

Pride and Prejudice Essay: The Function Of Dance

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The Function Of Dance in Pride And Prejudice

In Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, set in the Regency Period, dance performs several important functions. Dance patterns emulate courtship rituals, marking dance as a microcosm for courtship and marriage - two main themes of the novel. The Regency period propagated the belief that no ingredient was more essential to a courtship than [dancing](#): "To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love..." (Austen 7). Therefore, knowledge of dance - dance steps as well as dance etiquette - was a crucial necessity and was often acquired through study and awareness of conduct codes. These crucial codes were disseminated through popular courtesy/conduct books, which informed readers of correct dance steps, movements, and patterns, as well as socially acceptable etiquette.

Regency conduct codes also influenced interpretations of individual character, as social behavior was often considered the physical embodiment of character; thus, Austen's characters typically reveal their inner selves through their manners. And, in the manner of courtesy writers who were "concerned with behavior, not only to others but as it concerns oneself" (Fritzer 4), Austen was concerned with the behavior patterns exhibited by her

characters, especially upon the dance [floor](#). In this era particularly, a person's individual worth was manifested itself through performance on the dance floor:

As the courtesy books hint, dancing is a clue to character, negative as well

as positive. Austen shows that a lack of [moderation](#) combined with too

great a love of pleasure reflects questionable character. Other negative

indications include poor dancing, des...

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