PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

A novel about marriage, manners, money and morals

Money and Status

By Jackie Laba, AP ListServ
INCOME PER ANNUM?

- **21st Century:**
  - A rude question
  - Usually salary
  - Implies buying power
  - The higher a salary, the higher the status of the occupation

- **Austen’s Regency Period:**
  - A necessary question
  - Inherited, not earned wealth
  - Rank
  - Social aspirations
  - Buying power
  - Gentility (no need to work)
Man:
- His worth was expressed in the amount of interest his actual wealth made per year at 4-5%.

- Bingley’s £4,500 per annum is the interest on £100,000 (too bad it comes from “trade”).

Woman:
- Her amount is equal to her actual total worth.

- Women like Elizabeth will receive their inherited money when they marry.
WHAT MONEY BUYS IN P& P

Gentility’s necessities

Servants
Carriages
Houses
SERVANTS

- Servants = “modern conveniences” like hot water, washing machines, etc. Add a servant, add a convenience.

- The higher your income, the more servants you can afford.

- Hence, Mrs. Bennet’s insulted response when Collins asks her which daughter cooked the dinner.
TRANSPORTATION

- The higher your income, the better your mode of transportation.
- The higher your income, the more carriages you could afford.
- When Lady Catherine asks Elizabeth what carriage her father keeps, she’s asking, “What model car do you drive?
- Darcy doesn’t speak to Mrs. Long at the Meryton ball because she comes in a hired carriage.
Houses were valuable inheritances — the Bennet house, Longbourn, will go to Mr. Collins because of an entailment.

- Estates like Pemberly, Netherfield, and Rosings required large staffs (Think of Downton Abbey!)

- One house is nice, but two are better; the truly well-to-do can afford a 2nd home in London. However, the Gardeners live in Cheapside, an unfashionable part of London.
BARELY GENTEEL

- £100 per annum
- One servant of “all works”
- Poverty level
- Elizabeth’s £1,000 per annum would yield only £40-50 per annum

£ 200 per annum

Maid of all work — a better class of servant

Still relatively impoverished

£ 400-500 per annum:

One cook, two servants; still no carriage — but an almost comfortable income

£ 700-1,000 per annum is the income of the most prosperous professional classes.

£ 2,000 per annum (Mr. Bennet’s income):

One cook, several housemaids, male servants, gardener, groom, coachman, but tough for a family of seven.
£4,000 and above: A house in London “for the season,” numerous servants and vehicles; Darcy has £10,000 per annum and 26 servants.
A FINAL THOUGHT:

“Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor—which is one very strong argument in favour of matrimony.”

~ Jane Austen 1816