Toran said, based on several different ways of calculating annual income from Austen's era in early 1800's to 2015, that Darcy's yearly income, which does not include income from his properties, only from what he inherited (£200,000), **would be between \$986K to \$16 million in today's dollars**. Darcy would be one of the 400 wealthiest individuals in England (in the 99.75%). **Mr. Rushworth in *Mansfield Park* is even richer!!!**

Another Factoid -

The top 1% of households in Jane Austen's day had net worths of £100,000. That puts Mr Darcy's £200,000 and Mr. Bingley's £100,000 into perspective. Mr Bennet's £50,000 doesn't put him in the category of top 1% but he was well-to-do for his time (as Mr Collins, his heir, will be).

Ruth Perry's article "Home at Last: Biographical Background to *Pride and Prejudice*," in *Approaches to Teaching Austen's Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Marcia McClintock Folsom (1993), explains that after Austen's father died, she, her sister Cassandra and mother depended on her mother's annuity of £210 supplemented first by one brother's generous £600 annually and, after his death, by her three other brothers' contributions of a total of £450-£460 a year. The JASNA article says Austen made only £684 from publishing four books over her lifetime. (translated to today's dollars = approximately \$67,000). Putting the Austen family (Jane, Cassandra and Mrs. Austen) into perspective, they live on what Mrs. Dashwood, Marianna, and Elinor are reduced to in *Sense and Sensibility*—a very tight budget, with little room for comforts.

Eward Copeland's essay "The Economic Realities of Jane Austen's Day," in *Approaches to Teaching Austen's Pride and Prejudice*, is also a superb source.