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## Extended essay cover

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Candidate session number			
Candidate name			
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Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Literature and Performance ✓  
(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: Minor Characters in The Lizzie Bennet Diaries ✓

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 2.27.15

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The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

The student introduced me to "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" two years ago - when she was a sophomore. She talked to me about the subject and research for this paper/essay last May (2014). She explained the perspective she wanted to take and I questioned her about her direction and purpose. The student also gave me a draft of her essay in the late Fall and I reviewed and offered suggestions to her. I looked at another draft of this essay last week (Week of Feb. 23, 2015) and offered some more suggestions. We conferenced last week about the direction and conclusion of the essay and the student was quite meticulous and focused about her essay as a whole.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 3/6/2015

**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Candidate session number		
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**Achievement level**

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
B introduction	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
C investigation	4	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
D knowledge and understanding	4	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
E reasoned argument	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
F analysis and evaluation	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
G use of subject language	4	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
H conclusion	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
I formal presentation	4	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
J abstract	2	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
K holistic judgment	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
Total out of 36	33		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>

Name of examiner 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Minor Characters in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

Research Question: How does *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* translate to and or enhance the original story of *Pride and Prejudice*? ✓

3693 words

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## Abstract

*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, an Emmy award-winning web series based off of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, presents a modern perspective on the classic novel. Even with the drastic change in setting, the web series has been praised for its commitment to the original story and attention to the characters of the narrative. This investigative paper will explore the following research question: "How does the *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* translate to and/or enhance the original story of *Pride and Prejudice*?"

In order to keep the investigation appropriately narrow and focused, this paper will focus on a suitably specific topic: the characterization of select minor female characters in both *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Pride and Prejudice*. This paper will discuss the major differences between the web series and the original work and how these differences influence characterization and the overall narrative. Ultimately, the 21<sup>st</sup> century setting of the web series (which allows for more female independence and expression) and the importance it places on female respect and friendship highlight similar ideas in Austen's original work. The importance of sisterhood, as seen in the Jane and Elizabeth's close relationship in the novel, is magnified in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' treatment of the Wickham affair and development of Lydia Bennet's character. The web series takes on the challenge of developing notoriously static characters like Lydia and presenting them in a new light. This paper will ultimately conclude that both the original work of *Pride and Prejudice* and its web series adaptation have their own unique merits, and studying them in relation to one another provides a deeper understanding of each.

## Introduction

This paper will investigate how *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* translates to or enhances the original story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. This literary classic has inspired everything from Bollywood movies to zombie novels. However, even with its eclectic collection of adaptations, no one could have predicted that a YouTube miniseries based off of the iconic novel would be created, let alone that it would garner much attention or acclaim. And yet, when *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* first premiered in 2012, it was an unparalleled success. Since the premiere of its first episode on April 9, 2012, the series has accumulated millions of views, won an Emmy for Outstanding Creative Achievement In Interactive Media, and held a Kickstarter that raised \$460,000. Created by Bernie Su and Hank Green, it is loved by both Jane Austen experts and amateurs and praised as a remarkably insightful take on the classic novel.

In addition to the biweekly videos, each character interacted with other characters and viewers via individual social media accounts, and spin-off series revealed additional characters' perspectives on the narrative (all media was managed by the *Diaries*' main team of writers). The immersive transmedia experience this granted the lucky viewers who watched the series in real time was unlike anything that had ever been previously achieved.

However, the real success of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, like *Pride and Prejudice*, lies at the heart of its characters. The series' primary focus on characterization is what ultimately elevates it from an entertaining modern take on an old classic to a fascinating examination of the beloved characters of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

This research paper will analyze the characterization of Charlotte Lu and Lydia Bennet in both the original novel and the web series. The focus that *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* places on fleshing out these minor characters provides an interesting examination of not only the characters

themselves, but also of Lizzie's character. This extended essay will focus on the development of these minor characters and their relationships with Lizzie and how this emphasis, in context with *Pride and Prejudice*, ultimately enriches the narrative as a whole.

## Important Differences Between *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Before a proper comprehensive analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and its original source text can begin, the major differences between these two works must be addressed. Aside from the most obvious difference between them – that is, one being an online web series and one being a revered work of literature – one must also take into account the main differences in narrative and setting.

*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is set in 21<sup>st</sup> century America, as opposed to *Pride and Prejudice*'s 19<sup>th</sup> century England. This is arguably one of the most significant differences between these two works because it shifts the focus of the narrative and the characters from finding a man to finding themselves. In *Pride and Prejudice*, marrying well is of the utmost importance to every young woman. A good marriage is the only hope of a good life. Shifting the narrative to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, opens up an entire world of opportunity for the Bennets. In the beginning of the series, Lizzie states outright that “all life doesn't revolve around men anymore.”<sup>1</sup> In a modern setting, the women of *Pride and Prejudice* have the independence to live their lives the way they wish; marriage is no longer the be-all and end-all of every young woman's life. This allows the women in the web series to pursue their own interests, hopes, and

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<sup>1</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 9. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

dreams. Lizzie is a grad student, majoring in mass communications, while Jane is working towards a career in the fashion industry. They no longer have to be utterly dependent on marriage and men; they can achieve success and happiness by their own merit and hard work. This alters the entire dynamic of the narrative, as the Bennet sisters in the web series are allowed to pursue relationships purely for their own happiness.

A few major changes within the Bennet family must also be taken into account. Instead of a five children household, the web series includes only three of the original Bennet sisters: Lizzie, Jane, and Lydia. This change aligns with the typically smaller families of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and also allows for a more in-depth focus on the central characters of the series. However, the other two Bennet sisters are not completely gone. Kitty, who arguably had no major importance in the novel, still follows Lydia everywhere as her pet cat, and Mary is the Bennet's cousin. The presence of Lizzie's parents is greatly diminished in the web series, as the only action the viewer sees is what occurs in Lizzie's videos, and they never make an appearance.

The format of a web series as opposed to a novel also presents an interesting distinction in terms of bias and perspective. The novel's narration is third person omniscient, with a focus on Elizabeth. Occasionally, the thoughts and experiences of other characters are revealed, but the novel is mainly concentrated on Elizabeth's perspective and therefore is biased towards her opinions and emotions. In the web series, Lizzie and the other directly talk to each other and the viewer. As a result, Lizzie's videos are often dangerously limited to her perspective. However, the characters of Charlotte, Jane, and Lydia present alternate points of view in their interactions with Lizzie and the viewer that allow the viewer to understand the inaccuracy of Lizzie's often blindly narrow perspective. With these alternate viewpoints, the viewer is able to understand the extent of Lizzie's unreliable narration and better understand the story.

The transmedia storytelling of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* develops the narrative in real time across a variety of different media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Lookbook, and ✓ Pinterest. All of the



Image 2: (from left) Charlotte, Lizzie, Lydia, and Jane<sup>2</sup>

content on these platforms is supplemental to the YouTube narrative and is not necessary to understand the story. While this supplementary content will not be included in this analysis of the web series, it provides an interesting perspective into the development of the narrative and the characters. There are also multiple spinoff videos that directly align with the main narrative. In particular, Lydia Bennet's videos contribute enormously to her character development and will be analyzed extensively in this paper.

### A Study in Realism: Charlotte Lu

Charlotte Lucas is the dearest friend of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, just as Charlotte Lu is of Lizzie Bennet in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. As “a sensible, intelligent young woman,”<sup>3</sup> Charlotte is often the voice of reason. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, she offers unbiased, practical counsel, which is often contrasted with Lizzie's passionate opinions.

<sup>2</sup> Image from [www.jolvie.com](http://www.jolvie.com).

<sup>3</sup> Page 12. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

However, Charlotte Lucas's focus in the novel is to find a husband, and justifiably so, as that is her only path to a comfortable life in her world. Charlotte Lu, on the other hand, lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Marriage is not her sole hope of security; her life is open to more possibilities than 19<sup>th</sup> century Charlotte could ever have imagined. In the midst of their financial difficulties, both Charlottes use their realism and practicality to carve a future out of a seemingly hopeless situation.

In order to comprehensively analyze both Charlottes' actions and decisions, this paper will relate their development in the original novel and the web series separately, but analyze and contrast them together.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the Bennet's cousin Mr. Collins seeks a wife and decides to propose to Elizabeth, but she refuses him. Charlotte takes advantage of the situation and attempts "to secure her [Elizabeth] from any return of Mr. Collins's addresses, by engaging them towards herself."<sup>4</sup> Charlotte knows that at the age of 27, with no real money or hope of a future, a marriage with Mr. Collins might be her only chance at a comfortable life. Fortunately, he quickly redirects his attentions towards her, and they are soon engaged. But even though Elizabeth "wished her all imaginable happiness,"<sup>5</sup> she does not agree with Charlotte's decision. And while she believes that "it was impossible for that friend [Charlotte] to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen"<sup>6</sup> and bemoans her choice to Jane, Elizabeth does not challenge Charlotte's decision. Eventually, she grows to accept it, but she admits to herself that "no real confidence could ever subsist between them again."<sup>7</sup> ✓

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<sup>4</sup> Page 92. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>5</sup> Page 95. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>6</sup> Page 96. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>7</sup> Page 97. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Mr. Collins' marriage proposal is translated to a job offer as his partner at Collins and Collins, a change some might deem insufficiently comparable. But in reality, a partnership offer at a company today is remarkably similar to a marriage proposal in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Each case is primarily a business arrangement, chosen more often for the benefits and advantages of such a position than out of true desire. Ricky Collins first offers Lizzie the job. When Lizzie adamantly refuses him, Charlotte essentially manipulates him into offering her the job instead. ↙

Unlike in the novel, where Charlotte does not appear until Chapter 5<sup>8</sup>, Lizzie and Charlotte's friendship plays a significant role in the web series from the start. "Charlotte and I have been best friends basically since we were fetuses,"<sup>9</sup> Lizzie declares in the second episode. Charlotte films and edits Lizzie's videos and is always there to offer her opinions and advice. ↙ The focus of the web series is not on men and romance but on sisterhood, friendship, and independence. Charlotte and Lizzie's friendship is an exemplary representation of these themes.

The extra emphasis on their friendship only makes Charlotte's decision to join Collins & Collins more difficult. In the novel, Elizabeth disagrees with Charlotte's decision to marry Mr. Collins but does not attempt to persuade her otherwise.<sup>10</sup> However, the Lizzie of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* does not hesitate to speak her mind, and while she only wants what's best for Charlotte, she and Charlotte have very different ideas of what that is. "You are brilliant and talented," Lizzie protests. "This job is a waste of your time and talent! You're throwing away your dreams."<sup>11</sup> Her idealism contrasted with Charlotte's realism tests their friendship and ↙

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<sup>8</sup> Page 12, Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>9</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 9. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>10</sup> Page 95. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>11</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 42. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

acknowledges the flaws and strengths of both characters. Ultimately, however, Lizzie and Charlotte are able to overcome their differences and reunite at Collins & Collins. As in the novel, Lizzie comes to respect Charlotte's accomplishments with Mr. Collins and admits that, once again, she was wrong.

The weight that the web series places on Charlotte and Lizzie's friendship aligns with the Diaries' themes of friendship and sisterhood. By shifting the focus of the narrative from romance to the bonds of friendship, the increased importance of once minor characters like Charlotte elevates the story from a romance to one of independence and amity.

### “You're only a secondary character if you let yourself be”: Lydia Bennet

The portrayal of Lydia Bennet in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the web series at its very best. In the novel, Lydia is never anything more than the flighty, foolish younger sister. She rarely experiences any moments of depth and is forever “self-willed and careless... ignorant, idle, and vain.”<sup>12</sup> When she runs off with Mr. Wickham and is barely rescued from scandal, she learns no lesson. Lydia Bennet is not meant to be anything more than an utterly static, undeveloped character in *Pride and Prejudice*.

However, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* takes the unlikeable, flat character of Lydia Bennet and paints a picture of a wild, bubbly little sister whose insecurities and need to be loved lead her directly into an emotionally abusive relationship.

One could argue that the greatest achievement of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* lies within the character of Lydia Bennet. The coupled talent of writer Rachel Kiley and actress Mary Kate Wiles presents a character arc with unparalleled depth and genuine feeling. Considering the

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<sup>12</sup> Page 159. Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*.

frequent ridicule and ignorance of the novel's Lydia, the development of Lydia in the web series is even more extraordinary. "Austen invests great value in the bonds of sisterhood," wrote Dr. Glenda Hudson in her article "Precious Remains of the Earliest Attachment": Sibling Love in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*<sup>13</sup>. However, those "bonds of sisterhood" never include Lydia – or any of the other Bennet sisters, for that matter. Elizabeth and Jane are the epitome of sisterhood in *Pride and Prejudice*, as they are in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. But in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the viewer can see Lydia's desire to become a part of that sisterhood and her hurt when she is excluded and written off as silly and careless.

In the beginning of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, novel Lydia and web series Lydia do not appear all too different. With comments like "Nothing gets done without alcohol. Talk about a truth universally acknowledged, am I right?"<sup>14</sup> and "I like my boys the way I like my data plan: readily available, unlimited, and something I never signed a contract for,"<sup>15</sup> it's easy to mistake Lydia for the same careless girl she is in the novel.

But really, there is so much more to web series Lydia than it seems. In truth, she desperately wants the approval of her family and loves her sisters more than anything. When Jane leaves for L.A. to get answers from Bing, Lydia types up a resume and offers it to Lizzie with an eager, "I'm applying to be your new sidekick!"<sup>16</sup> When Wickham skips town, Lydia brings Lizzie a carefully prepared basket of chick flicks and chocolate, saying that she has "spent

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<sup>13</sup>From Dr. Glenda A. Hudson's paper "Precious Remains of the Earliest Attachment": Sibling Love in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>14</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 20. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>15</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 11. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>16</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 43. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

my entire life preparing for this moment.”<sup>17</sup> She adamantly declares that “boys come and go, but sisters are forever.”<sup>18</sup> ✓

However, Lydia is continuously dismissed and ignored. She has been unfairly compared with her intelligent, successful sisters her entire life. Her third grade teacher told her that she would “[make] nothing of her life.”<sup>19</sup> Even her sisters underestimate Lydia. Lizzie describes Lydia as “a cute, adorable, humps the neighbor’s leg, never know where she sleeps puppy.”<sup>20</sup> When Lydia tells Lizzie that she’ll always be there for her, Lizzie retorts, “Oh, lucky me, I get to keep the boy crazy, completely irresponsible substance abuser.”<sup>21</sup> In Lizzie’s second episode, she calls Lydia a “stupid whore-y slut.”<sup>22</sup> When Lizzie forgets Lydia’s birthday and then gives her a book entitled *Where Did I Park My Car? A Party Girl’s Guide to Becoming a Successful Adult*, it’s the last straw.

Lydia knows that no one thinks she’ll amount to anything, but when her sister tries to give her the cold, hard truth that “her reputation[could]... close doors for her in the future,”<sup>23</sup> Lydia acts out. Hearing her own sister tell her that she needs to change and can’t maintain her stubbornly carefree lifestyle forever inflames her insecurity, and Lydia reacts violently. She posts an immature response video to Lizzie’s criticisms and heads to Vegas for the New Year, where she encounters George Wickham.

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<sup>17</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 50. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>18</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 11. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>19</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 16. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>20</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 2. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>21</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 23. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>22</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 2. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>23</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 73. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

In the novel, Lydia goes to Meryton purely for the experience of careless socializing and flirting. Web series Lydia leaves for Vegas because, from her perspective, her sister told her that she was irresponsible, careless, and needed to grow up. She has always felt left out of the tight bond that Lizzie and Jane have, but Lizzie's criticism provokes all of the insecurity and loneliness that she feels. She doesn't go to Vegas to have fun or to meet guys; she goes to Vegas out of rebellion, to prove to Lizzie that no one can tell her what to do. "I wonder what my sister would think of me now? She'd probably drop dead of embarrassment. I am *so* irresponsible and thoughtless,"<sup>24</sup> she viciously remarks.

And all of this, all of her vulnerability, insecurity, anger at her family, and need to prove herself, puts her in the perfect position for George Wickham to take advantage of her. When she strikes up a friendship with him in



*Image 3: Lydia and George*

Vegas, she sees a kindred spirit in him. As she listens to him recount his sob story of loneliness and rejection, Lydia begins to feel like it's them against the world. Wickham manipulates her into starting a relationship with him despite her better judgment.

Lydia and Wickham's relationship is a textbook case of emotional abuse. Throughout the course of their relationship, Wickham undermines Lydia's confidence and isolates her from her family, claiming that she doesn't love him as much as he loves her<sup>25</sup>. According to the University of

<sup>24</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 21. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>25</sup> Episode 87. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

Illinois-Urbana's Counseling Center, emotional abuse "systematically wears away at the victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in their own perceptions, and self-concept."<sup>26</sup> That is exactly what Wickham does to Lydia. From the start of their relationship, he continuously targets her insecurities and puts her down. As their relationship progresses, Lydia fades into a mere shadow of her former self. No longer bright and bubbly, she dresses in muted colors and hangs on George's every word. She flinches at his carefully phrased remarks and is quick to apologize, even when she does nothing wrong. George purposely makes her feel like she is at fault for everything while pretending to care for her. "I want you to know how amazing you are, no matter what everybody tells you, no matter what you tell yourself,"<sup>27</sup> he tells Lydia, drawing attention to the fact that no one, not even herself, thinks much of her – except, of course, for him. He also isolates her from her sisters and her family as much as he can. [S]he's your older sister, she should be looking out for you,"<sup>28</sup> he declares, not-so-subtly implying that he is the only one looking out for her. He knows how much Lydia yearns to belong with and be loved by her family, and he tells her that she never will:

"I've seen Jane and Lizzie. They have their own little clique. The Bennet sisters. And you're never gonna be in between that. Jane is always gonna side with Lizzie."<sup>29</sup>

He targets Lydia's weak points – her family and her insecurity – and manipulates her into obeying his every word and growing utterly dependent on him. And, in the coup de grâce of his manipulation, he tells Lydia that she "didn't love him as much as he loved me, and I needed to prove it."<sup>30</sup> He films them having sex and creates a website selling subscriptions for it without

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<sup>26</sup> From the Counseling Center at University of Illinois's article on emotional abuse.

<sup>27</sup> George Wickham, Episode 27. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>28</sup> George Wickham, Episode 26. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>29</sup> George Wickham, Episode 28. *The Lydia Bennet*.

<sup>30</sup> Lydia Bennet, Episode 87. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

Lydia's knowledge, with a countdown for the video's release on Valentine's Day. However, before the countdown ends, Darcy buys out the website's company and takes the site down.

So why is this so important? Lydia could easily have been painted as a careless 20-something who thought it would be fun to date her sister's ex and put a sex tape on the internet. After all, that's exactly what novel Lydia might have done. So why did the writers of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* take the time to develop a purposefully superficial, static character whom no one has ever really liked?

Firstly, Lydia's character arc not only enhances her characterization, but it also adds a layer of depth to Lizzie's character development. At the beginning of the web series, Lizzie constantly demeans Lydia, both consciously and unconsciously. She, like many people, doesn't think Lydia is much more than her wild, irresponsible younger sister. But after Lydia gets involved with Wickham and he takes advantage of her in the worst possible way, Lizzie is forced to reexamine her attitude and views of Lydia. In the novel, Elizabeth realizes the extent of her pride because of her misjudgment of Darcy. This realization, however, becomes a much more powerful thing when it is her own sister that she, like everyone else, has written off. In one of the most powerful moments of the series, Lizzie confesses,

"I went back and watched all of Lydia's videos. I don't know that girl. It's like my sister is a person I've never met. And then I thought about it. And how could I not have seen her when she was standing right in front of me? Sometimes I feel so clever and rational and appropriately analytical about the world around me. I'm a grad student! It's what I do, what I'm supposed to be skilled at doing. Communicating and relating and acknowledging that people do not fit into neat

little boxes all wrapped up and tied in string. But here we are.”<sup>31</sup>

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, Lydia Bennet is no longer a simple character who can “fit into neat little boxes all wrapped up and tied in string.” Her thoughts and feelings are not limited to clothes or boys. She is the most powerful part of the web series



Image 3: Lizzie and Lydia<sup>32</sup>

because everyone, the viewer and all of the characters, underestimates her. She is presented as the carefree, bubbly girl from the novel, but as the series progresses, the viewer sees hints of her love for her sisters and her insecurity of never truly belonging. She is the lesson Lizzie must learn: people aren't always what they seem.

## Conclusion

*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* challenges the accepted and conventional opinions of Charlotte and Lydia by offering a different perspective on their actions. By providing them with more of a presence and a voice than they were granted in the original text, the web series allows their opinions to be just as justified as Lizzie's. Charlotte and Lizzie's fallout in the web series, once talked through and resolved, strengthens their friendship and deepens their respect and understanding of each other. While the Wickham affair devastates both Lydia and her family, they emerge all the better for it, more concrete in their love and understanding of each other than ever before. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* holds independence and female friendships in the utmost

<sup>31</sup> Lizzie Bennet, Episode 87. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

<sup>32</sup> Image from [www.austenprose.com](http://www.austenprose.com).

importance. It's fitting, then, that Darcy is last featured in the 99<sup>th</sup> episode of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, while the series dedicated the entirety of its final episode to the extraordinary female characters of the web series. *Pride and Prejudice*, on the other hand, focuses more on propriety and romance. These qualities are very reflective of each respective time period, and both works communicate important thematic ideas about love, family, and pride. Both are equally as valuable, and by studying them in conjunction with each other, we can continue to gain an even deeper appreciation of classic literature and quality story-telling.

Clearly attentive and detailed about the transformation of the materials, one would only see just a little more relevance to *HP* by talking more/analysing the media version's production values and transformation.

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