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AP Literature
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A Rebellion Against Society: The Individual In *A Tale of Two Cities* & *Pride and Prejudice*

Sometimes individuals become **ambivalent** toward their role as an individual in a complex society. For example, these individuals may become alienated when their government oppresses them or when traditional values, such as the outspoken need to marry, threaten to undermine the lasting bonds that an individual may have toward another. Individuals may then choose to rebel against the societal paradigms arbitrarily assigned to them or, often feeling such rules are there to protect and guide them, may readily choose to accept their assigned roles in society; however, when individuals should do either often depends on the circumstances. For instance, in Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* and Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* an individual’s role in society can be best elucidated by examining the aristocracy, by analyzing courtship between individuals, and by comparing the gender roles illustrated in each work, respectively.

To begin with, the roles of the upper-class in both works serve to represent the aristocracy in Victorian England who are often depicted as **fallacious**, haughty, and preposterous oppressors or, in the case of *Pride and Prejudice*, gratuitous advisors. For example, in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens first introduces Monseigneur as a powerful lord presiding over the court of France all building up to an anticlimax illustrating that Monseigneur is just about to eat chocolate (109). In this particular instance, and throughout the chapter, Dickens uses hyperbole to emphasize the corpulent grandeur of which Monseigneur, as the symbol of the nobility at the time, takes

*Technically, this novel is in Victorian since it precedes the era it might be better placed in the Renaissance.*