



Intensive  *Chapters*


READ ACTIVELY

PRIDE AND
PREJUDICE

A Guide to Reading
Through the Lens of Theory of Mind

*Look at this classic novel not just as a romance,
but as a brilliant training ground for
developing the habits of applying
Theory of Mind in your
everyday life.*





Before you open “Pride and Prejudice”:



The "Reading Guide" isn't a summary. It's not something you can use without having the novel itself, so start by buying or borrowing a copy - either a physical book or an e-book.



You don't need to pore over every single word of this Guide right away. However, it's worth skimming through to get a feel for what's coming.



This Guide is quite meaty and layered. If this is your first go at active reading, you might feel a bit swamped. Don't try to do, mark, and note everything at once. A good strategy is to pick one or two areas and focus on those. With every new title you read this way, you'll find you can handle more without feeling overwhelmed.



Keep in mind that active reading means slow reading. You'll need to set aside much more time for this book. Treat it like a course - complete with tasks, "homework," and plenty of interesting activities centred around the text.



Get your kit ready. You'll need some essentials: colourful markers, a notebook, sticky notes (the ones you can write on), small page markers, and coloured pens. This PDF is designed to work as a notebook, but if you fancy taking more extensive notes or want a "rough work" space, you'll definitely need some extra paper.



The Guide is designed with a physical book in mind, but you can easily do the same thing digitally by highlighting and taking notes in an e-book.

We aren't just going to read
"Pride and Prejudice" actively - we're
going to do it through the lens of
Theory of Mind.



ACTIVE READING

Reading that goes far beyond the plot.
We don't just ask "What happened?" or even "Why did it happen?".
We ask "Why was it written this way?" and "How do I feel while
reading this?". It's about engaging your empathy, critical thinking,
and analysing the language and the author's craft.



THEORY OF MIND

Theory of Mind, ToM

The psychological ability to understand that other people have
their own beliefs, desires, knowledge, and intentions that might be
completely different from our own.

In "Pride and Prejudice", Austen constantly tests our ToM skills.
She forces us to wonder what Darcy is really thinking and feeling
when, for instance, he stays silent - while she only feeds us
Elizabeth's conclusion that his silence is pure arrogance...
But is it really?

If Theory of Mind is a new concept for you,
make sure to check out this short post
covering the basics in a simple,
accessible way.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE & THEORY OF MIND:

[https://intensivechapters.com/
pride-and-preju-and-theory-of-mind/](https://intensivechapters.com/pride-and-preju-and-theory-of-mind/)

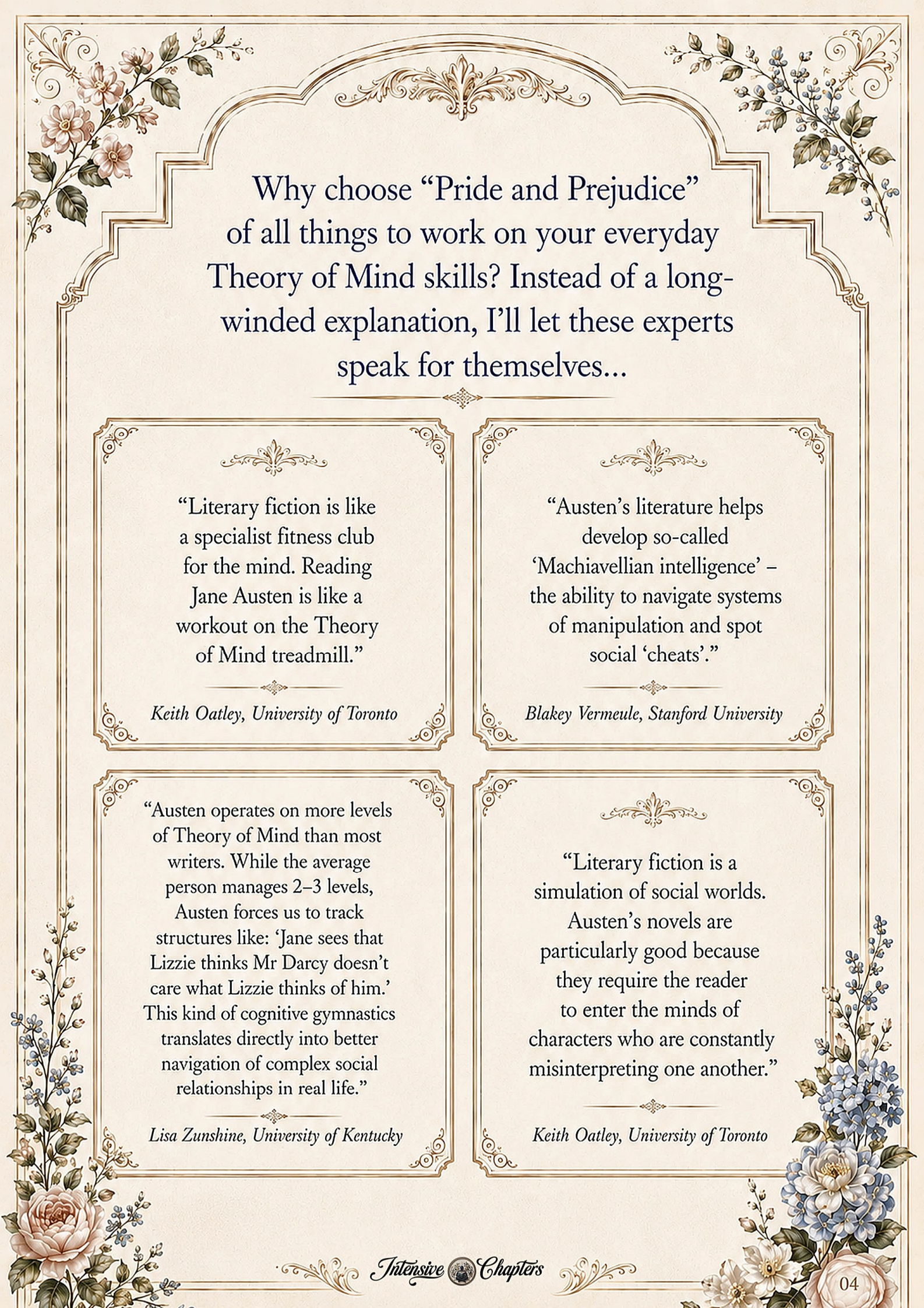


If you're interested in management and
leadership psychology, there's also an in-depth
post on how leaders at every level can use
Theory of Mind. It specifically looks at diverse
and inclusive teams, as well as the challenges
faced by female leaders in male-dominated
environments.

THEORY OF MIND FOR LEADERS:

[https://intensivechapters.com/
theory-of-mind-a-team-leaders-perspective/](https://intensivechapters.com/theory-of-mind-a-team-leaders-perspective/)





Why choose “Pride and Prejudice”
of all things to work on your everyday
Theory of Mind skills? Instead of a long-
winded explanation, I’ll let these experts
speak for themselves...

“Literary fiction is like
a specialist fitness club
for the mind. Reading
Jane Austen is like a
workout on the Theory
of Mind treadmill.”

Keith Oatley, University of Toronto

“Austen’s literature helps
develop so-called
‘Machiavellian intelligence’ –
the ability to navigate systems
of manipulation and spot
social ‘cheats’.”

Blakey Vermeule, Stanford University

“Austen operates on more levels
of Theory of Mind than most
writers. While the average
person manages 2–3 levels,
Austen forces us to track
structures like: ‘Jane sees that
Lizzie thinks Mr Darcy doesn’t
care what Lizzie thinks of him.’
This kind of cognitive gymnastics
translates directly into better
navigation of complex social
relationships in real life.”

Lisa Zunshine, University of Kentucky

“Literary fiction is a
simulation of social worlds.
Austen’s novels are
particularly good because
they require the reader
to enter the minds of
characters who are constantly
misinterpreting one another.”

Keith Oatley, University of Toronto

When reading actively, you'll often feel the urge to highlight and jot down quotes that catch your eye. That's a brilliant idea.

How to do it?



Pick a specific colour of small sticky tabs for your chosen quotes - let's say green. Keep them handy while you read and pop one in right next to any intriguing quote. This won't slow down your reading pace.

Once you finish a chapter, look back at the quotes from that section and decide if they're actually worth writing down.

Remember, when noting them, it's worth adding who said it, in what context, and when.

And don't hold back on adding your own comments and opinions! A quote should be something that moves you, so record your emotions, too. Even writing something like "That's so clever!" or "How can she be so naive?" counts for something.



ADVANCED QUOTE-NOTING: PRO TIPS

1. A quote isn't always just a single sentence. Sometimes you'll want to jot down half a dialogue, and that's perfectly fine.
2. Look for "mirror quotes." These are remarks from two or more characters about the same person or situation. Note them down together, and suddenly, you'll find you don't just have a flat statement - you have a multi-dimensional portrait.



QUOTES TO REMEMBER

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KEY THEMES TO TRACK THROUGHOUT THE NOVEL

When reading actively, we usually focus on specific themes that crop up throughout the text. In our case, we'll be looking at a few key points linked to Theory of Mind.



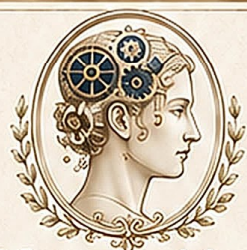
Attribution Errors

This is when a character assigns false intentions to someone, often based on their personality while completely ignoring the circumstances. This can go two ways: assuming the worst (“He’s not shy, he’s just arrogant”) or assuming the best (“I’m sure it’s just friendly criticism, he couldn’t possibly mean to be so unkind”). The latter is known as the Halo Effect.



Dramatic Irony

Those moments where we (the readers) know more than the characters do. We watch them do things that are cringeworthy, odd, or just plain wrong, fully aware of the facts they’re missing. In these situations, the trick is to “hold” both versions of reality in your head at once, remembering that the character doesn’t know what we know.



Metacognition

Behind this fancy name lies “thinking about thinking.” These are the moments in the novel where a character starts to question their own thought patterns, wondering where a certain interpretation came from or what the roots of their beliefs are. This is “next-level” Theory of Mind, and “Pride and Prejudice” is packed with these moments, perfectly illustrating ToM in action.



Cognitive Dissonance

Those moments of clear discomfort when a character is hit with information that completely shatters their existing opinions or beliefs.

HOW TO SPOT THE KEY THEMES WHILE READING



Assign a colour to each key theme using a small sticky tab, page marker, or highlighter.



Create a “cheat sheet” bookmark. Use a slip of paper to list the themes and their assigned colours. This way, you don’t have to memorise the definitions. Keep this bookmark handy, and whenever you hit a passage that fits a theme, just pop a coloured tab on the edge of the page.



If a passage sparks a strong reaction, stick a large post-it note directly on the page and jot down your thoughts. It can be just a few keywords or a string of exclamation marks - whatever marks the moment as moving or important to you.




Review your markers after each chapter. Decide if every single one is actually essential (we all have a tendency to over-mark!). If you like, make some notes then - or wait until you’ve finished two or three chapters to get a broader view. Don’t just copy out snippets, write down your observations. Argue with the characters, agree with them, or note down what you’d have done differently.




Feel free to make your own bookmark with the key themes, but we’ve already prepared a ready-to-print version for you below.


BOOKMARK TO CUT OUT




Attribution Errors –
‘I think he is...
I think she’s
convinced that...’
(but I’m wrong).




Dramatic Irony –
‘I know something
the characters
don’t!’




Metacognition –
‘She’s reflecting on
what she thinks
and why she thinks it.’




Cognitive Dissonance –
‘And there go their
beliefs... shattered
to pieces!’




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‘I think he is...
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Metacognition –
‘She’s reflecting on
what she thinks
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Cognitive Dissonance –
‘And there go their
beliefs... shattered
to pieces!’

If this is your first time trying active reading, you might find that tracking every key theme for every single character and situation is a bit too much. Instead of enjoying the thrill of being a detective successfully sleuthing out everyone's intentions, you might feel like a police officer with eight different leads and absolutely no idea how to juggle them all.

My suggestion? Don't give up on tracking the themes, but perhaps just focus on one or two specific characters.

You could go for the obvious pair:
Elizabeth and Mr Darcy.



You could pick one of the younger Bennet sisters.



Or, for a bit of fun, focus on the older Bennets. Mr and Mrs Bennet's marriage is a goldmine of overthinking, misread intentions, and exasperated sighs.



TIPS FOR YOUR FINAL NOTES ON KEY THEMES

By now, you've realised that Jane Austen's novel is a non-stop "mind gym." Many situations are linked, conversations shift mindsets, and the characters themselves spend a lot of time reflecting on how they perceive others' words and actions. Your notes should reflect that. If you split them strictly into four separate categories for the key themes, you might find yourself writing about the same person or event over and over again.

My suggestion? Map out the plot. Create a visual summary. This will really help you read the novel through the lens of Theory of Mind, because it lets you see not just what the characters are thinking, but how their thought processes collide and where the "short circuits" happen.

On the next page there is a sketch of how you might map out the beginning of the novel. Treat it as a starting point – your own version can be as detailed as you like.



CHAPTER 1+2

MR BENNET



MRS BENNET

1. SHE INFORMS HER HUSBAND OF MR BINGLEY'S ARRIVAL

PRESSURE! –
“Go, introduce yourself,
we have daughters
to marry off!”

ATTRIBUTION ERROR

She views Mr Bingley solely through the lens of his fortune and status, completely ignoring his personality.

DRAMATIC IRONY

We know Mr Bennet decided to visit Mr Bingley ages ago, while the ladies are in absolute agony.

HE'S HAVING A BLOODY GOOD TIME WHILE HIS WIFE LAMENTS!!!

2. MR BENNET'S IRONY AND RESISTANCE

Favouring Elizabeth

LOW TOM

She fails to see her husband's perspective; she interprets his irony as a lack of concern for the family's welfare, rather than him poking fun at her expense.

METACOGNITION

He has high self-awareness of his own thought processes - and his wife's too. He deliberately drip-feeds information to trigger her reactions for his own amusement.

3. HE ADMITS HE HAS VISITED MR BINGLEY

THE “SILLY WOMAN” STEREOTYPE OF THE ERA?

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

A sudden shift from frustration and scolding her husband to pure euphoria; she resolves the dissonance by changing her narrative - from nagging to parraing him instantly.

A LANGUAGE TASK FOR THE CURIOUS

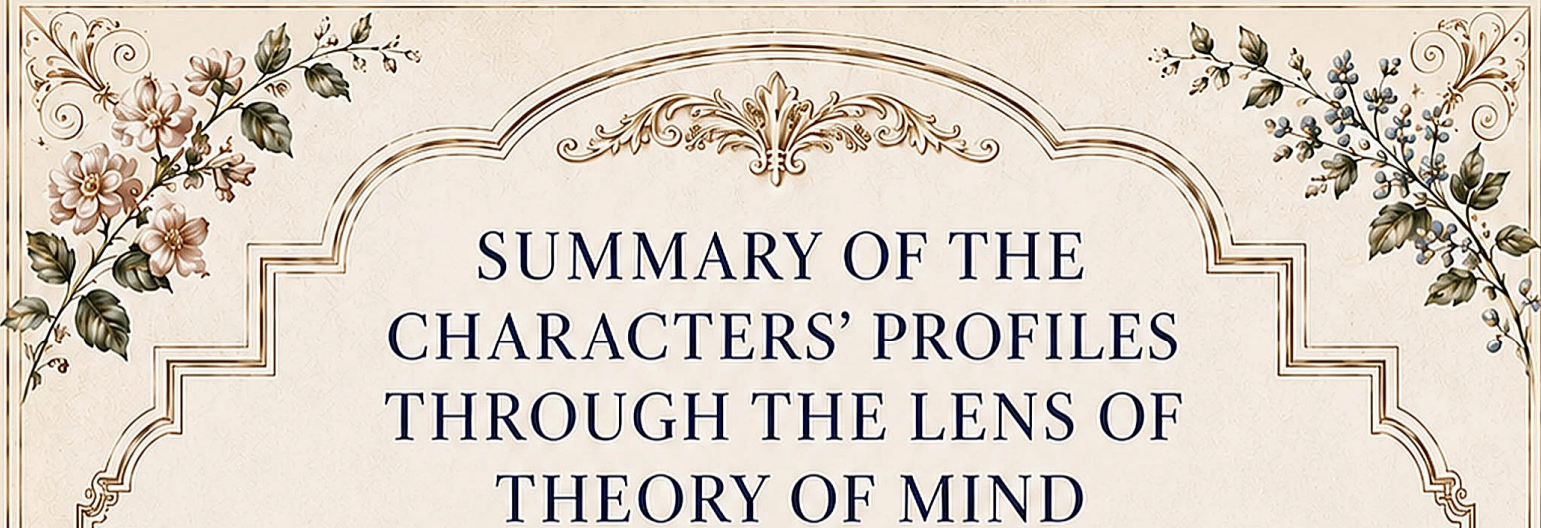
This isn't a suggestion for the entire novel - I don't think anyone could stomach that! - but it's a great spot of fun for two or three chapters.



Jane Austen intentionally uses specific verbs related to thinking: “assume”, “think”, “believe”, “imagine”. These often serve as a prelude to a character’s statement and, more often than not, they’re a... warning sign of an attribution error the character is about to make. It’s as if Austen is giving us, the readers, a cheeky wink.

Below is a space to list these “warning verbs”. Choose two or three chapters (I suggest those with plenty of Elizabeth) and mark every time one of these verbs appears. If it really was an introduction to an attribution error - meaning a misinterpretation of someone else’s motives - put a star next to it. See for yourself how often Austen “winks” at us, warning that her characters aren’t exactly masters of Theory of Mind.

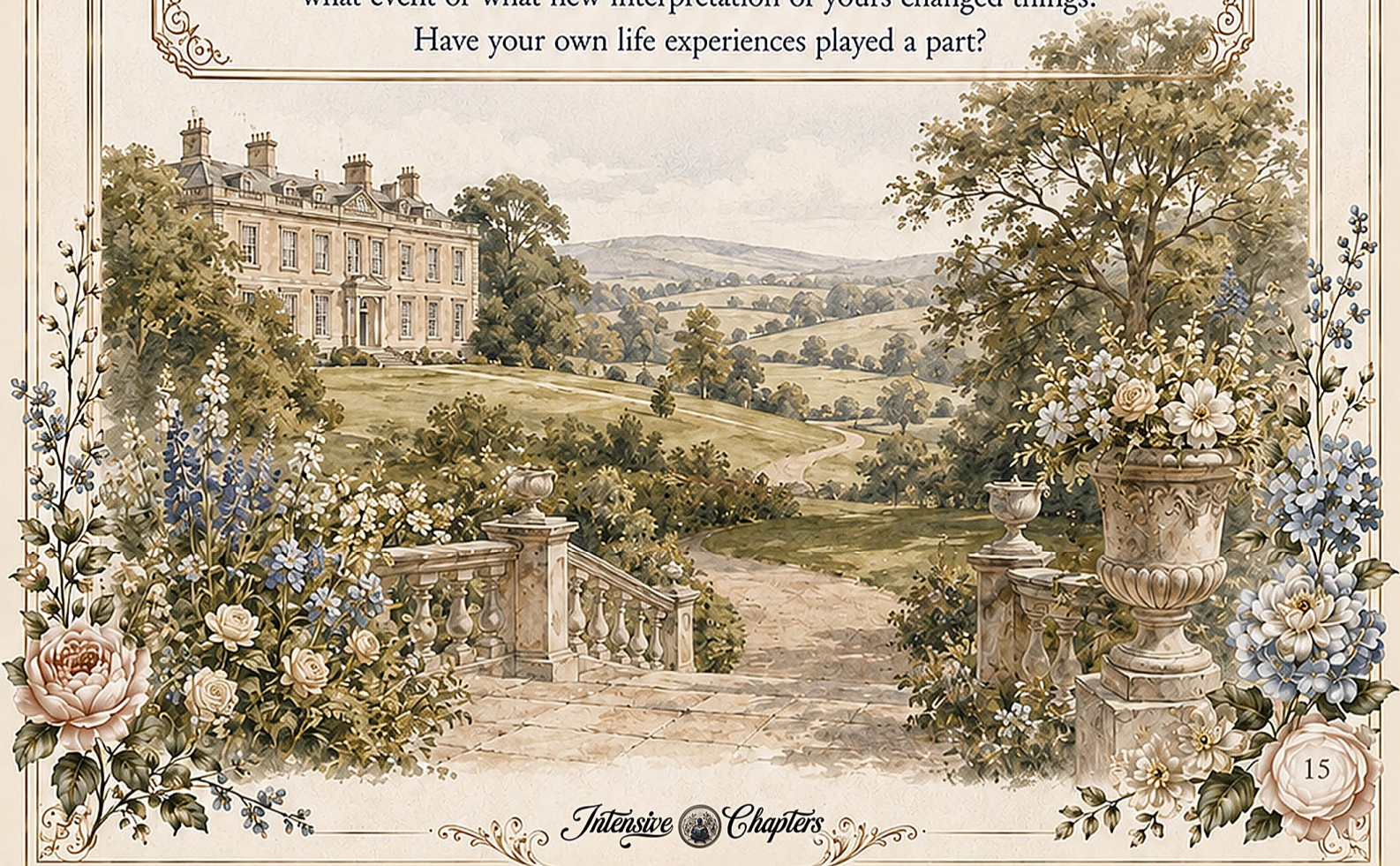
I assume that...	
I think that...	
I believe that...	
I imagine that...	
I suspect that...	
I know that...	



SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERS' PROFILES THROUGH THE LENS OF THEORY OF MIND

Once you've finished the novel, it's time to review your notes and wrap things up. Below is a space for a short summary of each character's profile through the lens of Theory of Mind. Note down what struck you most, what surprised you, or what disappointed you about them. Pay attention to how they perceive the world, how they interpret others' behaviour, and how they judge.

If you return to "Pride and Prejudice" regularly, keep these notes. After your next read-through, come back to them and see if your assessment of any character has shifted. If it has, think about why - what event or what new interpretation of yours changed things? Have your own life experiences played a part?



SUMMARY OF THE
CHARACTERS' PROFILES
THROUGH THE LENS OF
THEORY OF MIND



ELIZABETH BENNET

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FITZWILLIAM DARCY

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SUMMARY OF THE
CHARACTERS' PROFILES
THROUGH THE LENS OF
THEORY OF MIND



MR BENNET

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MRS BENNET

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SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTERS' PROFILES THROUGH THE LENS OF THEORY OF MIND

JANE BENNET



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MARY BENNET



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CATHERINE „KITTY“ BENNET



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LYDIA BENNET



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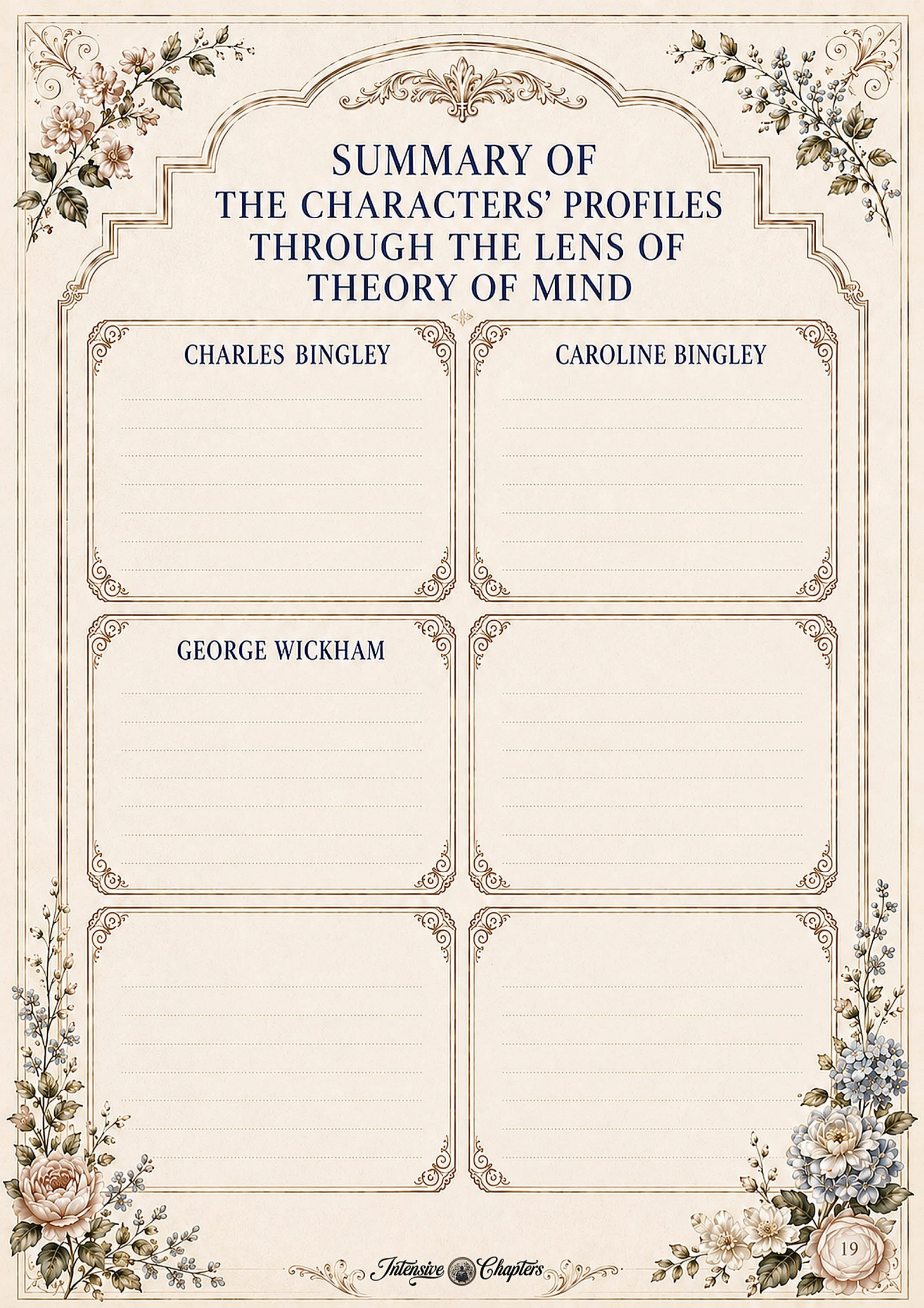
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SUMMARY OF
THE CHARACTERS' PROFILES
THROUGH THE LENS OF
THEORY OF MIND

CHARLES BINGLEY

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CAROLINE BINGLEY

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GEORGE WICKHAM

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READ THIS ONLY AFTER FINISHING THE NOVEL.

What lessons can we take from reading
“Pride and Prejudice” through the lens of
Theory of Mind that might actually help
in everyday life?

1

Firstly – practise “cognitive humility.”

Our interpretation of someone else’s behaviour is just a hypothesis, not a fact. Always ask yourself: “What if this person has information or motivations that I’m completely unaware of?”

2

Secondly – separate behaviour from intention.

Someone might seem arrogant (like Darcy at Meryton) not because they look down on you, but because they feel insecure or overwhelmed. Look for the “hidden layer.” It’s usually far less negative than your first guess.

3

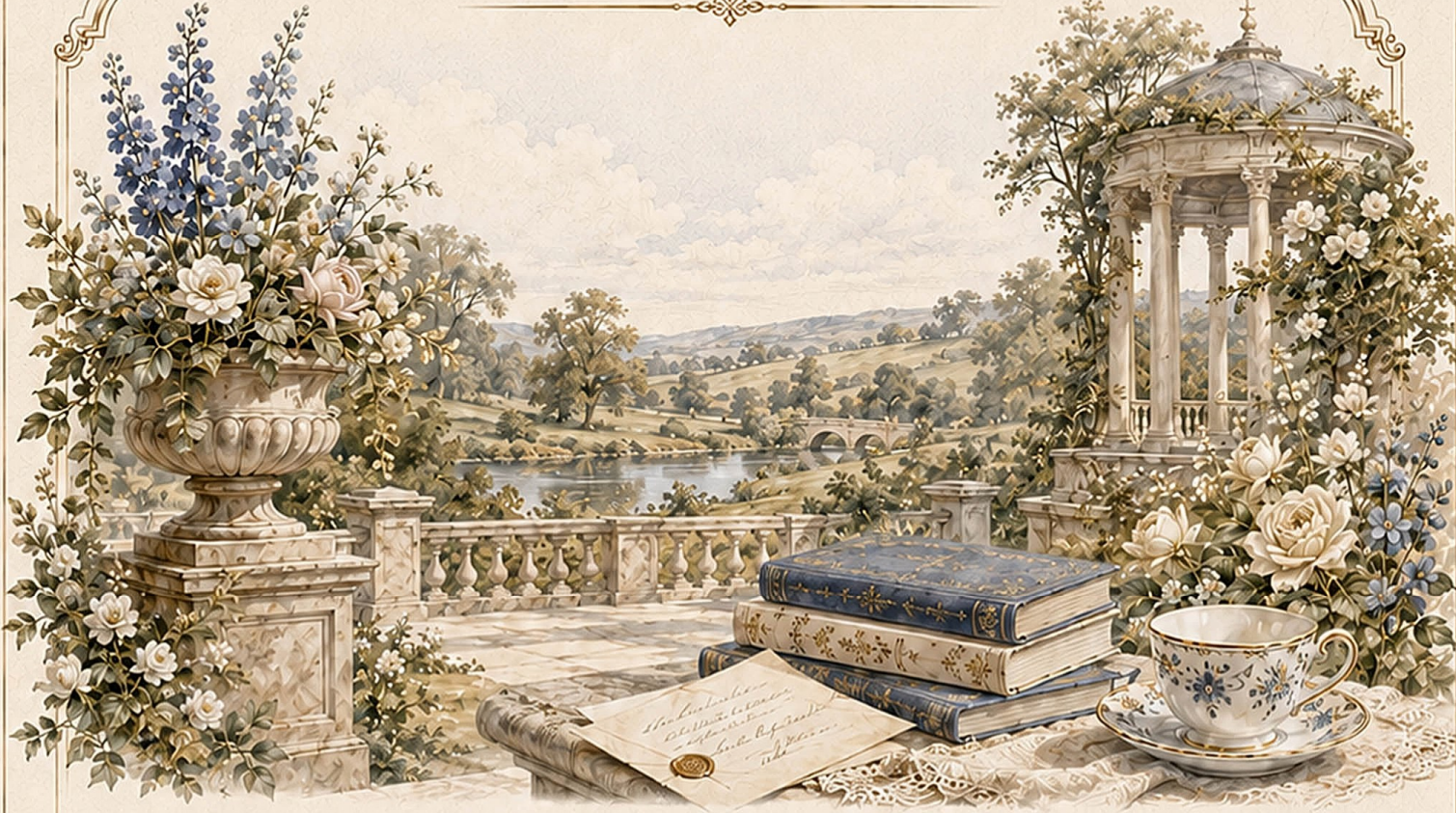
Thirdly – keep updating your “picture” of other people.

People change, yet we often cling to labels we pinned on them years ago. Be like Elizabeth at the end of the novel - have the courage to admit: “I thought I knew you, but I was entirely mistaken.”

SPACE FOR NOTES

Lined area for taking notes, featuring horizontal ruling lines within a decorative border.

Intensive Chapters



OUR WEBSITE



<https://intensivechapters.com/>

YOUTUBE



<https://www.youtube.com/@IntensiveChapters>

INSTAGRAM



<https://www.instagram.com/intensivechapters/>

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