

## Overview and terms

### Types of rescues:

- **Literal** — a physical, heroic act that saves someone from immediate danger
- **Social** — a simple, gentlemanly act that saves someone from social embarrassment
- **Financial** — a transaction or gift that saves someone from financial ruin (can connect with Social or Marital)
- **Marital** — a match that saves someone from poor social and/or financial circumstances or future

### Defining “gentleman”:

In the Regency and Georgian period, a “gentleman” (as distinct from the nobility of Europe) derived from landed gentry. The label applied to rank but also was behavioral: a simple “gentleman” could be wealthy or poor, so long as he owned property or held title, but to truly uphold the label of “gentleman,” he was expected to behave in a calm, rational, compassionate, gentlemanly manner, exhibiting “the three Rs: Restraint, Refinement and Religion.”

### Knights in shining armor:

When we think of chivalrous physical rescues, we think of knights. It is noteworthy that the title “gentleman” was the lowest-ranking of the gentry, followed immediately by “Esquire” (derived from “Squire”) and then “Knight” (Sir). It is worth noting that titled nobility — knights and baronets (as well as Ladies) — rarely come off well in Austen, even generous but gossipy and sometimes clueless Sir John. Note, too, Lizzie’s fierce retort to Lady Catherine: “He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal.”

### Women:

As with the men, in Austen, the higher-ranked and/or wealthier a woman is, the less appealing or “ladylike” she is. The reverse is also true, however: women fallen into poverty can be crass (see gossip-hungry Mrs. Smith in *Pers.*). However, since women do not inherit property, their “gentlewomanliness” is measured instead along behavioral and social lines similar to — but more stringent than — the men: **her accomplishments.**

Here is Darcy's list of accomplishments he expects in a woman he would consider his equal:

- thorough knowledge of music
- [thorough knowledge of] singing
- [thorough knowledge of] drawing
- [thorough knowledge of] dancing
- [thorough knowledge of] modern languages
- a certain something in her air
- [a certain something in her] manner of walking
- [a certain something in] the tone of her voice
- [a certain something in] her address and expressions
- the improvement of her mind by extensive reading

### **Sense & Sensibility**

#### **S&S Elinor and the Dashwood women (Financial)**

Though hardly flashy or heroic, I would argue that Elinor rescues the whole Dashwood family from financial ruin through her prudence and economy

#### **Sir John Middleton and the Dashwoods (Financial)**

Even considering Elinor's economy, the Dashwoods are in dire financial straits and soon to be without even a home until Sir John steps in — like a knight — and rescues them from poverty and homelessness.

#### **Willoughby and Marianne (Literal)**

Willoughby rescues Marianne from her fall; this superficial “rescue” sparks a romance that she suspects will lead to marriage, but it never develops

#### **Brandon and Marianne (Literal)**

Brandon performs a parallel rescue of Marianne when she falls ill, and he further “rescues” her from that illness when he brings her mother to her bedside

This leads to genuine affection and marriage

### **Lucy Steele and the brothers Ferrars (Marital & Financial)**

Who rescues whom? In holding to his promise, Edward F. winds up disinherited, so while his gentlemanly honor is intact his livelihood is in question, meaning his marriage to Lucy would be no rescue for either of them. But then Lucy throws Edward over in favor of his now-wealthy brother (who deserves no credit for “rescuing” her through marriage) — leaving Edward free to engage in a mutual marital rescue with Elinor. Domestic bliss presumably ensures, leading to the kind of rescue-through-marriage discussed in Barkley (Pers. 36), but who, in this situation, is the hero/ine?

## **Persuasion**

### **Wentworth and Louisa (Literal)**

Wentworth fails to catch Louisa in her foolish jump from the Cobb — ironic, since the Cobb itself is intended to “catch” harboring ships in its “arms” (Pers. 35)

### **Anne and Louisa (Literal)**

Anne, however, is level-headed enough to assess the situation and organize the aid Louisa needs, saving her life

### **Capt. Benwick and Louisa (Marital)**

Benwick “rescues” Louisa from her concussion through poetry — her attentions toward him in turn “rescue” Benwick from his depression

### **Admiral and Mrs. Croft (Marital? & Literal & Figurative?)**

This is no “rescue,” per se, and certainly not one we see except in Mrs. Croft’s telling, but consider Barkley’s (Pers. 36) assertion that marriage is an escape from family, and note the sense of FREEDOM with which Mrs. Croft describes her marital travels with the Admiral

Witness, too, the literal instance when Mrs. Croft rescues the Admiral from driving their carriage into a post, and the figurative situation Anne imagines it to represent (Pers. 35)

### Wentworth and Anne (Marital)

Obviously, esp. considering Barkley (Pers. 36), Wentworth rescues Anne — from spinsterhood as well as from her family. But Wentworth himself makes clear that, in truth, it is Anne who rescues him. Consider the lines from his letter: “Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever.”

“You alone have brought me to Bath. For you alone, I think and plan.”

“A word, a look, will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house this evening or never.”

The last line, especially — he will enter her father's house, i.e. he is willing to enter her family. This is his heroic gesture, but it is her decision. In return, he will take her OUT of her father's house and the embarrassment and ruin it represents. So, in truth — like Lizzie and Darcy, and very probably like the Crofts — Wentworth and Anne rescue each other

### Anne (Figurative)

I would argue that Anne “rescues” herself — and, figuratively, women as a gender — in her conversation with Capt. Harville. Her argument for constance in love not only is a forceful defense of women in general, but also triggers Wentworth to finally act. While he might “rescue” her, she instigates his action.

## Emma

### Frank Churchill and Harriet (Literal)

Frank Churchill physically rescues Harriet from gypsies (sadly, off-page)

BUT: Emma misreads gratitude for love, leading to a FAILURE of yet another of her schemes

### Mr. Knightley and Harriet (Social)

When Mr. Elton publicly snubs Harriet at the Weston's ball, Mr. Knightley “rescues” Harriet from social embarrassment by dancing with her

### **Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax (Marital)**

In some respects, FC does “rescue” Jane from her future as a governess, but the arrangement was longstanding — and secret, so really, FC acted the coward, waiting till his aunt died and nearly letting Jane go off to become a governess

### **Emma and everyone (Marital & Social)**

One of Emma’s primary occupations in the novel is “rescuing” people from their circumstances and/or loneliness via matchmaking, but she is terrible at it! Even when people do pair off, like Harriet and Mr. Martin (no thanks to Emma), the prospects aren’t terribly promising

### **Mr. Knightley and Emma (Marital)**

Much has been made of women “domesticating” men through marriage and men “rescuing” women from poverty/spinsterhood through marriage, but here, Mr. Knightley (aptly named!) seems to “domesticate” Emma through their ongoing (though contentious and, for Knightley’s part, often condescending) friendship more than through marriage. The marriage ultimately only results from Knightley’s hand in helping Emma grow up and get over herself

## **Pride & Prejudice**

### **Mr. Collins and Lizzie (Marital & Financial)**

Mr. Collins, though by no means gentlemanly or heroic, does offer a “rescue” from financial insecurity through his marriage proposal. However (regarding Barkley, Pers. 36) he also offers further entrenchment in family and so no true escape

In refusing him, does Lizzie rescue HERSELF from this fate?

### **Mr. Bennet and Lizzie (Social & Marital?)**

One might argue that Mr. Bennet also “rescues” Lizzie from the social embarrassment of Mr. Collins by siding with her in the argument over Mr. Collins’s proposal

## **Lizzie (Marital)**

I would argue that Lizzie's first refusal of Darcy was an act of rescuing herself. Many of the aspects of the eventual marital rescue that Darcy represents are true in the first proposal — his rank and wealth, an escape from her family — which he points out. But neither of them were ready to enter such a union, which Lizzie alone recognized, and so she saved herself from a difficult marriage that might not have been the same as the one she eventually entered.

## **Darcy and Lydia (Literal, Social, Financial, & Marital)**

Darcy rescues Lydia — and the rest of the Bennetts — from social ruin by arranging her marriage to Wickham and securing (for now) Wickham's economic future.

BUT:

- Their marriage is likely to be unhappy
- We know that war looms; will Wickham survive? What of Lydia then?

## **Darcy and Mr. Bennet (Social & Literal?)**

In a way, Darcy's intervention with Lydia and Wickham "rescues" Mr. Bennet not only from ruin but also (as Mrs. Bennet worries) from having to "fight" Wickham!

## **(Darcy and) Bingley and Jane (Marital & Financial)**

In marrying Jane, Bingley obviously "rescues" the entire Bennet family financially.

But I include Darcy here because, while he was the initial obstacle to their marriage, in removing himself as that obstacle and blessing Bingley's affection for Jane, he made it possible for Bingley to "rescue" Jane

## **Lizzie and Darcy (Marital & Social)**

Darcy rescues Lizzie from her dysfunctional family through marriage

But Lizzie "rescues" Darcy (from his isolation/pride) by "domesticating" him (Pers. 35)

ALSO: In marrying Lizzie, Darcy escapes the possibility of marrying either Caroline Bingley or (more importantly) his cousin Anne de Burgh (distancing him from his own embarrassing relatives)

I do not call this a financial "rescue" because Bingley already accomplished that for the Bennet family.

## Resources

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## For your amusement

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