Emma Study Guide

Emma by Jane Austen

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Of the 2,000 copes of *Emma* printed in 1815, only 563 sold over the next four years. Austen died in 1817 having earned less than £40 for the book during her lifetime. In the early 2000s, the novel was considered a classic of romance comedies and perhaps Austen's best novel of manners and morals. Written at the end of Austen's young life, and hence in her maturity, *Emma* fully demonstrates Austen's narrative power to render witty dialogue, romantic intrigue, memorable descriptions of scenes and situations, and the ironic and satirical treatment of the virtues, vices, and drawing room behavior of the British upper classes at the end of the eighteenth century. To combine both rationality and compassion in one's actions is the mark of true gentility, Austen seems to be saying. Yet, lest readers take this central lesson too much to heart, Austen gives plenty to laugh at and puzzle over as her flawed but redeemable heroine fumbles her way toward womanhood.

Author Biography

Jane Austen was the second daughter and the seventh of eight children born to the Reverend George Austen and Cassandra Leigh. Born on December 16, 1775, she grew up in the country village of Steventon, in Hampshire, England.

Her family was not wealthy, but they were certainly comfortable, for Jane Austen's father earned £600 a year as the local clergyman. This was a respectable salary but not one that could provide either Jane or Cassandra, her older sister and confidante, a large dowry. Austen lived at the Steventon rectory for 25 years. She never married, although she had more than a passing interest in romance and the society of her peers. Indeed, her keen observation of the society around her is mirrored in her novels, which reflect the manners and morals of her time, the conventions of courtship and marriage, and the psychology of human relationships.

Between 1795 and 1798, Austen wrote the original versions of three novels: *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. However, none of these books was published until well after her father's death (1805) after which Mrs. Austen and her daughters moved from Bath (where the family had lived from 1801 until Mr. Austen's death) to Southampton briefly and then to Chawton, where they lived in a house provided by Jane's wealthy brother, Edward. *Sense and Sensibility* appeared anonymously in 1811, and two years later, *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel that made her reputation. In 1814, Austen published *Mansfield Park.*

Jane Austen received a minimal formal education at the Abbey School in Reading, which she left at age nine. In her time, it was not usual for a woman of the "genteel" classes to attend school; rather, she would be expected to attain certain "accomplishments" (singing, sewing, drawing, a speaking knowledge of French, letter writing) to prepare her for an advantageous marriage. Respectable careers (except for those of governess or school teacher) were not open to women, and being married was much preferable to working outside the home. Austen, like most women of her class, was educated at home and read from the books in her father's library. Evident in all her novels is a pointed satire leveled at women who define themselves chiefly by their ability to attract the opposite sex while ignoring the improvement of their minds.

Although Austen was at work on her last novel, *Persuasion*, in 1815, it was published posthumously (along with *Northanger Abbey* which she had written earlier in 1797); *Emma* was the last book to see publication before her death. Austen died July 18, 1817, of Addison's Disease. She was forty-one years old. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Plot Summary

Emma begins with Miss Emma Woodhouse, the title character, losing her governess and a dear friend through the governess' marriage to Mr. Weston. Emma has no one to blame but herself as she was behind the match in the first place. She apparently loves to match make for people and cannot wait for her next challenge.

The loss of her governess prompts Emma to begin to search for a new companion, and Miss Harriet Smith fits the bill perfectly. Although she is beneath Emma in status, she is just the sort of friend Emma thinks she needs. She takes Harriet in and does her best to groom Harriet to be a suitable friend.

Since Harriet is single, Emma immediately begins pairing her off with the most eligible bachelor in Highbury, Mr. Elton. This leads to a great deal of confusion as Mr. Elton already has his sights set on someone else.

New characters are added to the mix, making Emma's game of match making even more interesting. However, she vows that she will not enter into match making for herself and much prefers to remain single.

This vow will be tested in a most unusual way before the novel is finished.

Mr. Knightley is a constant presence that seems to keep Emma in check and prevent her from going overboard. He is a frequent guest of her father's and an old family friend. He is also related to Emma by marriage, since his brother married Emma's sister Isabella.

Mrs. Weston, Emma's former governess, is also a steadying influence that seems to arrive in the nick of time with her much needed advice just before disaster strikes. Her new stepson, Mr. Churchill, necessitates the need for this influence more than once throughout the story.

As Emma continues her match making pursuits, things get very interesting as her choices for Harriet perpetually end in ruin. Each time a suitable match is found, something occurs that puts the entire project in jeopardy.

Mr. Woodhouse is available to provide the comic relief with an ever-growing list of ailments, concerns and worries. Everything seems to bother Mr. Woodhouse and his never-ending complaints. He is a dependable presence that never disappoints when a laugh is necessary.

Before the story comes to an end, the entire village of Highbury is turned upside down by a surprise revelation that shocks everyone involved. As is typical with Austen's novels there is a wedding at the end, but one that is guaranteed to surprise the reader. In fact, there is more than one wedding in store for Highbury whether they expect it or not!

Plot Summary

Volume 1

Austen introduces most of the major characters in Volume 1, with the exceptions of Jane Fairfax, Frank Churchill, and Mrs. Elton. Since Jane and Frank are the nucleus around which the central mystery revolves, and yet, since neither character is meant to outshine the hero and heroine (Emma Woodhouse and Mr. George Knightley), it makes good literary sense to save them for Volume 2 and the middle section in which the mystery unfolds and deepens. The book opens with the focus on Emma Woodhouse, whom we find has everything to recommend her as an eighteenth century heroine: She is "handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition." However, Austen makes it clear at the outset that Emma, and indeed all the characters, will take shape not as they appear in and of themselves, but in how they relate to others. Their mannerisms and habits, their allegiance to propriety, their wit and intelligence, and their compassion will mark them as either elegant or common.

Emma is motherless and has been educated by Miss Taylor, her governess of 16 years. "Poor Miss Taylor," as Emma's father calls her (projecting his own loss onto her) has just married Mr. Weston, their close neighbor and friend, and while they will continue to see her everyday, Emma is conscious of her approaching "intellectual solitude." Emma's "evil" character flaw, "a disposition to think a little too well of herself," has ample room for exercise when she meets Harriet Smith. Harriet has neither merit nor birth to urge a friendship between herself and Emma (she is a boarder at Mrs. Goddard's school for girls and her parents are unknown), and yet Emma decides to practice on her, to make for her the perfect romantic match and along the way improve her mind. Mr. Knightley, the novel's paragon of virtue and reason, is skeptical of the friendship. Prophetically, he sees that both must lose by the friendship. No one listens, least of all Emma, for once her imagination has been let loose on a subject, she must follow it to the bitter end. And bitter it does turn out to be.

Emma's designs to "improve" Harriet by association with a "superior" mind and to match her to the eligible bachelor, Mr. Elton, spring from a mix of hubris, boredom, a real intention to do good for both, a romantic detachment from the facts, and an overweening belief in the power of her own ideas. When she learns that Harriet is falling in love with Robert Martin, a simple but honorable tenant farmer (and a man wholly suited to Harriet), she immediately sets about discouraging Harriet by comparing his "clownish" ways to the ways of the "such very real" gentlemen she sees at Hartfield. Of course, Mr. Martin is dimmed by the comparison, at least outwardly. It becomes the cause of a serious disagreement between Emma and Mr. Knightley, who very much wants the union to succeed. Through the critical eyes of Mr. Knightley, and by virtue of her own supercilious airs, readers see how far Emma is from cultivating true grace.

The game of charades that Emma is teaching Harriet to play becomes a metaphor for the dual interpretations of words and motives that Austen cleverly weaves into the

scenes assigned to Mr. Elton, Harriet, and Emma. Emma, so blinded by her own intrigues, cannot see that Mr. Elton's true intentions are to win *her* heart. Ever so belatedly, Emma becomes more and more aggravated by Mr. Elton's behavior. At the Weston's Christmas Eve party, his attentions to her are unbecoming, and she wonders why he is not more solicitous for the health of her friend, Harriet, who is home in bed with a sore throat. In the carriage ride home, the suspense is broken when Mr. Elton proposes to Emma, who, in her shock, rudely rejects him. She learns her first lesson here, when she now must comfort Harriet for the illusions that Emma herself has helped put her under. That Harriet does not judge Emma harshly, if at all, speaks to Harriet's gentleness and sweet nature but also to her inability to be discerning. That Emma truly is mortified by her mistake and compassionate toward Harriet compels us to consider Emma's true depths.

Volume 1 closes with a discussion between Emma and Mr. Knightley on the merits or demerits of Frank Churchill, who is expected to pay a filial visit to his father, Mr. Weston, and his new wife, but who continually makes excuses why he cannot come. The debate grows rather heated since Emma, full of curiosity, imagines Mr. Churchill as someone she might like a great deal, while Mr. Knightley sees in him, although he never admits it, a potential rival to his affections for Emma. In singing his praises (although she has only heard of him by rumor) she claims: "he is very likely to have a more yielding, complying, mild disposition than would suit your notions of man's perfection." Here she hits Mr. Knightley where it hurts, for while he is the perfect specimen of reason and uprightness, the reader cannot help but feel him somewhat rigid and dogmatic in his pronouncements, somewhat bereft of the light-hearted playfulness that would make him truly appealing. For his part, Mr. Knightley, again prophetically, calls Frank's amiability superficial. "He may . . . have very good manners, and be very agreeable; but he can have no . . . delicacy towards the feelings of other people." Although the judgment is not aimed particularly at her, it should have made her blush, for in the department of delicacy she still has much to learn. The exchange shows us the gap between Emma's and Mr. Knightley's sensibilities as well as their carefully guarded feelings toward one another; it also keeps us in suspense about Frank Churchill.

Volume 2

When Jane Fairfax comes to Highbury to live with her aunt (Miss Bates) and grandmother (Mrs. Bates), she serves as a lodestone, attracting the attention of Emma, Mr. Knightley, Mrs. Elton (the former Augusta Hawkins, who has also just come to town with her new husband, the spurned Mr. Elton), the Westons, the Coles, and, surreptitiously, Frank Churchill. It is against Jane's elegance that we must compare all other women and find them wanting, even Emma. Emma, aware of Jane's talents, is determined to like and befriend her; however, her good intentions are shattered when she finds Jane cold and reserved. Jane has come back to Highbury on the occasion of the Campbells going off to Ireland in the wake of their daughter's marriage to a Mr. Dixon. Learning that the former Miss Campbell is not pretty or perhaps as talented as Jane, and, moreover, that Mr. Dixon once saved Jane's life on a sailing expedition, Emma is inspired with "an ingenious and animating suspicion . . . with regard to Jane

Fairfax, this charming Mr. Dixon, and the not going to Ireland." She pumps the chattering Miss Bates for more information and, finding nothing to deter her from her suspicions, settles it in her mind that Jane is suffering from an attachment to her friend's husband.

Frank Churchill's arrival corresponds almost exactly with Jane's, although no one regards the timing as anything more than coincidence. His attentions are such that the Westons and Emma herself believe he has fallen in love with her. Here, again, Austen deftly weaves a web of double meanings and possibilities, so that a word, token, or gesture can convey several interpretations. She lets the mystery grow, and readers are none the wiser. Like Emma readers can believe that Frank Churchill is infatuated; however, they are also invited to mistrust his character, as more and more, he enters into the charade of baiting Jane Fairfax over her supposed love affair with Mr. Dixon. In the light of Frank Churchill's attentions, Emma is forced to admit that, although she has vowed never to marry, she might be falling in love with Frank. However, upon reflection, she realizes her attachment is not deep. She becomes increasingly more concerned with how gently to reject him when he does propose to her.

Frank goes off 16 miles to London to have his hair cut (he says), an indulgence that some judge excessive. A few days after he returns, the Coles have a dinner party, during which it is discovered that a pianoforte had arrived mysteriously at the Bates's for Jane. Emma guesses immediately that it is from Mr. Dixon, and those gathered speculate that it must come from the Campbells, since they know how extremely well Jane plays and how much she must miss an instrument at her aunt's home. In the meantime, Mr. Knightley is charitable toward Jane Fairfax and the Mrs. and Miss Bates, and it is not long before Mrs. Weston takes it into her head that he must be in love with Jane. Emma's explosive rejection of such an idea hints at her feelings of propriety regarding Mr. Knightley and her well-hidden jealousy of Jane.

Frank Churchill's youthful energy is contagious. He wants to have a ball, and every plan is made for its going forward, until he suddenly is called away by his ailing Aunt Churchill. His going away is an occasion for sadness, and an opportunity for Austen to introduce the recently returned Mr. Elton with his new wife. All the duties that must be shown to newly-weds□the visits, the teas, the small social indulgences□are given with due regard to their place as a respected couple in Highbury. But Emma soon sees that the new Mrs. Elton is "self-important, presuming, familiar, ignorant, and ill-bred." Harriet, though she lacks birthright or fortune, shines by comparison, an irony that Austen clearly intends for readers to feel. Mrs. Elton takes Jane under her wing, more by persistence and force than by any attraction on Jane's side. Emma is puzzled as to why someone of Jane's gentility would stoop to "chuse the mortification of Mrs. Elton's notice and the penury of her conversation." It is Mr. Knightley, once again, who reminds Emma of her own fault in that she herself deigned it unnecessary to take any further notice of Jane. The volume closes with a dinner party at Hartfield for the Eltons, at which we see Mrs. Elton presumptuously planning to find employment for Jane and Jane politely declining.

Volume 3

At the end of Volume 2, nothing has been resolved: Harriet still has not quite recovered from the loss of *two* potential husbands; Jane Fairfax remains mysteriously reserved; Frank Churchill is returning but no one knows when; Emma is still unclear about her feelings for Frank Churchill; and Mr. Knightley's denial of his matrimonial intentions toward Jane Fairfax does not satisfy the discerning Mrs. Weston. The stage, then, is set for the action's climax. Three scenes in particular are noteworthy for providing encounters among the whole cast of characters, for further developing individual vices and virtues, and for teasing readers with the possibilities of the mystery's solution. The first is the ball at the Crown, a greatly anticipated event that has been delayed until the return of Frank Churchill. Here at the dance Emma is happily engaged for each set, but Harriet is not. At one juncture she is mortified by the snub of Mr. Elton who refuses to dance with her when she is the only woman unengaged. Both Mr. and Mrs. Elton, who are seen to be smugly enjoying the discomfort they have caused, are shown in the worst possible light. Mr. Knightley comes to the rescue and saves Harriet the embarrassment of the moment, an act for which Emma can hardly praise him enough. Frank Churchill continues to flirt with Emma, but his attentions to Jane Fairfax seem pointed. To further complicate matters of romance, some days later, when gypsies accost Harriet, Frank Churchill gallantly comes to the rescue.

The second scene, the "exploration" to Mr. Knightley's estate of Donwell Abbey, once again brings the characters together (all except Frank Churchill, who arrives late after having been called away to attend Mrs. Churchill). At Donwell, Emma notes that Mr. Knightley seems often in conversation with Harriet and wonders what they can be talking about. Much of the scene is taken up with descriptions of the estate, which represent for Austen and for Emma all that is good and right with England. The narrator comments: "It was a sweet view□sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive." For her part, Emma "felt all the honest pride and complacency which her alliance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant. . . . Emma felt an increasing respect for it, as the residence of a family of such true gentility, untainted in blood and understanding." Clearly, Emma is at home here. Strangely, though, Jane Fairfax bursts into her reverie with the news that she is leaving and, furthermore, walking home alone. Emma is shocked but agrees to let Jane leave. She is clearly upset; earlier, Emma has remarked her conversation with Mrs. Elton, who is still persisting in finding "a suitable situation" for her. Finally, Frank Churchill arrives "out of humour," an occasion for Emma to remark to herself that Harriet's "sweet easy temper" will not mind his ill one. Ever since the gypsy rescue, Emma has been considering a match between them not at all to be opposed.

The third important group scene involves a picnic to Box Hill, during which Emma and Frank not only flirt openly, but make the rest of the group uncomfortable by their indelicate gamesmanship and barely disguised taunts. Emma's deliberate insult to Miss Bates makes Mr. Knightley so angry that Emma later feels deep shame and regret. Even Mrs. Elton seems more in the right than Emma, and the party breaks up, leaving

Harriet, Mr. Weston, Frank, and Emma to themselves. Jane Fairfax's health becomes a matter of concern after Box Hill, and the next bit of news is that she has decided, on Mrs. Elton's recommendation, to go as governess to a Mrs. Smallridge. At about the same time, Mr. Knightley decides, on a moment's notice, to go to London for several days for no apparent reason. But all news is relegated to the background when it is discovered that Mrs. Churchill has died.

The denouement comes quickly. On the immediate heels of Mrs. Churchill's demise, Emma learns through Mrs. Weston that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax have been secretly engaged all along. The Westons are loath to tell Emma for fear she is in love with him. However, Emma is more worried for Harriet, for comically enough, she has really begun to think of Frank and Harriet as a match. Now that Mrs. Churchill is out of the way, Frank and Jane can openly declare their love. Harriet, in the meantime, confesses to Emma that she has fallen in love with Mr. Knightley and believes that he might share her feelings. Emma is astounded. She had thought Harriet in love with Frank after the gypsy episode, but all along it had been Mr. Knightley's saving her at the ball that had overcome Harriet with gratitude. At the moment of Harriet's confession, Emma wakes up: "It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!"

Romances must have a happy ending, or at least must end in weddings, and this one does in spades. All the eligible young people are married off most appropriately. The ill-bred Eltons have each other; the mysterious but charming and elegant Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, free of obstacles, are united. When Mr. Knightley returns from London, it is with the intention of comforting Emma for her loss of Frank. Emma believes his diffident behavior while walking in the garden can only mean he is hesitant to speak of his love for Harriet. Since both are operating under the most mistaken of convictions, it is only by luck (but we feel it is destiny) that Mr. Knightley finds the nerve to propose. As for Harriet, all's well that ends well. Her plain dealing farmer, Mr. Martin, is still in love. With the help of Mr. Knightley (whose attentions to Harriet have been precisely meant to assess her suitability to Mr. Martin) and the approval of Emma, they, too, are married in the little country church. There can be no doubt that Emma has come to value what is most ideal and elegant in herself by her union with Mr. Knightley□the joy that stems from a life ruled by reason and compassion.

Volume 1 Chapter 1

Volume 1, Chapter 1 Summary

Emma Woodhouse, as we can see from this first chapter, is a girl who has lived in the lap of luxury most of her life. Her mother died when she was five years old, leaving Emma, her sister Isabella and their father to fend for themselves. After the death of her mother, Miss Taylor is hired on as a governess for the sisters. As the years go by, Miss Taylor and Emma become close friends. After Emma's sister is married, they become even closer. On Miss Taylor's wedding day, Emma realizes that she is being left bereft of this companionship and an intellectual sparring partner.

As the chapter progresses we learn more about Emma's father, a man who seems to be unconcerned with complex thought or bodily movement, content with his state in life. He bitterly regrets Miss Taylor's marriage and seems to despair of seeing her again, even though Miss Taylor has moved just a half mile away to Randall's, the home of her new husband Mr. Weston,.

As Emma and her father sit down to tea after dinner, a visitor named Mr. Knightley arrives and we learn that he is a family friend and Emma's brother in law. He also appears to be the only person in the small village where the Woodhouses live who is willing to tell Emma the truth about herself. Emma doesn't always appreciate this but remains good-natured during this visit.

We learn that Emma was responsible for Miss Taylor marrying Mr. Weston and that she has quite a successful career as a matchmaker. As her father asks her to refrain from matchmaking again given that he feels she is responsible for their current predicament, the remainder of the plot is foreshadowed as Emma reveals that she has one more match to make. Mr. Elton, who is new in town, is her next target. Although Emma has no desire to attempt matchmaking for herself, she defends her matchmaking abilities to Mr. Knightley, who feels that it was mere luck that brought Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor together and that Emma had no part in forging the marriage.

This good-natured banter comes to a close as we reach the end of Chapter 1. Mr. Knightley suggests that Emma invite Mr. Elton over to dinner, but to leave the matchmaking to the more than capable Mr. Elton.

Volume 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

This story is set, as are most of Jane Austen's works, in England during the late 1700's and early 1800's. We are introduced to the main character, Emma Woodhouse, in the first paragraph and are immediately made aware that all is not right in the Woodhouse home. Her longtime friend and governess, Miss Taylor, was married earlier in the day and Emma and her father are faced with the prospect of many lonely nights without

Miss Taylor to keep them company. A surprise visitor shows up and cheers their evening as more is revealed about Emma and her personality.

Volume 1 Chapter 2

Volume 1 Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter brings Mr. Weston into the forefront and we discover many things about his character. He is much unlike his stable brothers, and preferred a life in the militia. He married a well-to-do woman, Miss Churchill, against the wishes of her parents. Since Miss Churchill had money of her own, she defies her family's wishes and suffers through the consequences of her marriage. He parents quietly disinherit her and her brother does not cease his protestation regarding their marriage.

Although Miss Churchill was raised in wealth, the lifestyle change after her marriage is a shock to her and she insists on living a lifestyle somewhat beyond their means. A son, Frank, is born shortly before Miss Churchill's death, after three years of marriage to Mr. Weston.

Frank is then taken in by his grandparents, who after considering the death of their daughter feel some obligation for his upbringing. This does not seem to bother Mr. Weston, who visits his son in London each year. After reaching adulthood, Frank takes the last name of Churchill and is officially adopted by his aunt and uncle.

After this brief background of Mr. Weston is provided, the new Mrs. Weston appears in the second part of this chapter and her feelings about her marriage are revealed. This second union is much happier than the first and we learn about the purchase of Randalls, the estate where the Weston's live. Mr. Weston had long desired Randalls and steadily saved up enough money to achieve his goal of owning the estate and marrying a young woman. He has succeeded on both points and is now quite happy.

Highbury is abuzz with excitement over the expected visit of Mr. Frank Churchill, which is presumed to be imminent after the wedding of his father. A letter from Mr. Churchill is delivered to the new Mrs. Weston and everyone in the village begins discussing it. The general air of the town is heavy with anticipation of this visit, and no one talks of anything else.

Before the chapter ends, we are treated to a humorous side story regarding Emma's father's dislike of rich foods. He particularly dislikes wedding cake, which he advises everyone at the Weston marriage to avoid. Much to his dismay, his advice is ignored. Even the apothecary, Mr. Perry and his family partake in enjoying the desert.

Volume 1 Chapter 2 Analysis

In Chapter 2, we begin to see more evidence of the social boundaries that were deeply in place during this time period. By the actions of Miss Churchill's parents, it is obvious that marrying beneath one's station in life was an unforgivable offence.

By using humor, Miss Austen also informs us of some of the popular ways of thinking during that time period, such as the belief that wedding cake and rich foods were bad for people and for the digestion.

Volume 1 Chapter 3

Volume 1 Chapter 3 Summary

As the nights at Highbury continue without Miss Taylor, the usual rounds of callers are admitted. Mr. Woodhouse prefers a very small circle of friends and the same guests can be counted on for an evening filled with small talk and gossip of the day's activities. Emma begins to despair, thinking that her nights will now be filled with nothing but this chatter and no real conversation. Miss Taylor's intellectual shoes are hard to fill and Emma fears that she will find no one to truly discuss important topics in the future.

Mrs. and Miss Bates are introduced as frequent visitors at Hartfield. Mrs. Bates is the widow of the vicar at Highbury, and is very well respected. Her daughter, Miss Bates, although neither pretty, rich or highly intelligent is nevertheless a very popular woman in Highbury. Much of this is explained as being due to her charming and warm personality. She is unmarried and is spending her life taking care of her mother.

Mrs. Goddard is also introduced as the mistress of the local boarding school, a very well respected establishment. Mention is made of her owing Mr. Woodhouse for his kindness in the past, and is given as explanation for her frequent visits to Hartfield.

As Emma dreads the approach of yet another evening sitting in front of the fire with Mrs. and Miss Bates, her father and Mrs. Goddard, she receives news that Mrs. Goddard will be bringing an unexpected guest. Miss Harriet Smith, a seventeen-year-old girl, is now introduced and Emma begins to think that she might have a new friend in Harriet. Harriet is very pretty and pleasant, and so far seems to fit Emma's ideal for a friend. Although not much is known of Harriet's background, she has formed good friendships in Highbury and is well respected among its inhabitants.

The evening progresses and to the dismay of Mr. Woodhouse, the table is brought closer to the fire and supper is laid out for the guests. His opinions of certain foods, especially anything unwholesome are made known. He makes several recommendations on the food being served, while restricting his meal to a thin bowl of gruel.

The dinner party is a success and Harriet feels quite happy and proud that her introduction to Emma went so well. Their future friendship has been started on the right track.

Volume 1 Chapter 3 Analysis

We are starting to learn more about Mr. Woodhouse and his peculiarities. In particular, his views on food are discussed as they were in the previous chapter. We are also introduced to new characters who are quite typical models of women during this time period. Women were either married or, if they were single and over a certain age or

widowed, they were typically employed as teachers. This seems to be a role that many women were resigned to.

Emma's snobbery is becoming more apparent and is a foreshadowing of what we can expect from her in the chapters to come. Her method of choosing friends is far different from what we are used to in today's society. However, this method was quite common during this time period, as your place in society was more important than your personal tastes.

Volume 1 Chapter 4

Volume 1 Chapter 4 Summary

As more characters are introduced, in particular the Martin family, we begin to see that Harriet is Emma's next victim for matchmaking. Emma has it in her mind to match up Harriet with Mr. Elton, whom she considers a proper gentleman. However, Harriet seems to be quite taken with Mr. Martin, a simple farmer, which horrifies Emma. The two girls meet Mr. Martin on the road to Hartfield and Emma is appalled by his manners. Meanwhile, it is apparent that Harriet has some affection for the young man, an affection that Emma hopes to squash

For the first time, we can see the actual snobbishness of Emma as she compares Mr. Martin, the son of a farmer, to Mr. Elton, a young gentleman introduced earlier in the book. Emma has it in her mind to create the perfect match for Harriet, and in Emma's eyes Mr. Martin is far from the perfect match.

As Harriet and Emma grow closer, Emma attempts to learn more about Harriet's past without any luck. Harriet does not know who her actual parents are and Mrs. Goddard has not supplied her with any additional information. Though this does not seem to bother Harriet, Emma is quite curious. Emma looks at Harriet as something Emma's house needs, which is an odd way to consider a friend. Since Mrs. Weston now has all that she needs since her marriage, Emma looks at Harriet as someone who can benefit greatly from Emma's friendship.

The Martin Family is introduced in this chapter, and they are generally looked down upon by Emma. Although they are reasonably wealthy and have a very spacious and elegant home, they do not have the caliber of manners that Emma is accustomed to. Mr. Martin is approximately 24 years old and it is evident that he is quite taken with Harriet. The affection is mutual, which disturbs Emma greatly. She resolves to introduce Harriet to Mr. Elton hoping that Harriet will forget Mr. Martin.

Volume 1 Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter also reveals the class boundaries that existed during this time in England. Emma is a great portrayal of the wealthy that populated this area of England in the 1700 and 1800's. She is not ashamed at her snobbery and is amazed that Harriet does not share her dislike of Mr. Martin's manners. Emma compares him to Mr. Knightley, who is according to Emma, the epitome of a gentleman. and Mr. Martin falls quite short in her estimation.

Volume 1 Chapter 5

Volume 1 Chapter 5 Summary

In this chapter, Mr. Knightley visits Mrs. Weston to discuss the subject of Harriet and her influence on Emma. Mr. Knightley is quite concerned that Harriet is not at all good for Emma and that their acquaintance bodes ill for Emma. Mrs. Weston does not share this opinion, and their conversation reveals quite a bit about Emma's character and what makes her tick. For the first time, it is revealed that Mr. Knightley might have some affection for Emma beyond friendliness. Mrs. Weston won't be swayed in her opinion that Harriet is a good friend for Emma.

The two leave their conversation until Christmas, when the arrival of Mr. Knightley's brother and Emma's sister Isabella will take place. Since both John Knightley and Isabella know Emma quite well, it is hoped that they will be able to make sense out of this problem.

Volume 1 Chapter 5 Analysis

We learn much more about Emma and her upbringing in this chapter. She is apparently quite willful and has successfully bent her family and her former governess, Mrs. Weston, to her will. Mr. Knightley is concerned that Harriet's constant flattery of Emma will lead to problems in the future and we begin to see that he may truly care for Emma. His dislike of Harriet, however, is quite apparent and he makes no apologies for this.

Mrs. Weston however, feels that Harriet will get Emma to read more, which is something she has tried to do since Emma was a child. She feels that the friendship will make Emma grow intellectually and it is quite obvious that Mrs. Weston thinks very highly of Emma. In her eyes, Emma can do no wrong.

Volume 1 Chapter 6

Volume 1 Chapter 6 Summary

Emma's talent for painting is revealed and we learn that she has done a number of portraits, landscapes and other drawings. As she attempts to bring Harriet and Mr. Elton together, the idea is hatched for her to paint Harriet's portrait. Although Harriet is somewhat shy about the idea, and Emma is not entirely convinced that she can create a proper likeness, Mr. Elton pleads with her to take on the task.

As we see in this chapter, Emma's designs appear to be working, at least on Mr. Elton. Harriet's feelings about Mr. Elton, however, are not revealed; leaving us to wonder if she is still set on the uncouth Mr. Martin.

As the portrait is being painted, Mr. Elton continually checks on its progress and becomes a bit of a nuisance. In the end, the painting is finished and it is decided that Mr. Elton will take it to London to have it professionally framed.

Volume 1 Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter touches on Emma's discreet matchmaking attempts between Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith. She invites him frequently to join them and we are led to believe that he is beginning to grow in admiration of Harriet.

Emma's talent for painting is revealed for the first time and this revelation is an interesting one. Women in this time were encouraged to spend their time reading, painting and engaging in necessary social arts. Emma's character is truly a well-rounded tintype of a woman during this time period.

Volume 1 Chapter 7

Volume 1 Chapter 7 Summary

Harriet is extremely surprised to find a parcel in her room at Mrs. Goddard's containing not only some songs that Elizabeth Martin returned after copying them, but a mysterious letter from Mr. Martin. Harriet reads the letter and rushes to meet with Emma to discuss its contents.

The letter is a proposal of marriage from Mr. Martin. His letter is analyzed by Emma and is she is surprised that it is so well written. However, this does not earn many points for Mr. Martin with Emma as she is still dead set against Harriet marrying him. Harriet is confused and does not know what to do.

Emma advises Harriet, but leaves the decision up to her. Harriet decides to reject the proposal, due to the fact that it would not be proper to accept a proposal in the form of a very brief letter from someone you do not know very well.

Emma reveals that this was a wise choice, as she would never visit Harriet again if she wed Mr. Martin. Harriet is shocked by this but understands when Emma explains that the Martin's simply aren't accepted in Highbury society and that she could not compromise her position by visiting her friend if she were to marry Mr. Martin.

Harriet writes a letter to Mr. Martin to reject his proposal, but fears that she will never again be invited to Abbey Hill Farms. Emma assures her that this is no great loss as Highbury is much more desirable.

Volume 1 Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter reveals more of the class disparities present among the middle and upper classes in Europe at this time. Emma, as was revealed earlier in the book, is quite snobbish when it comes to class and manners and makes no apologies for this behavior.

It is quite shocking to the reader to find out that Emma would have no problem immediately dropping her new friend should she marry Mr. Martin. However, Emma seems quite unapologetic as this was absolutely the norm.

Volume 1 Chapter 8

Volume 1 Chapter 8 Summary

As Emma and Harriet become closer, Harriet begins to spend more of her time at the Hartfield and only occasionally drops in to pick up her things from the boarding school.

It is during one of these occasions that Emma and Mr. Woodhouse are visited by Mr. Knightley. Mr. Knightley seems to be acting a little strange, and Emma questions his apparently good mood.

As her father decides to take a walk, Mr. Knightley stays behind to chat with Emma. He reveals the cause for his good mood and the back-story behind Mr. Martin's proposal letter comes to light.

Emma reveals that she told Harriet that she would be better off not accepting this proposal and Mr. Knightley is shocked. He becomes quite angry with Emma and leaves the estate.

Volume 1 Chapter 8 Analysis

Although in a previous chapter Mr. Knightley was unabashedly against Harriet, in this chapter he seems as though he was one of her greatest champions. This leaves the reader to wonder if he has an ulterior motive behind his encouragement of Mr. Martin's proposal.

Is Mr. Knightly attempting to remove Harriet from Emma's life by encouraging this marriage? Since he is undoubtedly aware of the social implications, this seems quite likely.

His anger at Emma for her advice to Harriet seems to be somewhat overdone and we are left to wonder what course of action he will now take.

Volume 1 Chapter 9

Volume 1 Chapter 9 Summary

This chapter revolves around a riddle or a charade that Mr. Elton leaves in the care of Emma. The meaning of the riddle is figured out by Emma to be Courtship and she assumes that the riddle was meant for Harriet. She shows the riddle to Harriet, who does not understand it at first.

Emma explains that Mr. Elton wrote the riddle for Harriet and that there is a good deal of hidden meaning in it. The girls agree to transcribe the riddle into their collection, leaving out the last two lines:

Lord of the earth and sea, he bends a slave,

And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.

These lines are omitted from the collection because Emma discerns that they were solely for Harriet. Emma has managed to convince Harriet that Mr. Elton is madly in love with her and that the match would be most beneficial to her social status.

Emma's father joins the girls and has Emma read him their new riddle. He enjoys it and tries to recall a riddle of which he can never remember the ending. Mr. Woodhouse begins to discuss the imminent return of his daughter Isabella and bemoans the fact that she can only stay for one week.

Mr. Elton returns and Emma gives the riddle back to him, after showing him their collection and their newest entry. He seems confused, not only by the copying of the riddle, but also by Harriet's behavior towards him. The chapter closes with Mr. Elton saying that this is one of the greatest honors of his life. Emma leaves to indulge herself in the laughter that she always seems to have at hand after Mr. Elton makes one of his speeches.

Volume 1 Chapter 9 Analysis

In this chapter, we learn more about the importance of riddles or charades during this time of English history. People collected these riddles and it was quite important to have a collection filled with a wide variety of well-written riddles.

We begin to see that Emma is most certain that Mr. Elton is madly in love with Harriet, but at the same time doubt is cast on this assertion. Is Emma truly the object of Mr. Elton's affections? His actions after finding out what the girls have done with his riddle seems to point in this direction.

Before the end of the chapter, we read more about Isabella's long anticipated arrival at the Woodhouse home. Mr. Woodhouse seems unable to handle that the visit will only be a short one and hopes to convince Isabella to stay longer with her family.

Emma, as usual, gets her way by convincing her father that this idea is folly and that Isabella cannot bear to be separated from her husband.

Volume 1 Chapter 10

Volume 1 Chapter 10 Summary

Emma and Harriet on are on their way to visit a poor family in Highbury and some very interesting conversation ensues. Emma declares that she doubts she will ever marry, a proposition that thoroughly shocks Harriet. When Harriet presses her about being an old maid, Emma responds that single women of wealth are never thought of as old maids and that only poor women who have not been able to find a husband fit into this category.

As they continue their journey, they pass Mr. Elton's house and both girls wish that they had a reason to go inside to see what the interior was like. After Emma concludes her visit with the poor family, the girls meet Mr. Elton, who was planning on visiting this family as well. They continue walking for a time while Emma tries to find a way to leave the two of them alone.

She finally breaks her shoelace intentionally and asks Mr. Elton if they can go to his house to find a replacement ribbon or string. Gaining entrance to the house, Emma busies herself with Mr. Elton's housekeeper, hoping that Mr. Elton will use this time to finally declare his affection to Harriet.

After some time, she returns to find them staring out the window, with no progress on the declaration being made.

A new character is introduced in this chapter, Jane Fairfax. We are immediately aware that Emma is not at all fond of Miss Fairfax and dreads an impending visit from this girl.

Volume 1 Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter, we finally begin to see another side to Emma. Her charity and care of the poor are somewhat at odds with her tendency towards snobbery, and we begin to see that Emma isn't such a bad person after all.

The lengths Emma goes to ensure that Harriet and Mr. Elton will be left alone are quite comical, especially since they fail in producing the long awaited declaration.

Volume 1 Chapter 11

Volume 1 Chapter 11 Summary

The long awaited visit from Isabella, her children and Mr. John Knightley finally transpires. We learn more about Mr. John Knightley's temperament, which Emma seems to find lacking in many regards. He seems to be less inclined towards politeness and tolerance of her father, which Emma cannot stand.

Isabella's children are briefly introduced, but kept away from their grandfather most of the time so as not become annoying.

The reunited family discusses the departure of Miss Taylor and her wedding with Mr. Weston. Isabella wants to know if Mr. Churchill has made his long awaited appearance, and his letter to his stepmother is again discussed.

This chapter ends before dinner and we will pick up the remainder of the Woodhouse's evening in the next chapter.

Volume 1 Chapter 11 Analysis

It is interesting to compare Isabella and her sister in this chapter. While there are some similarities, the two are virtually night and day to one another. Isabella is sweet and retiring, and apparently not as smart as her sister Emma.

Mr. John Knightley's character is also quite interesting, especially since he does not seem to be willing to tolerate Mr. Woodhouse's idiosyncrasies, or Emma's for that matter. An earlier conversation between Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley is to be remembered at this point, since Mr. Knightley hopes his brother would set Emma straight on Harriet Smith.

Volume 1 Chapter 12

Volume 1 Chapter 12 Summary

Mr. Knightley arrives for dinner and reconciles with Emma. Neither one is willing to admit that they were wrong but they agree to be friends again. Before dinner, everyone joins and begins various conversations. Isabella sits with her father while the two brothers begin conversing about the details of Mr. Knightley's estate. Emma bounces between the two conversations.

During dinner, which is a bowl of thin gruel, Mr. John Knightley begins to tire of Mr. Woodhouse and snaps at him regarding his advice and the advice of Mr. Woodhouse's friend, Mr. Perry where his children are concerned.

We learn that Bella, Isabella's youngest daughter, has had throat trouble and that the family spent the summer at the sea to cure this trouble. Mr. Woodhouse is resentful of this and wishes they had spent the summer with him. Because of this, he incessantly brings up Mr. Perry's advice that the location they chose for their summer vacation was all wrong.

John finally retorts against Mr. Perry and Mr. Knightley steps in to steer the conversation in a different course. Disaster is avoided, but Emma is further justified in her feelings on Mr. John Knightley and his rudeness.

Volume 1 Chapter 12 Analysis

In Emma's time, it was quite common for families to visit the sea for their health, and numerous strange remedies abounded at this time. Austen includes these in her book, which makes for an interesting history lesson during the reading of this novel.

Emma's dislike of her brother-in-law's manners is made quite clear and it is obvious that his presence is somewhat chafing to the family. However, being able to see Isabella is apparently worth this trouble.

The difference in the sisters is dramatic and is further illustrated by Isabella's affection for the previously mentioned Jane Fairfax.

Volume 1 Chapter 13

Volume 1 Chapter 13 Summary

The Woodhouses prepare for an evening at Randalls with the Westons. Harriet is invited but is not able to go due to a bad sore throat. Emma immediately thinks that Mr. Elton, who was also invited, will refuse to go. However, he seems very unconcerned about Harriet and can't wait to go to the party.

Mr. John Knightley tells Emma that he thinks Mr. Elton is in love with her, a prospect that terrifies Emma. She puts it out of her mind and prepares for the evening.

Volume 1 Chapter 13 Analysis

As this chapter progresses, a seed of doubt is placed in the reader's mind regarding Mr. Elton and Miss Harriet Smith. Emma seems to be disturbed at this prospect and does her best to forget Mr. Elton entirely.

We continue to learn more about Emma and how she is very used to getting her way. Since she wants Mr. Elton to be in love with Harriet, it is inconceivable to her that he should love another.

Volume 1 Chapter 14

Volume 1 Chapter 14 Summary

Everyone arrives at Randalls and congregates together discussing various subjects. Mr. Frank Churchill is the topic of one important discussion, one that Emma tries to take part in. She misses the first part of this conversation, dealing with when Mr. Churchill will arrive thanks to Mr. Elton.

Emma begins to talk with Mrs. Weston about Mr. Churchill and we find out that Mr. Churchill is subject to the whims of his aunt and his arrival may be further off than anticipated.

Volume 1 Chapter 14 Analysis

We see that Emma may be wavering in her avowal to remain single as the prospect of Mr. Churchill's arrival nears. You can see that matches made during this time were not based so much on love, but on social status.

Mrs. Weston's continued belief that Emma can do no wrong is further revealed as she attempts to explain why Mr. Churchill is subject to his aunt, thinking that Emma cannot conceive of such a notion.

Volume 1 Chapter 15

Volume 1 Chapter 15 Summary

Tea begins after dinner at Randalls and much fun is had by everyone but Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley. They are both concerned about the weather and the prospect of making it back home safely.

Throughout the night Mr. Elton clings to Emma, making Mr. John Knightley's advice seem true. A snowstorm sets in and after much discussion everyone decides to leave Randalls.

Emma ends up riding in a carriage alone with Mr. Elton, who confesses his undying affection for her. Emma rebuffs him and they argue over Harriet. Mr. Elton leaves the carriage in a huff and Emma is shocked by his apparent lack of manners.

Volume 1 Chapter 15 Analysis

The third part of the dinner party is very revealing, as Mr. Elton's true affections are made known. Emma's shock and remorse at having misled Harriet are keen, and she regrets her matchmaking attempts.

We begin to see that Emma might be reconsidering her attempts at matchmaking, and her avowal never to marry. Emma begins to think that a match with the elusive Mr. Churchill might be very right for her.

Volume 1 Chapter 16

Volume 1 Chapter 16 Summary

Snowed in at Hartfield, Emma takes this time to reflect on Mr. Elton's true motives behind his professed love for her. She comes to the conclusion that he must only be interested in her status and will soon find someone else to fixate on.

Emma wonders how she will tell Harriet that Mr. Elton is not in love with her and decides to do her best to completely avoid Mr. Elton.

Volume 1 Chapter 16 Analysis

Emma's character is continuing to grow as she analyzes Mr. Elton and his supposed love for her. Far from being romantic or impressed with this devotion, she is appalled.

Emma is a deviation from the norm of the women in this time period and is clearly a free thinker who is unafraid to state her mind and not marry the first eligible man that proposes.

Volume 1 Chapter 17

Volume 1 Chapter 17 Summary

Mr. John Knightley and his family take leave of Hartfield and Mr. Woodhouse is very much upset. Mr. Elton sends a letter to Mr. Woodhouse informing him that he will be departing for Bath right away with the intention of staying for a few weeks. Emma is not mentioned in the letter, and she worries that her father will notice this. Instead, Mr. Woodhouse fixates on his worry that Mr. Elton will not return.

Emma finally reveals the truth about Mr. Elton to Harriet, who is quite upset with the news. Instead of blaming Mr. Elton, she deems herself unworthy of his attention anyway. Emma resolves to make her comfortable at Hartfield and to keep her mind occupied away from Mr. Elton.

The chapter ends with Emma deciding that she will not rest until she has found someone else to make Harriet happy.

Volume 1 Chapter 17 Analysis

Once again, we are treated to the humorous diversion of Mr. Woodhouse's tendency to be a worrywart. Emma does her best to placate him, and as usual, gets her way.

Her decision to set Harriet up with someone else tells us that there is certainly more intrigue awaiting poor Harriet, which will be revealed in the forthcoming chapters.

Austen continues to form her characters throughout the remainder of Volume 1, and she does not seem to be afraid to let them grow and mature. This is somewhat unusual, since many author's characters are stagnant and do not change throughout a story line.

Volume 1 Chapter 18

Volume 1 Chapter 18 Summary

Mr. Frank Churchill, much to the dismay of the Westons, will not be visiting Randalls as planned. Although Mr. Weston makes the best of this news Mrs. Weston is quite distraught. The continued avoidance of Mr. Churchill worries her that her husband is being hurt unnecessarily.

Emma, although trying to lie low from love for a while, commiserates with the Westons as she feels she should. Although she does not really feel any dismay at the delay of Mr. Churchill's arrival, she pretends to for the sake of Mrs. Weston.

Mr. Knightley and Emma discuss Mr. Churchill at length and it is revealed that Mr. Knightley doesn't think very highly of a man who will not stand up to his aunt and say that he is visiting his father. Mr. Knightley and Emma disagree on what is proper and she defends Mr. Churchill to the best of her ability.

Volume 1 Chapter 18 Analysis

Another interesting aspect of Emma's character is revealed as she lies about her dismay over Mr. Churchill's delay. It was quite common at the time to put on a good front and act the role you were supposed to play, according to your friends and your stature in society. Emma is no exception.

Mr. Knightley's dislike of Mr. Churchill is quite interesting as he seems to have developed it despite never meeting the man. He is the one person in Highbury who is not enthralled by Mr. Churchill's letters, revealing that he is truly an independent thinker.

Volume 2 Chapter 1

Volume 2 Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter opens during a walk with Emma and Harriet. Harriet is still bemoaning the loss of Mr. Elton and Emma is trying to figure out how to distract her. She decides to call on Mrs. and Miss Bates in the hopes that will help.

Unfortunately, the Bates have just had a visit from Mrs. Cole, whose son is a close friend of Mr. Elton. The girls are regaled with the stories of Mr. Elton at Bath and then a more dreaded turn of conversation occurs.

Emma, hoping to avoid the subject of Miss Fairfax entirely, is forced to sit through a description of Miss Fairfax's latest letter. The Bates' are very excited about this letter, since Miss Fairfax mentions that she will be arriving within a week for a three-month stay.

Emma hurries to leave before the actual letter can be read, but not before she gathers some suspicion about Miss Fairfax's sudden decision to visit.

Volume 2 Chapter 1 Analysis

Two new characters are mentioned in this chapter, but only in passing. Mrs. Cole and her son are friends of Mrs. And Miss Bates, as well as Mr. Elton. It seems that no matter where Emma turns, she can't get Harriet away from news about Mr. Elton.

Emma's suspicions are raised regarding Miss Fairfax's imminent visit. It is revealed that there may be more than meets the eye to Miss Fairfax and her possible relationship with a married man. Although this was looked down upon during this time period, it was extremely common.

Volume 2 Chapter 2

Volume 2 Chapter 2 Summary

More of Miss Fairfax's background is revealed in the beginning of this chapter. We learn that she was orphaned at a young age and cared for by her grandmother, Mrs. Bates, and her aunt, Miss Bates. At the age of nine, she went to live with a family friend, Colonel Campbell, who cared for her and provided an education.

Emma resolves upon the arrival of Miss Fairfax to cease in her dislike. However, as the first week goes on this resolution seems to be getting harder for Emma. Miss Fairfax is described as being almost too polite, and therefore somewhat suspicious in her nature.

Miss Fairfax is acquainted with Mr. Churchill and Emma does her best to find out more about him. Unfortunately, she can only pry very general statements about him out of Miss Fairfax.

Volume 2 Chapter 2 Analysis

The game of being polite is quite humorous, as Emma and Miss Fairfax dance around one another. There is still some suspicion regarding the nature of the relationship between Mr. Dixon, the husband of Colonel Campbell's daughter and Miss Fairfax, but as of yet no more is revealed.

One gets the impression that Austen knew someone much like Miss Fairfax and did not think highly of her. The narrator of the story seems to almost sneer while she is being mentioned.

Volume 2 Chapter 3

Volume 2 Chapter 3 Summary

Mr. Knightley discusses the past evening with Emma, attempting to bait her regarding Miss Fairfax. Emma eludes him and does her best to convince him that she truly does like Miss Fairfax. Mr. Knightley seems to be in very high spirits and is about to announce a piece of good news when Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax burst into the room.

The news is that Mr. Elton is going to marry a Miss Hawkins, and Mr. Knightley watches Emma closely to see her reaction. After thanking Emma and Mr. Woodhouse for the leg of pork that they sent over to them, Miss Bates launches into a complete story about this impending marriage. Of course, this was Mr. Knightley's news as well, and Emma is quite shocked and concerned for Harriet.

Harriet has run into Mr. Martin and his sister Elizabeth at a store in Highbury, and is much too upset over that for the full effect of Mr. Elton's impending marriage to sink in. Both were quite congenial to Harriet and she is desperate for Emma's advice on what she should do.

Volume 2 Chapter 3 Analysis

More of the Woodhouses' charity to the poor is revealed, with their gift of a leg of pork to the Bates family. Mr. Knightley's character seems to have more life in this chapter as he watches Emma for her reaction. Is he aware of Mr. Elton's previous avowal of affection for Emma, or is this merely because of her attempts to match Mr. Elton with Harriet?

The re-entry of Mr. Martin on the scene is a foretaste of more high jinks that are soon to be on the horizon.

Volume 2 Chapter 4

Volume 2 Chapter 4 Summary

Highbury begins to discuss the upcoming nuptials of Mr. Elton and Miss Hawkins at great length. Much is made about her and her coming to live in the village. Harriet does her best to avoid this talk, but cannot escape the constant reminder of the failed matchmaking attempt with Mr. Elton.

Miss Hawkins is discussed at length and it is revealed that she is quite wealthy, and reasonably good-looking. The anticipation of her arrival at Highbury is very high and no one talks of anything else.

Mr. Elton arrives back in Highbury and spends most of his time gloating about his upcoming marriage. It seems that the entire village can talk of nothing else.

Elizabeth Martin visits Harriet and invites her to Abbey Mill for a visit. Harriet agrees, and Emma and she cook up a plan to keep her visit restrained to 15 minutes. Emma will drop her at Abbey Mill from the carriage and return promptly to keep the visit short.

Volume 2 Chapter 4 Analysis

It appears that Emma's assessment of Mr. Elton was quite accurate. Miss Hawkins, although not ugly, has one claim to fame and that is her fortune of 10,000 and 1 pounds. This is referred to as 10,000 1 since no one knows for sure the entire amount, but they do know it is greater than 10,000 pounds.

The expected arrival of Miss Hawkins has temporarily derailed the village from discussing Mr. Churchill, leaving the reader to wonder if this visit will ever transpire.

Harriet's pending visit with the Martin's is very much on Emma's mind as she does her best to shield her friend from not only pain but also a loss of her rank in society.

Volume 2 Chapter 5

Volume 2 Chapter 5 Summary

Harriet is dropped off at Abbey Mill for her visit with the Martins. Meanwhile, Emma uses the fifteen minutes to pay a visit to an old servant who lives near by. She returns punctually fifteen minutes later and is waiting for Harriet at the gate to Abbey Mill.

Harriet discusses her visit with the Martins and reveals that while the mother and sisters were somewhat cool at first, they warmed quickly. Mr. Martin was nowhere to be found.

The girls decide to visit Mr. And Mrs. Weston, only to find that they had already left to visit them at Hartfield. Emma bemoans this and reluctantly has the driver return to Hartfield, where she is sure she will miss them.

However, the Westons stop the carriage en route and reveal a shocking piece of news. The long awaited Mr. Churchill will be arriving at Randalls the very next day. Mrs. Weston asks Emma to think of her at 4:00 so that all will go well, which Emma faithfully promises to fulfill.

The next day arrives and as the clock strikes twelve, Emma walks into a room only to find Mr. Weston and Mr. Churchill standing before her. Mr. Churchill had taken an earlier train and arrived the night before.

Emma immediately takes a liking to Mr. Churchill and is quite pleased with his appearance. The two begin to get to know one another and it seems that they will be quite good friends.

Miss Fairfax is briefly brought up and Mr. Churchill agrees to call on her, as they were previously acquainted.

Volume 2 Chapter 5 Analysis

Emma's control over Harriet is evident as she dictates how long she can stay at Abbey Mill and returns promptly to pick her up. Her worries regarding Mr. Martin were unfounded as he was not present for the visit.

The announcement of Mr. Churchill's arrival promises to turn Highbury into a whirl of gossip and speculation. The fateful day arrives and Emma is quite surprised at how much she gets along with Mr. Churchill. This leaves the reader to wonder if her vow to remain single will be broken by Mr. Churchill.

Volume 2 Chapter 6

Volume 2 Chapter 6 Summary

Much to Emma's surprise and concealed delight, Mr. Churchill arrives the next day at Hartfield, this time with Mrs. Weston. The three of them take a leisurely walk to Highbury and Mr. Churchill discusses his love of dancing.

Emma enquires on whether Mr. Churchill has already visited Miss Fairfax. After much delicate conversation on the issue, they realize they both agree about her general disposition and character. It seems that Mr. Churchill also questions the relationship between Mr. Dixon and Miss Fairfax.

Emma and Mr. Churchill seem to be in perfect agreement on everything.

Volume 2 Chapter 6 Analysis

It is interesting to watch Mr. Churchill and Emma try to be polite about their opinions on Miss Fairfax. Since they are both extremely well bred and polite, it takes much discussion before they find out they agree completely about her.

Emma's affection towards Mr. Churchill seems to grow much stronger after she finds out that they have so much in common.

Volume 2 Chapter 7

Volume 2 Chapter 7 Summary

The next day, Emma's opinion of Mr. Churchill is practically ruined as it is revealed he decided to go to London just to get a haircut. Mr. Knightley arrives, and once told the news he mumbles that he expected no better from Mr. Churchill. Mr. Knightley feels confirmed in his analysis of Mr. Churchill's character. However, his good treatment of Mrs. Weston tempers this in Emma's mind and she decides that it really is a trifling thing to hold against someone.

The Coles family is discussed again, and it is revealed that they have grown in wealth over the years and are now second only in social stature to the Woodhouses. They are throwing an enormous party and everyone of consequence has been invited except Emma and her father. She had no plans to attend, but feels that she is being somewhat ostracized. However, the next day the invitation arrives, and we find out the reason for the delay. The Coles were installing a screen to keep Mr. Woodhouse safe from drafts and wanted to ensure the screen was in place.

Emma cannot now decide if she should decline this invitation. Since the Westons are at Hartfield when the invitation arrives, she asks them for their advice. Much discussion ensues as Mr. Woodhouse frets about visiting after dinner which is something he never does.

It is decided that Mr. Woodhouse will stay home and that Emma will go alone, provided that she does not arrive home too late or sit up afterwards until all hours.

Volume 2 Chapter 7 Analysis

The prospect of a party seems to charge the air, especially since everyone who is well thought of socially will be there. Emma's character continues in her natural course of not wanting to go, but being curious enough to be talked into going even without her father. Her father's concern is touching although he does seem to be overbearing about it to some extent.

Volume 2 Chapter 8

Volume 2 Chapter 8 Summary

The Coles party begins with the important people in society such as Mr. Knightley, the Westons and Emma arriving first. The people of lesser consequence such as Harriet, Miss Fairfax and Miss Bates arrive after dinner. Before their arrival, everyone discusses the pianoforte that appeared in the Bates household earlier. No one is sure who purchased the piano for the Bates and therefore it is assumed that Colonel Campbell paid for it.

However, Emma and Mr. Churchill agree that Mr. Dixon must have purchased it. They discuss this for a time and then the rest of the guests arrive. Mr. Churchill is introduced to Miss Harriet Smith and they both think highly of one another.

As everyone congregates, Mrs. Weston reveals to Emma that Mr. Knightley sent his carriage over for Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax so they did not have to walk. Emma thinks that this is merely because he was being nice, but Mrs. Weston seems to think that Mr. Knightley might be in love with Miss Fairfax and sent not only the carriage but the piano as well.

Emma is aghast at this for a number of reasons. The first being that she wants Donwell Abbey to go to her nephew, which will not happen if Mr. Knightley marries. The two discuss this for some time until tea is completed.

After tea the entertainment portion of the evening begins and Emma is asked to perform. She is joined by Mr. Churchill, who has been sitting next to her all night, both at dinner and whenever a seat was available. After two songs Miss Fairfax takes over and Emma uses this opportunity to converse with Mr. Knightley to see if he was the one that gave the pianoforte to Miss Fairfax. However, she is unable to get anything out of him. After two more songs, Mr. Knightley worries that Miss Fairfax will do her voice harm by singing any more and gets Miss Bates to put a stop to it.

It is then decided that everyone will dance, and Mr. Churchill asks Emma to dance with him. She keeps an eye on Mr. Knightley to make sure that he is not dancing with Miss Fairfax, and for now her fears are allayed.

Miss Bates wants to return home and so ends the dancing for the evening. Mr. Churchill reveals to Emma that he is glad he did not have to dance with Miss Fairfax, as her dancing seemed languid when compared to Emma's.

Volume 2 Chapter 8 Analysis

Mr. Churchill is extremely attentive to Emma during the party, and is quite obvious in his affection for her. Strangely, this does not seem to bother Emma much at all.

However, the idea of Mr. Knightley marrying anyone seems to bother her quite a lot, as she makes no attempts to disguise this. We are left to wonder why she is so adamant about Mr. Knightley remaining single.

Emma seems to be somewhat jealous of Miss Fairfax, and Mr. Churchill's comments before the of the night seem to allay this somewhat.

Volume 2 Chapter 9

Volume 2 Chapter 9 Summary

Emma and Harriet go into Highbury, since Emma is concerned that another visit to Ford's will result in her bumping into Mr. Martin again. When they arrive at Highbury they are met by Mrs. Weston and Mr. Churchill who were calling on the Bates' to hear the new pianoforte.

The two try to convince Emma to join them, but she demurs. She joins Harriet in the Fords while Harriet tries to decide where to have her new dress fabric sent. They are interrupted by Miss Bates and Mrs. Weston who insist that Emma must join them. Emma can hardly refuse and agrees to accompany them to the house.

Volume 2 Chapter 9 Analysis

It must be very painful for Emma, seeing as she does not like Miss Fairfax, to be forced into visiting the Bates' again. Were it not for Mr. Churchill, the reader is left to wonder if she would have gone at all.

Volume 2 Chapter 10

Volume 2 Chapter 10 Summary

Emma and Mrs. Weston join Mr. Churchill at the Bates' residence and Mr. Churchill is busy fixing Mrs. Bates' broken glasses. Mr. Churchill begins to unmercifully taunt Miss Fairfax to get her to reveal the true donor of the piano, and Emma chastises him in whispers. However, Miss Fairfax blushes quite readily with Mr. Churchill's pointed comments and the two are left to wonder if she really is guilty of having an affair with Mr. Dixon.

Mr. Knightley arrives but does not come in. Instead, Miss Bates goes out to thank him for the generous gift of apples that he sent over the day before. It turns out that he has been left without any apples at all, which makes Emma quite curious about his motives.

Volume 2 Chapter 10 Analysis

This forced visit does not seem to appeal to Emma, and she leaves at the first available opportunity. However, the reader is able to discern that Mr. Knightley might really be in love with Miss Fairfax, since he continues to shower the family with gifts.

Mr. Churchill seems to be in love with Emma and does his best to situate himself nearest to her whenever he can. Whether or not this is the case will be soon be revealed.

Volume 2 Chapter 11

Volume 2 Chapter 11 Summary

After the successful dinner party at the Coles' house, Mr. Churchill wishes to dance again. Mr. And Mrs. Weston do not tire of repeating how wonderfully Mr. Churchill and Emma danced together. Finally they decide to hold a party of their own.

However, Randalls is too small to hold a large party so it decided that they would hold their party at Crown's, a local inn. Plans are being made and the guest lists are being drawn up.

Mr. Churchill asks Emma for the sole privilege of the first two dances, which she accepts. Mr. Weston, overhearing this, joyously tells his wife of the dances and says that he knew Mr. Churchill would ask Emma.

Volume 2 Chapter 11 Analysis

After reading this chapter, it is apparent that Emma isn't the only person who fancies herself a matchmaker. Mr. Weston seems to be hoping that a match can be made between Emma and his son, Mr. Churchill.

Everyone is anxiously awaiting the evening of the party, and hoping that Mr. Churchill will be able to make it since it is planned for a few days after he was supposed to leave. Will Mr. Churchill be able to squeeze a few more days out of his aunt?

Volume 2 Chapter 12

Volume 2 Chapter 12 Summary

Emma discusses the upcoming ball with Mr. Knightley, who doesn't seem to care one way or another if it takes place at all. Instead of arguing the point with him she resolves to put his quarrelsomeness out of her mind and focus on the big event.

Two days later while Emma is eating breakfast, she receives a note from Mrs. Weston. The note states that Mr. Weston received a letter from Mr. Churchill, Frank's uncle that he must return immediately as his aunt is very ill.

The ball is called off and Mr. Churchill stops at Hartfield before he leaves. He wonders if he will ever be able to return, but promises Emma that there will be a ball when he does. He seems on the verge of saying something very important to her, but Emma steers the conversation in hopes of avoiding it. Mr. Churchill leaves and Emma is left without a ball or the new friend that kept her company nearly every day for fourteen days.

In the days that follow, Emma realizes that she misses Mr. Churchill very much and seems dissatisfied with everything at Hartfield. She realizes she must be in love.

Volume 2 Chapter 12 Analysis

Finally, we see some crumbling in Emma's resolve to remain unmarried. The sudden departure of Mr. Churchill throws everyone but solid Mr. Knightley into chaos as the ball is cancelled.

It is interesting to watch Emma's character grow, as she believes she really has fallen in love with Mr. Churchill and it is left to the reader to wonder if he ever will be allowed to return.

Volume 2 Chapter 13

Volume 2 Chapter 13 Summary

As the absence of Mr. Churchill sinks in, Emma begins to talk herself out of love with him, and remakes her vow to remain single. She spends a great deal of time crafting their relationship in her head, but always ending it only in friendship and never anything more.

A letter arrives at Randalls from Mr. Churchill and Emma is allowed to read it in its entirety. She is mentioned in the letter quite often, in warm tones. Harriet is mentioned briefly as Emma's beautiful little friend. After reading the letter, Emma is further convinced that she is not really in love with Mr. Churchill at all.

In fact, she begins to wonder if there couldn't be a possibility of matching Harriet with Mr. Churchill, since he referred to her so nicely in the letter. However, poor Harriet is still very much in love with Mr. Elton. Since Mr. Churchill left all the attention in Highbury has been turned back to Mr. Elton and his bride, leaving Emma quite worried about Harriet. She finally asks Harriet to stop thinking and talking of Mr. Elton, since it reminds Emma that she was the cause of such harm to Harriet. Of course, not so much for Emma's sake but for Harriet's does she make this request.

Volume 2 Chapter 13 Analysis

Emma's manipulative tactics rear their head again, as she gets Harriet to stop talking about Mr. Elton incessantly. Her ability to convince herself that she is not in love with Mr. Churchill is very interesting, as is her wondering if a match could be made for Harriet.

On one hand, Emma appears to be very concerned about her friend, and on the other she appears to be very self-serving. Emma's character is extremely complicated, further illustrating the machinations that were common to women during this time period and throughout history.

Volume 2 Chapter 14

Volume 2 Chapter 14 Summary

Mr. Elton is finally married and it comes time for Emma to meet the new Mrs. Elton. She brings Harriet along to make it easier to get out of the way and they call on the newlyweds. Mr. Elton acts a little strangely, which is not to be unexpected, and Emma doesn't have much chance to form an opinion of Mrs. Elton.

Harriet seems quite at ease now that she has met and approved of Mrs. Elton. She resolves not to sign after him again, knowing that he married well and is happy.

Mr. And Mrs. Elton call on Emma and her father and she is at last allowed to form an opinion on Mrs. Elton. Emma considers Mrs. Elton vulgar, rude and completely insufferable. Mrs. Elton refers to everyone with great familiarity, such as calling her husband Mr. E and referring to Mr. Knightley as just Knightley. Emma is completely appalled and cannot wait for the visit to end.

Volume 2 Chapter 14 Analysis

The narrator seems to dislike Mrs. Elton as much as Emma does, leaving the reader with the feeling that Mrs. Elton truly is a vulgar woman. Harriet will now hopefully have some peace of mind knowing that Mr. Elton is married and seems happy. How long this peace of mind will last will most likely depend on how quickly Mr. Churchill returns and if Emma continues her matchmaking pursuits.

Volume 2 Chapter 15

Volume 2 Chapter 15 Summary

As Mrs. Elton settles in at Highbury, the battle lines between her and Emma are beginning to form. She treats Harriet with much disdain and seems to enjoy harassing both girls. Mrs. Elton begins to form a close friendship with Miss Fairfax.

This friendship is discussed by Mrs. Weston, Emma and Mr. Knightley while Emma attempts to find out just how much Mr. Knightley cares about Miss Fairfax. Mr. Knightley disavows any affection on his part and reveals that Mr. Cole asked him the exact same thing.

After Mr. Knightley leaves, Emma triumphantly tells Mrs. Weston that she was right all along; Mr. Knightley does not love Miss Fairfax. Mrs. Weston replies that she thinks Mr. Knightley is too busy convincing himself of this fact to realize that he really is in love with Miss Fairfax.

Volume 2 Chapter 15 Analysis

The lines of demarcation are being drawn and it seems that while Mrs. Elton and Emma may certainly not look like enemies in public, they certainly are becoming so in private.

The Elton's treatment of Harriet is considered shameful, but Emma does hope it will result in Harriet finally letting go of Mr. Elton and her attachment to him.

Again, we are left to wonder if Emma is being honest in her reasons for wanting Mr. Knightley not to marry Miss Fairfax.

Volume 2 Chapter 16

Volume 2 Chapter 16 Summary

As Mrs. Elton settles into society at Highbury, she throws a great deal of dinner parties. Not wanting to seem rude, Emma decides to throw a dinner party at Hartfield and invites the Eltons to join them. Mr. And Mrs. Weston are invited, as is Mr. Knightley. However, an eighth guest must be found, so Harriet is invited.

However, much to Emma's relief she refuses to come, so Emma invites Miss Fairfax instead. Emma feels quite guilty that Mr. Knightley thinks she has been avoiding Miss Fairfax and this gives her a great opportunity to change his opinion.

Her father is quite happy with eight guests, and a letter arrives stating that Mr. John Knightley will be arriving with two of his sons the day of the party. Since they cannot keep him from coming, the number of guests is enlarged to nine, greatly bothering Mr. Woodhouse.

The night of the party arrives and Mr. Weston is called away, reducing the number of guests back to eight to the pleasure of Mr. Woodhouse. The conversation centers on Miss Fairfax's trip to the post office that day, since it had rained. Although she missed being rained on, Mrs. Elton loudly begins to assert that Miss Fairfax must no longer get her own mail, and that she will send one of her servants instead.

Miss Fairfax resists and then changes the subject. Handwriting is discussed and the subject of Mr. Frank Churchill is raised, since he has beautiful handwriting for a man. Mr. Knightley uses this opportunity to sneer at Mr. Churchill and mocks him gently. Mrs. Weston and Emma spring to Mr. Churchill's defense and the evening continues without any further problems.

Volume 2 Chapter 16 Analysis

Again, our suspicions are roused in regard to Miss Fairfax. Why would a woman in such poor health walk to the post office every day? Her refusal to have this task removed from her deepens this suspicion.

Emma wonders if she is expecting a letter from a certain someone and we are left to wonder with her.

More instances of society in this time period are revealed as Emma plans a party to which she must invite people she cannot stand in order to appear polite. This was quite common at the time.

Volume 2 Chapter 17

Volume 2 Chapter 17 Summary

As the dinner party continues, Mrs. Elton converses with Miss Fairfax on a variety of subjects. It seems that Miss Fairfax wants to become a governess, a position that seems to be appalling to Mrs. Elton. They continue on until Mr. Weston arrives for tea.

Mr. John Knightley is shocked that a man who must certainly be exhausted after a long day would walk over to another man's house for tea. Mr. Weston, however, does not notice any disruption he is causing and immediately goes over to Emma and Mrs. Weston.

He reveals a letter that he just received from Mr. Churchill. It seems that Mr. Churchill will be visiting them again very soon, which pleases Mrs. Weston very much. Emma, however, is almost silenced by the agitation she feels.

Volume 2 Chapter 17 Analysis

Emma's reaction to Mr. Churchill's letter is quite interesting given her former avowals that she would never be more than friends with him. She seems very agitated and confused, a condition that does not often strike her.

Everyone else seems to be pleased, and it will be interesting to see how Mr. Churchill receives Mrs. Elton and if there will be any reason for jealousy between Emma and Miss Fairfax.

Volume 2 Chapter 18

Volume 2 Chapter 18 Summary

Mr. Churchill's arrival is announced to be sometime in May since his aunt was ordered to move to a warmer climate and has selected London. This means that Mr. Churchill will be able to visit them very often.

Mrs. Elton goes on and on about the Churchills while Mr. Weston looks for an escape. Her incessant comparisons of everything at Highbury to her old place of residence, Maple Grove, continue.

Tea is served and everyone breaks off into their own groups. Mr. And Mrs. Weston play cards with Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Elton. This leaves Mrs. Elton in want of attention, which no one seems to want to provide.

Mr. John Knightley takes this time to speak with Emma regarding his sons, who will be staying behind with the Woodhouses after he leaves the next day. He is worried that they will be a bother to Mr. Woodhouse and to Emma since she has been so busy lately.

Emma laughs this off and is surprised that her brother-in-law thinks that she is that much busier.

Volume 2 Chapter 18 Analysis

The narrator seems to like Mrs. Elton less as the story progresses, and she becomes an almost insufferable character. Most of the party seems to want to avoid her.

As the visit of Mr. Churchill is announced, it is interesting to see how Mrs. Elton attempts to place herself firmly in Highbury society and the reader learns that she is not short of self-esteem.

Volume 3 Chapter 1

Volume 3 Chapter 1 Summary

The Churchills arrive in London, and although everyone is expecting Mr. Frank Churchill to visit often he comes only once in ten days. Emma is agitated but convinces herself that she is not agitated because she is in love with Mr. Churchill, but because she is worried about his being in love with her.

Mr. Churchill seems agitated as well and does not stay long at Hartfield before hurrying off. Emma thinks that he is either not in love with her as much as he was, or he is trying hard not to be.

The Churchills leave London for Richmond, which is located much closer to Highbury. Mr. Churchill announces that he will be available more, even for 24-hour periods, so the long anticipated ball at Crown's is re-planned and reorganized.

Volume 3 Chapter 1 Analysis

Emma's constant mental battle with herself continues as she does her best to trick herself into thinking she is not in love with Mr. Churchill. One wonders if Mr. Churchill is trying to do the same thing.

The upcoming ball promises to bring much of this conflict to a head, since Emma must still give the first two dances to Mr. Churchill.

Volume 3 Chapter 2

Volume 3 Chapter 2 Summary

The long awaited ball at Crown's finally arrives and everyone is excited. Emma arrives early at Mrs. Weston's request. The Eltons arrive and Mrs. Elton proceeds to take over the party, removing Emma from her place.

Mr. Churchill is acting quite odd, and keeps waiting for more carriages to arrive. Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax arrive and he makes sure that they do not get wet in the rain that has suddenly begun.

Mrs. Elton dances the first two dances with Mr. Churchill, which were intended to be for Emma. Emma later asks his opinion of Mrs. Elton and he apparently does not like her. Everyone is dancing except Harriet, Mr. Elton and Mr. Knightley. Mrs. Weston asks Mr. Elton if he would like to dance and since Harriet is not dancing, that they should dance together. He mortifies Harriet by refusing and states that he is a married man. A gleeful look passes between Mr. And Mrs. Elton. Mr. Knightley then asks Harriet to dance to remove some of the sting of the refusal.

Supper is served and Emma does have not a chance to speak with Mr. Knightley until it is finished. She invites him over to speak with her and they discuss the behavior of the Eltons. Finally, Emma gets Mr. Knightley to ask her to dance and the chapter ends with both of them taking the floor.

Volume 3 Chapter 2 Analysis

The rudeness of Mrs. Bates seems to shock the narrator of the story. The refusal of Mr. Elton to dance with Harriet almost seems planned, and it appears that the Eltons are now sworn enemies, not only of Harriet but also of Emma.

Mr. Knightley picks up on this and questions Emma about it but she does not supply any additional information. This behavior was quite common in this time, as people did not discuss private matters unless they were with sworn confidants.

Emma seems to be quite attracted to Mr. Knightley and compares everyone in the room to him. The only one who can compare is Mr. Churchill and Emma wishes that he liked him more. The reader is now left to wonder if Emma's previous assertions that Mr. Knightley must not marry Miss Fairfax are grounded in her own affection for him.

Volume 3 Chapter 3

Volume 3 Chapter 3 Summary

The next day dawns and Emma happily recalls her evening. Mr. Knightley's agreement with her on the Eltons and his kindness to Harriet seem to put everything between them on the right setting again. Mr. Churchill had stated he would not be able to visit her before leaving for Richmond, which suited Emma just perfectly. She was all set to have a perfectly wonderful summer with everything in its place.

However, as she gets ready to go take care of her two nephews, Harriet and Mr. Churchill come in through the gate. Harriet is very upset and is leaning heavily on Mr. Churchill. She gives an account of harrowing trial with gypsies and how she was unable to get away from them. The whole group surrounded her demanding money, and she was very much alone and frightened. Mr. Churchill, who was on his way to Richmond, came up on the group. After making them run away, he brought Harriet to Hartfield right away.

Emma is quite pleased that the two of them were thrown together in such a way and hopes that more will come of it. Mr. Churchill departs and Harriet recovers. Emma hopes to keep the news of the gypsies from her father, but within half an hour the entire village is talking of nothing else. Mr. Woodhouse is quite concerned and makes the girls promise never to go down the road where the incident took place again. The gypsies leave before they can be apprehended and everything soon returns to normal.

Volume 3 Chapter 3 Analysis

It seems that although Emma is disinterested in love for herself she cannot contain herself from hoping for love for all of those around her, particularly Harriet. With this latest event, it seems that Emma will quickly begin setting up a match between Harriet and Mr. Churchill, thus solving her problem with being in love with him herself.

Volume 3 Chapter 4

Volume 3 Chapter 4 Summary

Harriet arrives at Hartfield with a mysterious package. She tells Emma that since she is finally resigned to the loss of Mr. Elton, she will now destroy the mementos she has kept. Emma questions her and Harriet reveals that she has been keeping the end of a pencil he had used, as well as some plaster that was left over from a cut Mr. Elton received while at Hartfield.

Emma is very surprised that Harriet has been keeping these things and feels very ashamed of herself. Harriet decides to burn them both and then announces that she has no plans to ever marry. Emma asks her if this is because of what happened with Mr. Elton, to which Harriet responds in the negative.

However, Emma is able to catch a murmur from Harriet about not being worthy of someone. She immediately deduces that Harriet must mean Mr. Churchill and questions Harriet about it. Seeing that Harriet does have some affection for Mr. Churchill, Emma decides to begin matchmaking again in full force.

Volume 3 Chapter 4 Analysis

Emma obviously blames herself for Harriet keeping these mementos, but this doesn't keep her from wanting to try matchmaking for Harriet again. More of Harriet's character is revealed by the fact that she kept these few items and the reader can't help but feel sorry for poor Harriet.

The reader also wonders if Harriet will be able to withstand more of Emma's matchmaking, especially since the last go at it was so completely disastrous.

Volume 3 Chapter 5

Volume 3 Chapter 5 Summary

June arrives at Highbury and everyone is in good spirits. However, Mr. Knightley seems to be growing to dislike Mr. Churchill, while everyone else seems to like him more. Mr. Knightley has noticed that Mr. Churchill has made Emma his object of affection, and this concerns Mr. Knightley greatly. He has also noticed that Mr. Knightley appears to be trifling with Miss Fairfax.

A chance for him to further observe the situation is granted when he, Mr. And Mrs. Weston, Mr. Churchill, Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax all meet up by the gates at Hartfield. Emma invites them in to tea and Mr. Knightley does his best to eavesdrop on the conversation. Mr. Churchill notices Mr. Perry riding by and mentions that Mrs. Weston told him in a letter that Perry will be purchasing his own carriage. Mrs. Weston denies this and it is obvious that he heard it from someone else. Miss Bates remembers that she was the one who knew this information, and it is gathered that Miss Fairfax might have been the one to tell Mr. Churchill this information.

Mr. Knightley continues to observe Mr. Churchill through tea and then Mr. Churchill requests that they play a riddling game with Emma's nephew's alphabet letters. The letters are spread on the table and Mr. Churchill jumbles them up for Emma to decipher. He also includes Miss Fairfax in this game, with some rather revealing jumbles that she immediately pushes aside. The last jumble, Dixon, is given to Emma and she figures it out immediately. Mr. Churchill then gives the jumble to Miss Fairfax although Emma asks him not to. Miss Fairfax figures it out and gets very quietly angry. She and her aunt decide to leave.

Everyone trickles out but Mr. Knightley stays behind. He feels he must warn Emma about Mr. Churchill. He brings up what he has noticed between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax, but Emma thinks he is mistaken. Instead of going into further detail, Mr. Knightley returns to Donwell Abbey for the evening.

Volume 3 Chapter 5 Analysis

Again, we are presented with Mr. Knightley's concern for Emma. There seems to be more behind his noticing of little events between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax. This seems to matter little to Emma, who is set on creating a match between Mr. Churchill and Harriet.

Slowly, the narrator is beginning to reveal that there might actually be some sort of relationship between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax, instead of the occasional hints that were previously dropped in the story.

Volume 3 Chapter 6

Volume 3 Chapter 6 Summary

Mrs. Elton's relatives, the Sucklings, are delayed from visiting her at Highbury and she is very much in need of a party to make herself feel better. She resolves to go to Box Hill and invites a great many people to join her. However, a lame carriage horse throws these plans into turmoil.

Mr. Knightley offer Donwell Abbey and its famed strawberry patches for a party, to which Mrs. Elton readily agrees. She tries to invite all of her friends and make the party her own, but Mr. Knightley will not allow this. He arranges everything so that Mr. Woodhouse and Emma can come and enjoy themselves.

In the meantime, the horse recovers and it is decided that they will all visit Donwell Abbey on one day and Box Hill the next. Mr. Churchill is invited to come, but does not arrive until very late. Miss Fairfax slips away before his arrival, telling Emma to tell her aunt that she has left.

When Mr. Churchill finally does arrive, he is very cross and Emma is somewhat put off by his behavior. However, she asks him to meet all of them the next day at Box Hill, to which he at first says no but finally agrees.

Once it is discovered that Miss Fairfax has left, everyone decides to go home and meet the next day at Box Hill.

Volume 3 Chapter 6 Analysis

Miss Fairfax's sudden departure from the party is very suspicious, as is Mr. Churchill's behavior when he arrives. Is his crossness merely the result of a long hot ride, or did he meet with Miss Fairfax before he arrived at the party?

Emma is persisting in her resolution not to love Mr. Churchill, which is made easier by his cross behavior at the party. She is still intent on setting Harriet up with Mr. Churchill, since she thinks Harriet is better equipped to deal with someone who seems to be unable to withstand even the slightest heat, something which is appalling to Emma.

Volume 3 Chapter 7

Volume 3 Chapter 7 Summary

The next day arrives and everyone meets at Box Hill for the party. Emma is quite bored at first, both with Mr. Churchill and with Harriet, but things pick up once everyone is settled. Mr. Churchill and Emma flirt excessively, to the notice of everyone present.

Mr. Churchill calls for a game of conundrums, and Emma makes a comment about Miss Bates that although not meant in harm is very rude. Miss Bates seems to take notice of the comment, and the party continues.

After awhile, the servants return and everyone is bundled off into their own carriages. Mr. Knightley stops Emma and chastises her for her treatment of Miss Bates. Emma is mortified and shrinks into the carriage, forgetting to take proper leave of Mr. Knightley.

Volume 3 Chapter 7 Analysis

Something very strange takes place with Emma's rudeness to Miss Bates. It is not at all like her and it is inferred that Mr. Churchill may be influencing her behavior. Mr. Knightley, who is never afraid to bring Emma's faults to light, catches her on this and makes her realize that she truly was rude to Miss Bates and that her actions might influence everyone to treat Miss Bates' differently, since everyone looks up to Emma.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Knightley would be more willing to overlook Miss Bates' character flaws if she was wealthy, but since she is not, they are more obvious. However, he still feels that Emma was very much in the wrong with her public rudeness towards her.

Volume 3 Chapter 8

Volume 3 Chapter 8 Summary

Emma visits the Bates' household and hopes that Miss Bates will not hold the previous days events against her. To smooth things over, she immediately asks about Miss Fairfax. Emma learns that Miss Fairfax has taken a job as a governess with a friend of Mrs. Elton's. The Smallridge family lives near Maple Grove and Miss Fairfax is due to leave within two weeks time.

Mr. Churchill is mentioned briefly, and Emma thinks it odd that Miss Bates would know so much of his comings and goings but puts it aside.

All seems to be well with Miss Bates and Emma leaves quickly.

Volume 3 Chapter 8 Analysis

Emma's apology, although not outright, is more in line with her character than the previous rudeness she displayed the day before. The announcement of Miss Fairfax's imminent departure is somewhat shocking and the reader is still left to conjecture about the possibility of a relationship between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax.

Volume 3 Chapter 9

Volume 3 Chapter 9 Summary

Emma returns home to find Harriet and Mr. Knightley sitting with her father. It is obvious at first that Mr. Knightley has still not forgiven her for her rudeness to Miss Bates. However, when her father informs him that she was just visiting Miss Bates, Mr. Knightley warms towards Emma and all is forgiven. He seems about to kiss her hand, but stops before accomplishing this.

Mr. Knightley reveals that he will be visiting his brother and Isabella for a time and will be leaving right away. He leaves for the evening and Mr. Woodhouse is quite upset with the news of Mr. Knightley's impending journey. Emma tries to soften this blow by telling her father about Miss Fairfax's new position as a governess.

The shocking news of Mrs. Churchill's death arrives in Highbury. Although no one was fond of the woman, they all do their best to show proper esteem at her death. Emma feels that perhaps now Harriet will have a chance with Mr. Churchill now that the controlling influence of Mrs. Churchill is gone. However, he and his uncle are removing to Windsor for a time, which puts Emma's plans on hold.

She then turns to Miss Fairfax, in the hopes of undoing some of her unjust treatment in the past. However, Miss Fairfax returns all the notes that Emma sends with polite refusals. Miss Fairfax is apparently quite ill and her chances of leaving for her new position look dim.

Emma finds out that the day she had tried to take Miss Fairfax for a ride in her carriage and was refused was the same day Miss Fairfax was seen walking through a meadow. Emma regrets her past treatment of Miss Fairfax and assumes that she will never be forgiven.

Volume 3 Chapter 9 Analysis

Emma seems to be quite preoccupied in regaining the good favor of Mr. Knightley. Again, we are left to wonder if she truly thinks of him as more than just a friend of the family.

Although Emma is quite solicitous of Miss Fairfax, her motivation is questionable. She seems to be doing this more out of trying to get Mr. Knightley's regard, than for any noble reason.

Volume 3 Chapter 10

Volume 3 Chapter 10 Summary

Mr. Weston arrives at Hartfield with an urgent message for Emma. She must come at once at Mrs. Weston's request. He will not reveal the nature of the request; only that it is urgent.

Emma leaves with him immediately, absolutely certain that something has happened to her sister or her nieces and nephews. Mr. Weston will only say that it has nothing to do with them and that he cannot reveal anything more.

They arrive at Randalls and Mr. Weston leaves Emma with his wife. Mrs. Weston looks quite terrible as she drops the bombshell that Mr. Churchill has been secretly engaged to Miss Fairfax since the previous October.

This is quite shocking as everyone feels that he has misled them, and Emma regrets some of the confidences she had with Mr. Churchill regarding Miss Fairfax.

Mrs. Weston is very concerned that Emma is in love with Mr. Churchill, since they seemed to be each other's objects since February. Emma assures her that this is not the case, and puts her very much at ease.

Mr. Weston peeks in and is relieved to hear that all is well and that Emma is not upset.

Volume 3 Chapter 10 Analysis

At last, all of the hinting and misleading of the narrator has led to the secret engagement of Miss Fairfax and Mr. Churchill. In this time period, this news would be have been completely shocking, especially since Mr. Churchill had spent so much time with Emma.

The twists and turns gave the reader some clue that there was something going on between Miss Fairfax and Mr. Churchill, but nevertheless it is still quite a surprise when it is completely revealed.

Volume 3 Chapter 11

Volume 3 Chapter 11 Summary

Emma, upon leaving, immediately thinks of poor Harriet. She has managed to disappoint the girl once again by selecting a match for her that was not going to work out. Emma wonders how she will break the news when Harriet arrives, mentioning what she has just heard.

Emma is surprised that Harriet does not seem to be bothered by the announcement. Emma thought that Harriet was attached to Mr. Churchill since the incident with the gypsies. Emma also reminds Harriet of her comment of not being worthy enough for someone, which Emma assumed was Mr. Churchill.

Harriet now drops a bombshell of her own. Her love interest is not Mr. Churchill but rather Mr. Knightley himself. Emma is absolutely aghast at this announcement and does not know what to do.

Volume 3 Chapter 11 Analysis

At this point, Emma realizes that she has made a horrible mistake with Harriet. Instead of leaving her a humble girl, she has turned her into a vain creature. In Emma's estimation, Harriet is far beneath Mr. Knightley and should never even think of such a match. However, with Emma's constant attention, Harriet believes that this match is possible.

This chapter highlights the differences in class that were very prevalent in Europe at this time. The differences between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax's engagement are displayed against Mr. Knightley and Harriet. While neither girl is of a high social stature, they have both found men that are far above them in society. This was normally frowned upon, and Emma is no exception to this rule.

We are also left to wonder if Emma doesn't have a secret of her own that she has been waiting to reveal, even to herself.

Volume 3 Chapter 12

Volume 3 Chapter 12 Summary

Mrs. Weston arrives at Hartfield after visiting with Miss Fairfax. Emma learns that Miss Fairfax had a terrible time concealing the engagement and Emma deeply regrets her past actions in Miss Fairfax's regard. She also regrets her actions in trying to improve Harriet and wishes that she had chosen Miss Fairfax as a friend instead.

Emma's father takes ill and she is continually at his side, giving her time to reflect on their circumstances. Soon, if the Westons have a child, she will lose their company. Mr. Churchill will no longer be visiting, and Miss Fairfax will leaving as well. If Harriet does marry Mr. Knightley, their one remaining friend will be gone, leaving her alone with her father.

Volume 3 Chapter 12 Analysis

Finally, Emma begins to realize that all of her machinations may turn out to be her undoing. By encouraging Harriet to leave her station and pursue someone far above her in society, she may have ostracized their only remaining true friend.

She reflects on her attachment to Mr. Knightley and deeply regrets what she has done with Harriet. In essence, by her kind attentions, she has created a monster with Harriet, and one that may turn out to do her much more harm than she thought.

Volume 3 Chapter 13

Volume 3 Chapter 13 Summary

Mr. Knightley returns and arrives at Hartfield as Emma is walking around the garden. She mentions the news of Mr. Churchill's wedding, which he had already received that morning in the form of a letter from Mr. Weston.

As he tries to discern if Emma is upset by this news, he is extremely attentive to her. He takes her arm and does his best to find out if she really was in love with Mr. Churchill. Emma reveals that she was never in love with Mr. Churchill, which finally prompts him to at long last reveal that he is in love with her himself.

This pleases Emma very much and the chapter ends on a very happy note.

Volume 3 Chapter 13 Analysis

We have finally reached Mr. Knightley's declaration of love, which has been hinted at through the entire novel. Emma doesn't even seem to give her vow to remain single another thought as she happily reflects that Mr. Knightley loves her. Nor does Harriet seem to enter her mind at this point. Once again, Harriet seems doomed to have the object of her affection fall in love with Emma.

Volume 3 Chapter 14

Volume 3 Chapter 14 Summary

Emma and Mr. Knightley return to the house for tea, and he leaves shortly after. Emma is now left to reflect on what has happened and what it means for her future. Since her father is an invalid, she determines that she must remain engaged until his death and not marry until this occurs.

Harriet enters her mind and she sits down to write Harriet a letter. Emma is successful in getting Isabella to take Harriet in for a while to remove her from the situation until Emma can figure out what to do.

A letter arrives from Randalls containing a long letter of explanation from Mr. Churchill, which Mrs. Weston wants Emma to read. She sits down immediately and pores over the very long letter, feeling much better about the situation after finishing it.

Volume 3 Chapter 14 Analysis

Emma once again has her way by sending Harriet off to London to stay with Isabella. By removing her from Highbury and Hartfield, she will have a chance to come up with an explanation regarding Mr. Knightley.

The letter from Mr. Churchill is used as a device to explain and provide the back-story of his relationship with Miss Fairfax. Once you have completed reading this chapter, much of the book now makes sense and many plot twists are revealed.

Volume 3 Chapter 15

Volume 3 Chapter 15 Summary

Mr. Knightley returns and Emma asks him to read the letter she received from Mrs. Weston. He would rather take it home with him, but after some persuasion he does, while remarking on his thoughts of Mr. Churchill. He has not changed his mind on the character of Mr. Churchill, but Emma thinks more highly of him after reading his explanation.

After finishing the letter, Mr. Knightley begins to frankly discuss their situation and the plans that they need to make. Emma reveals that she cannot marry while her father is still alive, so they discuss the problems of moving him to Donwell Abbey, which will not do.

Mr. Knightley decides that instead of moving them, he will move in with them and they will all reside at Hartfield. Emma mentions that William Larkin will certainly not approve of this arrangement, but what else could they possibly do?

Emma's thought return to Harriet and she decides that Harriet must be kept away. Since she had such affection towards Mr. Knightley, it would not do to have her as "dead weight" in a family gathering.

Volume 3 Chapter 15 Analysis

Mr. Knightley, as always, remains the same and does not change his opinion of Mr. Churchill. Mr. Knightley seems to be the one character throughout the novel that stays the same and is not subject to whims or fancies.

Emma however, seems to be rather cold towards her former friend and does not seem to be bothered by the prospect of losing this friendship. She finally admits to herself that her reason for wishing Mr. Knightley to remain single so her nephew could inherit Donwell Abbey was a silly ploy and that she has loved him all along. This shows a great deal of growth of character on one hand and a startling change of character on the other hand regarding Harriet.

Volume 3 Chapter 16

Volume 3 Chapter 16 Summary

Emma is relieved to find that Harriet does not want to visit her, making it much easier to exclude her from what is going on at Hartfield. She decides to call on Miss Fairfax in the hopes of putting things right with her.

However, when she arrives Mrs. Elton is already there and it is impossible for her to get a word in edgewise. The discussion centers on Miss Fairfax's recovery and Mr. Woodhouse's feeling better.

Mr. Elton arrives, out of sorts and very overheated. He was supposed to meet Mr. Knightley at Donwell Abbey, but Mr. Knightley was nowhere to be found. He mentions running into Mr. Larkin, who seemed very upset and told him Mr. Knightley was not at home. Mr. Elton did not believe him, and traveled all over the fields just to make sure Mr. Knightley was not at home. Emma feels that it is best to leave now and heads for the door.

Miss Fairfax sees her out and they finally decide to put the past behind them and start anew as friends. Miss Fairfax reveals that she has been deceiving Emma by how she was acting towards her and is very sorry. The chapter ends with both of them declaring their friendship towards one another.

Volume 3 Chapter 16 Analysis

As the book nears its close, all of the characters seem to be taking their places for their final bow. Emma has finally reconciled with a willing Miss Fairfax, Mrs. Elton is the same as ever and Miss Bates is her useful talkative self.

The mysterious meeting with Mr. Elton and Mr. Knightley must not go unnoticed at this point and we are left to wonder why Mr. Knightley did not show up for a meeting he invited Mr. Elton to attend. Mr. Larkin's apparent bad mood leaves the reader to wonder if Mr. Knightley has already announced his plans to move to Hartfield.

Volume 3 Chapter 17

Volume 3 Chapter 17 Summary

Mrs. Weston is now the proud mother of a little girl, named Anna. Mr. Knightley and Emma discuss this new arrival and he worries that Mrs. Weston will spoil this little girl just as she did Emma. However, since Emma turned out just fine, he has high hopes for her.

Mr. Knightley has informed his brother of their engagement, and Mr. John Knightley replies that Emma has done well, but he is not so sure for his brother. Emma laughs off this response as typical from Mr. John Knightley.

Mr. Woodhouse is informed of the engagement and is not at all happy with the news. Emma resolves to keep reminding of him of it and hopes that he will soon come to accept it.

Emma tells Mr. And Mrs. Weston of the engagement and it soon becomes public knowledge. Everyone is informed that the couple will be living at Hartfield, which Mrs. Elton finds absolutely appalling.

Volume 3 Chapter 17 Analysis

The reaction of Mrs. Elton is to be expected, as her character remains true to form. Mr. John Knightley's character does not waver either, as he continues to judge Emma as he always has done.

Mr. Woodhouse's reaction is also expected, but it is hinted that he will soon accept the impending marriage after some inducement.

All seems to be going well for Emma at this point, leaving only the question of how to break the news to Harriet.

Volume 3 Chapter 18

Volume 3 Chapter 18 Summary

Mr. Knightley reveals to Emma that Mr. Martin has been to London and met Harriet at her sisters. He has proposed yet again and this time, Harriet has accepted. Emma is very shocked, but relieved since this will remove all embarrassment at the announcement of her engagement to Mr. Knightley. Contrary to her previous position, Emma is quite happy with the match and shows no trace of her former snobbery about the Martins.

The couple travels over to Randalls with Mr. Woodhouse, where they are greeted by the surprise guests Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax. Much discussion centers on Mr. Churchill's former deceptions and his apologies. He and Emma make up and everyone seems to be at peace with everyone else at last. Mr. Churchill and Emma realize that they are very much alike and he hopes that he will be able to visit Randalls in the future with his new bride.

Volume 3 Chapter 18 Analysis

Now that all of the past hard feelings have been reconciled, the way is paved for a happy conclusion to the novel. The comparison between Mr. Churchill and Emma is very accurate and accounts for their fast and apparently lasting friendship.

Emma, in keeping with her character, receives the easy way out with Harriet with the announcement of her impending marriage to Mr. Martin. Even the narrator seems obliged to grant Emma her way at this point in the novel.

Volume 3 Chapter 19

Volume 3 Chapter 19 Summary

Harriet arrives back in Highbury and she reconciles with Emma. They are both quite happy now with their matches. It is revealed that Harriet is the daughter of a tradesman who is very well off, and as such Harriet will not need to be removed from the society at Highbury.

Harriet and Mr. Martin are the first of the three couples to wed, while it announced that Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax would marry in November. That leaves Emma and Mr. Knightley to set a date.

Mr. Woodhouse is still not quite resigned to the idea, but a rash of poultry house robbing finally makes up his mind. He will feel much safer with Mr. Knightley around and consents to the wedding. Emma and Mr. Knightley are wed at the close of the chapter, and Mrs. Elton gets in one last barb regarding the accoutrements of the wedding before the book ends.

Volume 3 Chapter 19 Analysis

The book ends, as do all of Miss Austen's works, with a wedding. In this case, we are treated to two weddings, as Mr. Martin weds Harriet and Mr. Knightley and Emma finally reach the altar.

The final barb from Mrs. Elton is to be expected and leaves the reader with a sense that all is right in Highbury, with everyone taking their usual places in society.

Characters

Miss Bates

"[A] great talker upon little matters," Miss Bates is a comic but sympathetic character whose loquacious, hopelessly indiscrete ramblings are the source of much unspoken amusement and, for Emma in particular, some disgust. Taken together, her uncomplaining acceptance of her lot and her well-meant, kind attentions to her neighbors give her poverty some "elegance" and authority. Miss Bates lives with and cares for her aging mother, the two of them surviving by the charitable good graces of their neighbors in Highbury. She also is the loving and solicitous aunt to Jane Fairfax, another major female character in the novel. Miss Bates is important for several reasons. Along with Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Goddard, and Mrs. Cole, she belongs to the country village's mature female circle. Since, on the one hand, her constant chatter is repugnant, but, on the other hand, her morals and her cheerful, good temper are beyond reproach, she is a challenging personality for Emma. It is only when Emma can feel ashamed of her treatment of Miss Bates and learn real patience and charity toward her that Emma herself can take credit for the elegance and breeding she so admires. Miss Bates's position in Highbury society is instrumental to the plot since she provides a source of charity, empathy, and social decorum against which other characters are measured. Moreover, as an "old maid" without means she shares the predicament of certain genteel women in Austen's time (Austen herself had brothers who provided for her) who did not worked and had neither husband nor inheritance on which to rely.

Mrs. Bates

Mrs. Bates is the old and much-respected widow of a former vicar of Highbury and mother of Miss Bates. She rarely leaves her room but to have tea with Emma's father, Mr. Woodhouse, or with Mrs. Perry and Mrs. Goddard. Her principal importance to the novel is as a convenient companion to Mr. Woodhouse and as an example of elderly propriety within the community.

Colonel Campbell

The Campbells are mentioned only in relation to being the benefactors of Jane Fairfax, who is the orphaned niece of Miss Bates. Jane has grown up in the Campbell family and been treated on an equal footing to their own daughter. Their daughter's marriage to Mr. Dixon and the family's temporary removal to Ireland compels Jane to return to Highbury; it also signals the dreaded time of independence, when Jane must seek her living as a governess. So, at least, the good people of Highbury have been led to believe.

Frank Churchill

The mysterious young gallant of marrying age has not yet made his appearance in Highbury, but he is expected every day, for his biological father (Mr. Weston) has just married the elegant Miss Taylor, former governess to Emma. His own mother having died before his was three, Frank Churchill was adopted by his uncle, who was in a position to bestow upon him all of the privileges of rank and wealth that his father could not. Mr. and Mrs. Weston have received "handsome" letters announcing his intent to come and his excuses why he cannot. When he finally arrives, he is liked by all except Mr. Knightley, who finds him less forthright or perfect in his duties and intentions than he ought to be. As it turns out, Mr. Knightley has good reason for his suspicions. Frank is playing a game of deception with the good people of Highbury, and at least two women, Jane Fairfax and Emma Woodhouse, are in danger of falling prey to his manipulative charms. By artifice, Frank Churchill becomes one of Emma's three suitors. In that role readers are meant to judge his character alongside that of Mr. Elton and Mr. Knightley. As importantly, though, he becomes the means by which Emma once again makes critical mistakes in both her assessment of character and in her own powers of reason and observation.

As with most of Austen's characters, Frank Churchill is more complicated than he appears. With Emma, readers learn that charm, good looks, and breeding may serve as a front for sly manipulations and selfish goals. Emma must see in Frank's actions a reflection of her own failings, and she must learn that appearances are not what they seem. With Mr. Knightley, readers must acknowledge that circumstances can sometimes deter good intentions and that although Frank Churchill's actions were not to be condoned, he can easily be forgiven for acting out of love.

Mr. Churchill

While he is never introduced in person, Mr. Churchill is one of the privileged, condescending members of society living outside Highbury whose influence on the story is felt mainly in his role as adopted father to Frank Churchill. Whether and when Frank Churchill will finally come to Highbury to visit his biological father, Mr. Weston, and his new wife, the former Miss Taylor, governess to Emma, is a matter of grave speculation among the neighbors. In fact, one of the key disputes between Mr. Knightley and Emma centers on whether Frank Churchill is being unduly ruled by his feelings of duty toward his adoptive parents and not enough by his filial duty to Mr. Weston. Mr. Churchill also is mentioned early on in the novel as disapproving of his sister's earlier marriage to Mr. Weston on the grounds that it was an unequal match. When that sister dies three years later, their child, Frank, becomes a means of reconciliation. The Churchills adopt him.

Mrs. Churchill

Mrs. Churchill is the sickly wife of Mr. Churchill and adopted mother to Frank. She is regarded by Emma and by the narrator as the chief obstacle to Frank's marrying Jane

Fairfax. While, like her husband, Mrs. Churchill is never introduced except as a name associated with Frank's fate, she serves to illustrate the lure and the drawbacks of money and privilege. While Frank expects and needs his inheritance, he is unwilling to act on his own behalf in choosing a wife. Mrs. Campbell is not quite a stereotype. While she indeed appears to be the rich, domineering, condescending society snob that Emma takes her for, toward the end of the novel she actually does die of her illness□poetic justice perhaps, but certainly a very handy plot device, for otherwise Frank and Jane would still be dissembling about their secret engagement.

The Coles

Mr. and Mrs. Cole do not figure largely in the novel except as representatives of a merchant class who have some pretensions to mix with the gentry. Emma grapples with whether she should attend a dinner party given at the Coles, first thinking it inappropriately beneath her, and later not wanting to be left "in solitary grandeur," she decides to accept the invitation. Austen's irony aims partially at a fixed society so blind in its class-consciousness that it cannot account for good character and breeding unless it is attained by lineage. More importantly, the Coles, like the Martins, serve as lessons in humility to Emma. Austen makes the point through the Coles that when the accepted hierarchies break down and judgments about class and character must be determined, Emma, more often then not, acts out of a desire to be treated as the first person of consequence.

Mr. Dixon

Mr. and Mrs. Dixon do not figure in the action except, as with the Campbells, through their acquainted with Jane Fairfax. However, Mr. Dixon, who has married Miss Campbell (a virtual sister to Jane), is important to the comedy and mystery of the novel. Emma reasons that Jane's sadness and eventual illness can be imputed to an unrequited or ill-fated love for Mr. Dixon. The romance that she imagines is all the more fixed in her mind when the pianoforte arrives for Jane from an anonymous source. She deduces that Jane's decision not to go to Ireland has everything to do with the love she cannot show for the former Miss Campbell's new husband.

Mr. Elton

Having been so successful (at least in her own mind) of having matched Miss Taylor to Mr. Weston, Emma determines to marry off Mr. Elton to her friend Harriet Smith. Mr. Elton, who is the new vicar of Highbury, is single and unhappily so. Readers know little about him except what Emma believes him to be: "most suitable, quite the gentleman himself, and without low connections." Readers have already been privy, though, to Emma's supercilious attitudes toward the Martins, her pride of place, and her vanity in manipulating marriages for her amusement. When it turns out that Emma mistakenly takes his courtship of herself for an attraction to Harriet, Mr. Elton is forever diminished

in her eyes. Mr. Elton, to be sure, has her dowry in mind, and when his hopes are dashed, he acts the churl, all pretense of gentle behavior shed like a skin. He soon disappears and only returns to Highbury when he has found a new conquest in the person of Augusta Hawkins. After his marriage to Miss Hawkins, Mr. Elton is relegated to the role of husband and co-conspirator in the couple's haughty treatment of Emma and Harriet Smith.

Mrs. Augusta Elton

The former Miss Hawkins is coarse, arrogant, and interfering. She is embarrassingly familiar and at the same time unaware of social gaffes. Though orphaned and of dubious breeding, Mrs. Elton takes pride in her sister's having married extremely well, to a Mr. Suckling. Augusta makes odious comparisons between Mr. Suckling's "seat" at Maple Grove and Emma's estate at Hartfield, and her fondest wish is to explore the country in the her sister's barouche-landau, a fancy carriage. Mrs. Elton conspires with Mr. Elton to deliberately humiliate Harriet Smith at the Crown Ball, a social crime for which she is not to be forgiven. She also takes an immediate and therefore controlling interest in Jane Fairfax and her fate. It is Mrs. Elton's persistent haranguing of Jane to take a position as governess that nearly ends in disaster for Jane and Frank. Austen constantly forces Jane into Mrs. Elton's overbearing company to show how elegant Jane Fairfax is by contrast and, as importantly, how superior Harriet Smith appears despite her lack of breeding. Ironically, it might be the anti-heroic Mrs. Elton, so easy to criticize for her hauteur and disdain, who can be fairly compared to Emma at her worst.

Jane Fairfax

Jane Fairfax, orphaned at an early age, is raised in privileged circumstances by the Campbells. Of Emma's age and of fine sensibilities, she is beautiful, discrete, and refined. She is Emma's superior in her talent for music, and she is admired for her elegance. She comes to Highbury when the Campbells leave for Ireland and her friend and "sister," Miss Campbell, marries Mr. Dixon. It is expected that she will take a place as governess to a good family in order to support herself now that she is of age. At Highbury she is compelled to live with her chattering Aunt Bates and receive the attentions of the odious Mrs. Elton. While Emma could befriend her and has good intentions of doing so, she finds Jane's reserve and coolness anathema. For her peculiar reserve, indeed, "Emma could not forgive her."

Jane Fairfax can be considered the main female character around which romance and mystery revolve. Although Emma is mistaken in thinking her in love with Mr. Dixon, she is certainly in love. Jane's secret engagement to Frank Churchill, a man with whom Emma initially thought herself in love, is the cause for Jane's reserve and also her shame. While Jane Fairfax's virtue and intelligence are highly praised, the intrigue she is involved in, as David Lodge points out in his "Introduction" to *Emma*, leaves her "passive and enigmatic." Or as Mr. Knightley describes her, "She has not the open temper which a man would wish for in a wife."

Finally, however, she is redeemed by the same impulse the narrator feels for Frank Churchill. She could be forgiven because she was motivated by love and by a helpless sense of her own inability to choose her fate. She is infinitely finer than Frank Churchill, for in her dissembling, she hurt no one but herself, drew no one into the charade, took no enjoyment in others' ignorance of their secret but only wished for resolution and peace. Except that she lacks a spirit of animation and is not as fortunate in her circumstances of birth, she is Emma's equal or superior in every way. It is indeed necessary for her to leave Highbury soon after her plans to marry Frank are secure, for Highbury is only big enough for one heroine.

Mrs. Goddard

Mrs. Goddard runs a boarding school of high repute at which Harriet Smith is enrolled. She is an honest "plain, motherly kind of woman," a hard worker who is no longer young. She is one of the ladies whom Emma calls on to play cards with her father in the absence of Miss Taylor. She also is the one career woman in town who, by dint of her wholesome, old-fashioned establishment, and her great influence on generations of girls, Emma can accept as proper company for her father. She is one more example of the fluidity possible within a fixed society.

Isabella Knightley

Isabella Knightley is Emma's elder sister, the wife of John Knightley, Mr. George Knightley's brother. Isabella is the quintessential good mother and wife, deferring to her husband in all things, keeping an orderly household, and artlessly adoring her sister and father. Clearly Isabella provides a contrast to Emma, whose intelligence, wit, imagination, and lively projections of her own ego make it extremely unlikely that she will come to regard herself as a passive Victorian housewife.

John Knightley

Mr. John Knightley has, like his brother, a confident sense of self, an Enlightenment zeal for reason and logic, and a temper that does not easily suffer foolishness or inconvenience. His discernment is made evident when he warns Emma that Mr. Elton has designs on her. Austen uses John Knightley's visits to Hartfield to provide one more model of gentlemanly behavior against which to contrast Mr. George Knightley. In John's inability to be tactful in the face of Emma's father's eccentricities, he is found wanting. His sarcasm, as opposed to his brother's forbearance, adds to Emma's distress over her father's comforts. He also provides a comic, down-to-earth corrective to Mr. Woodhouse's peccadilloes and hobby horses.

However, there is room for education; if Emma must learn reason and gentility from him, he also must study to be more open and less decided in his opinions. He stubbornly clings to his assessments of Harriet and Frank Churchill before he has had a chance to really know them. His jealousy of the latter makes him immune to any of his charms,

and his suspicions that the former can not be improved by Emma's attentions makes him distant and cool to the friendship.

Of all the male characters, Mr. Knightley is the only man whom Emma can marry without fear of discovering a lack of intelligence, compassion, or virtue. He combines all three as well as a promise that things will remain much as they are with the surprising but wonderful addition of marital love and security. Mr. Knightley's absolute steadiness and brotherly affection make it possible for Emma to come face to face with her own desire and sexuality, which until now she has only managed to express in the form of affection for her father, family, and friends.

Mr. Knightley

Mr. George Knightley surpasses all other gentlemen of Highbury for his discernment, reason, kindness, and virtue. He is the owner of Donwell, a large estate comparable only to Hartfield for its size and grandeur, which, if he does not marry, will be inherited by the eldest son of his brother John. While Emma busies herself naïvely making matches, carelessly starting rumors, and meddling in affairs that bring confusion to her friends, Mr. Knightley quietly helps his neighbors, not for his own amusement but out of a sense of responsibility for their well being. It is with his help that Harriet and Robert Martin are finally united, with his care that Mrs. and Miss Bates's needs are often met. With brotherly advice and a firm sense of justice and duty he guides Emma toward more mature behavior. He befriends Jane Fairfax and chides Emma into better intentions on her behalf. He is suspicious of Mr. Elton and Frank Churchill when everyone else is charmed by them, and he turns out to be right most of the time.

Robert Martin

Robert Martin is a tenant farmer of good character and intelligence who has a comfortable and increasingly promising living on Mr. Knightley's estate, Donwell. Harriet is introduced to him and to his sister Elizabeth and the Martin family during a summer recess from Mrs. Goddard's School. Mr. Martin later writes Harriet an eloquent and quite correct letter proposing marriage, which Harriet is inclined to accept until Emma talks her out of it. He is the source of great irritation between Emma and Mr. Knightley, for Emma does not yet know how to value anyone below her own class. She finds a "young farmer . . . the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. . . . precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do." While Robert Martin plays only a very minor role in the action of the novel, he is important to Emma's education. She finally learns how to value him, despite his station. And through the good offices of Mr. Knightley, Robert Martin finally marries Harriet to the delight of both.

Harriet Smith

Harriet Smith is a boarder at Mrs. Goddard's school, "daughter to someone" but no one knows who. Since Emma needs someone to amuse her after Miss Taylor moves to

Randalls, she chooses Harriet, as someone whose sweet and guileless nature could be easily guided and to whom Emma "could be useful."

Harriet takes all her cues from Emma, flattered to be admitted to Emma's inner circle and presented as her special friend. In almost every respect, Harriet has more common sense than Emma, whose imagination leads her to believe that Harriet is of noble birth and therefore should be matched with a gentleman bachelor, the most eligible being Mr. Elton. Emma's misguided interference in Harriet's love affairs threatens to cost her the true happiness of Mr. Martin and loses for her the vague promise of Mr. Elton, who never liked her in the first place except as a friend of Emma's. Emma's "training" of Harriet, which consists of persuading her she is "superior" to anyone but a gentleman, ironically leads Harriet to think of Mr. Knightley as an appropriate and desirable match. It is only when Harriet begins to focus on Mr. Knightley that Emma herself realizes she is in love with him and that she truly has done Harriet great harm.

Harriet's simplicity and naïveté are transformed through Emma's agency to a confidence, maturity, and fuller sense of her own worth without the conceits and arrogance that might accompany such a change. It is to Harriet's credit that she does not judge Emma more harshly for her intrigues, even though they end up costing Harriet much heartache and disillusionment. In the end, it is her own good sense, and not Emma's wisdom, that leads Harriet to the altar and to an appropriate and fulfilling future.

Mr. Weston

Mr. Weston's importance has to do with his early alliance with the Churchills and his son, Frank. His rise in "gentility and property" makes him another example of upward mobility within the early nineteenth-century British class structure. He also presents another "type" of gentleman in Highbury society, who, though very amiable and cheerful of temperament, lacks the judgment and discipline that marks Mr. Knightley as the more reasonable and gentile.

Mrs. Weston

Mrs. Weston, formerly Miss Taylor, marries Mr. Weston at the beginning of the novel and leaves Hartfield where she has been Emma's governess for 16 years. It is her departure for Randalls, only a half-mile away, which occasions the miserable Emma to take on Harriet Smith as a respite to her loneliness. Mrs. Weston is Emma's best friend and confidante. As her governess, and indeed her surrogate mother, she has had a large share in Emma's education; she has also indulged and spoiled her and given her a great sense of her own importance. However, Mrs. Weston is an excellent creature□young, attractive, intelligent and always thinking of others' happiness before her own. Mrs. Weston is the second wife of Mr. Weston. Their marriage sets the stage for the appearance of Mr. Weston's son, Frank Churchill, who owes filial duty to his father and new mother to pay his respects.

Mrs. Weston's story ends almost before it begins with her happy marriage. However, her continuing friendship and devotion to Emma is one of the elevating themes of the novel. Her mistaken interpretations of events and scenes in the novel also endear her to readers. She keeps guessing with her own misguided detective work when she suggests to Emma that Mr. Knightley is really in love with Jane Fairfax, and she adds to the suspense in guessing that Frank Churchill means to propose to Emma. Like readers, Mrs. Weston is beguiled by double meanings and innuendo.

Emma Woodhouse

Emma is an unlikely heroine. She is haughty, immature, rash, overly imaginative, supercilious, and sometimes mean. She finds herself "superior" to almost everyone in her midst, and she is possessed of an undisciplined mind "delighted with its own ideas." Her pride and vanity seem to know no bounds, and her intrigues and manipulations harm or embarrass a number of her friends. But despite her questionable personal charm she is surprisingly able to remake and redeem herself. Where first there is blindness and conceit, later readers see self-awareness and humility. When one moment readers recoil at her arrogance, they are next cheered by her patience and forbearance. Readers almost dismiss her for her rude indiscretions but then are entertained by her candid, honest charm. Just when she is suspected of being ruthless, she is found to be capable of deep compassion and love. Indeed, Emma's very imperfections bind readers to her.

Austen infuses her heroine with such high spirit and determination that her youthful follies can be overlooked. She is motherless, after all, embarked on a project of self-education that begins only when her governess leaves. She is likeable because she refuses to be typical. She refuses to do what is expected of her. She determines never to marry, to continue to improve herself by her own means, and to reject the received wisdom of her times that a woman is nothing without a man. That she does marry in the end does not make her a hypocrite. On the contrary, it is only when she learns that she need not lose herself in a marriage, that her best moral guide and friend has all along been eager for her to make her own mistakes and to wonder in an unselfish way "what will become of her" that she relents.

Mr. Woodhouse

Austen clearly means to equate gentility with the amounts and types of foods one eats, and in his preference for the most abstemious amounts and the least volatile types, Mr. Woodhouse cannot be rivaled. Mr. Woodhouse is old and has a delicate constitution; he is constantly referring to the good advice of his esteemed apothecary, Mr. Perry. It is a source of comic relief when Mr. Woodhouse and his daughter, Isabella, converse about harmful weather conditions, the benefits of one seaside town over another, or the type of gruel that should be preferred on all occasions to avoid an unhealthy constitution. As a quintessential gentleman and undisputed member of the English gentry, Mr. Woodhouse is esteemed as the first citizen of Highbury. His neighbors are solicitous for

his health, and he is always careful that people should do their duties toward one another, uphold customs and traditions, and by no means ever give in to excesses or haste. He deplores change and invariably refers to Mrs. Weston as "poor Miss Taylor" and to his own daughter as "poor Isabella," thereby projecting onto their happiness his own dread of their absence from his household.

Austen seems to measure her characters in relation to how they treat the eccentricities and hardships of the most difficult characters. Mr. Woodhouse is one of the characters whose trying personality must be suffered because of his position in society and because he has often been a benefactor to his neighbors. Emma's diligent and dedicated care of her father is perhaps one of her greatest strengths, and Mr. Knightley's unselfish decision to move to Hartfield and give up Donwell to marry Emma is a mark of his true superiority as a man.

Objects/Places

Highbury

The village where the story takes place. A quiet little place located about sixteen miles from London.

Hartfield

The Woodhouse Estate. The setting for much of the novel.

Randalls

The new home of the Westons. A very nice estate located near Hartfield.

Donwell Abbey

The home of Mr. Knightley. This estate will be inherited by Emma's nephew unless Mr. Knightley marries.

Brunswick Square

The home of Mr. And Mrs. John Knightley and their children. Located in London.

London

The home of Mr. And Mrs. John Knightley. Frequently mentioned as many residents of Highbury visit there often.

Abbey Mill Farms

The home of the Martin family.

Richmond

A small town located between Highbury and London.

Maple Grove Farms

A farm incessantly mentioned by Miss Hawkins. Located near Bath.

Bath

A popular vacation spot for many people in England. Miss Hawkins is formerly of Bath, and Mr. Elton visits. Previously both Miss Fairfax and Mr. Churchill visited there separately as well.

Fords

The popular store in Highbury. Very well thought of by all of the residents of Highbury.

Mrs. Goddard's

The boarding school where Harriet lives. A highly regarded school in Highbury.

Box Hill

A popular picnic spot, located near Highbury.

Social Concerns

The dominant social danger explored in Emma is the propensity exhibited by the heroine to control others by manipulating their social lives. While we have seen the same tendency in some of Jane Austen's calculating villains, Emma's manipulations are naive, although sometimes just as hurtful. For example, she influences the illegitimate daughter of a man whom we find out to be a tradesman at the novel's end, Harriet Smith, to reject an earnest and appropriate suitor, Robert Martin, for the socially unattainable and inappropriate Mr. Elton, risking the destruction of two and possibly three characters' chances for happiness. In addition to this incident Emma also manipulates the naive and gullible Harriet in other ways. Harriet is only seventeen and looks up to Emma for guidance and lessons in manners. As the single, attractive unmarried daughter of a well-to-do hypochondriac widower who has just lost his daughter's caregiver and governess to marriage, Emma has almost free rein to practice her wiles, and her efforts and their effects are measured against the built-in social injustices that we see in all of Austen's novels: unequal distribution of wealth, the compromised financial and social position of women, the guilt by association suffered by so-called natural children, parental neglect, and the snobbery and superficiality of the socially well-placed that compound the sufferings of all marginalized citizens.

Countering Emma's machinations and working vigilantly to make the best out of the imperfect social world of the novel is Mr. Knightley. His name reflects his actions in the book, so much so that critics have complained he is unrealistically drawn. It is when Harriet sets her sights on him (instead of Mr. Elton, Emma's second candidate for Harriet) that Emma realizes that she herself desires to marry Mr. Knightley, and she is taught a severe lesson—a lesson of which Mr. Knightley has been aware all along—about the danger of using people like chess pieces.

As in Austen's other novels, the social world depicted in Emma is narrow—the chief characters are upper class, and even the disenfranchised do no work or regard work with horror (Jane Fairfax is decidedly unhappy about the prospect of becoming a governess), yet there are reminders of what lies beyond the well-furnished rooms, welltended grounds of the country estates, and well-married and well-off people. One especially pointed example appears at the end when we learn that Mrs. Weston's turkeys have all been stolen from her poultry house, and other estates have been likewise robbed. The episode ironically undercuts the "perfect happiness" of the ending and shows once more how aware Jane Austen was of the contradictions and inconsistencies of the world she wrote about.

Techniques

Mary Lascelles points out that in Emma Jane Austen has perfected a narrative technique of "self-effacement" that allows her to control and direct the reader's attention entirely unobtrusively. We never suspect that "our attention is being manipulated" (Jane Austen and Her Art), and she uses the buildup of the strain in the relationship between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax as an example, noting how Frank misses the hint contained in her statement about people of strong character being able to rid themselves of deleterious acquaintances. As in her other novels, the artistry and precision in the creation of character and use of language are a delight. Another critic cites Emma as the novel which has the most prismatic treatment of character, calling it "the novel of character," with Emma of course being the chief character, and the object of the plot "the gradual humiliation of self-conceit" in Emma. People who bother to dislike Emma, he argues, are missing the point: She is "simply a figure of fun,.. . whom we both love and laugh at." Aided by Austen's masterful use of irony, we at once see Emma's follies and deficiencies and admire her outgoing spirit, warmth, and open nature, a quality which Knightley finds present in Emma and wanting in Jane Fairfax. Austen's brilliant use of foil characters and lesser characters to leak information about major ones add to our sense of the complex treatment of the main character. Walton Litz notes "three stages of development in Emma's movement toward self-recognition," noting that initially she is blind both to her own emotions and to the outside world, but that with the assistance of Knightley in successive roles of "father, brother and finally lover" she becomes disillusioned about Elton, but remains confident about her powers of insight, then after she is again deceived by Frank Churchill's word game into believing he has genuine feeling for her, she is secondly made to feel the limitations "of her judgment and her egoistic imagination."

Knightley's role in Emma's moral education is so obviously authorial as to at least deflect the arrows of feminist criticism that see him, like Henry Tilney as a condescending, slightly domineering male. Like Jane Fairfax, his distance and reserve, required by this role, tend to efface him when set against the Byronic Frank Churchill and the vibrant Emma. His two most decisive acts, and they are largely private, are to avoid Emma after the Box Hill episode and to reclaim her after the news of Jane's and Frank's engagement is out. He is the chief contributor to the masterful control of point of view mentioned by Lascelles and that A.

Walton Litz sees as primary achievement of Emma: "By allowing us to share Emma's inner life without being limited by it, Jane Austen has avoided that dichotomy between the sympathetic imagination and critical judgment which runs through the earlier novels." ("The Limits of Freedom: Emma."

Thematic Overview

As in Austen's other work, the marriage plot predominates, but the central themes are found in the characters' interactions with each other and the degree of intelligence, humanity, capacity for growth, and kindness they bring to their inherited social positions. Emma, who has so many gifts, abuses them for much of the novel by trying to rearrange other people's lives—she manipulates Harriet Smith's emotions, hurts those of Miss Bates, all the while not knowing where her own feelings really lie. It is her discovery, guided by Knightley, both of her shortcomings and her real feelings that in a sense earn her betrothal to Knightley.

Yet Emma's machinations, reprehensible as they may be, serve not just to expose her moral shortcomings, but the failings of others and of the social system itself. This exposure is particularly evident in the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax—subterfuge forced upon the couple by superficial considerations about money and propriety, and made especially painful for Jane when Churchill flirts with other women in her presence and then ignores her, all to conceal the engagement. Indeed, an encounter between Emma and Churchill toward the end of the novel (Chapter 18 of Volume 3) shows each admitting to the other the manipulative nature they share.

Adding to the sense of complexity of the social system is the capricious ease with which some characters fall into personal happiness and prosperity without themselves suffering very much, while others achieve happiness only after long and patient struggle. Jane suffers far more than Frank in the course of their secret union, and Knightley is overtly jealous of the twenty-three-year-old Frank Churchill being handed a fortune and marrying Jane, while he is to marry Emma, whom he has known since she was a child, only after a long, careful vigil (Chapter 13, Volume 3). Churchill, in a slight way, is socially stigmatized by his own passions in arranging the secret engagement (which Jane at one point calls off), but yet his youthful rashness is ultimately rewarded. The coincidental death of Mrs. Churchill, his aunt, has also played right into his hands: She would have opposed the marriage and refused any financial backing.

Breaches of propriety and abuses of language find expression here as in Austen's other novels, most dramatically in the famous Box Hill outing, reminding one of Austen's pervasive concern with propriety and decorum for the sake of human dignity and happiness. In addition to Churchill's blatant flirting with Emma and its repercussions on Knightley and Jane Fairfax, there is Emma's abuse of Miss Bates and the events that lead up to it. After annoying Mrs. Elton, the self-proclaimed chaperon of the party, by preempting a leadership role— a perhaps forgivable breach—Emma starts a conversation game in which each person may contribute "one thing very clever, ... or two things moderately clever—or three things very dull indeed." Miss Bates takes the bait and offers "three things very dull indeed." Emma quips back, "'Pardon me, but you will be limited as to number—only three at once.'" Miss Bates is very hurt, and apologizes about her loquacity to Mr.

Knightley, yet she also notes Emma's rudeness. Later, Knightley confronts Emma with her cruelty, reaffirming the imperative that well-placed, intelligent people need to behave in a caring manner towards others, regardless of their perceived lack of intelligence. The Box Hill sequence suggests how polite behavior can mask many complex passions and motives, but also that, as often as not, there is a reason for masking them.

Gossip is a breach of decorum and abuse of language that apparently only becomes so when it is revealed to its subjects, but characters who gossip sink in the author's, the reader's, and magnanimous characters' estimations. Frank Church gossips about the Eltons having married on slight acquaintance right after they are out of earshot, preparing for a discussion of capricious vs. steady marriages, and Jane Fairfax counters that people of strong character pull away from any "unfortunate acquaintance," anticipating her own breaking of their engagement, and underscoring hers and Churchill's divergent ratings on Austen's character scale. (Still, there remains the ever-present possibility of Churchill's own moral growth as the husband of Jane Fairfax.) Knightley, by contrast to Churchill, is a man of few words—his summary of Frank Churchill's life is one of the few times he speaks at all negatively about another. The banter at Box Hill, and the flirtation between Churchill and Emma leave Knightley so upset that he leaves. The episode leaves him very conscious about how the language of love can be abused and this awareness makes it almost impossible for him to propose to Emma. Ironically, it is both his knowledge of Churchill's engagement to Jane as well as a visit to his brother's family that remind him of his own feelings for Emma. In the end, "perfect happiness," in the form of a decidedly modest wedding between Emma and Knightley, prevails. It is as though ceremonies, like language, must be kept appropriately in check to validate the expression.

Themes

Love

Love is a theme that pervades this novel and appears on practically every page. Austen wrote about nothing else and *Emma* is no exception. The characters are all in various stages of being in love, falling in love or wishing they were in love. Emma in particular seems to want to avoid love, but has no problem arranging it for other people.

When Emma thinks she has fallen in love she does her best to convince herself that this is not the case and ends up thinking herself right back out of love. This will come in handy later on to prevent more misfortune, but her friend may not be able to say the same.

As several characters fall in and out of love, it is interesting to watch the events transpire. Harriet in particular seems to be a victim of love as someone who is perpetually being set up with men who care nothing for her. Harriet forms strong attachments to each of these people and her association with Emma, who continues to try to form a match for her, seems to be doing her great emotional harm.

In the end, love prevails and everything is set right with all of the characters. No one is left unhappy and all past issues are resolved.

Society

Society is discussed at length throughout the book, in particular ones given station in life. During this time period it was looked down upon if you sought a relationship outside of your social standing. Although women were allowed to marry to better themselves, their prospective mates must not be too far in status above them.

At times, the pressures of society seem almost too much to bear and it is striking to see how things have changed since this time in history. Much less credence is given to social standing in general circles.

Emma in particular holds society as an impregnable fortress that must not be breached. She works at being very proper, and intends to hold everyone around her to this high standard. She is constantly comparing everyone to Mr. Knightley, who appears to be a paragon of societal virtue and as such must be admired and imitated by all who wish to succeed.

It is amazing to see how Emma continues to hold on to her idea of society, even if it means losing a friendship of someone she has worked so hard to improve. Instead of being happy with the regular virtues of a friend, Emma feels it is her duty to improve everyone around her, especially if they are lacking in manners and carriage.

This constant need for approval must have surely been a drain on anyone who did not enjoy a high position in society.

Repression

Women in this time period were extremely repressed, and it was not uncommon for someone to never say exactly what they were thinking. Even if you could not stand the person to whom you were speaking, it was imperative that you never let them know. This has changed to some extent in our time, but there is still some remaining vestige of a standard of politeness.

However, in the time period in which this novel is set, it was an unforgivable offense to speak your mind or to answer a question honestly if it meant the offense of another. Emma is a terrific example of the lengths that people went through to avoid speaking their mind.

There is a double edged sword to this repression. While it may be overlooked if a person of wealth made a social gaffe, if you were not of a wealthy family you were under much more scrutiny and less likely to be forgiven.

The theme of repression runs throughout the novel and one can guess that Austen uses this to illustrate not only her own situation, but the situation of thousands of women during this time.

Age of Reason or Age of Enlightenment

Jane Austen was well acquainted with eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers such as Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose classical ideals of common sense and moderation were revived during the so-called Age of Reason or Age of Enlightenment. Respect for scientific principles, including human nature, were applied to all aspects of life. While emotion, sentiment, and individual imagination were not absent from Enlightenment thinking, reason and rational thought were highly prized. Characters in Austen's works suffer from her lightly ironic and satirical pen when their wit is unconnected with their powers of reason. (Miss Bates, for example, is kind but "ridiculous"; Mr. Woodhouse is loveable but neurotic about health issues and eating habits; the Eltons' powers of reason are dwarfed by their meanness and pretensions.) But Austen's most heroic characters (Mr. Knightley; the Emma at the end of the novel) have found a balanced way to blend reason and compassion, intellect and virtue.

Manners and Morals

Self-control, decorum, and polite conduct are hallmarks of civilized society, and to be thought well of in society was a mark of good breeding in Jane Austen's privileged world. Although Austen has too keen a sense of humor and too deep a desire for good to triumph to be considered a slave to convention, she imposes limitations on her

characters to act with gentility at all occasions. Much can be forgiven in the fictional world of *Emma* if one's manners are proper and if one acts out of a sense of propriety and decency. Hence Frank Churchill is chastised for having deceived the neighbors but escapes condemnation on account of his good manners, gentility, and well-intentioned heart.

Neoclassicism and Wit

Late eighteenth-century England saw a resurgence of classical forms in art (a period often referred to as Neoclassical)□the comic, the tragic, the epic, and heroic genres in literature reflected the universal truths of human nature. Jane Austen was writing during the Regency period, toward the end of the eighteenth century, when writers of the Romantic Movement were reacting with more lyrical and emotional content to the constraints and limits imposed by neoclassicists. Although Austen was not much influenced by romanticism, her witty dialogue and satire focuses on human foibles within a specific social context that fuels emotion, deep feeling, and sentiment. Austen's wit shows most boldly in her comedy of manners and situations when rules of conduct are broken (Mrs. Elton referring to Mr. Knightley with contemptible familiarity as "Knightley"); when one person's play on words hits on a truth that is unsuspected (Frank Churchill's declaring to Emma that the gift of the pianoforte was certainly "an offer of love"); or when human folly is at fault for uncomfortable social situations ("how peculiarly unlucky poor Mr. Elton was in being in the same room at once with the woman he had just married, the woman he had wanted to marry, and the woman whom he had been expected to marry").

The Novel and Realism

The novel, as a recognized genre, was born in the eighteenth century and in its earliest forms is associated with the writings of Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, and Daniel Defoe. However, the novel was as much a female creation springing from the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Fanny Burney, Ann Radcliffe, and, of course, Jane Austen. The novel was indeed original in that it took for its subject the experiences of ordinary people (rather than mythological, historical, or legendary figures) and based its story on individual expressions of truth common to current times and culture. Jane Austen took the novel to new heights in dramatizing the domestic concerns of her characters. She encompassed the full spectrum of human behavior through situational detail common to her characters and language particular to each character's psychology. The rise of realism and the novel had much to do with the rise of literacy and the middle class as well as the examination and scrutiny by women of their roles in both public and domestic spheres.

Style

Point of View

The story is told in the 3rd person, using a nameless narrator who is privy to all that is going on. At times, the narrator is not impartial, and positively drips with sarcasm or disdain when describing certain characters. This is particularly useful if you are curious to see what will happen later in the book. Instead of being confined to one person's view, you can begin to see the way that all of the characters are woven together from a distance.

This is an interesting way for a novel of this time period to be crafted. Austen was one of the few women during this time period that actively wrote novels. You get the impression that Austen herself is the narrator of the story and that she actually knew some of the people that appear as characters within.

The use of a narrator allows the reader to form many conclusions as you are reading the story through an observer's eyes, instead of through a single character. You are allowed to see the faults of not only secondary characters, but the heroine as well. This method works very well in Emma, especially since there are so many characters that frequently appear and disappear.

The point of view does not change throughout the novel, remaining constant to the end. Although you may be misled at times by the narrator, especially in regards to several sub-plots, it is easier to follow the story line this way.

Setting

The novel is set in England during the early 1800's. This is the time in which Austen herself lived, and her descriptions of the landscape are very vivid. The setting is quite pastoral in nature and covers life in a small country village outside of London.

Although other places are spoken of, at times in length, the entire novel takes place in one location, Highbury. This village is described as idyllic and a very peaceful place to live. You have the usual village vicar, stores, boarding houses and manors that dotted the English countryside during the 19th century.

You are placed in the midst of the well-to-do of Highbury and do not venture beyond these constraints during the novel. While some of the poorer places of Highbury are visited, the majority of the time is spent at the manors and houses of the rich society members.

Highbury is a very typical English country village, full of people that were common during this time. You have everyone in their proper place in society and the setting is defined by this society.

Language and Meaning

The language used throughout the novel is very formal. Many words that have been changed in spelling, but contain the same meaning. Typically, these words include chuse instead of choose, shew instead of show and other words that were commonly used in the 19th Century.

Other examples include the way that some words are spread out, instead of being combined into one word as they are today and words that have fallen out of daily use in our current time. Word lovers should enjoy this book greatly, as many words are included that have fallen by the wayside in the literature of today.

Although this novel was written in the 19th century and contains some words that may be considered strange, the language is very timeless in nature. It is very simple to pick up the meaning of most of the words.

The sentence structure is very formal and is a good example of what was considered to be proper English during this time. The grammar also follows this rule, and it is interesting to note how this has changed throughout the years.

Austen is well known for writing works that are almost satirical in nature. Her characters at times appear as caricatures of the common members of society during this time. At times, some of them are almost unbelievable as they go through the motions of society.

Structure

The novel is divided into three volumes. Volumes One and Two contain 18 chapters and Volume Three has 19 chapters. Each volume serves to divide the story into different phases of the growth of the main character, Emma.

The first volume introduces us to Emma, and reveals her faults and good points. Her charity to the poor is mentioned alongside her somewhat contrary snobbishness. We are bystanders, watching Emma grow and learn not only about herself but about the other characters. Many of Emma's preconceived notions turn out to be incorrect and by Volume Three, Emma has completed her transformation into a much nicer human being.

Emma's character is not the only own that goes through a growth process in the three volumes. Harriet begins as a sweet and humble girl in Volume One, and in Volume Two you can see the effect her relationship with Emma is having on her personality. As Emma grows, Harriet seems to be moving backwards and becoming a much less nicer person. By Volume Three Emma realizes that she has created a monster with Harriet, who has become more like Emma was in the previous volumes. However, this is set right before the end of Volume Three as Harriet realizes her folly.

Bildungsroman

A German term, bildungs, and a French one, roman, combine to form a term that describes the novel of development or formation. This is a story about Emma's formation as a gentile woman. The author intends to show us how a youthful life matures, is educated, and, finally, transformed. In *Emma*, the heroine's development coincides with her attachment to those people in the novel (in particular Mr. Knightley) whose sterling qualities she also must adopt and make her own.

Comedy of Manners

A comedy begins in difficulty and ends happily. At the outset of Austen's novel, Emma is distressed by the thought of her own loneliness that must follow in the wake of Miss Taylor's marriage. The novel ends in the most suitable of companionship and marriage to Mr. Knightley. The major character is often set a task that needs completion or a lesson that needs to be learned. Emma must learn the true nature of discernment of mind and nobility of character. The term, comedy, comes from the Greek (meaning to make merry), and while it is usually lighthearted, a comedy can be serious in intent, as *Emma* certainly is. Austen's novel is not merely a light-hearted romp; its message of compassion and transformation is carefully illustrated. The comedy is not crude; on the contrary, it is subtly ironic and satirical. It revolves around the conventions and manners of an artificial, sophisticated society and depends on small, domestic intrigues and character foibles to generate amusement. Universal truths, however, can be gleaned from the small and particular.

Fatal Flaw

While Emma's personality flaws are not fatal as are those, for example, that mark major characters in Shakespeare's tragedies, hers prevent her from full participation in the life she aspires to□that of a gentile lady. Emma's flaws are treatable; they stem from an excess of imagination, a tendency to think too well of herself, and an inbred bias based on class superiority. At bottom she is well intended and compassionate, animated, intelligent, cheerful and patient. Readers are meant to like her, despite her flaws, but they are also meant to delight in her reinvention of self and the smoothing over of her rough edges.

Gender Issues

Jane Austen is not usually considered a feminist, at least not an active proponent of women's rights such as Mary Wollstonecraft (a contemporary of Austen's who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*). But she did believe that women were intelligent, creative equals to men, just as capable of accomplishment and just as liable to shortcomings and, therefore, that they should be judged according to their intelligence and character, just as men were. Emma vows never to marry. It is not because she

dislikes men, but because she judges that her life will be just as fulfilling if she remains single. She is well aware of her personal resources, does not behave coquettishly in order to attract men, and prefers to make her own decisions about her welfare, behavior, and attitudes. She is open to instruction from Mr. Knightley, but it is also clear that she will continue to be a forceful, enlightened partner in their marriage.

Mystery

Austen keeps us in suspense as to the nature of the romantic intentions and motives of several of her characters, especially in regard to the central mystery of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. She employs the usual strategies of mystery writing to do so: planting clues, creating dialogue and actions that may have multiple meanings; introducing red herrings to throw us off the trail; and supplying motives that offer possible keys to solving the mystery. Much of the enjoyment in reading is due to Austen's mastery of these techniques, which compels readers to join Emma in playing detective.

Point of View

In *Emma*, there are two perspectives from which to understand the story and the psychology of its characters: that of the author/narrator and that of the heroine, Emma. This limited omniscience provides insights into characters; motives and personalities, but (with the exception of Emma) it does not allow readers to know what characters are thinking. The strategy makes sense in this story since the plot revolves around Emma's process of maturation. Emma's insights are not to be trusted, and so the reliable narrator provides the full truth of the matter.

Satire

A literary strategy for revealing the follies and shortcomings of humankind, satire blends humor and wit with critical attitudes toward human nature and social institutions. Irony, which reveals an often-comic dual reality between what is true and what is illusion, is one of Austen's favorite techniques. She uses it freely to create intrigue and situational comedy. For example, it is ironic when Emma attributes the gift of the pianoforte to Mr. Dixon and Frank Churchill (knowing it is of course from himself) pretends to agree with her suspicions by saying, "I can see it in no other light than as an offering of love." Emma is none the wiser, but the reader sees the double meaning. The Eltons come in for their fair share of satire since they are the perfect pretenders to gentility, being themselves coarse, pretentious, and uneducated.

Social Setting

The novel is set in late eighteenth century England (during the Regency period), in a small countryside village, structured with a conventional hierarchical social ladder. At the top are the landowners (Mr. Knightley, Mr. Woodhouse, and their families); next come

the respectable male professionals□the career military officers (Captain Weston, Colonel Campbell), doctors (Mr. Perry), solicitors, and vicars (Mr. Elton). The tradesmen have become more mobile (Mr. Cole), moving up in class as they gain wealth during the Industrial Revolution. Women also can earn respectable wages as teachers and governesses. The tenant farmers (Robert Martin) are near the bottom, followed by the hired servants, and the truly poor (the gypsies). The hierarchy is important to the story since Emma must learn not to be deceived by class when judging a person's character.

Subplot

A secondary plot that develops alongside the main action involving the heroine and which usually influences the major character and the action as a whole is called the subplot. In this case, Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill are the major characters involved in the intrigue of a secret engagement that leads to mistaken motives and suspicions among the neighbors of Highbury. The mystery of the subplot allows the other characters to reveal their true natures as they interact with the two newcomers.

Historical Context

Jane Austen's *Emma* belongs to a period in English history known as the Regency (1811—1820), during which King George III was considered incompetent to rule and the Prince of Wales acted as Regent. But as a literary figure writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Austen can be considered a descendant of the Age of Enlightenment (alternately referred to as the Age of Reason, the neoclassical period, or the Augustan Age). It was a time of economic upheaval, political unrest, and great cultural industry and change.

During much of Austen's life, Europe and England were caught up in the Napoleonic Wars. While the novel itself makes no reference to war, nor is the plot in any way connected to it, military men do play a role as characters. Indeed, it is interesting to note that domestic country life could go on much as usual, despite the political turmoil. The Enlightenment philosophy that sustained the French Revolution and spurred the search for natural laws that would explain human behavior and social institutions did not alter Britain's tradition of monarchy. But it did inspire writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, and William Godwin to pen classic essays on the rights of man, the defense of a just revolution, and the pernicious effects of unjust rule.

The Industrial Revolution grew out of Enlightenment thinking that placed faith in the rational individual and in human progress and science. New inventions such as James Watt's steam engine, Crompton's "mule" (for making yarn), and Jethro Tull's seed planting drill, led to a great increase in agricultural and manufacturing production. When combined with the Enclosure Acts, which radically reduced the number of tenant farmers and drove landless people to cities for jobs, this revolution also led to the spread of contagious disease, an increase in infant mortality, and terrible overcrowding and dangerous working conditions in cities. Social status became more mobile with the growth of the middle class, and confusion about rank and custom prevailed. The wealth and stature of the Coles, for example, comes from trade, and while they belong to a class of people with whom Emma initially does not think she should mix, she eventually accepts their importance to the community. In Mr. Woodhouse's obsession over food and health, we might read an eccentric but practical wish to stay removed from the evils spawned by urban life. (One of the wonderful discoveries of the time was the smallpox vaccine.) And, through Emma, Austen pokes fun at Mr. Knightley's recurring discussions of agricultural improvements and his need to be in constant communication with his estate's steward.

During Jane Austen's time, satire was a popular literary tool used to critique social institutions and human evils. Ironically, writers associated with the Age of Reason and characterized by Cartesian logic (the thinking of Descartes, as in "I think; therefore, I am.") were not hesitant to parody logical thinking when it came to addressing social ills. Jonathan Swift's great satire, *A Modest Proposal*, for example, uses rational arguments to suggest that the Irish could solve their famine by eating their children. Jane Austen's targets are moral, domestic ones. She satirizes the over-indulgent, supercilious, proud, and coarse whose actions and behaviors lead to crimes of the heart.

It makes sense that the rise of the novel should accompany the rise of the middle class during the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding, Daniel Defoe, Anne Radcliffe, Fanny Burney, and Samuel Richardson were experimenting with realism, and Jane Austen was their literary heir. The Romantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, and Shelley among the most prominent) were also emerging, reacting against the cold and impersonal intellectuality of Cartesian logic with lyricism and exotica. Austen was more inclined to observe a unity of form—her novels have a well-conceived beginning, middle, and end, and all parts are related in an organic whole. For example, the action of the novel takes place in the tidy confines of one calendar year.

An influential philosopher of a slightly earlier time was John Locke. His seminal idea that human understanding evolves solely from the experience of the senses had a remarkable influence on the thinking of the next two centuries. The novel, with its focus on social and public discourse, evolved from Locke's stunning postulation that there was a normal shared truth in the collective memory of man and that new ideas did not emerge from private inspiration but from new combinations of old material. If external experience was the measure of knowledge, then essentially, truth was transparent and available to all. The nature of man was knowable and uniform. From this position, it is easy to see why satire and social documentary, science and empirical research prevailed. The influence of Lockian psychology on Jane Austen is suggested in her fondness for characters who show an appropriate public face and her penchant for discovering the true patterns of human nature through interactions in social settings. Other influential social thinkers include John Wesley, who founded the Methodist Church during the eighteenth century; Jean Jacques Rousseau, a radical philosophical voice of the time who distrusted science and valued emotion and intuition; and Adam Smith, called the father of modern economics.

Critical Overview

A collection of responses to Austen's novel (that includes, in fact, all the writers quoted below) is available on the Jane Austen Web site hosted by Brooklyn CUNY. Perhaps the most influential critique of *Emma* written during Jane Austen's lifetime was Sir Walter Scott's in the March 1816 edition of *Quarterly Review,* which that Web site contains. Scott described her as writing "a class of fictions which has arisen almost in our own times, and which draws the characters and incidents . . . more immediately from the current of ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel." For Scott, Austen's brand of realism was striking and unique, setting it apart from the false sentiment of typical romances or the lurid phantasms of Gothic tales. He praised Austen for "copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of the splendid scenes of an imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him."

Despite Scott's praise, however, Austen's novels were not a commercial success during her lifetime. Indeed, she was no self-promoter; she published her works anonymously. Because her novels came to be canonized as classics of English literature and because she was so venerated throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, it is difficult to imagine that Jane Austen's art garnered so little notice in her own time. Part of her obscurity as an artist might lie in the fact that most of her books were only actually published at the end of her life. *Sense and Sensibility* was her first book to see publication in 1811. She died in 1817. In the early 2000s, she was probably best known as the author of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) because of that novel's popularity.

The central argument over her accomplishments tends to revolve around two notions: her narratives' lack of passion and their narrow focus. Some accused her of being blinded by conservative, upper-class views and Enlightenment philosophy. Others wondered how she could ignore the great events of her time. Two critics might serve to represent the critical divide. In the mid-nineteenth century, George Henry Lewes, English philosopher and companion of author George Eliot, heralded Austen as "the greatest artist that has ever written." Where Charlotte Brontë found reason for scorn□"Anything like warmth or enthusiasm, anything energetic, poignant, heartfelt, is utterly out of place in commending these works. . . . The passions are perfectly unknown to her: she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood"□Lewes found plenty of room for praise. He wrote, "There are heights and depths in human nature Miss Austen has never scaled nor fathomed, there are worlds of passionate existence into which she has never set foot; but although this is obvious to every reader, it is equally obvious that she has risked no failures by attempting to delineate that which she has not seen. Her circle may be restricted, but it is complete. Her world is a perfect orb, and vital. Life, as it presents itself to an English gentlewoman peacefully yet actively engaged in her quiet village, is mirrored in her works with a purity and fidelity that must endow them with interest for all time."

Austen's reputation began to grow in the nineteenth century. Professor of English Lilia Melani notes how Victorian scholar and essayist Thomas B. Macaulay praised "the

marvellous and subtle distinctive traits" of Austen's characters, and that novelist E. M. Forster preferred to read Austen's work with "the mouth open and the mind closed." Melani also reports, "In the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf rescued [Austen] from the vilification of feminists when she wrote that [Austen] was 'mistress of much deeper emotion than appears on the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there.'"

Indeed, devotion to Jane Austen became so commonplace that readers were even satirized for their sentimental devotion to her. The "Janeites" were so called after the title of a short story by Rudyard Kipling (1924), which tells of soldiers forming a secret society based on their admiration and understanding of Jane Austen's novels, a source of solace during the horrors of World War I. The Cult of Janeites originated with the 1870 *Memoir* written by her nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh. Wanting to portray her as conforming to strict Victorian values, he softened her image, painting her as a kindly old spinster aunt. Anthony Trollope enhanced the image by writing that her novels were "full of excellent teaching, and free from an idea or word that can pollute."

As of the early 2000s, Austen's work was the subject of countless essays, commentaries, dissertations, and media remakes. She is considered one of the greatest novelists in the history of English literature. An American Society of Jane Austen scholars features essays, biographies, book reviews, and web links; scholars continue to discuss and scrutinize her life and work for what it can tell them about her literary style and genius as well as the history, culture, and domestic sensibilities of small-town England in the early 1800s.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Smith has a Ph.D. in English literature and is a freelance writer, tutor, and non-profit administrator. In this essay, Smith discusses how the comedy of manners and the bildungsroman meet in the education of Emma*.*

Austen's genius for combining elements of the comedy of manners with the "coming of age" story, or *bildungsroman*, helped legitimize the novel as a literary genre. When *Emma* was published in 1816, the novel was still young. In the early eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, often referred to originators of the modern form, wrote what were to become the first canonized novels in British literature. Gothic horror, sentimental romance, satire in the service of reform, and epistolary moralizing characterized the bulk of popular narratives between the 1720s and the 1740s. By the turn of the next century, Austen had teased the novel into maturity by filtering out the sentimental, the fantastic, and the puritanical. In their place, she substituted ordinary domestic conflict, natural dialogue, a plot that progresses causally in real time and in familiar settings. Moreover, she complicated her stories with recognizable human motives, liberally leavened with wit, a dose of light irony, and sprinkled for the most part with sympathetic humor.

In keeping with the conventions of classical drama, Austen provides both enjoyment and instruction as she carefully constructs the events and circumstances under which Emma's education is to take place. We are introduced to the heroine in the first paragraph by a narrator who is both in and above the action, freely commenting on the story and its individual characters, much like a reporter, while closely identifying with them, in particular with Emma. In "'The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury': Gossip and Free Indirect Style in *Emma*," Casey Finch and Peter Bowen suggest that the effect of this "free indirect style" works on us the way gossip might. Each character's thoughts are "at once perfectly private and absolutely open to public scrutiny." We are "taken in" almost helplessly by our desire both to know what happens to the principles and to belong to the community around which the story unfolds. The narrative voice is comforting. It acts as a corrective to the characters' whims and opinions and also serves to exculpate them (or most of them) from the guilt of their social gaffes. As Frances Ferguson points out in "Jane Austen, *Emma*, and the Impact of Form," Emma (and by extension, the reader) is allowed to make mistakes and to learn "by trial and error" since "sociological knowledge . . . can be learned only experimentally."

Austen drops a clue as to what Emma's trials might involve in the very first sentence: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her." Something, Austen implies, is about to change. Our sheltered, privileged but intellectually alive heroine is about to experience some vexation that calls into question the early formation of her character under seemingly fortunate circumstances. We soon find that the first problem to be solved in Emma's social education curriculum is how to cope with boredom. The problem is both serious (her loneliness and isolation are real) and trivial

(in as much as she seeks mere amusement and diversion). Emma's fixation on Harriet as the object of *her* tutelage is the ostensible solution to her problem and the first great irony of the novel since it is really Emma who needs improvement. The classical pattern of comedy slowly emerges whereby the protagonist is confronted with a difficulty, undertakes to remedy the situation by self-prescribed methods, and by a naïve series of missteps and adjustments, achieves a reformation of character that is ultimately rewarded, in this case by a new experiential self-awareness and a marriage that seals her achievement of elegance.

The action of *Emma* turns on the domestic scene, on the manners and morals of a country village society designed to represent all that is artificial and sophisticated, ridiculous and honorable, condescending and humble; in short, all the vices and virtues that plague and bless the human condition. It is crucial that we identify with Emma by seeing and judging through her eyes, for as a heroine, she is central to the human portrait, embodying those human qualities and frailties so often at war.

Emma is a meddler. She is presumptuous, haughty, and proud. In the wake of Miss Taylor's loss, she feels compelled to intercede in Harriet Smith's life in a way that brings trouble and shame not only on them both but on their neighbors as well. Moreover, Emma seems happily unaware of her own rectitude; her condescending attitude toward Harriet's beau, Robert Martin, is based on the "rightness" of traditional class structure ("The yeomanry," says Emma, "are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do."), and seems completely just and rational to her. Upon first meeting Harriet, Emma thinks, "Those soft blue eyes and all those natural graces should not be wasted on the inferior society of Highbury and its connections. The acquaintance she had already formed were unworthy of her." Emma herself would take Harriet's improvement in hand. "[S]he would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers."

In the abstract, it is difficult to imagine a more smug protagonist. And yet, by chapter three, when Emma reflects with self-satisfaction on the good she can do Harriet, we have already decided to like her, despite, or perhaps because of, her psychological warts. Of course, Emma's animated spirit and intelligence attract our attention. She also has the advantages of wealth and beauty, but what really intrigues us is the pleasure we derive from eavesdropping on her. Austen invites us to critique her and commiserate with her. We feel superior when she expresses ugly sentiments; we are relieved and glad for her when she gets it right. The more we identify with Emma and her predicaments, the more minutely we are obliged to examine our own moral codes. Like Mr. Knightley, we are curious to know "what will become of her!" precisely because she is, like ourselves, a work in progress.

Artlessly, Emma draws us into intrigues that are partly a manifestation of her own active imagination. We don't mind because, like Mrs. Weston, we want to believe that, "[w]here Emma errs once, she is in the right a hundred times," and if Emma is manipulative, "she will never lead any one really wrong." Austen's narrator confirms Mrs. Weston's good opinion of Emma. If Emma possesses "a mind delighted with its own ideas" she is also

full of "real good-will." If she is spoiled by always having been "first" with her father, she is also extraordinarily patient with his tiresome eccentricity. And if she is an intriguer, she is capable of self-criticism and compassion, qualities illustrated in self-reflection when her hopes for Harriet and Mr. Elton are dashed. By the time Emma has "taught" Harriet to be smitten with Mr. Elton, we have been given clues enough that Emma is the real object of Mr. Elton's desire. Of course we relish the situational irony of Emma's self-congratulatory pronouncement that her efforts for Harriet have paid off: "There does seem to be a something in the air of Hartfield which gives love exactly the right direction, and sends it into the very channel where it ought to flow." But by the same token, when the full horror of Mr. Elton's real intentions are revealed as he attempts to "make love" to Emma in the coach scene, her misery and admission of culpability redeem her in our eyes: "Every part of it brought pain and humiliation . . . but, compared with the evil to Harriet, all was light; and she would gladly have submitted to feel yet more mistaken . . . more disgraced by mis-judgment . . . could the effects of her blunders have been confined to herself."

Lest Emma's journey toward true gentility become too didactic or moralistic, Austen introduces a romantic and mysterious subplot involving Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, which offers the theme of Emma's education more opportunities for wit and satire. Austen's humor expresses delight with the spectacle of imperfection; however, the tone is far from mocking, for we, like Emma, are still in the dark as to the nature of the mystery, and it is only by a succession of ambiguous hints that we ourselves discover the truth. Although we find little to admire in Emma's jealousy of Jane Fairfax, we do not like Jane's cool reserve any more than Emma does. (By now we are addicted to the gossip.) Moreover, Frank Churchill's deceptions are so clever, that we are able to forgive Emma her favorite new intuition that Miss Fairfax is secretly in love with Mr. Dixon. Despite her foolish mistake with Harriet, Emma has not yet learned the virtue of discretion, but in sharing her gossipy supposition with Frank she is led on deliberately. In fact, the entire community (both the village folk and the literary folk who read the book for the first time) is involved in guessing who has sent Jane the gift of the pianoforte. It is with an almost voyeuristic curiosity, then, that we watch the mystery unfold as the characters gather for a dinner party at the Coles' place.

Frank Churchill's cleverness and acute perception as contrasted with Emma's naïve conjectures set the scene for a comic display of wit during this episode when the major characters come together as a community. The dialogue concerning Jane and the pianoforte is a case in point. "I may not have convinced you perhaps," says Emma to Frank, "but I am perfectly convinced myself that Mr. Dixon is a principal in the business." She is looking for validation of her secret romance idea. Frank Churchill is only too willing to provide it. "Indeed you injure me if you suppose me unconvinced. Your reasonings carry my judgment along with them entirely. . . . And now I can see it in no other light than as an offering of love." The passage is at once ironic and witty because it is Emma's very lack of considered "reasonings" that allows Frank Churchill to deceive her, and because the pianoforte is indeed an offering of love, but from Frank himself. But wit is a double-edged sword. It can easily injure another (Emma "unwitting" use of wit at Box Hill hurts Miss Bates by implying that the spinster will not be able to limit herself to saying three dull things) as it forces the truth out into the open. Throughout

the novel, Austen reveals when wit is appropriate precisely by gauging its effects on members of the community.

The comedy of manners "works" as an educational device only when we have wit enough to see that all in the community are subject to the petty foibles and peccadilloes to which flesh is heir. Even Mr. Elton, whom we hold in disdain both for his cruel treatment of Harriet at the Crown Inn ball and his irredeemable, supercilious behavior after his marriage to the equally ill bred Augusta Hawkins, requires a small measure of sympathy: "how peculiarly unlucky poor Mr. Elton was in being in the same room at once with the woman he had just married, the woman he had wanted to marry, and the woman whom he had been expected to marry."

Austen tends to forgive the improprieties of those who see their own shortcomings but finds little toleration for those who cannot. Frank Churchill is berated for his intrigues and deceptions, especially as they are perceived to compromise the health and future of Jane Fairfax, but his honest apologies, his true regard for Jane, and his loyalty to her friends overcome most objections to his frailties. Mrs. Elton, on the other hand, has no such loyalties and makes no such apologies. The fact that her character, especially, remains "unreclaimed" is important. In "Self-Deception and Superiority Complex: Derangement of Hierarchy in Jane Austen's *Emma*, Shinobu Minma points out what other critics have also noted: the character of Mrs. Elton is meant to "expose" Emma's own pretensions of superiority and her "self-righteous patronage." She is Emma's exaggerated and not so subtle alter ego. Shinobu argues that Austen's intent is to show how the arrival of the nouveau riche (here he includes the Woodhouses who, while well established, "are not a landowning family") tended to upset the traditional hierarchical structure with their need for acceptance into the upper echelons of society. I would argue that Mrs. Elton, unlike Emma, never fits, not merely because of her parvenu pertness, but because she is only superficially self-aware and lacks the talent to belong to any community. Emma's capacity to belong, ultimately, is the true measure of her gentility.

That belonging is finally crucial to Emma's happiness, for like most others in the village, "Not one of them had the power of removal, or of effecting any material change of society. They must encounter each other, and make the best of it." Mrs. Elton considers herself preeminent in Highbury society by connection to and by the trappings of wealth and position. While Emma also feels herself superior and wants to remain so, her social position as "first" is challenged on moral grounds. She submits to the tests of character and admits her vulnerability and failures. Her wedding (the simplicity of which Mrs. Elton finds "extremely shabby") promises, in fact, to make her "first" in social stature, for Mr. Knightley is a member of the true landed gentry. However, that union comes only after Emma realizes the poverty of her own class-based prejudice and rectifies her social behavior. She finds her place and her humility when she can be civil to Miss Bates, accepting of Robert Martin, sociable with the Coles, and intimate with Jane Fairfax. We are left to imagine that because her education has been successful, she will find her happiness among that "small band of true friends" who have vouchsafed her membership among them.

Source: Kathy Smith, Critical Essay on *Emma*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Critical Essay #2

Holm is a freelance writer, as well as a genre novel and short story author. In this essay, Holm discusses how the writing style of this novel differs from a modern fiction novel.

Jane Austen's *Emma* was first published in 1816. Today's readers will note that conventions in written storytelling have changed dramatically since the early 1800s. But Austen's style of storytelling effectively captures the societal nuances that are such a big part of this story. While it may be difficult for modern readers to absorb an older style of writing, it is possible that the older style of writing reflects how people generally communicated during that period in history. In this way, writing is a reflection of the consciousness of society and the trends in communication in general, whether in the 1800s or the twenty-first century. The difference between writing in the 1800s and writing today does not mean that one type of writing is superior to the other, but it does lead to interesting observations about how communication changes over time and what these changes might imply.

A present-day reader will notice that Austen's book reads differently than a contemporary fiction novel, beginning with the first sentence. Modern fiction is required to "hook" readers right away. Within the first several pages of contemporary fiction (or even the first several paragraphs), there must be the sense of danger, urgency, or a problem (perhaps the central story problem) that the protagonist must deal with. Modern readers have come to expect this. This expectation may be influenced by today's fast-paced life, competing distractions, entertainment media that are short and to the point, or an evolution over time of storytelling methods which have come to be more popular than others.

For a modern-day reader, it may be difficult to discern *Emma*'s central conflict, or the premise of the story, given the first several pages. By contemporary standards, the book starts out quite gently with the following statement: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to invite some of the best blessings of existence; and had very little to distress or vex her."

Compare this to the beginning of the 2002 bestseller *The Lovely Bones*, by Alice Sebold, which plunges the reader right into the first-person experience of a horrible murder, and one can see how much the conventions of fiction writing have changed in two centuries. Little seems urgent during much of the beginning of *Emma*, which was perhaps typical of 1800s stories but not typical today. One of the first senses of real urgency in *Emma*, which involves the protagonist, does not come until more than a quarter of the way into the book (at least one hundred pages from the beginning) when Elton and Emma are alone in a carriage and Elton reveals his passionate feelings for Emma.

This is one of the first times in the story that emotions from any of the characters truly flare, and there is suddenly a sense of the larger problem at hand. Emma's astute skills of human observation and her attempts at matchmaking have backfired. In a modern

novel, a problem like this, or at least some real emotion with something at stake, would have presented itself earlier in the story.

A contemporary reader might assume, after the first few pages of *Emma*, that the governess named Miss Taylor is to be an important character in the story, since much narrative is devoted to Emma's consternation when Miss Taylor moves away. Yet this does not turn out to be the case. Emma does start the novel, as she is mentioned in the first sentence, and the reader might correctly assume (based on contemporary storytelling conventions) that she will be important, even though the urgency to the story is very slow in coming, by modern-day standards. A number of other minor characters make an immediate appearance. Six characters are introduced or mentioned in the first three pages: Emma, Mr. Woodhouse, Miss Taylor, Mr. Weston, Isabella, and Isabella's husband. This convention marks another difference from today's toned down, streamlined fiction. It is impossible to know whether this implies that readers in the 1800s were more patient or could tolerate more narrative complexity, or whether readers today need communications to be as streamlined and concise as possible.

Prose style in a novel such as *Emma* differs from a contemporary fiction novel. Sentences are often much longer than what today's readers are accustomed to. Dialogue is presented in huge chunks, compared to today's standards. Again, the urgent scene between Emma and Elton in the carriage illustrates both the use of sentences and dialogue in this novel. The way the scene is presented is also quite different than it might be written in contemporary fiction. The beginning of this explosive moment is almost lost in the prose.

To restrain him as much as might be . . . she was immediately preparing to speak . . . but scarcely had she begun, scarcely had they passed the sweep-gate and joined the other carriage, than she found her subject cut up—her hand seized—her attention demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her.

It is a very roundabout way of getting to the main point, which reveals itself at the end of this somewhat long sentence. Mr. Elton is "making violent love" to Emma. By contemporary standards, this scene might be written quite differently, possibly using more dialogue, shorter sentences, and immediately presenting the urgency of the problem at hand: Mr. Elton completely surprises Emma when he passionately displays his feelings for her.

By contemporary story-writing standards, the dialogue in *Emma* often has a character speaking for a long time, longer than may sound natural to contemporary readers. A good example of this, toward the beginning of the book, features Emma and her father discussing their servant James. Mr. Woodhouse goes on for longer than may be comfortable to the modern reader.

I am very glad I did think of her. It was very lucky. . . . I am sure she would be a very good servant; she is a civil, pretty-spoken girl; I have a great opinion of her. Whenever I see her, she always curtseys and asks me how I do, in a very pretty manner. . . . I am sure she will be an excellent servant; and it will be a great comfort to poor Miss

Taylor. . . . Whenever James goes over to his daughter, you know, she will be hearing of us. He will be able to tell her how we all are.

This large chunk of dialogue (with words omitted) is devoted to a servant and his daughter who have little importance in the novel's entirety, or its plot. Contemporary novels often emphasize a pragmatic approach, and very little shows up in the prose that does not advance the plot or serve as an important cue for the reader in some way.

Contemporary literature teachers often advise aspiring writers to "show, don't tell." This phrase is a common denominator of the resources available to writers who want to improve their craft. The narrative style in *Emma* seems to favor the "telling" side of the spectrum, in many cases. This implies no judgment on the quality of the writing, but is another good example of how immensely storytelling craft has changed since the early 1800s. A good example of narrative that tells more than it shows occurs shortly after Emma and her father discuss their servant.

Emma spared no exertions to maintain this happier flow of ideas, and hoped, by the help of backgammon, to get her father tolerably through the evening, and be attacked by no regrets but her own. The backgammon-table was placed; but a visitor immediately afterwards walked in and made it unnecessary.

The narrative then goes on to describe the visitor at great length, including his age, location of his home, and his "cheerful manner."

Contemporary storytelling would likely handle this series of events quiet differently. Mr. Knightley's (the above mentioned guest) appearance might be worded to stand out more effectively and the reader might not feel like such an observer but instead feel closer to the action. The wording "a visitor immediately afterwards walked in," which is almost lost and hidden at the end of a paragraph, "tells" the reader what is going on but might distance a contemporary reader. A more active way to "show" this action would be to set apart Knightley's arrival with a paragraph break. Then, instead of telling the reader that "a visitor walked in," the contemporary author might say something like, "Emma turned at a rustling behind her, and saw Mr. Knightly coming through the doorway." The contemporary author might immediately follow with dialogue and nuances that would gradually reveal (and "show" the reader) Knightley's character, age, and other details about this new character.

There are moments in *Emma* where the prose stands out with insight and conciseness. During one of these moments, readers gain deep insight into Emma because her honest and blunt (but unspoken) thoughts contrast so effectively with what she has to say. The irony of the contrast highlights the excruciating importance that people (and these characters) placed on social conventions during this time in history.

'Yes, good man!' thought Emma, 'but what has all that to do with taking likenesses? You know nothing of drawing. Don't pretend to be in raptures about mine. Keep your raptures for Harriet's face.'

These thoughts are in direct contrast to Emma's polite, socially mannered response, which follows immediately: "Well, if you give me such kind encouragement, Mr. Elton, I believe I shall try what I can do."

Obviously, social conventions and consideration of social standing were extremely important in England's early 1800s. Austin's style of writing, purposefully or not, reflects these societal considerations. In *Emma*, characters spend a lot of time discussing proper behavior, as well as the importance of class and social standing. Emma goes to great lengths to steer Harriet from a romance with a lowly farmer. Emma distresses internally at some length over Churchill's decision to go to London for a haircut. Clearly, these characters pay attention to details, and the modern reader might find them obsessed with such details. There is a self-consciousness that runs throughout most of the book, particularly as characters worry about how to behave in social situations.

Some change of countenance was necessary for each gentleman as they walked into Mrs. Weston's drawing-room. Mr. Elton must compose his joyous looks, and Mr. John Knightley disperse his ill-humour. Mr. Elton must smile less, and Mr. John Knightley more, to fit them for the place.

But, this is a part of the fascination with *Emma*; it is not only a story but an in-depth experience of life in nineteenth-century England. The writing style reflects the social concerns and nuances of the time and might well be difficult to recreate using modern storytelling methods. Critic Frances Ferguson of *Modern Language Quarterly* describes this predicament another way: for the characters in this novel, "desire is always triangulated" because individual choice is always being aligned with larger societal choices, or "what 'everyone' thinks." In the same article by Ferguson, D. H. Lawrence is quoted as saying that Austen "creates a world of 'personality' that identifies characters in terms of their interests and evaluations. In this way, societal trends are reflected in *Emma* and in the way that it reads. Perhaps this can be said of all writing.

Source: Catherine Dybiec Holm, Critical Essay on *Emma*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Quotes

"The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments." Chapter 1, Page 6.

"In one respect, perhaps, Mr. Elton's manners are superior to Mr. Knightley's or Mr. Weston's. They have more gentleness. They might be more safely held up as a pattern."

Chapter 4, Page 35.

"This man is almost too gallant to be in love," thought Emma. "I should say so, but that I suppose there may be a hundred different ways of being in love." Chapter 6, Page 50.

"My first displays the wealth and pomp of kings, Lords of the earth! their luxury and ease. Another view of man, my second brings, Behold him there, the monarch of the seas! But ah! united, what reverse we have! Man's boasted power and freedom, all are flown; Lord of the earth and sea, he bends a slave, And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone, Thy ready wit the word will soon supply, May its approval beam in that soft eye!" Chapter 6, Page 74.

"Mr. Elton's manners are not perfect," replied Emma; "but where there is a wish to please, one ought to overlook, and one does overlook a great deal. Where a man does his best with only moderate powers, he will have the advantage over negligent superiority. There is such perfect good-temper and good-will in Mr. Elton as one cannot but value." Chapter 8, Page 117.

"Perhaps it is as well," said Frank Churchill, as he attended Emma to her carriage. "I must have asked Miss Fairfax, and her languid dancing would not have agreed with me, after your's." Volume 2 Chapter 8, Page 236.

"Indeed, I am very sorry to be right in this instance. I would much rather have been merry than wise." Volume 2 Chapter 12, Page 266.

"□of her going into public under the auspices of a friend of Mrs. Elton's — probably some vulgar, dashing widow, who, with the help of a boarder, just made a shift to live! — The dignity of Miss Woodhouse, of Hartfield, was sunk indeed!" Volume 2 Chapter 14 Page 282.

"Insufferable woman!" was her immediate exclamation. "Worse than I had supposed. Absolutely insufferable! Knightley! — I could not have believed it. Knightley! — never seen him in her life before, and call him Knightley! — and discover that he is a gentleman! A little upstart, vulgar being, with her Mr. E., and her caro sposo, and her resources, and all her airs of pert pretension and underbred finery. Actually to discover

that Mr. Knightley is a gentleman! I doubt whether he will return the compliment, and discover her to be a lady. I could not have believed it!" Volume 2 Chapter 14 Page 285.

"His dancing proved to be just what she had believed it, extremely good; and Harriet would have seemed almost too lucky, if it had not been for the cruel state of things before, and for the very complete enjoyment and very high sense of the distinction which her happy features announced." Volume 3 Chapter 2, Page 336.

"Lord bless me! when should I ever have thought of putting by in cotton a piece of court-plaister that Frank Churchill had been pulling about! I never was equal to this." Volume 3 Chapter 4, Page 337.

"You are sick of prosperity and indulgence. Cannot you invent a few hardships for yourself, and be contented to stay?" Volume 3 Chapter 6, Page 374.

"Well," said Emma, "I suppose we shall gradually grow reconciled to the idea, and I wish them very happy. But I shall always think it a very abominable sort of proceeding. What has it been but a system of hypocrisy and deceit, — espionage, and treachery?" Volume 3 Chapter 10, Page 410.

"Amiable and delightful as Miss Woodhouse is, she never gave me the idea of a young woman likely to be attached; and that she was perfectly free from any tendency to being attached to me, was as much my conviction as my wish." Volume 3 Chapter 14, Page 448.

"I remember once calling you 'George,' in one of my amiable fits, about ten years ago. I did it because I thought it would offend you; but, as you made no objection, I never did it again." Volume 3 Chapter 14, Page 473.

Adaptations

Emma was adapted for television as a BBC miniseries in 1972. It was directed by John Glenister, and the cast includes Doran Godwin as Emma and John Carson as Mr. Knightley. Since it is four and a half hours long, the series has time to develop fully the themes, characters, and story lines.

Emma was adapted as a full-length movie in 1996. It starred Gwyneth Paltrow and was nominated for two Oscars. The film was released by Miramax and directed by Doug McGrath. It is available on home video.

Emma was also adapted as a full-length British made movie in 1997, starring Kate Beckinsale and produced by Sue Birtwistle. It is available on home video.

Topics for Further Study

How is individual worth determined in a class-conscious society? Was there a clear hierarchical social structure in Emma's world? Did it reflect the reality of Jane Austen's time? What lessons did Emma learn about class and character?

Under what conditions could women own property in the eighteenth century? Why was it so important for women to marry? What qualities and behavior does Austen believe lead to a happy marriage?

List the kinds of female accomplishments that would have been considered praiseworthy in Jane Austen's time. Compare them to what women accomplish in the early 2000s. What does the comparison tell you about gender roles then and now?

Research the British Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth century. What impact did they have on urban and rural culture?

Austen's novel is full of references to diet and health as well as concern for illness and exposure to bad weather. Much of the concern is treated satirically as the obsession of an aging Mr. Woodhouse. But Harriet Smith's sore throat seems more serious. Describe the living conditions in London during the end of the eighteenth century. Was there any real reason for concern?

Do some research on the topic of feminism and how it is variously defined. Based on your findings, do you think the character of Emma could be an early proponent of feminism? If yes, what are her qualities that express this? Cite some specific scenes from the novel that you feel express feminist expressions or ideals.

Compare and Contrast

1815: Acting as sovereign in place of the ill king, George III, the licentious Prince of Wales (to whom Jane Austen, at his urging, dedicated *Emma*) runs the Regency, which becomes a symbol of British decadence. This era is known for the clash between hedonistic, vulgar behavior and classical standards of elegance.

Today: Government leaders are held to high standards of behavior and decorum, but, although outwardly public officials maintain a public image of decency, intrigues and scandals are no less common in the early 2000s than they were in Jane Austen's time.

1815: Women have very few legal or personal rights. They are not allowed to vote or to hold wage-earning jobs aside from teaching or factory work. Women cannot attend college. All property and children within marriage belong to the husband, and the eldest male child inherits the family wealth.

Today: It is unconstitutional to discriminate on the basis of sex. Women have equal access to jobs, exercise complete control over their own property, share control over their children, can achieve a college or university education, and are free to decide their own destiny.

1815: Leisure activities for ladies of the period include walking, drawing, playing a musical instrument, singing, embroidery, and cards. Any strenuous or intellectual activity is placed strictly outside of the woman's role in society. Accordingly, women's fashions are very restrictive.

Today: Women from all walks of life participate in extreme sports, hard physical work, and challenging intellectual enterprises as well as enjoying more sedentary pursuits. Women's clothing allows complete freedom of movement.

1815: Social relations between well-bred young people follow strict codes of behavior that preclude premarital sex, coarse language or rude behavior, and unchaparoned meetings. Since a woman depends almost entirely on her husband or father to make her way in life, she protects her reputation as a lady.

Today: People live in a much more permissive society, and the conduct of individuals is not strictly enforced by social codes. Young adults date unsupervised, and cars provide a form of privacy and means of escape. Freed from dependence on husbands, women are likely to worry about education, careers and vocations, politics, among a great many other things once relegated to the masculine social sphere.

1815: Few people move far from the conditions into which they were born. The economic classes do not mix socially, and the higher classes enjoy more privileges and rights than do the lower classes. The barriers that keep the farmer, tradesmen, landed gentry, and ruling elite within their separate spheres begin to break down with the rise of the middle class.

Today: People pride themselves on living in a time when social barriers can be overcome by merit and education. Education and democratic institutions have created a society more open to mobility and change. However, wealth and status are still associated with privilege and well-being, and those who are economically secure do not usually mix socially with those who are not.

1815: Disease is rampant in large cities such as London. The streets and waterways are dumping grounds for all kinds of animal and human waste; plumbing and refrigeration are primitive; and bathing is not a frequent activity. One of the most dreaded diseases is smallpox, but people also die from seemingly mild afflictions such as colds. Edward Jenner develops a vaccine for smallpox in 1796, and later in the twentieth century, smallpox is virtually eliminated.

Today: Although knowledge of nutrition and hygiene has increased dramatically, environmental hazards and pollution problems have not been eradicated. People still suffer from plagues such as cancer and AIDS that threaten a growing number of the population. In the early 2000s, treatments for both diseases have been discovered, but there is no known cure.

What Do I Read Next?

Pride and Prejudice (1813) has been the most popular of Austen's six novels. Like *Emma*, it is a comedy of manners, full of satire and irony, wit and sophisticated drawing room exchanges. Blending humor with stunning insight into the domestic scene, human nature, courtship, and the limits and attraction of authority, Austen paints a vivid portrayal of life in the English countryside at the end of the eighteenth century. Like Emma, the protagonists Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett undergo a moral education, teaching one another through mishap and intention that charm, intelligence, independent-thinking, and vibrancy must ultimately be leavened with humility.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) the first notable feminist essay on gender equality. It takes as its premise that reason, virtue, and knowledge separate humans from beasts. Women, Wollstonecraft argues, should therefore "endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body." Men who try "to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood" are "unphilosophical" at best.

It is hardly possible to understand the Age of Reason without having read John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). It changed the nature of inquiry into human consciousness by establishing a cognitive model for analyzing human thought. Locke's notion was that all knowledge was gained by direct experience through the senses and by reflection on those experiences. Hence, individual expression, social interaction, and religious thought could be systematized and explained rationally.

The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), by Ann Radcliffe□a contemporary of Jane Austen, is considered one of the preeminent Gothic romances of the time, following in the style of the Horace Walpole prototype, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). The Gothic novel, with its attendant hauntings, sudden storms, sliding tapestries, and generational madness was a very popular genre in the eighteenth century. Jane Austen parodied Radcliffe's work in her posthumously published novel, *Northanger Abbey*.

Key Questions

Emma is admired by many readers for its vivid, complex characters, its artistry, its sense of play, and also a sense of the limits of play. Although Emma's machinations drive the plot, she is not Machiavellian— there is no apparent self-interest in her, but rather a misdirected desire to fix things.

Her delight in arranging and rearranging other people's lives is checked not just by the external force of Mr. Knightley and her victims' own sense of who they really are, but her own innate sense of right and wrong.

She harms Harriet Smith, but has not meant to, she hurts Miss Bates, but is very contrite.

She stirs up feelings and trouble not just in others but in herself, becoming vulnerable to Frank Churchill and ultimately to her own feelings for Knightley.

Her manipulative nature makes her appear superficial, but she is not. She is diametrically opposed to Jane Fairfax not just because of their differing stations in life, but because she has the freedom to fail and recover from failures. She is the dynamic force against which other characters, even Knightley, measure themselves and their values. Provocative questions for discussion can center on Emma and the other female characters, on Emma's complex relationship to Knightley, and on the way her misdirected efforts expose problems in the social world she inhabits. Once again, the author's narrative skill and masterful use of irony should be examined for their role in the creation of such dynamic characters and the complex view of English society and human nature they afford, despite Austen's selective sampling of social classes.

1. Emma is perhaps unique among female heroines of her day at the outset of this novel in that she professes no desire to be married. What special advantages does this perspective afford her as a matchmaker? Are there any disadvantages? How does this professed renunciation of marriage figure in our view of her relationship to Knightley toward the end of the novel?

2. Characterize the kind of love that Emma and Knightley have. Does it change as the novel progresses?

3. In what ways is Jane Fairfax different from Emma? What good qualities does she have that Emma lacks? Why does Mr. Knightley not fall in love with Jane?

4. Consider Mr. Knightley and Frank Churchill as foils, especially in their pursuit of love. When does Knightley express his reservations about Churchill? Where does Churchill explain his reasons for the secret engagement to Jane?

5. Minor characters in novels are useful for showing up flaws and inconsistencies, as well as strengths, in the major characters. How does Miss Bates do this in Emma? How does Mrs. Elton function in this manner?

6. What characteristics does Mr. Elton in this novel share with Mr. Collins, also a clergyman, in Pride and Prejudice? How does Mr. Elton's pursuit of love resemble Frank Churchill's? Which man appears more sincere?

7. Harriet Smith is accosted by a band of Gypsies who presumably want to rob her, and we learn at the end of the novel that turkeys have been stolen from Mr. Woodhouse, making him even more anxious and afraid. How do these seemingly small incidents qualify your view of English country life in the novel?

8. Harriet Smith, who is illegitimate, shares a background of relative poverty with Jane Fairfax, who is an orphan. Jane is without parents but has responsible guardians in the Campbells, and Harri et has living parents who do not acknowledge her. How do the circumstances of each of these characters effect a critique of the social customs of the day. What is amusing and ironic about the author's statement, "Harriet Smith was the daughter of somebody" (Chapter 3, Volume 1).

9. What do you make of Knightley's decision to live with Emma and Mr. Woodhouse at Highbury? What problem does it resolve for Emma? For Mr. Woodhouse? Claudia Johnson has argued that staying at Highbury allows Emma to maintain a certain amount of autonomy within her marriage. Will she? Or will she just have a double obligation to two men instead of one?

10. Peruse Chapter 7 of Volume 3, the famous Box Hill episode. Why does Mrs. Elton grow angry at Emma? Why is Frank Churchill flirting so openly with Emma? Why is Mr. Knightley offended and what decision does he make as a result of Emma's behavior here? What decision does Jane Fairfax make as a result? Why would Austen have chosen an outing such as this to reveal tensions formerly held in check?

Topics for Discussion

What are Emma's flaws?

Should a person attempt to rise above their current station in life?

Are the characters believable?

Compare the characters to people in today's society.

Do you feel that Emma should have prevented Harriet accepting Mr. Martin's proposal?

Do you feel that the narrator is prejudiced against certain characters in the story?

Describe how women's roles in society have changed since the 19th century.

Describe how society has changed since the 19th century.

Literary Precedents

Austen's erudition as the daughter of an educator and an avid reader of novels, and her blending of the two traditions, rooted in Richardson and Fielding, of the sentimental novel and the comedy of manners has been noted in the discussion of Pride and Prejudice (see separate entry). Certainly the manipulative heroine, or villain, was nothing new in her day, but certainly Emma's unique combination of big heart and machinating mind were. Ian Watt cites Fanny Burney as a predecessor, but notes that Emma's originality lies in her ability to allot comic aggression, exhibited only by villains or rogues in older literary traditions, especially stage comedy, to good or potentially good characters. I have noted above how Emma's machinations help move the plot; she of course is a developing character who becomes less self-centered as the novel progresses. Watt goes on to note that evils in Austen are characteristically the result not of intentional but inadvertent behavior ("Jane Austen and the Tradition of Comic Aggression" from an address delivered to the Jane Austen Society in San Francisco, October 10, 1981, printed in Persuasions, No.

3, Dec. 16, 1981; rept. in Emma, Norton Critical Edition, Macmillan, 1993, 414—416).

Other critics identify the uniqueness of Emma in her assumption of authority usually given to males. Her presumption is not chastised as completely as it might be in a more didactic novel, as Claudia Johnson suggests (400—401), even though she admits that in the end, Emma is brought low. Both Johnson and Watt implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the prismatic quality of Austen's characters, distinguishing them from those of her predecessors. Yet, while her treatment of characters appears highly original, it is based on her Christian orientation that people are complex mixtures of good and bad and must be treated as if they are redeemable. Her generally tolerant view also inspires her to give a fuller picture of her supposedly narrow social world than someone who was merely out to write satire or identify obvious virtues and vices. Her originality is grounded in very old values.

Claudia Johnson also points out another feature of Emma that makes it stand out from its more didactic predecessors.

Knightley gives advice to Emma but does not pressure her to heed it, and she practically never does. He differs from Edgar Mandelbert in Camilla because he does not use advice to assert power, and he is diametrically opposite to the type of advicegiving predecessor found in More's Coelebs in Search of a Wife, who is looking for a dull submissive wife. "Choosey men," like Knightley, Johnson argues, prefer "saucy women, not women who place themselves at the margins" (From "Woman, lovely woman reigns alone," in Jane Austen, Women, Politics, and the Novel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, 121-143; rept. in Jane Austen's Emma, Norton Critical Edition, 396—408; 407). She also notes Knightley's willingness to relinquish his own home in favor of Emma's and her father's at the end of the novel as the giving up of considerable male prerogative, and comments that "Knightley gives his blessing to her rule."

But it is also possible to see that the couple as a whole is adapting an age-old institution to their own mutual needs—neither is really the ruler.

Further Study

Austen-Leigh, James Edward, *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections*, edited by Kathryn Sutherland, Oxford University Press, 2002.

The memoir written by Austen's nephew James Edward was first published in 1870 and offers the one existing source of family memories about Jane Austen, mostly the recollections, biographical notes, and vivid personal accounts of devoted nieces and nephews.

Copeland, Edward, and Juliet McMaster, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

This book is a comprehensive guide to Jane Austen and her work in the context of the times in which she lived. The book includes a discussion of her works and chapters on economics, politics, religion, social class, and literary traditions.

Lynch, Deidre, ed., *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, Princeton University Press, 2000.

This collection of essays produced since Austen's lifetime demonstrates how wide is the range of interpretations and reader response to her works. It also explores adaptations, reviews, and general reasons for her popularity.

Tomalin, Claire, *Jane Austen: A Life*, Vintage Books, 1997.

This is a lively and accessible account of the flesh and blood Jane Austen as told mainly from the perspective of family and friends and the many fascinating people she knew.

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Project Editor
David Galens

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Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

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Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Novels for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535