

THE MILWAUKEE REPERTORY
THEATER PRESENTS

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Adapted from the novel
by Jane Austen

A STUDY GUIDE FOR
STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

March 3 - 29, 2009



This study guide is researched and designed by the Education Department at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and is intended to prepare you for your visit. It contains information that will deepen your understanding of, and appreciation for, the production. We've also included questions and activities for you to explore before and after our performance of

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Synopsis/About the Author	2
Who's Who	4
The Regency Time Period	6
Interview with Joseph Hanreddy	8
Novel vs. Script	10
Visiting the Rep	12

If you would like to schedule a classroom workshop, or if we can help in any other way, please contact:

Jenny Kostreva at (414) 290-5370
jkostreva@milwaukeeerep.com

Rebecca Witt at (414) 290-5393
rwitt@milwaukeeerep.com

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STUDY GUIDE CREATED BY

Rebecca Witt,
Education Coordinator

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

Janine Bannier,
Education Intern

EDITED BY
Jenny Kostreva,
Education Director

Kristin Crouch,
Literary Director

Synopsis

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE focuses on the story of the Bennet family. The Bennet family lives in the estate of Longbourn, in England. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are the father and mother of five daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. All of the daughters are of marriageable age and it has become Mrs. Bennet's dream to have each of them marry a wealthy man with high social status. With no male heirs, Mrs. Bennet knows she and her daughters would be evicted from their home should Mr. Bennet die. When an estate nearby is rented by Mr. Bingley, a man who is handsome, amiable, and very wealthy, Mrs. Bennet arranges to have her daughters meet him in hopes that he will want to marry one of them. While at a party, Jane and Mr. Bingley become very close. However, Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley's friend, and disapproves of the low status of the Bennet family. He is prideful, and feels that both he and Mr. Bingley are superior to the Bennet family. Everyone dislikes Mr. Darcy right away because of his secretive and unsociable nature, but Mr. Darcy begins to form feelings for Elizabeth, without her knowing. Elizabeth hears a story from the young officer named Wickham about Mr. Darcy's cruel nature, which makes her dislike him even more. Is the story true or is Wickham lying in order to have Elizabeth for himself?

"Yes, vanity is weakness. But pride— where there is real superiority of mind, pride will always be under good regulation."

Mr. Darcy

About the Author



Jane Austen was born in Steventon, Hampshire in December of 1775 to Reverend George and Cassandra Austen. She was the second daughter and seventh child in a family of eight. The first 25 years of her life Jane spent in Hampshire. On her father's unexpected retirement, the family sold off everything, including Jane's piano, and moved to Bath. Jane and Cassandra, her elder sister, were considered by contemporary standards confirmed old maids and followed their parents.

Jane Austen was tutored at home, and irregularly at school, but she received a broader education than many women of her time. She started to write for family amusement as a child. Her parents were avid readers and Austen's favorite poet was Cowper. Her earliest-known writings date from about 1787, when she was only 12 years old. Very shy about her writing, Austen wrote on small pieces of paper that she slipped under the desk if anyone came into the room. In her writings and letters she observed the daily life of her family and friends in an intimate and gossipy manner: "James danced with Alethea, and cut up the turkey last night with great perseverance. You say nothing of the silk stockings; I flatter myself, therefore, that Charles has not

purchased any, as I cannot very well afford to pay for them; all my money is spent in buying white gloves and pink persian" (Austen in a letter to her sister Cassandra in 1796) .

George Austen supported his daughter's writing aspirations and tried to help her get a publisher. After his death in 1805, she lived with her sister and mother in Southampton. In July 1809, they moved to a large cottage in the village of Chawton. This was the place where Austen felt most at home. Though she never married and she never had a room of her own, her social life was active and she had many suitors and romantic dreams.



The desk where Austen did most of her writing.

Austen was well-connected with the middling-rich landed gentry that she portrayed in her novels. In Chawton, she started to write her major works, among them *Sense and Sensibility*, the story of the impoverished Dashwood sisters, Marianne and Elinor, who try to find proper husbands to secure their social position. The novel was written in 1797, when Austen was 20, as the revision of a sketch called *Elinor and Marianne*. According to some sources, an earlier version of the work was written in the form of a novel in letters and read aloud to the family as early as 1795.

Austen's heroines are determined to marry wisely and well, and in all of Austen's novels her heroines are ultimately married. *Pride and Prejudice* describes the clash between Elizabeth Bennet, the daughter of a country gentleman, and Fitzwilliam Darcy, a rich aristocratic landowner. The book was first published in 1813, though Austen had completed the early version of the story in 1797 under the title *First Impressions*. The book went to three printings during Austen's lifetime. In 1998, a sequel to the novel, entitled *Desire and Duty*, was written by Teddy F. Bader.

Austen focuses on middle-class provincial life with humor and understanding. She depicts minor landed gentry, country clergymen and their families, in which marriage determined women's social status. Although Austen restricted the scope of her novels to matters of domestic life, her wit and observant narrative touch has been a delight to readers for nearly two hundred years. Of her six great novels, four were published anonymously during her lifetime. Austen had troubles with her publisher, Thomas Egerton, who wanted to make alterations to her love scenes in *Pride and Prejudice*. In 1811 she wrote to Egerton: "You say the book is indecent. You say I am immodest. But Sir in the depiction of love, modesty is the fullness of *truth*; and decency frankness; and so I must also be frank with you, and ask that you remove my name from the title page in all future printings; 'A lady' will do well enough."

Austen died on July 18, 1817 in Winchester, at the age of 41. At this time, she was writing the *Sanditon*. She managed to write twelve chapters before stopping in March 18, due to her poor health. Austen was buried in Winchester Cathedral, a building that she loved.

Who's Who

This article was researched and written by Janine Bannier, Education Intern.

THE BENNET FAMILY



The Bennet Family gazes at the crowd at a ball. Picture courtesy of the film version from 2005.

Mr. Bennet is the head of the Bennet family and surrounded by women. An intelligent man, he can be somewhat withdrawn from society. Mr. Bennet dislikes his wife and three youngest daughters, complaining that they are frivolous and conniving. He is closest to his older daughters, especially Elizabeth.

Mrs. Bennet is the wife of Mr. Bennet and mother of Elizabeth and her sisters. Her goal in the story is to find wealthy husbands for her five daughters. She is frivolous, impulsive and is susceptible to attacks of tremors and palpitations. Her public manners are embarrassing. She favors her youngest daughter, Lydia.

Jane Bennet is the eldest of the sisters. At twenty-two years old, she is considered the most beautiful young lady in the neighborhood. Her character is contrasted with Elizabeth's as a sweeter, shyer, sensible character, but not as clever. Jane never thinks badly of anyone. Of the five sisters, Jane is closest to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Bennet is the center of the story. She is the second of the five Bennet daughters. At twenty years old, she is intelligent, lively, attractive and witty. Throughout the play she judges upon first impressions, but by the end she realizes that she has been prejudiced.

Mary Bennet is the middle sister, aged eighteen. She is the plain girl of the five daughters, but she strives to be the most accomplished. She spends most of her time reading and studying.

Catherine (Kitty) Bennet is the fourth sister, aged seventeen. She is less willful and determined than Lydia, but equally silly.

Lydia Bennet is the youngest sister, aged fifteen. She is repeatedly described as frivolous and headstrong. Her main activity in life is socializing and flirting. She dominates her older sister Kitty and is supported in the family by her mother.

William Collins is a cousin of Mr. Bennet and the entitled heir of Longbourn. At twenty-five years old, the Bennet daughters think he is pompous and dull.

THE BINGLEY FAMILY

Charles Bingley is a good looking gentleman who just joined the town of Netherfield. He is handsome, good-natured and wealthy. He is easily influenced by others, especially Mr. Darcy, who convinces him to leave Netherfield.

Caroline Bingley is the unmarried sister of Charles Bingley who accompanies him to Netherfield. She is selfish and fixated on social class. Caroline believes that Jane is not good enough for Charles and that he should marry Mr. Darcy's sister.

Mr. Darcy stands in the foreground as Caroline and Mr. Bingley follow.
Picture courtesy of the film version from 2005.



OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy is the unmarried, wealthy owner of an estate in Pemberley. Darcy is handsome and intelligent. Pride and concern for social impropriety is what is important to him. He is a more reserved person and makes a poor impression on strangers but is valued by those who know him well.

Charlotte Lucas is clever and astute and is the daughter of the Bennets' neighbors, Sir William and Lady Lucas. She is a close friend of Elizabeth and views marriage as a business arrangement.

George Wickham is a militia regiment lieutenant touring Meryton. While he is charming and handsome, he is a liar and is in debt. His main desire is to marry for wealth and status.

Resources and Further Reading

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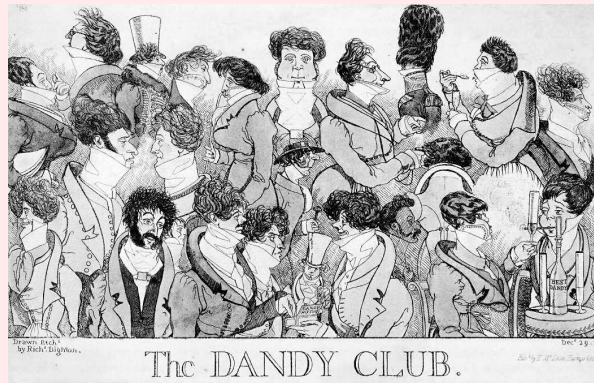
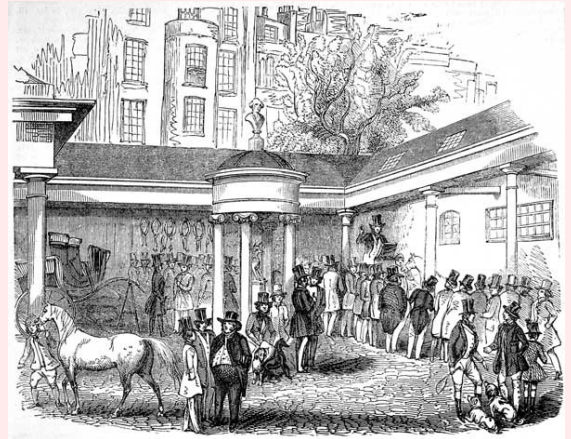
The Regency Time Period

This article was researched and written by Janine Bannier, Education Intern.

Sandwiched between the Georgian and Victorian time periods, the Regency Era was a short-lived time in which England flourished unlike any other. From the glittering streets of London lined with cobblestone and Palladian-style buildings to the magnificent country estates built to display a family's wealth and power, no one in England was spared an insatiable appetite for pleasure and indulgence.

The term Regency is a commentary on Britain's unstable rulers of the time. "Regency" means that the current ruler is incapable of performing his royal duties, and a "Regent" must be appointed to govern. In this case after the death of King George II in 1760, his grandson, known as Mad King George III, rose to power. In 1811, when it was clear that George III was incapable, his son and heir to the throne, Prince of Wales, was appointed Regent. Prince Regent was crowned George IV in 1820 and ruled until his death in 1830. It is under these two rulers that the Regency Era takes place.

An average Regency gentleman spent all of his time relieving boredom. He did not work, but rather made money by gambling on cards, horses or which raindrop would reach the bottom of a windowpane first. The



period is defined by its frivolous actions. Though England was at war, and Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor after the French Revolution, a gentleman and his lady were not at all concerned. They attended parties, balls, musical evenings, the theater, the opera, country house parties and spent endless hours in exclusive gentlemen's clubs with his high-born friends.

What was most important to a Regency woman was the marriage to a gentleman who would bring wealth and prestige to her family. In the Regency Era, women held all the power in

courtship. The mother would decide which men could call on her daughter; the daughter could request her mother to invite men to their home who she had met at dinners and dances. There were many reasons that a man and a woman might marry. Some married for love or physical attraction, others married for the convenience of having a spouse or financial reasons. Finding a husband who was involved in the military or public office such as Wickham or Darcy was particularly desirable because of the wealth and social status that was associated with such men.

In *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*, Mrs. Bennet desperately wants her daughters to be married. She doesn't care about the quality of the men's character that her daughters marry, but is satisfied just as long as they find a wealthy gentleman with a respectable status. She goes to great lengths to expose her daughters to as many gentlemen as possible through social functions, focusing all her energy (and her husband's money) into finding a suitor for each of her daughters.

During this era, the ballroom was the most common place for women to meet gentlemen and much of the courting process took place on the dance floor. Dances were a place to mingle with other dancers, and for the most part, all the dancers were young and unmarried. A girl who was not "out" (meaning eligible for marriage) could not attend a dance until she had been presented to society. Married women could dance, but usually did so with their husbands, or to make up numbers when there were not enough on the floor. Dancers stood in two lines, called a set, with partners facing each other. Each couple progressed down the set, creating and recreating symmetrical patterns. These patterns, or figures, were made up of movements such as casting off, gating (revolving around a neighbor and coming together in the center to touch hands like the two halves of a gate), figure eights and stars (four



dancers forming a small circle and extending one arm into the center). Dancing offered a man and a woman the opportunity not only to touch each other, in which was otherwise not permitted, but also to communicate in other ways. The speaking glance, degree of proximity to one another, and pressure of hand upon hand could convey a preference for a certain dancer with a subtlety that everyone could understand.

The suitor would come to the home of the woman who had invited him if he sought that woman to be his wife. He brought gifts, sat and listened to her play piano or sing-- all under the watchful eye her parents, especially her mother. After some time, the man would ask her father if he could marry her, and if agreed they would walk down the aisle together. Though choosing a husband for one's daughter was not an easy task, weddings were mostly small and private affairs. Even fashionable weddings at the popular church for that day were sparingly attended. Regency gentlemen married on a whim and rarely stayed interested in their wives for very long.

Though Queen Victoria is often credited with the rise of fashion in white dresses, Regency women started the trend of the white wedding dress. As weddings were small and private, the dress was made was beautiful, but not expensive or elaborate. These dresses were made of white muslin, a cheap and widely available fabric at the time. Since then, the white wedding dress has become the traditional wedding attire across the western world, becoming a symbol of purity and beauty.



ACTIVITY: Compare and contrast dating then and dating now in a small group. How have things changed over the decades? Do you think that there are any benefits from using ideas from the past? From the information that is here do you think it is harder or easier to date now? Why do you think so?

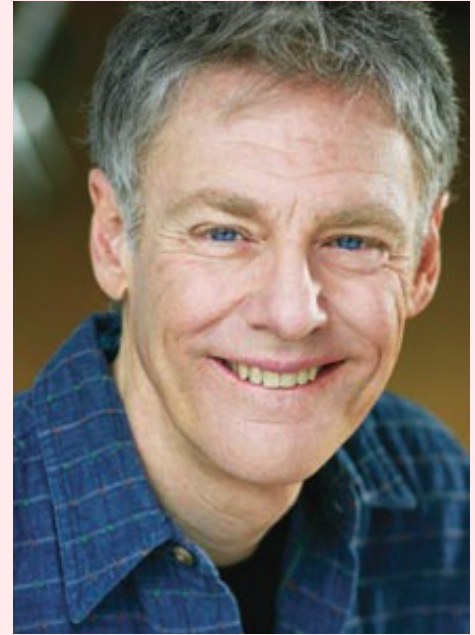
DISCUSSION: In the Regency Era, it was okay to marry just for money and social status and not for love. Do you think that people today still marry for wealth? Or do you think that it is not an issue anymore? Why do you think so? Discuss these questions with your class.

An Interview with Joseph Hanreddy, Artistic Director

You worked with J.R. Sullivan to adapt Jane Austen's 400-page novel into a play. What is the process like of turning a novel into a play? Was it hard to pick and choose what you wanted to incorporate?

The first thing we did was to outline the essential story points of the novel and discuss how we could streamline the plot and still do justice to the misunderstandings, story complications and class obstacles that fuel the love/hate relationship of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Jim and I then divided up sections that we would take the first pass at dramatizing. Since Jim is directing the play, he took the initiative on the parties and balls so that he could write them with the staging in mind. In that initial phase, I concentrated more on the overall arc and the family scenes. After that we continued to trade scenes back and forth and at the end of the day not much in the play is the singular work of either of us.

We were committed to be faithful to the spirit of what Jane Austen wrote, while also creating a dramatic entertainment that would be funny, compelling and moving. We tried to preserve a considerable amount of Austen's language, while taking the liberty to compress some very eloquent, but very long sentences with many ideas packaged in a great many parenthetical thoughts divided by numerous semi-colons, dashes and commas. Many of these paragraph long sentences were delicious on the page, but would lose energy and comic bite on the stage. Compressing the story to play length also required that we write a great deal from scratch. I read several of Jane Austen's other novels before I started on the project so that her language was in my ear. During the writing process my routine would be to "warm up" for an hour or so by just reading something from one of her books. I also played a variety of music from the period while writing to create a proper mood.

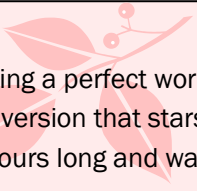


How long has the process taken?

About eight months. We started working on it this summer. Neither of us was able to work on it full-time, but would e-mail each other our work in progress regularly. When we were both free we would be on the phone or email several times during the day. Jim came to Milwaukee for a few days in the Fall and was also here for a few weeks directing GREATER TUNA, so we did get some time together to talk through where we were and where we needed to go.

Pride & Prejudice has been adapted many times by not only other theaters, but by Hollywood as well. What will make The Rep's production stand out from other adaptations?

The other stage adaptations all use narration directly spoken to the audience and the many letters in the book spoken verbatim in a spotlight. We felt the piece would be much more exciting if we could tell the entire story by creating scenes between actors. It was a very hard task and limited the amount of scenes that we could just lift directly from the book. I wanted to approach the project by imagining that Jane Austen had intended the story to be a play from the very beginning rather than a novel. I pretended that the novel was just a long notebook of very detailed notes for a play that she hadn't gotten around to writing. It made me feel more like her partner than someone



spoiling a perfect work of art. The film versions of course are much more about the visuals than the language. The BBC version that stars Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle is very faithful and very good, but it also has the luxury of being six hours long and was intended to be seen in six viewings.

Was it difficult to adapt the novel since it takes place over such a long time period as well as it being in so many places in England?

The story takes place over one complete year beginning and ending in the fall and cycling through all of the seasons. The seasonal passing is tied to the tones and emotions of the story and Jim and the designers have worked hard to foreground this in the costuming and lighting design. As for places, our set designer, Michal Ganio, has created a magnificently picturesque set that has the versatility to be anywhere the story requires with a simple shift of lighting and rearrangement or absence of furniture. We favored quickness, momentum and theatrically inventive solutions over literal representations of the locations. Theater can't compete with a movie shot on location. I believe that great stage actors can invite an audience into the story and be more compelling, funny and exciting than a movie can and that's where the focus should rightly go.

The story is set during the Regency Era, which is very different from today. What connections are there between society then and society now? What can the audience take away that is relevant to them?

Jane Austen's brilliance is that her insight into the chemistry that makes connections between men and women enduring or passing and the way that we can be our own worst enemies as we try to attain happiness in love is universal. In *PRIDE*, a part of the story that I connect to is that first impressions can create a very strong emotion and sometimes all we know is that it is strong. We don't really understand if it's good strong, or bad strong. Our longing for connection is so overpowering that we lose objectivity when we allow ourselves to feel deeply. The sense of decorum, rules of etiquette and obsession with class distinctions have changed from Austen's time to our own, but part of the joy of reading her books is that over and over you can completely identify with the characters, the emotions they're feeling and her uproariously comic view of common human failings.

You have adapted other shows including, *The Rep's A CHRISTMAS CAROL*. Does the process of adapting a show change? Or do you follow the same regimen?

Each piece is completely different and I try to avoid any "formula". *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* and *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* have some similarity in that they are iconic classics that many of the audience have read and love. Fans of the author want to see a version that has the excitement of theater, but is close to the spirit of the book and not a radical departure. Wilkie Collins' *ARMADALE*, which Jeff Hatcher wrote but I directed last spring was completely different. The vast majority of the audience hadn't even heard of that more obscure novel which is almost three times the length of *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*. Jeff and I were more intrigued to create something that contained a taste of the sensational excess of the popular crime fiction the Victorian Era. The essence of the plot and characters were there, but Jeff used a lot more invention. Sometimes lesser works of fiction can make for brilliant pieces of theater because you can be free to be irreverent and a bit crazy with them. Masterpieces like *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* require considerably more love, respect and care.

ACTIVITY: What other novels or plays have been adapted for the stage or for film? Do some research with a small group and see what other adaptations are out there. Have these novels and plays been adapted several times? Share your findings with your classmates.



The Novel vs. The Script

The process of turning a novel into a script can be quite challenging. Often times the novel is much longer than what's desired for the stage and needs to be condensed down. Also, narration needs to be turned into action or dialogue. In order to get a better idea of how a novel is turned into a script, below is an excerpt from *Pride & Prejudice* as well as the script version of the same scene.

THE NOVEL

Mrs. Bennet was prevented replying by the entrance of the footman with a note for Miss Bennet; it came from Netherfield, and the servant waited for an answer. Mrs. Bennet's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and she was eagerly calling out, while her daughter read –

"Well, Jane, who is it from? what is it about? what does he say? Well, Jane, make haste and tell us; make haste, my love."

"It is from Miss Bingley," said Jane, and then read it aloud.

"My dear Friend, – If you are not so compassionate as to dine to-day with Louisa and me, we shall be in danger of hating each other for the rest of our lives, for a whole day's tête-à-tête between two women can never end without a quarrel. Come as soon as you can on the receipt of this. My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers.
– Yours ever, "CAROLINE BINGLEY."

"With the officers!" cried Lydia. "I wonder my aunt did not tell us of that."

"Dining out," said Mrs. Bennet; "that is very unlucky."

"Can I have the carriage?" said Jane.

"No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night."

"That would be a good scheme," said Elizabeth, "if you were sure that they would not offer to send her home."

"Oh! but the gentlemen will have Mr. Bingley's chaise to go to Meryton; and the Hursts have no horses to theirs."

"I had much rather go in the coach."

"But, my dear, your father cannot spare the horses, I am sure. They are wanted in the farm, Mr. Bennett, are not they?"

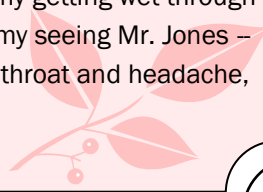
"They are wanted in the farm much oftener than I can get them."

"But if you have got them to-day," said Elizabeth, "my mother's purpose will be answered."

She did at last extort from her father an acknowledgment that the horses were engaged: Jane was therefore obliged to go on horseback, and her mother attended her to the door with many cheerful prognostics of a bad day. Her hopes were answered: Jane had not been gone long before it rained hard. Her sisters were uneasy for her, but her mother was delighted. The rain continued the whole evening without intermission: Jane certainly could not come back.

"This was a lucky idea of mine, indeed!" said Mrs. Bennet more than once, as if the credit of making it rain were all her own. Till the next morning, however, she was not aware of all the felicity of her contrivance. Breakfast was scarcely over when a servant from Netherfield brought the following note for Elizabeth –

"My dearest Lizzy, – I find myself very unwell this morning, which, I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet through yesterday. My kind friends will not hear of my returning home till I am better. They insist also on my seeing Mr. Jones – therefore do not be alarmed if you should hear of his having been to me – and, excepting a sore throat and headache, there is not much the matter with me. – Yours, etc."



THE SCRIPT

LYDIA: A letter! From Netherfield! For Jane!

The letter passes from sister to sister and eventually lands with Jane.

MRS. BENNET: Is it from Mr. Bingley?

KITTY: Or Mr. Darcy?

MRS. BENNET: (*Dismissively*) Oh!

JANE: It is from Miss Bingley.

MRS. BENNET: Miss Bingley? I take that to be a very good sign. Make haste, Jane, and tell us what Miss Bingley has to say.

JANE: (*Reading*) "My dear Miss Bennet. If you are not so compassionate as to dine with me today, I face the appalling prospect of being left to my own company. My brother Charles and Mr. Darcy are to be with the officers in the town. Come as soon as you can –

MRS. BENNET: (*Having taken the letter from JANE*) - upon receipt of this. Yours ever, Caroline Bingley." Mr. Bingley not there, that is very unlucky, but still, you must go, Jane, and make what you can of it.

JANE: May I have the carriage, Papa?

MR. BENNET: Of course, child.

Sound of distant thunder.

MRS. BENNET: The carriage! No, my dear, you had much better go on horseback. It is very likely to rain and if it does you will of course be required to spend the night.

JANE: Mother!

MRS. BENNET: Go all the way to Netherfield and not see Mr. Bingley? I won't hear of it. Now, Jane, dress but lightly and I'll pray for a good storm.

Thunder and a bit of lightning and the sound of rain as JANE is isolated in a light. A liveried servant from Netherfield brings a blanket to JANE and other servants effect the change to Netherfield. A chaise/settee is brought on upstage as the first element of the interior.

JANE speaks with the discomfort brought upon her by a cold. ELIZABETH is seen in a downstage light, reading JANE'S letter.

JANE: My dearest Lizzy – I find that I am quite unwell this morning, which, I suppose, can be attributed to my wet travel yesterday. Mr. Bingley has returned and he and his kind sister will not hear of my returning home until I am recovered.

CAROLINE and the servant help JANE to the upstage chaise. BINGLEY looks on from a short distance. The blanket is comfortably arranged over her.

ACTIVITY: Compare and contrast the scene from the novel and the scene from the script with your classmates. How are they different? How are they similar? Do they convey the same ideas, despite their differences? Do you think that one scene is more effective than the other? Why?

ACTIVITY: In small groups, take a scene from a book and adapt it into a script. Was it difficult to do? What problems did you run into? After rehearsing several times, read the scene from the book for your class and then perform your scene in script form. Have your classmates compare and contrast the two. Which did they think was more effective? What else could have been done to convey the meaning of the scene?



THE MILWAUKEE REPERTORY
THEATER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT

Jenny Kostreva, Education Director
414-290-5370
jkostreva@milwaukeeerep.com

Rebecca Witt, Education Coordinator
414-290-5393
rwitt@milwaukeeerep.com

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“THE THEATRE IS SO ENDLESSLY
FASCINATING BECAUSE IT'S SO ACCIDENTAL.
IT'S SO MUCH LIKE LIFE.”
Arthur Miller

Our lives are greatly enhanced with theater.
Studying and viewing it teaches us about
other cultures and times, collaboration,
work ethic, and imagination. We become
more aware of the world around us with
these concepts, and in addition to this,
more alert to and responsive of human
nature. With this improved understanding
of what theater can provide for us we are
able to gain a better appreciation not
only for theater, but for life as well.

Visiting The Rep

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater is housed in the Milwaukee Center at the corner of Wells and Water Streets, downtown. Our building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company. This name is still carved on the wall outside.

You'll enter on the Wells Street side into a large, open space. Our box office will be visible on your left as you come through the front doors. The large space is the main hub for the businesses that share this building: a bank, an office tower, the Pabst Theater, and the Intercontinental Hotel. There will be a stair case on your left. You will take this staircase to the Powerhouse Theater lobby.

Inside the lobby are restrooms, water fountains, and a coat check. If you decide to bring a snack, please know that food and drink are NOT permitted in the theater. However, you can leave things (at your own risk) in the coat check room, and enjoy them outside the theater during intermission. Most plays have one intermission that is about 20 minutes long. You might also want to look for signs in the lobby which give the full “running time” of the play.

**For more information on our education programs and our productions,
please visit our website at www.milwaukeeerep.com**