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Sommario/riassunto	Jane Austen was the daughter of a clergyman, the sister of two others and the cousin of four more. Her principal acquaintances were clergymen and their families, whose social, intellectual and religious attitudes she shared. Yet while clergymen feature in all her novels, often in major roles, there has been little recognition of their significance. To many readers their status and profession is a mystery, as they appear simply to be a sub-species of gentlemen and never seem to perform any duties. Mr Collins in ""Pride and Prejudice"" is often regarded as little more than a figure of fun. This