# 6 Easy Steps to Great Character Mapping

http://writeonsisters.com/writing-craft/6-easy-steps-to-great-character-mapping/
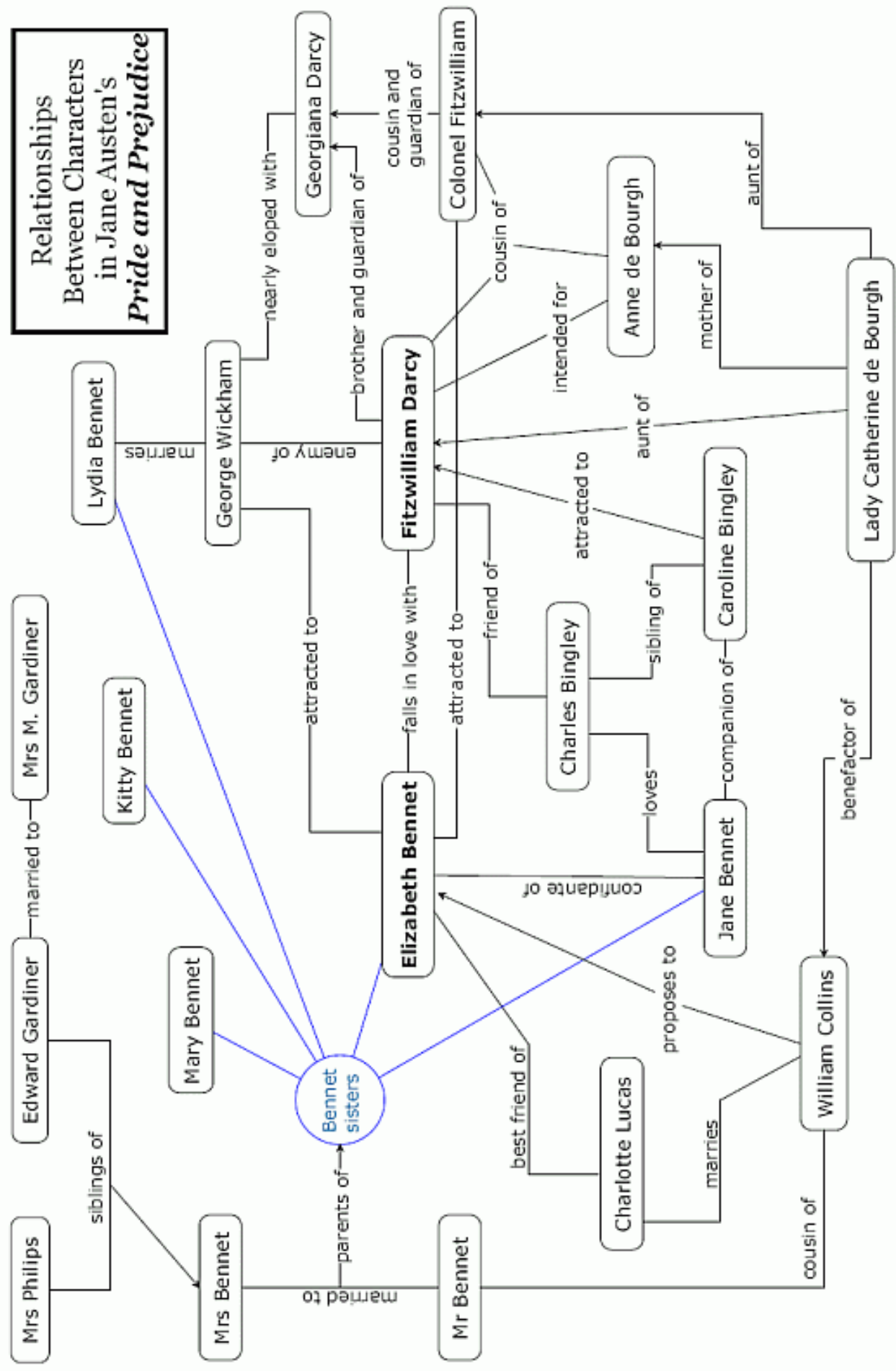
Character mapping is a technique I use on every project I write. These simple flow charts keep track of all the interconnected relationships in my books and help me build more complexity into those relationships. I love including lots of secondary characters. Out of personal necessity, I developed a quick method for making character maps.

1.  Establish what type of map you need. Each project requires its own criteria. A mystery project might need a map to track the clues each character reveals. If your protagonist is constantly meeting new characters, you might need to keep track of where, when, and how they met each character. That way you don't accidentally include a character in an earlier scene than you should have. If you're writing family saga or a series with lots of romantic entanglements, you might want to track which characters like, hate, date or have sex with other characters.

2.  Using your character sheets (or whatever method you favor for fleshing out your characters), make out a 3X5 card with the name of every character. If they don't have a name yet, use the character's title. Include one or two sentences of information about each of the characters on the back as needed. Don't get crazy, you just want to jog your memory. If you have an image for character reference, feel free to stick a small photo on the card as a visual cue.

3.  Alphabetize the cards. It's an extra step, but it helps you find mistakes, like including too many similar sounding names. Also, I like to key each card as having a positive, neutral, or negative stance in the protagonist's life. I will indicate if the relationship changes over time.
    *(Negative > Neutral, or Positive > Negative, etc)*
    You can code for male or female, old or young, alive, or undead. Whatever traits you need to keep track of for your story.

4.  With a huge open space in front of you (I like to do this on a dry erase board and you'll see why in a moment), place the cards for the main protagonist and main antagonist in the middle. Slowly start to fan the other cards around the first two cards. I have a basic structure I follow. The parents or mentors at the top. Siblings, love interest or partners in crime at the sides. Children, BFFs, frenemies, evil minions, and other secondary characters go below. The minor characters go to the outer edges wherever they fit.

5.  Here is where the dry erase board comes in handy. Carefully create the web of connections around the characters. I like to use different colors to signify each relationship status, like my first example does. If you are not using a board, you will need to do this with more cards. Since you have already established the kind of board you need, make sure your web reflects your needs. For example, in a romance novel the web might reflect the role each character plays in thwarting or promoting the protagonist's HEA.

6.  Evaluate your pattern. This is when you start to notice mistakes in the big picture. Everyone shouldn't love the protagonist, it's not realistic. You need to give the protagonist some detractors. Also, you may notice a deficit in your antagonist's network. Evil seldom works alone. Adjust your characters and their relationships if you find any defects. Once you have the web the way you want it, transfer the information to a permanent source. You can transfer everything to a flowchart program, or just attach the cards to a cork board for your wall.

Once you have a perfect character map in place, you can refer back to it as you write. A good map minimizes continuity mistakes and makes the final editing process go faster. Don't forget to update your chart as your charters evolve and change.

# Relationships Between Characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

- Georgiana Darcy
- George Wickham — nearly eloped with → Georgiana Darcy
- Colonel Fitzwilliam — cousin and guardian of → Georgiana Darcy
- Fitzwilliam Darcy — brother and guardian of → Georgiana Darcy
- Lydia Bennet — marries → George Wickham
- George Wickham — enemy of → Fitzwilliam Darcy
- Colonel Fitzwilliam — cousin of → Fitzwilliam Darcy
- Fitzwilliam Darcy — intended for → Anne de Bourgh
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh — aunt of → Anne de Bourgh
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh — mother of → Anne de Bourgh
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh — aunt of → Fitzwilliam Darcy
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh — benefactor of → William Collins
- Caroline Bingley — attracted to → Fitzwilliam Darcy
- Charles Bingley — friend of → Fitzwilliam Darcy
- Charles Bingley — sibling of → Caroline Bingley
- Caroline Bingley — companion of → Jane Bennet
- Charles Bingley — loves → Jane Bennet
- Elizabeth Bennet — falls in love with → Fitzwilliam Darcy
- Fitzwilliam Darcy — attracted to → Elizabeth Bennet
- George Wickham — attracted to → Elizabeth Bennet
- Jane Bennet — confidante of → Elizabeth Bennet
- William Collins — proposes to → Elizabeth Bennet
- Charlotte Lucas — best friend of → Elizabeth Bennet
- William Collins — marries → Charlotte Lucas
- William Collins — cousin of → Mr Bennet
- Mrs M. Gardiner — married to → Edward Gardiner
- Edward Gardiner — siblings of → Mrs Bennet / Mrs Philips
- Mrs Bennet — married to → Mr Bennet
- Mr Bennet & Mrs Bennet — parents of → Bennet sisters
- Bennet sisters: Lydia Bennet, Kitty Bennet, Mary Bennet, Jane Bennet, Elizabeth Bennet

**Interconnection of Relationships in "Love, Actually"**

Love
Friendship
Employment
Family
Neighbor

Harriet (Texan, S. Elizabeth)
Carla (Denise Richards)
Judy (nude standin)
Joanna (child singer)
Carol (Schiffer)
Joanna
Tony
John (nude standin)
Daniel (Neeson)
Sam (son, drummer)
Colin (Brit over to America)
Stacey (Milicevic) Jeannie (Jones) Carol-Anne (Cuthbert)
Harry (Rickman)
Karen (Thompson)
U.S. President (Thornton)
Daisy (kid)
Bernard (kid)
David (H. Grant, prime minister)
Natalie (caterer)
Michael (severely mentally ill brother)
Mia (Harry's office affair)
Karl (Sarah's Spanish crush)
Sarah (Linney)
Joe (manager)
Peter (Ejiofor)
Billy (singer)
Mark (boom box/cue card scene)
Jamie (Firth, author)
Juliet (Knightley)
Aurelia (Portuguese assistant)

**Henry Poole Is Here**

Theme: Religion and Faith

Doctor

Dawn Stupek

Dr. Fancher

Henry Poole

Millie Stupek

Millies father

Father Salazar

Image of Christ on wall has miraculous powers

Meg Wyatt, realtor

Patience, store clerk

Former owner of house, deceased

Esperanza Martinez, neighbor

Josie, religious zealot

pronounces Henry no longer terminally ill

Diagnoses Henry as terminally ill

counsels Henry regarding faith

Henry's neighbor

mother, daughter

left a year ago, Millie stopped talking

sells the house to Henry

re-stuccoed the house causes stain to appear

thinks image is just a stain, no longer terminally ill after destroying with ax and house falls on him

Millie starts talking after touching image

doesn't need glasses after touching image

insists stain is the face of Christ