Howard's End Study Guide

Howard's End by E. M. Forster

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

When *Howards End* was published in 1910, critics generally agreed it surpassed E. M. Forster's earlier novels. Forster had arrived as an important author, and the public and critics eagerly anticipated his next novel. But fourteen years would elapse before the publication of *A Passage to India,* which would also be the last novel published during his lifetime Forster's novels are all considered classics, with *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* regarded as his best works. Like all of Forster's early novels, *Howards End* concerns itself with Edwardian society. As a member of the upper-middle class, Forster had keen insight into its attitudes and social mores, which he expertly rendered in *Howards End.* His humanistic values and interest in personal relationships inform all of his novels, and are revealed in the major themes of *Howards End:* connection between the inner and outer life and between people, the future of England, and class conflicts. *Howards End* has been called a parable; indeed, its symbolism reaches almost mythic proportions at various points in the novel. Although elements of the plot construction have been problematic for some critics, opinion of his character creation and development is almost unanimously given the highest praise. With Margaret Schlegel, Henry Wilcox, Helen Schlegel, Leonard Bast, and Forster created some of the most unforgettable and complex characters in English literature.

Overview

When Howards End was published in 1910, critics generally agreed it surpassed E. M. Forster's earlier novels. Forster had arrived as an important author, and the public and critics eagerly anticipated his next novel. But fourteen years elapsed before the publication of A Passage to India, which would also be the last novel published during his lifetime. Forster's novels are all considered classics, with Howards End and A Passage to India regarded as his best works. Like all of Forster's early novels, Howards End concerns itself with Edwardian society. As a member of the upper-middle class, Forster had keen insight into its attitudes and social mores, which he expertly rendered in the novel.

His humanistic values and interest in personal relationships inform all of his books, and are revealed in the major themes of Howards End: connection between the inner and outer life and between people, the future of England, and class conflicts. Howards End has been called a parable; indeed, its symbolism reaches almost mythic proportions at various points in the novel. Although elements of the plot construction have been problematic for some critics, opinion of Forster's character creation and development is almost unanimously given the highest praise.

Author Biography

Edward Morgan Forster was born on January 1, 1879, in Coventry, England. His father died when he was only a year and a half old, leaving him to the care of his mother and a devoted circle of female relatives. He and his mother lived at Rooksnest, their beloved country house near Slevenage in Hertfordshire. After a rather unhappy adolescence as a student at Tonbridge School, Forster enrolled at Cambridge University, where he flourished.

At Cambridge the emphasis was on liberal arts and individual expression; Forster found freedom to pursue both intellectual development and personal relationships. It was here that he began developing many of the humanistic ideas and values that would come to dominate his literary works. He became a member of the Cambridge Apostles, an intellectual discussion group. Many Apostles were later active in the Bloomsbury Group, which began informal salons in London about 1905. Several in the Bloomsbury circle later became famous: Lytton Strachey as a critic, biographer, and historian; Leonard Woolf as political activist and theorist and man of letters; John Maynard Keynes as a political and economic theorist; Roger Fry and Clive Bell as art critics; Grant and Vanessa Bell as painters; and Virginia Woolf and Forster as novelists. The Bloomsbury Group was influenced by Cambridge philosophers, especially G. E. Moore, who believed in the value of social interaction and cultural stimuli, and possessed a passion for the truth and a skepticism toward moral tradition.

After Forster graduated from Cambridge in 1901, he traveled abroad for a year. Between 1902 and 1910, he wrote four novels: *Where Angels Fear To Tread* (1905), *A Room with a View* (1908), *The Longest Journey* (1907), and *Howards End(l910).* With *Howards End,* Forster achieved status as a major writer, receiving high critical praise. Forster's novels were recognized for their precise character portrayal, their concern with the complexities of human nature, and their detailed, comical descriptions of Edwardian society. His next novel, *A Passage to India,* did not appear until 1924, and was the last novel published during his lifetime. A posthumously published novel, *Maurice,* tells the story of a young man's growing awareness of his homosexuality and is based on Forster's own experiences. The publication of *A Passage to India* firmly established Forster's reputation as a master novelist. Drawn from Forster's experiences in India during visits there in 1912 and 1921, A *Passage to India* portrays the social and political realities of colonial India.

For the rest of his career, Forster focused on writing short stories, essays, biographies, and travel books. He also became quite politically active, and wrote essays in which he spoke out against many of the political and social ills of his time. In the mid-1940s he was offered a resident fellowship at Cambridge University, which he enthusiastically accepted. He became one of the most celebrated figures at the university, and remained active in university life and continued to write and publish well into the early 1960s. He died on June 7, 1970, in Coventry at the home of friends.

About the Author

Edward Morgan Forster was born on January 1, 1879, in Coventry, England.

His father died when he was only a year and a half old, leaving him in the care of his mother and a devoted circle of female relatives. He and his mother lived at Rooksnest, their beloved country house near Stevenage in Hertfordshire. After a rather unhappy adolescence as a student at Tonbridge School, Forster enrolled at Cambridge University, where he flourished.

At Cambridge the emphasis was on liberal arts and individual expression; Forster found freedom to pursue both intellectual development and personal relationships. It was here that he began developing many of the humanistic ideas and values that would come to dominate his literary works. He became a member of the Cambridge Apostles, an intellectual discussion group. Many Apostles were later active in the Bloomsbury Group, which began informal salons in London about 1905. Several in the Bloomsbury circle later became famous: Lytton Strachey as a critic, biographer, and historian; Leonard Woolf as political activist and theorist and man of letters; John Maynard Keynes as a political and economic theorist; Roger Fry and Clive Bell as art critics; Grant and Vanessa Bell as painters; and Virginia Woolf and Forster as novelists. Members of the Bloomsbury Group were deeply influenced by Cambridge philosophers, especially G. E.

Moore, who believed in the value of social interaction and cultural stimuli, and possessed a passion for the truth and a skepticism toward moral tradition.

After Forster graduated from Cambridge in 1901, he traveled abroad for a year.

Between 1902 and 1910, he wrote four novels: Where Angels Fear To Tread (1905), A Room with a View (1908), The Longest Journey (1907), and Howards End (1910). With the publication of Howards End, Forster achieved status as a major writer, receiving high critical praise. Forster's novels were recognized for their precise character portrayal, their concern with the complexities of human nature, and their detailed, comical descriptions of Edwardian society. His next novel, A Passage to India, did not appear until 1924, and was the last novel published during his lifetime. A posthumously published novel, Maurice, tells the story of a young man's growing awareness of his homosexuality and is based on Forster's own experiences. The publication of A Passage to India firmly established Forster's reputa tion as a master novelist. Drawn from Forster's experiences in India during visits there in 1912 and 1921, A Passage to India portrays the social and political realities of colonial India.

For the rest of his career, Forster focused on writing short stories, essays, biographies, and travel books. He also became quite politically active, and wrote essays in which he spoke out against many of the political and social ills of his time. In the mid-1940s he was offered a resident fellowship at Cambridge University, which he enthusiastically accepted. He became one of the most celebrated figures at the university, and remained active in university life and continued to write and publish well into the early

1960s. He died on June 7, 1970, in Coventry at the home of friends. His legacy of classic novels, while not written specifically for young adult readers, are read and studied by students of all ages.

Plot Summary

Howards End begins with Helen Schlegel's brief affair with Paul Wilcox. In its wake, Helen's Aunt Juley travels to Howards End, the Wilcox home, to discuss the relationship with the Wilcoxes, not knowing that it has already ended. The Wilcoxes react with horror to news of the affair, believing, unlike the Schlegels, that Paul must make his fortune before he marries.

Helen, her romance with Paul and the rest of the Wilcox family over, returns to the Schlegel house, Wickham Place, and she and her sister Margaret resume their old life together. They attend a concert of Beethoven with other family members, and Helen accidentally walks off with the umbrella of Leonard Bast, a poor clerk teetering on the edge of respectability. After accompanying Margaret to Wickham Place to retrieve his umbrella, Leonard accepts her card, and returns to his own shabby flat, where he lives with Jacky, a woman much older than he.

The Schlegels learn that the Wilcoxes are taking a flat across the street from Wickham Place, and Ruth Wilcox soon calls on Margaret. Margaret writes a rude note suggesting that they should not meet because of the possibility of an encounter between Helen and Paul, and Mrs. Wilcox replies to her that they should meet, because there is no possibility of an encounter between the two former lovers. The two women strike up a friendship, in spite of Mrs. Wilcox's discomfort in Margaret's world. Mrs. Wilcox feels that Margaret understands her attachment to Howards End, and after a day of shopping together, she impulsively proposes they go there. Margaret wavers at first, but they leave for the train station, where they meet Henry and Evie Wilcox, Mrs. Wilcox's husband and daughter. Mrs. Wilcox is spirited off by her family, and Margaret's visit is postponed. Soon after, Mrs. Wilcox dies.

The Wilcoxes are alarmed to discover that Mrs. Wilcox has left a note leaving Howards End to Margaret. They decide to burn the note, and not speak of it to Margaret.

Two years pass. The Schlegels are about to lose their house at Wickham Place, which will be destroyed so that flats may be built there. Leonard Bast's wife, Jacky, comes round to the house looking for him. Leonard has disappeared for an evening, and Jacky thinks he is with the Schlegels. The next day, Bast appears at Wickham Place, explaining that he has taken an all-night walk outside of London. When he notes that the dawn was gray and not at all romantic, the Schlegels are charmed by him. When they mention Bast to Henry Wilcox, he tells them Bast's company is in danger of going under, and they resolve to warn Bast of this eventuality. They invite Bast to tea, and he is suspicious of their desire to talk business when he wants to talk poetry. The tea is interrupted when Evie and Henry Wilcox arrive at the house, and as Bast is leaving, he tells the Schlegels he will not call again.

Mr Wilcox thinks that Margaret is attracted to Leonard Bast, and feels an attraction for her as a result. Soon after, at a lunch with Evie, Mr. Wilcox offers to lease the Wilcoxes'

Ducie Street flat to the Schlegels. While Margaret tours the flat, Mr Wilcox asks her to marry him, and she accepts.

Margaret wants to live at Howards End, but her fiance' is against it. Meanwhile, Helen has had a letter from Leonard Bast, who is leaving his company for another post at lower pay. When Margaret mentions this to Henry, he says that in fact Bast's company is a very stable firm Though the Schlegels blame Henry for Bast's predicament, he shrugs off their criticism.

Margaret and Henry make a trip to Howards End, where she is frightened by Miss Avery, who mistakes her for Ruth Wilcox. Margaret loves the house, but believes that she and Henry will live at Oniton, where they attend Evie's wedding to Percy Cahill. Helen, who has refused to attend the wedding, arrives there unexpectedly with Leonard and Jacky Bast, saying that she has found them starving. Margaret is planning to ask Henry to give Bast a place in his company, but before she can do so, Jacky recognizes Henry as her former lover. Helen takes the Basts to a hotel, where she and Leonard have an intimate conversation. Margaret, who believes Henry's unfaithfulness is the late Mrs. Wilcox's tragedy rather than hers, refuses Henry's offer to release her from their engagement, and they reconcile. Before Margaret can speak with any of them, Helen and the Basts leave their hotel.

Before she goes to Germany, Helen attempts to give the Basts a substantial monetary gift, but they refuse. They are soon evicted and forced to rely on handouts from Leonard's family. Wickham Place is destroyed to make way for flats, and Margaret and Henry marry. With the family scattered, the Schlegels' furniture is stored at Howards End. When Margaret hears that Miss Avery has unpacked the Schlegels' things, she goes to Howards End. She is amazed to see how well her furniture fits in the house, but is soon called away to Swan-age when she gets news of her aunt's illness. Margaret and her brother Tibby contact Helen, who has been in Germany for eight months, to tell her Juley is gravely ill, and Helen agrees to come to Swanage When Helen hears that Juley has recovered, she refuses to see her family, but will get some books from Howards End. Believing her sister to be unwell, Margaret reluctantly agrees to Henry's plan to surprise Helen at Howards End.

As the plan is carried out, Margaret realizes that "[t]he pack was turning on Helen, to deny her human rights," and it seems to Margaret "that all Schlegels were threatened with her." When she sees her sister, who is pregnant with Leonard Bast's child, she pushes her into Howards End, and bids her husband and the doctor to leave them. Helen, on seeing their furniture and other things, asks to spend the night in Howards End. When Margaret asks Henry if they may stay at Howards End, he refuses on the grounds that it would be immoral. Margaret is disgusted by his hypocrisy and she defies his wishes, spending a peaceful night at Howards End with her sister.

Leonard Bast has been looking for Margaret, and Tibby tells him she is at Howards End. As Leonard approaches the house, he is filled with happiness, but when he enters the house, Charles strikes him, and he dies. In the wake of Bast's death and her own quarrel with him, Margaret tells Henry she will go to Germany with Helen. But Henry is

broken by the certainty of Charles's conviction for manslaughter, and Margaret takes him to recover at Howards End. In the final scene of the novel, fourteen months have passed, and Helen, her child by Leonard Bast, Margaret, and Henry have become a loving family. In the presence of his children, Henry deeds Howards End to Margaret, who will leave it to her sister's son. When Dolly remarks that Margaret has gotten Howards End after all, Margaret realizes that she has conquered the Wilcoxes without even trying.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Howards End begins with three letters written by Helen to her sister Meg. She tells of how different the house is from what she expected, but that it really is quite lovely. Wonderful trees and all sorts of flowers surround it, and it seems to be covered in vines. The people of the house, the Wilcox family, are described as being most delightful and accommodating. Many of the folks there seem to have hay fever, though. Helen says that the way the Wilcox men manage through the hay fever could teach their brother, Tibby, a lot. Helen is having a glorious time and admits being in love with Paul, the Wilcox's younger son who had just arrived a few days before.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The locale Helen describes in her letters to Meg seems to be idyllic, and even the people are delightful. The reader questions why Helen is there and wonders what will transpire while she is there. There is also a significant curiosity created by the mention of Helen's attraction to the young man who she has seemingly only very recently met.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Margaret (Meg) explains, in her discussion of the letters, to Aunt Juley, that she and Helen had met the Wilcox family in Germany while exploring an old cathedral that had been poorly restored to their way of thinking. Helen had befriended the Wilcox family, Meg explains to Aunt Juley, and they all spent time together during their vacation. According to Meg, The Wilcoxes are pleasant enough people, but she does not know them well and certainly does not know Paul well enough to think that he might be an appropriate fiancé for Helen.

Therefore, the two women decide that Aunt Juley should go to Howards End, not to create a scene, but to make inquiries and to make a determination about the situation in which Helen has found herself. Aunt Juley leaves on the 11 a.m. train, having been upgraded from a second-class ticket to a first-class ticket, which she finds immensely pleasing.

It is only when Meg returns home, and Aunt Juley has already left, that Meg receives Helen's next letter, which says only: "All over. Wish I had never written. Tell no one—Helen."

Chapter 2 Analysis

The year in which the story takes place has not yet been determined, but it is clearly still the time when a family and its extended members became intimately involved in the activities of its young women, especially on the subject of marriage and suitable partners. We gather that this is a leisure class family with time to vacation, to ponder trivialities and the monetary means to travel at a moment's notice to intervene in life's course. Helen's brief letter means that Aunt Juley is headed into an unexpected situation, and it is intriguing to think what the old woman will encounter at Howards End.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

During the hour train ride north, Aunt Juley thinks about her relationship with her nieces. Their own mother had died when Meg was only nine. Aunt Juley had offered to help with the family, but Meg had said that the family could manage just fine. Then when the girls' father died a few years later, their aunt extended the offer again and was again refused. However, she did manage to intervene as best she could, especially in the matter of their financial investments and future plans.

When Aunt Juley arrives at Hilton, the Howards End train station, she asks the ticket boy if he knows the location of the house. The ticket boy calls out to a young man who just happens to be Mr. Wilcox, who offers to drive Aunt Juley to the house. Aunt Juley is glad of the opportunity to speak with him privately. After a while, though it becomes clear that this young man is not Paul Wilcox, but rather Charles, who informs her that any relationship between his brother and Helen is preposterous and that he knows of no such thing.

When they finally arrive at Howards End, Helen runs out to meet her aunt, saying that there was no engagement; it has all been a mistake. Mrs. Wilcox strides over to meet Aunt Juley and very calmly asks someone to inform the cook that there will be one more for lunch. The others go inside to collect themselves, as Mrs. Wilcox tells Charles that Paul and Helen simply are not in love any longer and stoops down to smell her roses.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Aunt Juley's position and relationship with her nieces is defined in this chapter. She had wanted to be a bigger part of their lives after the deaths of their parents, but the fiercely independent Meg had thwarted Aunt Juley's assistance. However, Aunt Juley took no offense and managed to stay involved the best she could. The girls had come to rely on their aunt as a confidant anyway; so, Aunt Juley ultimately got her wish. It is apparent that their social class is one where young girls are to be taken care of and not expected to be independent in thought or action. Therefore, when Aunt Juley sets out for Howards End to determine the nature of Helen's relationship with Paul Wilcox, she not only has Helen's best interest at heart, but also the best interest of the family.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Helen and Aunt Juley return home to Wickham Place in a state of collapse but after a few days, they have gained some perspective. In the future Aunt Juley would refer to the incident as "the one time I really did help Emily's girls was over the Wilcox business."

The truth of the whole incident is that Helen had fallen in love, not with an individual, but with a family. Helen adored spending the days in their outside sports and sleeping under their roof at night and even started to alter her socialist views to fit into their capitalist ones. Helen was enthralled, and she hoped Paul would be her way of becoming a part of the Wilcox family.

It seemed as if Paul was agreeable to it, too, and they found themselves together one night when he kissed her and told her that he loved her. However, by the next morning the so-called relationship had ended just as suddenly as it had begun. When Helen came down for breakfast, Paul had changed; he was nervous and avoiding her, so she took the opportunity later to relieve him of any further responsibility. Paul's situation would not permit any romantic involvement at the time, and Helen knew there was no point in pursuing it. That is when she had sent the hurried note to Meg. However, the message crossed with Aunt Juley's trip, and the rest became an uncomfortable memory- forever. Helen knows now that personal relationships are the important thing in life, and maybe the Wilcox family is nothing but a shell of newspapers and pretension and that would never be good enough for her.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Helen, the younger of the two sisters, is also the prettier one. Meg is more straightforward, partly due to her personality but partly due to being the oldest of the three children. She had more responsibility thrust upon her at an early age than did her siblings. Moreover, it is becoming evident through the relationships they each form that the two sisters have similar characteristics and a family code, but society will treat them each differently.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The girls attend a concert with their brother, Tibby, Aunt Juley, some friends from Germany and a companion of Meg's. Each of them is swept away with the music, each in his or her own style. Helen feels sure that Beethoven has imagined goblins that are marching all over the universe, while Meg and Tibby appreciate the craft. Whatever the response, it is sure that the passion of each life becomes more vivid with each note.

Helen leaves the concert hall to wander about wherever the music leads her; and she inadvertently takes the umbrella of Meg's companion. The young man is quite distressed about this and thinks that a petty crime had been perpetrated upon him. Meg tries to calm him, saying that he would surely get his umbrella returned, and that Helen had meant him no harm. However, Helen sees that he is still distressed and understands that his behavior gives "her a glimpse into squalor. To trust people is a luxury only the rich can indulge; the poor can't afford it."

When the concert ends, they all walk back to Wickham Place so the young man can retrieve his umbrella and they can all have tea as a peace offering for the offense. The young man is so overwhelmed by Helen's show of apology and the other events of the evening that he decides not to stay for tea.

Meg chides Tibby into trying to be more of a host that men would enjoy instead of seeing to the tea and scones. Meg and Helen think about the Wilcox men and how their bearing is conducive to proper entertaining. The evening is pleasant enough, and they hope that the young man will not worry over the umbrella incident too long.

Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter provides a better glimpse into the characters' lifestyle. Helen is the dreamy, emotional one, easily swept away by the music and the passions it brings out in her. Meg and Tibby are more practical, appreciating the methods and craft of the music, and they are able to argue its fine points on tactics alone. The unnamed young man seems to represent the lower class, and although he tried to fit in with them for the evening, he was terribly uncomfortable and out of place. The evening was enlightening for the girls, too, as a hint that all is not for the best in the best of all possible worlds; beneath their social structure and their wealth, there were many people like the boy at the concert who left them with his umbrella intact, but not much more. The young man's umbrella serves as a symbol, an emblem of protection against the "elements" of the upper class. As long as he has his umbrella to cover his true self, then he can easily fit into to the upper class role. However, once a member of the upper class has stolen his umbrella, he can be seen for who is—someone who certainly does not fit in. He feels like the only person in a rainstorm without an umbrella, like an easily recognizable fool.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The young boy with no name is now identified as Leonard Bast. He stands on the edge of gentility, trying to elevate himself to the life that the Schlegel girls, Helen and Meg, enjoy. However, his mind and his body have been malnourished during his life and he has to make up for such neglect if he is ever going to attain an elevated status. Therefore, he makes the long walk to his rented basement flat and collapses in a chair to think about the evening.

He makes some tea and pulls out the latest book he has been reading, a volume of Ruskin. Leonard reads and feels the words he is reading, as he makes some notes, though he falls sullen, as his life cannot begin to compare to the vibrant life of Venice that was coming out at him through Ruskin's words. Suddenly there is a commotion on the staircase and a woman enters, clearly not of the same class as the Schlegel girls.

The woman's name is Jacky, and although she is ten years older than Leonard, she wants to marry him. Jacky repeatedly makes Leonard promise to marry her as soon as he reaches the age of 21. Leonard makes them a meager dinner of bouillon, tongue and sweet jelly, and Jacky goes to bed while Leonard immerses himself in Ruskin.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Leonard, a representative of the poor class in this era of English society, strives to reach a better station in life. However, he is not likely to ever reach his goals. He is too far behind in so many things. Jacky likely senses Leonard's ambition and wishes to cling to his dreams of a better life by clinging to the young man himself. It is not clear how or why they are together; it seems that Leonard will grow weary of her and relieve himself of his commitment to her as he continues to take steps toward improving his station in life.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Unexpectedly, the Wilcox family is moving into the house across the street from the Schlegel girls. Aunt Juley, having noticed Charles on the sidewalk earlier, obtains this bit of information from him, and is quick to share her concerns with Meg. Aunt Juley does not want this new development to cause Helen and Meg any distress, and she assures the girls that the episode with the Wilcoxes is quite in the past. Meg is willing to risk any discomfort to stay in her house. Besides, Meg says, there is never any real risk for people who have money, "You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. It is only when we see someone near us tottering that we realize all that an independent income means. Last night, when we were talking up here round the fire, I began to think that the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin."

Meg seems to think that if there were any concern in the situation regarding the Wilcoxes moving in that it would be for the sake of Mrs. Wilcox, who Meg hopes to spare any pain or embarrassment. Helen is very puzzled by the news, as she leaves to visit their German cousins, not planning to return until after the first of the New Year.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Meg seems to be more firmly established as the older, more settled sister. The importance she sets on money and social standing is no longer hidden and, while Meg hopes that the entry of the Wilcoxes into their neighborhood will not cause a hardship on Helen, her overriding concern is for Mrs. Wilcox. There seems to be a hint of a possible friendship brewing in Meg's mind, which could possibly elevate both women mutually.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

There had been the beginning of a friendship between Mrs. Wilcox and Meg when their families had met on vacation in Germany that summer. Now Meg wonders how to proceed with the friendship. Helen is going away, so the old issue with Paul should not be an immediate problem. Finally, Meg sends Mrs. Wilcox a letter saying that it would probably be best if the two of them did not meet. Given the fact that both Helen and Aunt Juley had both caused some measure of distress for the Wilcox family, they were already at a disadvantage. In addition, Meg does not want to risk any repeats of the situation between Helen and Paul.

Meg's letter is answered with one from Mrs. Wilcox that is bitingly short; Meg need not have written her such a letter because Paul has gone abroad. Meg is mortified and goes immediately to the Wilcox residence to apologize. A bit ungracious at first, Mrs. Wilcox is still upset by Meg's letter, but eventually warms and the two women have a most enjoyable conversation, which ends with Mrs. Wilcox reminding Meg that sometimes it seems as if Meg forgets she is a girl.

Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter begins to reestablish a friendship between Mrs. Wilcox and Meg. The relationship the two women have seems to be one of mentoring in which Mrs. Wilcox hopes to enlighten Meg to the ways of the world. Mrs. Wilcox's motive for moving directly across the street from the Schlegels, when the families have already encountered a most inconvenient display of emotions, is unclear at this point in the novel.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Although Meg has become quite the accomplished hostess and housekeeper after ten years' practice, the small luncheon she holds for Mrs. Wilcox is not a success. Meg's invitation has included a few people to welcome Mrs. Wilcox to London, but the guests have very little to talk about. Mrs. Wilcox's tastes are simple and do not gravitate to those of the other guests, which include art, music, culture and politics. Mrs. Wilcox has lived her life in service to her husband and sons and even believes that women should not enter into conversations on topics that should be left to the male gender. Furthermore, Mrs. Wilcox does not have much interest in any country outside of England and would have preferred to stay at Howards End, though she has come to London at the request of her husband.

In the middle of a conversation, which Mrs. Wilcox deems unimportant or boring, she rises, thanks Meg for her kindness, and leaves the luncheon. Meg hopes that Mrs. Wilcox will visit again, and Meg promises not to invite anyone else should Mrs. Wilcox agree to come.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Meg is trying to do the appropriate thing and include Mrs. Wilcox in the social gatherings in order to meet a few people and not feel so isolated in London. Mrs. Wilcox has no interest in meeting others and almost prefers her self-imposed isolation. Mrs. Wilcox is a mix of social propriety in that she knows the mechanics of her position, yet she does not join in willingly, and does not take any interest in any social or political causes. Somehow, the older woman is a great draw for Meg, perhaps in a somewhat motherly role.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Several days have passed since the disastrous luncheon. Meg wonders if Mrs. Wilcox is just one of those unsatisfactory people who dangles intimacy and then withdraws it. Meg likes things tidied up and written down and would have liked the older woman to commit to a friendship, but Mrs. Wilcox will not be hurried, if there will be any relationship at all.

Meg is brought out of her melancholy by a message from Mrs. Wilcox asking her to go Christmas shopping. The holiday is drawing near and Mrs. Wilcox has spent too many days brooding inside the London flat. The two women set out in a carriage for Harrods' and the Haymarket stores. Mrs. Wilcox tells Meg that she has been a wonderful help getting her organized and making gift suggestions.

Their conversation drift to their respective homes and Mrs. Wilcox suggests that they both go to Howards End right away. Meg, always practical, tells Mrs. Wilcox that possibly another day would be better, as they should probably have an earlier start if they are going to make the trip. Immediately Mrs. Wilcox is angry at being rebuffed and the two women spend a quiet carriage ride back to their mansions where they go their separate ways.

Back at home, Meg thinks of the incident and realizes that by turning down an afternoon trip, she has insulted Mrs. Wilcox, whose only passion is Howards End. Therefore, Meg heads to the train station where she sees Mrs. Wilcox also buying a ticket, and they become friendly again. As the two women head for their train, Evie, Mrs. Wilcox's daughter, following closely by Mr. Wilcox, interrupts them. Their family road trip has been cut short, and they are just arriving home. With that, Mrs. Wilcox dismisses Meg for another day and leaves the station with Mr. Wilcox husband and their daughter.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Mrs. Wilcox seems to have a strange hold over the naïve Meg. Although Mrs. Wilcox recruits Meg's help to finish her shopping, she becomes angry when Meg does not accommodate her whim to go to Howards End. Meg's disappointment is obvious as she is left at the train station, not even offered a ride home. It is unclear whether Meg plans to continue to submit to Mrs. Wilcox's abuse.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Mrs. Wilcox is now dead. Some of the townspeople say she had not looked well for some time and others say it was going to London that did the woman in. They don't know what her family now knows, that Mrs. Wilcox had been ill for awhile but kept it a secret so an not to distress her family. Death is such an unpleasant topic. The dead woman's family is devastated and her husband remembers her faithfulness and her virtue. All her life, he could count on her.

Soon a letter arrives announcing something that Mr. Wilcox could have never imagined. Mrs. Wilcox has left Howards End to Meg Schlegel. The handwritten note has come in the morning's mail and has sidelined the family's grief into shock and bewilderment. They immediately consider scenarios of its legality, of her state of mind, and the question of Miss Schlegel's possible undue influence on the woman.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Mrs. Wilcox's death explains a lot. Her impetuous need to see Howards End that December afternoon; her impatience with the guests and the conversation at Meg's luncheon; and the days the older woman had spent in bed claiming that they were strictly for leisure and quite her routine. Her death has crumbled the family's foundation but they are even more devastated, if that is possible, by Mrs. Wilcox's willing Howards End to Meg. Perhaps the woman wanted to leave it to someone who would value it. If one can leave one's soul, Howards End was Mrs. Wilcox's, and she wants it safe.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

If the Wilcoxes have been worried that Meg would show up and claim her inheritance, they need not have, because Meg knows nothing about it. When Charles had inquires if his mother had ever offered to give Meg anything, the girl declines, saying that Mrs. Wilcox had mentioned a Christmas gift, but nothing more. Meg has only received a simple silver vinaigrette set and seems moved by the gesture.

Helen is writing about her visit in Germany and yet another marriage proposal that Meg let slip by. Helen declines it just as Meg thought she might and only briefly comments on the sad occasion of Mrs. Wilcox's death. Helen marvels to herself how she could have been in such personal turmoil just six months ago and now her life is so cheerful and full.

Meg can only stand back and wonder at the chaotic nature of daily life and how that differs from the orderly sequence fabricated by historians. Actual life is full of false clues and signposts that lead nowhere. She hopes that in the future she will be less cautious, not more so, than she had been in the past.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Meg is totally unaware of the Mrs. Wilcox's gesture and is content to receive a small token of friendship from her family. The family, of course, tries to determine what she knows and feel safe that Meg is ignorant of her inheritance. However, Meg is becoming a discerning woman and it won't be long before the truth about the situation will reveal itself, leaving the possibility for a tremendous change in the course of her life.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

It has been two years since Mrs. Wilcox died and Meg is still ignorant of the gift of Howards End. In fact, she and Tibby are in discussion about where to move, as their lease on Wickham Place will expire soon. The owner will be demolishing it and be building flats in its place. The brother and sister bat about different housing options and Meg cannot resist throwing in some sisterly advice to Tibby about taking stock of his career and his life in general. He is in his second year at Oxford and not particularly ambitious or looking forward to joining the real world.

Helen bursts into their discussion with the most amusing story. Some woman has come to their house demanding to see her husband. Of course, he is not there; Helen tries to tell her. However, the woman would not be calmed. His name is Lan and she demands to see him. After finally being convinced that he is not there, she leaves, and Helen has a great time telling the story to her incredulous brother and sister.

Chapter 13 Analysis

It seems as if life has calmed down for the Schlegels. They are faced with the problem of finding a new home by September; and while there is some sentimentality involved, they are pleased that they have the money to find something at least, if not more, suitable, and the prospect isn't too overwhelming. Helen and Meg are both entering into the political scene by giving speeches, Tibby is growing up at Oxford, and stability seems to be in the forecast for all of them.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The mystery of Mr. Lan is solved the very next day with the arrival of Mr. Leonard Bast, a clerk employed by the Porphyrion Fire Insurance Company. He announces that he is apologizing for the intrusion of the woman who had come looking for him yesterday. The demanding woman was his wife and had seen Meg's name and address on a card in his possessions. Leonard shows the girls the card and Meg does not remember that this is the unnamed young man whose umbrella Helen had inadvertently taken that night at a concert a few years ago.

Leonard had kept the card as a symbol of stature: theirs and his aspirations. Because he is always working to improve his position, Leonard wants the adventure that comes to those who know more than the outside of books. What is available to Leonard Bast at this time is the adventure of walking all night through the streets of London, having a fine dinner and then walking all night into the woods and meadows searching for something unattainable.

Leonard apologizes for the intrusion and for burdening them with his story and promises never to bother them again. The Schlegels are gracious, of course, and ask him please to come again but Leonard knows that he would not. The Schlegels belong to the part of the world that is bright and colorful and his is grey. At least Leonard has this card to carry with him; and the spirit of all that it implies.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Again, the separation of the classes is apparent. Leonard is drawn again into the world of the Schlegels even though they can really offer him nothing more than their kindness and an ear for his stories. Leonard seems to serve the role of symbol for the poor working class against the backdrop of the privileged lifestyle of the two sisters and their indulged brother.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The Schlegel sisters are enjoying one of their women's dinners, which are really informal discussion groups. The sisters are talking about their experience with Mr. Bast when the subject of how millionaires should dispose of their money comes up. Some of the women think that the Mr. Basts of the world should benefit while others say that the money is part of that particular family and should stay there. If someone like Leonard Bast were to benefit from anything, it should be clothes, or food, or items but never the money outright according to most.

Helen retorts that the Mr. Basts of the world should be given the money outright. Do not dole it out to them in the form of clothes or food as if they are babies. Give people the cash and they will pick up the ideals on their own. The others think her mad and wonder what good it would do if a Mr. Bast gained the whole world and lost his soul. Helen answers that it would not do any good, but he cannot gain his soul until he gains a little of the world. Any man like Leonard would perish in a world of squalor and need.

When the women could come to no conclusion, and as the discussion has been purely theoretical anyway, the two Schlegel girls walk home and wonder what they could do for the poor Mr. Bast on their own. That is when they run into Mr. Wilcox, whom they have not seen for quite some time. He tells them that he is leasing Howards End, that the family has moved to London and that everyone is well.

They pose the topic of Mr. Bast's plight and ask what Mr. Wilcox would do in that situation. When asked what the unfortunate man did for a living, Helen tells Mr. Wilcox that Leonard is a clerk at the insurance company and Mr. Wilcox advises them to tell Mr. Bast that that company is going under and the young man would be without employment very soon. The girls thank him for the inside piece of information and decide that this is the way they could help and would contact Mr. Bast at once.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The Women's movement is figuring more prominently into the lives of the Schlegel girls as they mature. Their Socialist sensibilities are now widely received by their contemporaries, however, and the sisters find themselves at odds with others over their thoughts. The very fact that they would entertain the idea of parting with cold hard cash to give to those less fortunate suggests some benevolent idea or plan brewing, and surely Mr. Bast will benefit and possibly even more, from the Schlegels' generosity.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Leonard Bast accepts the Schlegel girls' invitation to tea but unfortunately, the visit does not go as either party had hoped. Meg and Helen are intent on bringing Leonard around to the subject of his employment when all he wants is to discuss books and ideas. Therefore, finally, they are forced to tell Leonard what they had heard; that his company is going under and he should find another job elsewhere as soon as he could. Leonard replies that he is not in the routine of following idle gossip and passes it off. The girls keep forcing the issue for his sake, and thankfully, Mr. Wilcox and his daughter Evie, who brings a couple of puppies she has bred, interrupt them. At that intrusion, Mr. Bast can see that his time of discussing higher things had ended even before it started and he stands to leave.

Helen and Meg ask Leonard not to leave; they want to help him, it is true, but they also want his company. Because what good are the stars and trees, the sunrise and wind Leonard loved, if he cannot bring them into his daily life? Did life always have to be a struggle against the grayness? The girls only think that they could have some mutually beneficial dialogue and friendship.

Mr. Bast is unmoved and leaves the house feeling unfulfilled and hurt. Mr. Wilcox cautions the girls not to invite such characters into their home. Meg tries to tell him that they only want to open up more worlds for Mr. Bast; that everyone needs someone or something very dear to relieve life's daily grey. That is all. Leonard s such an intense young man and they can see the want of adventure in him and want to help supply it.

At first, Meg did not notice how Mr. Wilcox was watching her as she spoke so passionately but their eyes did meet and catch and suddenly a spark was struck. She has touched his emotions and Meg sees the real man in him. It is an odd triangle: Mr. Bast, Meg, and Mr. Wilcox, but it has fired something primal in Mr. Wilcox and he cannot explain this strange jealousy.

Mr. Wilcox and Evie take their leave but he shares his feeling that two girls like the Schlegels should not be living in London alone in these times and vows to look in on them on a more regular basis.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Once more, the Schlegel girls' benevolence has been thwarted. They seem to be at an impasse with poor Mr. Bast. He hungers for knowledge and the adventures of the spirit and is irritated with their talk of money and political issues; and cannot understand that without the money, the adventure will always elude him. Will Leonard ever bend any so that he can begin to understand and find his way out of his bleak life? Somehow, some force will return Leonard back to the Schlegels. Mr. Wilcox will also be back as he now

seems smitten with the Schlegel girl most unlikely to cause a stir in any man of any age, Meg.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

September is drawing closer and the Schlegels have not yet found a new home. Meg is pushed past distraction when she thinks about all the family's possessions that have to find a new home and there is nothing in sight. Meg had hoped to find something by now so that she could go on their annual visit to Aunt Juley's and have that worry removed. Meg vows not to do anything but look for a house and then breaks that vow in half an hour when an invitation comes to join Evie Wilcox and her new fiancé for lunch.

When Meg arrives, she immediately feels uncomfortable in the presence of the young lovers, almost as if the vessel of life is passing her by and she is looking at its two latest passengers. Meg's mood lifts considerably though when she sees that Mr. Wilcox is joining them for lunch. He helps her choose her lunch selection and is so attentive when Meg speaks of her political issues and was sympathetic about her house hunting woes.

In time, they had finished lunch and Meg leaves without having had much conversation with Evie at all. She suspects that somehow Mr. Wilcox had been the force behind the luncheon invitation and thinks about how attentive he had been lately. Meg and Mr. Wilcox had done more in the last week than they had in the last two years. It was something to think about for sure. The next morning the Schlegels leave for their visit with their aunt without having secured a new home.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Finally, some romance for Meg who has been burdened all her life with the responsibilities of running the home and raising a sister and brother. Meg is now at an age where she feels that life must surely have passed by, but suddenly her heart lifts at the attentions of Mr. Wilcox and for once, a man is interested in her, not Helen. Maybe Meg feels buoyed by the attention and lets slide the burden of the new house just so she can revel in it if only a short while.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

The Schlegels are eating breakfast with their Aunt Juley when the message arrives. It is from Mr. Wilcox for Meg. He had made arrangements so that the Schlegels could lease his own house on Ducie Street since Meg, Helen, and Tibby are in such a predicament. The note says that Meg must come at once so that they can finalize the arrangement if it pleases her. Not at all sure what her answer will be, Meg takes the train back to London where Mr. Wilcox is waiting for her at the station. During their tour of the house, Mr. Wilcox asks Meg to marry him right in the middle of the drawing room. The proposal would not rank among the world's greatest love scenes but Meg says she would let him know tomorrow and they awkwardly say their goodbyes.

Meg returns to her house for the evening and thinks about her life and all the men she has known: some ninnies and some old men who could not find anyone else. However, with Mr. Wilcox, it is different. Meg sees the world as whole; he sees it steady. In addition, they seem to complement each other in spite of a 20-year age difference. Mr. Wilcox is not an emotional man and he does not display much but Meg feels comfortable around him. All the while, Meg feels the spirit of Mrs. Wilcox around her, surveying the scene, but without one hint of bitterness.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Love, or maybe contentment, had finally arrived for Meg. She had hoped that she was not acting like an old maid when she got Mr. Wilcox's note and was reading too much into his sense of urgency. She had not. So now, instead of finding a new house, Meg was finding a new life… and somehow she knew that Mrs. Wilcox approved.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Aunt Juley, Helen, Tibby are giving their cousin Frieda a tour of the valley, the hills and the coast of their England. Aunt Juley's home was in this part of the island and the Schlegels adore visiting her and now especially love sharing it with their German cousin. As the cousins look over the vista, they catch sight of Meg's train returning from her quick trip into London. Tibby is waiting for her at the station and he will bring Meg and a tea basket to meet the others just as soon as he can gather her at the station.

As soon as they see Meg, they begin calling out asking if she took the house. It is all a bit of a mystery she replies, as she wants them all together when she tells them of Mr. Wilcox's proposal of marriage. Helen responds with uncharacteristic tears and begs her not to do it. Meg thinks her a bit selfish, as she herself had never reacted anything like that when Helen had received proposals.

Despite any claim that is made about Mr. Wilcox, Meg has a comeback. She knows that he is a businessman, more prone to figures than emotions. In addition, Meg is to keep her independence more than most women do. Marriage is to alter her fortunes rather than her character and she feels that she knows her future husband well. Mr. Wilcox did have public qualities that Meg does not understand but she knows enough to know that it will afford them a life that will be more than comfortable.

Helen is silent for a long time and murmurs to herself that one would lose something in a marriage like this, and she continues to gaze out to the sea.

Chapter 19 Analysis

We learn that Meg will say yes to Mr. Wilcox. In what should be a moment of joy for her, she's let down by Helen's asking her not to marry Mr. Wilcox. What is this rush of jealousy and selfishness? Does Helen know something about Mr. Wilcox that has yet to be revealed to Meg? Meg just has a sense of loss and it is not sure if she's talking about the loss of her sister or that Meg will lose something important; maybe herself.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Meg has often wondered at the disturbance that takes place in the world's waters when love, which seems such a tiny pebble, slips in. Love concerns only the two people involved, yet its impact deluges a hundred shores. Meg is soon to find out the practical aspects of this with Mr. Wilcox's visit to Aunt Juley's. He arrives in town bearing the engagement ring and the appropriate manners to please the family.

Once he and Meg are taking an after dinner stroll, he brings up the issue of property and how it is to be divided. Meg makes it clear that she wants him to be generous with his children; she herself had all she will ever need. Meg asks Mr. Wilcox if he would make a point of befriending Helen so there would be no awkwardness there and he promises that he would. When they reach Aunt Juley's door, her fiancé grabs her so suddenly that she almost screams and then he kisses her forcefully. When it is over, Mr. Wilcox disappears without a word into the darkness and his hotel room and Meg is left wondering at the indelicate maneuver and thinks for a moment about Helen and Paul.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Henry Wilcox is a businessman and has come with his bargaining tools to close the deal with Meg. Before there is any romance or talk of their life together, Henry must get the property affairs discussed so that there will be no room for error or hurt feelings in the future. Meg is truly in love, but is Henry? Has he suffered some financial problems and needs her money more than her love? Meg is a bright, sensitive woman but not naïve and there is hope that Henry is being straightforward with her about his intentions.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Charles has just scolded Dolly for matchmaking his sister and her uncle. That leaves his father, Henry, to fend for himself and now he has gone off and proposed marriage to one of the Schlegels. Charles knows that the Schlegels are determined to get Howards End some way. Heaven only knows what Paul will say when he finds out! Finally, Charles runs out of steam and he and Dolly sit with their two children and one on the way. Nature is turning out Wilcoxes in this peaceful abode so that they may inherit the earth.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Charles has received his father's letter and suspects that there is more to this marriage proposal than meets the eye, having always been suspicious of the Schlegels. But maybe Charles is worried that Meg Schlegel will soon find out that Howards End was left to her by the Wilcox's own mother… and that is something Charles is hell bent to keep quiet.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Henry Wilcox is admittedly a man who does not bother about his emotions and it is in just this area that Meg intends to help him. If Henry could just connect the everyday prose and the deep passion, both would be elevated and their love would be seen at its height. Meg plans to deliver the message in quiet ways and their life would start to build beautifully.

However, so far, Meg is failing; she had not counted on his obtuseness. Henry simply does not notice things. It does not matter that Meg tries to help him; Henry calls her clever but his motto in life is to concentrate. Therefore, when Meg announces that she had received a letter that morning from Mr. Bast, Henry essentially ignores her and says he has had a letter as well about Howards End. Henry's tenant wants to sublet the house because of his being ordered abroad and Henry thinks it is a mistake. Henry does not care at all what Meg is saying about Mr. Bast having left the insurance company on Henry's suggestion to take a position at a bank at a lower salary. Henry barely remembers the talk about the clerk. This angers Helen to see how inconsiderate he is and she leaves, the two of them in a ruffled state.

Henry, in the meantime, announces to Aunt Juley that he and Meg will be leaving for Howards End and that Meg will not be able to stay for the duration of the vacation. Meg is not sure how she feels about Henry's taking control over her affairs but she looks into his dark eyes and feels she knows what lies behind them but is not afraid.

Chapter 22 Analysis

This is really the first time that Henry and Meg have spent any time together. They do not really know how to interact with each other yet and it is particularly trying for Meg who is also trying to manage the insertion of Henry into her family dynamic. However, Meg is a tender, sensitive person and hopes that she can smooth over the immediate rough spots as well as get Henry to open up for the benefit of their relationship.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Before she leaves for Howards End, Meg scolds Helen, not for disapproving of her engagement, but for throwing a veil of mystery over that disapproval. Meg feels that Helen is too absorbed with the subconscious self these days. Helen tells her to go ahead and marry Henry. She does not like Henry but she adores Meg and that will never change. Meg is grateful for Helen's affection and asks only that her sister try to be civil to Henry to his face. Helen repeats that she definitely dislikes him but she will do what she can.

The following morning, Meg goes to Henry's office to see how his business operates. Unsure of what she had expected, Meg finds just the ordinary sea of ledgers and polished counters of any other ordinary business. His private office does have a Turkish carpet but only an ordinary table and a rather ordinary map of West Africa.

Henry's voice brings her back to reality and he and Charles are discussing the fact that their Howards End tenant has moved out abruptly and apparently has left the place in a shambles. The three of them decide to visit that afternoon after they had stopped in at Charles' house where his wife, Dolly, would have lunch waiting.

Meg is uncomfortable with their young children and is quite ready to leave to tour Howards End at the end of the lunch. Upon arriving, Henry realizes he does not have a key and leaves to get one. Meg waits on the porch and after awhile tries the door to get in out of a rain shower. Amazingly, it opens and she steps in. It is in need of some cleaning but Meg is taken aback at how beautiful it is and she can see the flowers and trees of the gardens and into the meadow and marvels at how lush everything seems to be. Then Meg hears the house make some noises and she thinks it is Henry returning but he does not answer when she calls out. She calls again and still, there is no answer. The drum-like noise seems to be getting louder and almost deafens her. Meg flings open the door to the stairs and an old woman is descending and says she thought Meg had been Ruth Wilcox because Meg has the same way of walking. The woman says good day and passes out into the rain.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Meg is finally coming into her own, asserting her rights and establishing boundaries in her relationships. She was just learning Henry but she also was putting Helen on notice about how things would be with the two of them now that she was getting married. She also is setting up her position as Henry's wife, and that did not include fawning over his grandchildren. She seems to almost blossom like the lush trees in the meadow when she sees Howards End for the first time and you can almost hear her heart beat as she is walking from room to room. Was that the sound she heard thundering in her ears? Or

was it something else? Who was the strange woman who had come downstairs and addressed her as Ruth Wilcox?

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

As it turns out, the old woman is Miss Avery, one of the crew at the farm. She had assumed that Meg knew that she herself had brought the keys up to Howards End because they are laying in the entry way. Henry apologizes for Meg's fear and passes Miss Avery's behavior off as that of an old maid who is uneducated in the social graces.

Henry is able to give Meg a proper tour when he returns and points out the stories of the owners of the adjoining properties. Meg finally starts to realize her love for England, starting with Howards End. "An unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable. Helen and her father had known this love, poor Leonard Bast was groping after it but it had been hidden from Meg until this afternoon."

Before she and Henry leave the house for the day, Meg points out the pigs' teeth that are embedded in the bark of the wych elm tree, just the white tips showing. Ruth Wilcox had told Meg of that at one time; but Meg doesn't say where she had heard it, just somewhere in London; because neither one of them ever calls Mrs. Wilcox by name.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Meg is getting further entrenched into the idea of being Henry's wife. She knows he is a man who knows many things and hopes she can help him connect some of them so that he can have a more substantial life. Meg immediately loves Howards End and senses that this is England; that this is home. Meg is feeling love on many levels for the first time in her life and we can almost feel the lightness in her heart and her swift steps.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Evie hears of her father's engagement when she is at a tennis tournament and her play is simply horrible. That Evie should marry and leave her father would be natural; that he should do the same seems deceitful. Her only recourse, in her mind, is to move up her wedding date from September to August and somehow all the gifts she has started to receive puts her in a much better mood.

Therefore, the wedding party all boards the train for the trip to Oniton, one of Mr. Wilcox's homes, where Evie's wedding will take place. Charles and two others are driving so that they will have cars at their disposal but they do not want the ladies to have to ride in them for the whole journey. It is a pleasant enough trip and rather uneventful until they had all departed the train and were going the rest of the way in the cars. Meg hears some screaming and she is told that one of the cars has hit a dog. She demands that Charles stop the car so she can see about it but he refuses. After repeated requests, Meg jumps out of the moving car, tears her gloves and cuts her hand.

As it turns out, it had been the cat of a young girl that had been run over by one of the cars in their party. The drivers offer apologies and compensate the girl but Meg is outraged by the overall insensitivity of her companions. Meg feels no real connection with them as if the whole trip had been unreal. "They had no part with the earth and its emotions. They were dust, and a stink, and cosmopolitan chatter, and the girl whose cat had been killed had lived more deeply than they."

Chapter 25 Analysis

Meg is still rebelling against the separation of the classes. It is not the money that she minds at all; it is the vacant emptiness that it seems to foster in those who have a lot of it. Meg feels that surely there must be a way to connect the value that it can provide with the value of what is true and authentic. Maybe Meg will be that connection. She has one foot in the world of privilege but she feels so much more at home walking the fields and meadows of the English countryside.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Oniton fascinates Meg. The house is insignificant though; it is the prospect of the eternal joy that would come from it that she was in love with. Meg has already started to meet some of the notables in the local town and knows that she would also get Henry to love the life here as much as she does.

However, to the immediate matter at hand, Evie is being married today. The servants are scurrying, the wine cellar relieved of some precious contents, and all the flowers are overflowing. The actual ceremony seems a bit low key and the wedding breakfast is lovely and perfect; but Meg decides that hers will be so much more grand and perfect in its own way.

Soon it comes time for the guests to leave and Meg and Henry are left to themselves for a short time. That is when they notice the late stragglers who turn out to be none other than Helen and Mr. and Mrs. Bast. Apparently, Mr. Bast has lost his position at the bank and the couple is penniless. Helen is demanding justice for them, as it had been Henry who recommended that he leave the insurance company. Meg is outraged that Helen would bring such a ragamuffin couple to this event and whisks the Basts away to a hotel in town as her guests. Meg calms Helen down by saying that she will speak to Henry on Mr. Bast's behalf but that Helen needs to curb her actions in the future or they will have no relationship.

Meg is successful in getting Henry to agree to see Mr. Bast in the hopes that he will hire him. That is when their evening stroll in the garden shows Mrs. Bast still dining on some wedding cake and champagne while Helen and her husband had gone into town to make the hotel arrangements for the evening. Henry tells Mrs. Bast that she would be more comfortable elsewhere; and to Meg, that he cannot abide that sort of woman in his garden. That is when the woman chimes in and says hello, calling him Hen; that she still loves him. Meg is incredulous and it turns out that Mrs. Bast had been Henry's mistress ten years ago. Meg leaves without a word and realizes that it is not her own tragedy; it was Ruth Wilcox's.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Once again, the separation of the classes rears its head. The wedding is very sedate and proper and everything is cautiously joyful. Meg is basking in her first success as Henry's hostess in what will soon be her home. Everything is almost idyllic. Then Helen shows up with the Basts. Meg continually comes to their rescue and seems determined that Henry should pay for the offhanded comment he had made about the insurance company where Mr. Bast had been employed. Helen is a champion for the causes of

those less fortunate and we see Meg beginning to take on more of the attitudes of her fiancé who is most definitely a Capitalist.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

The flurry created by Helen had subsided and she and the Basts are now settling in at the hotel. Helen disapproved of her sister's methods but knows that ultimately, the Basts will benefit from them and that is all that matters.

Helen and Leonard are discussing his employment situation and hope that Mr. Wilcox will take Leonard on and then his life will be all right. It will not be inspired but it will be settled and a man needs that. Helen challenges Leonard that that way of thinking is nonsense; that money is not the only thing in life. People always forget about death. "I love death—not morbidly, but because it shows the emptiness of money. Death and money are the eternal foes, not death and life. Never mind what lies behind death, Mr. Bast, but be sure that the poet and the musician and the tramp will be happier in it than the man who has never learnt to say 'I am I.'"

Helen is urging Mr. Bast never to give in and her excitement grows as she tries to cut the rope that fastens him to the earth but he has experienced too many bitter experiences and resisted. That is when a waitress hands her a letter from Meg with a separate note for Mr. Bast inside.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Helen has had success and she is calmer now. She cannot help her righteous anger, especially over the Bast situation, even though it is alienating her from her sister. She got what she wanted tonight, but may soon lose what she had.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

The notes from Margaret are very abrupt. To Mr. Bast, she says that unfortunately Mr. Wilcox has no position to offer him at this time. To Helen, that the Basts are no good and that she should leave the hotel, come back to Oniton for the night, and that Meg may go to see the Basts in the morning to see if there is anything she can do.

Meg determines that Henry's degradation changes everything. It is imperative that Helen and Mrs. Bast never speak again so that his indiscretion will not be revealed to her sister. In addition, at the bottom of Meg's heart is pity. Henry must be forgiven and made better by love. Nothing else matters, and she sleeps and wakes for the second time in her new home.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Meg's sense of propriety is still at the forefront but a newfound sense of compassion for Henry is ruling her. His degradation is also her pain and she plans to spare him, no matter the cost. Most surely, Meg's letters to Helen and Mr. Bast will most surely cost her the relationship with her sister.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Henry, of course, will release Meg from the engagement after the news of his indiscretion. Meg hates to see him hiding behind yet one more emotional fortress and tells him sincerely that that is not necessary; he is forgiven. Her plan now is never to mention it again. Henry cannot believe his good fortune in finding this woman and his life lifts as he projects forward, and although any gossip resulting from the incident would be unpleasant, he would manage it and even prosecute the Bast woman if it should ever come to that.

Meg has gone to the hotel to see Helen but finds out that she and the Basts have already left: Helen very early and the Basts just a short while ago. Meg can only imagine that Helen has heard about Henry's indiscretion and took leave of the hotel at once. Meg will probably meet her back in London and dreads the thought; and Meg wonders what Mr. Bast will do. Leonard now has enough information to blackmail Henry and gain some power but his character and past behavior indicate that he doesn't have the courage or the motivation to do so.

Chapter 29 Analysis

This chapter reveals another milestone on the abbreviated emotional timeline of Meg and Henry. She is an endless supply of compassion for this man whose actions she may not like but whose character was never in question. Meg's relationship with Helen is undoubtedly damaged from the event but to what extent is yet to be revealed.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Tibby is approaching his last year at Oxford and is studying his Chinese vocabulary when Helen arrives. She tells him that she has just arrived from Oniton where there has been a great deal of trouble. Helen breaks down, tells the story of Henry and the Basts, of Meg's notes, and wonders if he could see the sense in her distress. Tibby is never bothered by much that does not affect him personally but soothes his sister into believing that Helen has every reason to be outraged.

Helen tells him that she is going to Munich, or maybe Bonn, and she wants his help. She wants him to decide if Meg should be told about Henry's past and she also wants him to make sure that the Basts receive an immediate sum of money and then a trust. Tibby agrees but the check comes back saying that the recipient is in no need of the money. Helen asks Tibby to please take it personally, and when he arrives, he finds the Basts' personal belongings on the street as they have been evicted for not paying their rent.

Helen, in the meantime, begins fussing with her money and even sells out her shares in the Nottingham and Derby Railway. She reinvests and becomes even richer than she had ever been.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Helen's righteous anger is not exactly shared by Tibby. He is not easily aroused and would rather stay tucked up in his neat little world. However, he is willing to do what Helen asks, at least as far as the disposition of the money is concerned, and goes out of his way for her. Helen's generosity seems to have seeded even more abundance with her new financial gains and we wonder to what purpose she will invest it now.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Meg and Henry marry. The wedding is much simpler than she had originally intended, but due to recent circumstances, it seems the best course. Besides, what is important is the marriage, not the wedding. Meg has seen into her husband's past as well as his heart and she loves him. They spend their honeymoon near Innsbruck where she hopes to run into Helen at some point, but that never happens.

Meg and Henry settle into domestic life, once Meg got over her disappointment that Henry had leased Oniton, which she absolutely adored. He convinces her that they should sit out the winter in the house on Ducie St. and find something more permanent just for them in the spring. She falls into the routine of managing the house and the servants and gives little thought to her old discussion groups and friends from those days. Perhaps Meg has outgrown those stimulants and is passing from words to things. After all, some closing of the gates is inevitable once you turn thirty.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Meg is losing some of her independent edge; but that may not be all bad. She is devoted to her husband and the making of a wonderful home for them. She learns that she will not be mistress of Oniton and she accepts it almost docilely. In addition, her previous world of theories and thought are slipping from her. There is hope that she is not becoming passive, only putting her passion to a different use.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Spring comes and Meg is reviewing plans for the new house she and Henry are to build when Dolly comes to see her. The young woman looks vacantly at the plans and tells Meg the reason for her visit; to inform her that Miss Avery is unpacking the Schlegels' belongings, which are in storage there after they moved from Wickham Place months earlier. Meg is outraged at this imposition but sends a gentle note to the woman asking her not to interfere in her things. The only real solution is for Meg to go to Howards End herself and re-pack her own things. Tibby backs out at the last minute and so for the second time in her life Meg enters the house on her own.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Howards End is still pulling at Meg. Even though she and Henry are planning to build a magnificent house, she is drawn back there. Miss Avery's assumptive behavior with Meg's things is unnerving and Meg must set things right and gain the upper hand in the situation in order to feel that her life in general is in order.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Miss Avery is at Howards End when Meg arrives and she is a little unnerved when she sees her own umbrella stand in the entry. However, that reaction pales when Miss Avery draws back the curtain and there are all the contents of Meg's library from Wickham Place. The carpet is laid, all the furniture is in place, even Meg's father's sword has been removed from its scabbard and hangs on the wall. Meg protests that this is not their intention; that she and Henry are not going to live in this house. However, Miss Avery declares that the house has been empty long enough. Before long, she has led Meg through the entire house, which is now outfitted with Meg's furnishings and belongings. Meg has to tell the old woman that the things need to be re-packed and that she will be making other arrangements for someone to watch over the house. The old woman simply replies that it will only be a couple of weeks before the Howards End lights will be shining again and wonders if Meg has ordered in enough coals.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Miss Avery's intrusive behavior borders on insubordination yet she feels righteous in her behavior almost as if she's received some sort of divine intervention. It seems as if Miss Avery is the only person who can see into Meg's soul and knows what she really wants and needs; not those things that she has sacrificed for her new life with Henry.

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Aunt Juley is sick and Meg and Tibby rush to the old woman's bedside. A message is sent to Helen who is still abroad and she replies that she is coming. Aunt Juley talks of the things Meg should do, what Tibby should eat, and other things that probably go with the thoughts of the dying. However, Aunt Juley does not die. That is mixed news for Meg who loves her dear aunt but now has to decide what to tell Helen. If she tells her the truth, that Aunt Juley is much improved; Helen will not come. However, if Meg lets her think that Aunt Juley is still failing, Helen will come and they can have a chance to reconcile. She sends the note, indicating that their aunt has rallied and Helen replies that she wants to know where their furniture is because she wants a few things. Helen gives her address in care of her bankers yet fails to show up at the appointed time to meet Meg and Tibby.

The pair is concerned about their sister who is being very evasive and refuses to meet with them, even though she is now in London. Henry suggests telling Helen the truth: that the furniture is at Howards End. Then when Helen is retrieving her things, they can enter and see for themselves if she is well or not. Meg doesn't like the idea of the deceit, but her concern for her sister outweighs that and she writes a letter to Helen telling her that a cleaning woman will be at Howards End at 3 p.m. on Monday to let her in.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Meg's distance from her sister had been a grave area of concern for the eight months that she had been gone. Due to their aunt's illness, she at last had a reason to summon her back to England and the hope of reconciliation. However, Helen's resistance to seeing them strikes Meg as odd, and she reasons that she has been odd for quite some time. However, is Helen really mad, or just a passionate person, driven by her ideals and willing to risk everything to live them; while Meg has maybe transformed into someone who isn't capable of making the distinction anymore.

Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Therefore, the day comes for the confrontation with Helen at Howards End. Meg and Henry stop on the way to pick up a doctor who specializes in nervous disorders. He might be needed on site if the situation turns drastic. When they pull up, Miss Avery is standing in the yard and there is Helen on the porch with her back to the road. Meg jumps out of the car, runs to her and immediately sees that her sister is pregnant. Meg ushers Helen into the house and yells to Henry that everything is all right.

Chapter 35 Analysis

The secret of Helen's mysterious departure for eight months now makes sense. She was not mad at all, just an unmarried woman evasive with her family who would not understand the circumstances or relationship that created her awkward situation. We sense Meg's tenderness, though, and hope that she will do the right thing and stand by her sister, in spite of what Henry may say about the completely awkward mess.

Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Henry does not understand why Meg will not let him into the house. She refuses entrance also to the doctor who tries to persuade her for medical reasons but Meg persists and stands firm. Meg feels as if she is taking a stand for all women at this point and that to let any man, even Henry, into Howards End would be a betrayal of all womankind.

"It all turns on affection now," said Meg. "Affection. Don't you see? I like Helen very much, you not so much. Dr. Mainsbridge doesn't know her. That's all. And affection, when reciprocated, gives rights. Put that down in your notebook, Dr. Mainsbridge. It's a useful formula."

The men and the driver leave Meg to tend to her sister. After the car pulls away, Meg faces Helen for the first time in a long time and asks Helen to forgive her.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Thankfully, Meg still has her passions. Nothing can interfere with the bond of the sisters; and even more, she feels like she is taking a stand for all women. She has demurred and held her tongue on so many issues lately, but on this one, she will not be moved and we applaud her for it.

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Meg bolts the door and the two sisters are face to face. Meg apologizes for the scene but explains that they had thought Helen might be ill. Helen explains that she had to leave England, that her circumstances would never be accepted in their old life. She lives now with an Italian woman named Monica, a feminist who seems to have helped Helen make sense of her life and stick to her plans.

The longer they sit and talk, the more comfortable the sisters become, and the house seems as if it is theirs. All their furnishings are there and the warm feelings between the two prompt Helen to suggest that the two of them spend the night there before she leaves for Germany in the morning. Meg needs to ask Henry, which of course annoys Helen, but she leaves to get his permission because Howards End is his house after all.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Just when it seems as if Meg has regained her spirit, it seems to disappear when she leaves to ask Henry's permission for her and Helen to spend the night at Howards End. Perhaps she knows that Helen will disappear, taking her soul with her; and that she will be left with Henry in the end and it is best not to be angry with her even on the smallest matters.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

When Meg approaches Henry, he has only two questions for her: Is Helen wearing a wedding ring? In addition, did Helen tell Meg who had seduced her? Meg replies negatively to each and Henry says that they need more information to come to Helen's defense and possibly to save her name and reputation. Meg sees no future in pursuing this line of activity and proceeds to ask him if the two sisters could sleep at Howards End for just this one time. Henry thinks Helen would be more comfortable at the hotel and can't understand why Meg feels so attached to the house, even though Meg tries to explain to him that the furnishings had been the Schlegel's and it comforts Helen to be near them.

Henry flatly denies the request and it finally surfaces that he has the reputation of his family to consider and that Helen should leave his house at once. Meg controls herself for the last time. "Tomorrow she will go to Germany and trouble society no longer. Tonight she asks to sleep in your empty house—a house which you do not care about, and which you have not occupied for over a year. May she? Will you give my sister leave? Will you forgive her—as you hope to be forgiven, and as you have actually been forgiven? Forgive her for one night only. That will be enough."

Henry persists that it would not be fitting in deference to his late wife. And Meg brings up Mrs. Bast and challenges Henry that Helen has done nothing any worse than he has already done and been forgiven for. Henry leaves and Meg walks out into the night.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Meg's sense of injustice is raging. The double standard for men is glaring and she can no longer hold her tongue. Henry has committed all sorts of crimes against humanity and the human soul and he has never been challenged on them until this night. Meg is at a critical juncture in her life: to soothe over the relations with her husband or return to her vulnerable sister.

Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Charles is on a mission to find out Helen's secret and he is questioning Tibby relentlessly at the house on Ducie St. He has had quite enough of the Schlegels in his life and this is the last offense. He is also perplexed that Tibby does not seem too upset about Helen's situation and certainly is not taking on the role of her protector.

Tibby, unwittingly tells Charles that Helen had mentioned someone named Bast, and that is all the ammunition Charles needs. Without intending to, Tibby feels that he has betrayed his sister and he also feels inadequate that the cunning Charles has bested him.

Chapter 39 Analysis

Sweet, gentle Tibby is unprepared to encounter the vicious, desperate Charles. They have nothing in common and become the perfect metaphor for the forces that are now pulling at poor Helen who is trapped between her past and her imminent future.

Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Helen and Meg are indeed going to spend the night at Howards End. This will be Helen's evening, won at what cost Meg did not know just yet. They talk about so many things; of Meg's sorrow that she had written those two notes to Helen and Mr. Bast; how Helen's feelings of empathy for Mr. Bast had developed into something much more; how Helen still could not find it in her heart to like Henry. Then Helen surprises Meg by asking her to come back to Germany with her. Meg thinks for a few minutes of how she has grown to love England in the past year and she would be sorrowful to leave it. On the other hand, Meg wonders what good it would be to stay with Henry and all his blubbering and outbursts for the rest of his days. However, these are issues for another day. Tonight they are content to sit under the huge wych elm tree and feel life pass.

Chapter 40 Analysis

Helen had always been a catalyst for change during her whole life. Now was no different. Her brief return had made the Schlegel family and the Wilcox families examine their priorities and their principles. In addition, Meg was beginning to see that the Wilcox side of the equation was sorely lacking in what she truly valued and it will be interesting to see if Meg has the courage to act on her true convictions.

Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

To say that Leonard is wracked with remorse from his indiscretion with Helen would be a gross understatement. He carries his guilt with him and it invades his thoughts of how he and Helen had come to have their brief interlude that night outside the hotel at Oniton. Little did Leonard know that it was Helen who was using him and not the other way around, as he now lamented. The only thing to do is to confess and show his remorse but he has no idea where Helen is anymore. However, Leonard is able to track down Meg at Howards End and shows up there the morning after Meg and Helen had spent their last night at the house. Leonard walks into the house, hears Meg's voice, moves toward it, and cries out that he has done wrong. Charles grabs him by the collar and cries for a stick. The women are screaming as a very bright stick comes down upon Leonard. Books are falling all over him and finally they carry Leonard outside to get some air. However, it is too late. Leonard Bast is dead. Helen pours water over him in an attempt to revive him but Charles says it is enough. Yes, murder is enough agrees Miss Avery, as she comes out of the house carrying the sword.

Chapter 41 Analysis

Leonard Bast takes his final stand for civility and position. He is the poor class in this early 20th century society. He has been shut out of employment; turned into a beggar with his family; and is now ostracized for his indiscretion with Helen. All those things could have been managed and he could have had quite a different life, because he was intelligent and sensitive, but the lack of money killed his dream, and ultimately took his life.

Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

The night before, Henry had asked Charles to drive to Howards End in the morning to remove Meg and Helen from the house. It is to be vacated immediately and Charles is the emissary. In addition, when Charles returns to his father later that day he is compelled to explain the circumstances surrounding Leonard Bast's death. The police are saying it was heart failure brought on by extended heart disease. Yes, Charles had hit him with a sword but only the flat edge. He had to swat the man with something as Leonard had intruded on them in the house and he was guilty and should have been thrashed within an inch of his life according to Charles.

Henry leaves for the police station, wanting to hear more details for himself. When he returns, he tells Charles that there will be an inquest tomorrow at 11:00 and Charles is required to attend.

Chapter 42 Analysis

Henry is weary of all the activities that have swirled into his life since he married Meg. All this talk of connecting and being real brought so many complications. Why couldn't she and the others just look at things logically and methodically as he did? He was tired and maybe even a little relieved that there was a possibility that Meg would be leaving him and going to Germany. Maybe then, he could get back to what was comfortable for him.

Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary

Miss Avery gathers narcissi and places a bunch in Leonard Bast's dead hands. There is nothing more to be done for the dead man and it seems the least she can do. The police question the others and finally they leave and take the body and the sword with them.

Meg has determined to go to Germany with Helen after the inquest is over and tells Henry that she is leaving when she sees him at Charles' house. Henry reveals to Meg that the police want to charge Charles with manslaughter and that Charles could be imprisoned. That is exactly what happens. Charles is sentenced to three years in prison and that is when Henry's emotional fortress breaks. Henry begs Meg to be with him and do with him as she sees fit and she takes him to Howards End.

Chapter 43 Analysis

Finally, after all this time, Henry may be able to do what Meg has yearned for… connect. She sees the man inside the statue and is willing to help him break out of the restrictions that have bound him for so long. Maybe Meg knew all along that there were powerful emotions there, but Henry just did not know what to do with them.

Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary

Fourteen months have passed. Tom has been in prison for a year already and Helen's baby is almost walking. Meg had taken Helen into Howards End at the same time that she brought Henry at his emotional collapse. They have settled into a family unit that no one could have predicted just a short year ago. Now, as Meg and Helen are talking at the edge of the meadow, Meg is summoned into the house by Paul who has come back to England to take over his father's business.

All the Wilcoxes are represented inside; Evie, Dolly, and Paul, all gather around their father who is reclining in a low leather chair. It has been determined that after his death, Howards End will go to Meg; and to her nephew after that. Henry is also giving each of his children more money now so that they will be more independent of him; and he tells them that Meg has given up any claim to any of his fortune. The children seem satisfied with the arrangement, and Dolly lets slip the fact that it is ironic that Meg should get the house since the previous Mrs. Wilcox had already given it to her. Meg questions Henry about it and he passes it off as something that occurred in a delusional phase of his wife's illness. Meg assures Henry that it is okay that she never had known: that there had been nothing wrong done. Then Helen and her baby bound into the room bringing a new joy and energy to the old house.

Chapter 44 Analysis

Finally, Meg gets the inheritance that really means something to her. Of course, she lives in Howards End and it will be hers outright someday, but she finally has the true love of her husband and her sister has come back into her life. She has only wanted what was real in life: things that mattered, and now she had them. Maybe Ruth Wilcox could foresee this for her when she willed her the house all those years ago; she just did not know what paths Meg would have to take to get back to it.

Characters

Miss Avery

Miss Avery is Ruth Wilcox's old friend and the caretaker of Howards End. She unpacks and arranges the Schlegels' furniture in Howards End, even though it is only supposed to be stored there.

Jacky Bast

Jacky is Leonard's dull, uneducated wife who was once Henry Wilcox's mistress.

Leonard Bast

Leonard is the lowly clerk who wishes to educate himself by reading books and attending concerts. "Such a muddle of a man, and yet so worth pulling though," says Helen Schlegel. He is described as being on the "abyss" of poverty, and is very self-conscious about his position in society.

Suspicious of the rich, he will not be patronized by them, which is part of the reason he refuses Helen's offer of money. His two unfortunate mistakes are leaving his job on the advice of the Schlegel sisters (and Henry Wilcox), and becoming involved with Helen. The scene in which he dies, which includes a dramatic fall into a bookcase that showers him with books, has been criticized for its heavy-handed symbolism.

Frieda Mosebach

Frieda Mosebach is the Schlegels' German cousin, who attends the performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with them.

Juley Munt

Juley Munt is the Schlegels' beloved but interfering aunt, whose famously comic scene in the novel occurs when she travels to Howards End for the purpose of convincing Helen to break off her engagement to Paul Wilcox.

Helen Schlegel

The charming sister of Margaret, Helen is high-spirited and hopelessly idealistic. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony affects her most profoundly, and reveals an interesting theme in the novel. She hears a "goblin footfall" in the music, which she imagines to represent the "panic and emptiness" of life, but she also hears a repetitive motif that she

imagines as the heroism, magnificence, and triumph of life. These two aspects of life intrinsically bound together echo the highs and lows of Helen's own experiences. Her short-lived love affair with Paul at the beginning of the novel is indicative of her behavior throughout□heady excitement followed by disillusionment. Ruled by passion, she seldom considers the reality of a situation until it is too late. At first she is quite taken with all of the Wilcoxes, but the ill-fated love affair with Paul colors her feelings afterwards, and she is disappointed when Margaret and Henry Wilcox announce their engagement. Her liaison with Leonard Bast is the result of her sympathy for him and her anger at Henry, who will not help Leonard Her anger at Henry also occasions a break with Margaret. Helen eventually reconciles with Margaret and Henry, who accept her and her illegitimate child (from Leonard Bast) at Howards End.

Margaret Schlegel

Margaret is the cultured, intelligent, and sympathetic protagonist of the novel. Although idealistic like her sister Helen, she is also very sensible and realistic. "Not beautiful, not supremely brilliant, but filled with something that took the place of both qualities□something best described as a profound vivacity, a continual and sincere response to all that she encountered in her path through life" is Forster's description of her. Some critics have found it hard to believe that Margaret would marry Henry Wilcox, a man most definitely her opposite. But Margaret sees things "whole," and although aware of Henry's faults, she also recognizes noble qualities in him. By the end of the novel, Margaret has had some effect on him. While it could be said that Helen reaches out to help Leonard, Margaret does the same for Henry. Indeed, Margaret is the connecting force between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes; by the end of the novel, Henry seems less "muddled" and Helen seems less impulsive. But this does not occur until after Margaret nearly leaves Henry because of his refusal to allow Helen to stay the night at Howards End with her. In her famous speech to him, she implores him to connect his infidelity with Helen's transgression: "You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress□I forgave you. My sister has a lover□you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel□oh, contemptible!□a man who insults his wife when she's alive and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for his pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men. And gives bad financial advice, and then says he is not responsible. These, man, are you. You cannot recognize them, because you cannot connect."

Tibby Schlegel

Tibby is Margaret and Helen's younger brother, the Oxford undergraduate. Although intellectual like his sisters, he is not interested in personal relationships as they are. His placid demeanor plays comically against their more passionate personalities, and is particularly evident in the scene where Helen visits him at Oxford to let him know of her plans to go to Germany.

Charles Wilcox

Charles is the philistine elder son of Henry Wilcox. Not especially fond of the Schlegels and their "artistic beastliness," he ridiculously suspects Margaret of scheming to get Howards End. His fierce sense of class superiority leads him to beat Leonard when he finds out that he is the father of Helen's child Charles is convicted of manslaughter for Leonard's death.

Dolly Fussel Wilcox

Dolly is the chattering, good-hearted wife of Charles Wilcox. Like her husband, she foolishly believes Margaret is scheming to get Howards End.

Evie Wilcox

Evie, the daughter of Henry Wilcox, is a rather silly, superficial woman. Although she dislikes Margaret, she humors her father's interest in Margaret

Henry Wilcox

Henry is the head of the Wilcox clan, who marries Margaret Schlegel after the death of his wife, Ruth. Critic Rose Macaulay describes him this way: "He has the business mind; he is efficient, competent, unimaginative, practically clear-headed, intellectually and spiritually muddled, uncivilized, a manly man, with firm theories about women, politics, the Empire, the social fabric." He is not given to self-introspection, a trait that almost costs him his marriage to Margaret. She insists that he acknowledge the connection between his affair with Jacky Bast and Helen's involvement with Leonard Bast. But his flaw is that he lacks the ability to connect his actions with the pain they might cause in another person's life, thus his indifference to Leonard's loss of employment. Furthermore, he cannot relate his own transgressions in life to another person's similar transgressions; therefore, he cannot sympathize with Helen. He cannot "connect the prose with the passion." By the end of the novel, Henry is broken by the imprisonment of his son, Charles, which forces him to reevaluate his life.

Paul Wilcox

Paul is the younger Wilcox son with whom Helen briefly falls in love. The incident sets the tone for conflict between the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels.

Ruth Wilcox

Henry's first wife, Ruth, is a kind, unselfish woman whose family adores her. However, she completely mystifies her family after she bequeaths Howards End to Margaret. She

does so because she intuitively senses that Margaret will appreciate its "personality" and significance. The critic Lionel Trilling has written that Howards End represents England and its agrarian past, and that Ruth, while not intellectual, possesses ancestral wisdom that will be passed on to Margaret. Ruth is almost like a spiritual guide, or as critic Rose Macaulay states, a bridge between the unseen and the seen, and Margaret believes herself and the others "are only fragments of that woman's mind."

Setting

The various locales represented in Howards End are related to the theme of inheritance and speculation regarding which of England's landscapes—countryside, city, or suburbs—will claim the future. During the Edwardian era, a great migration from the countryside to the city transpired, mainly because England was shifting from an agrarian nation to an industrialized nation. London, in particular, was growing at an alarming rate, and a great deal of rebuilding and restructuring of the city occurred. New modes of transportation, such as the automobile, tramcars, autobuses, and the subway, allowed people more mobility than ever before. Urban and suburban development, or "sprawl," followed the subway and tramway lines. The novel is wary of this type of progress and movement, preferring the stability of the country life and homes like Howards End versus the impersonal, chaotic world of London.

The three families in Howards End occupy three different locales: the Schlegels live in London, the Wilcoxes split their time between homes in London and the countryside (easily facilitated by their "motor"), and the Basts live in suburbia. A great deal of movement occurs between country and city, and moving house is a major activity in the novel. For Ruth Wilcox, nothing is worse than being separated from your home. When she hears that the Schlegels' lease on Wickham Place will expire and they will be forced to move, she is greatly distressed. "To be parted from your house, your father's house—it oughtn't to be allowed.... Can what they call civilization be right, if people mayn't die in the room where they were born?" she says to Margaret.

Social Concerns

E.M. Forster begins Howards End with two thematic signals so simple and so innocent that the unsuspecting firsttime reader may fail to comprehend their importance—at least until the end of the piece. The novel opens with a letter from Helen Schlegel to her sister Margaret that begins with a description of the house at Howards End: "It is old and little, and altogether delightful—red brick." Later in the letter she reports that "The air here is delicious." Following the epistolary exchange, Forster moves the setting to Wickham Place, London, from the country to the still peaceful city, to a house "fairly quiet, for a lofty promontory of buildings separated it from the main thoroughfare. Though the promontory consisted of flats—expensive with cavernous entrance halls, full of concierges and palms—it fulfilled its purpose, and gained for the older houses opposite a certain measure of peace. These, too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would rise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London." At the end of the novel, the solid "red" brick in the countryside of Howards End disintegrates to the "red dust" rising out of London. Even before that, the solid "soil" of England rises high to separate the wealthy who stand on top of it from the poor who swim aimlessly in the sea below it. Essentially, in this novel, Forster continues to echo the concerns expressed as early as 1770 by Oliver Goldsmith in his The Deserted Village: the passing of the English countryside and its way of life, and the related attempts of the poor to lessen the social and economic vacuums separating them from the wealthy.

Toward the conclusion of Howards End, Margaret Schlegel-Wilcox confesses to her sister Helen Schlegel that "There are moments when I feel Howards End peculiarly our own." "All the same," responds Helen, "London's creeping."

She then points over the nearby meadows and identifies, on the horizon, the "red rust," the smog associated with north London. "You see that in Surrey and even Hampshire now," continues Helen; "I can see it from the Purbeck Downs. And London is only part of something else, I'm afraid. Life's going to be melted down, all over the world."

Thus, in the fourth of his six novels (or of the five published in his lifetime), Forster laments the passing of Victorian country life and the families who comprised it, and of the inevitable dominance of the emerging Commercial Age.

Further, the "red rust" not only hovers upon the horizon, it permeates the traditional values associated with the English countryside, creating, in turn, what Margaret Wilcox identifies as "the lopsidedness of the world." Initially, she simply cannot understand why her husband Henry, who had some time past taken on a mistress and another man's wife, Jacky Bast, would drive away her sister Helen because she had a casual affair with Leonard Bast, Jacky's husband. In an abrasive chastisement of her husband, Margaret sees him as but a microcosm of muddled, modern man "corrupted by the inner darkness in high places that comes with a commercial age . . ." However, the key to the issue remains Ruth Wilcox—Henry's first wife and the true "owner" of Howards End. Even as she dies, Ruth plans to leave the house to Margaret—the only person whom

she believes can preserve the old way of life, the life that gave her sufficient strength to provide for her husband and her family. Ruth Wilcox never does see the "red rust" on the horizon.

Akin to the issue of the commercialism that will eventually invade Howards End rises the problem of the poor—a problem that Forster and his characters determine to ignore. Before considering the social dilemma of young Leonard Bast, Forster provides him with a brief introduction: "We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet. This story deals with gentlefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk." Bast recognizes his poverty, simply because he refuses to cede any degree of superiority to the wealthy. However, as Forster quickly points out, inferiority proves a fundamental and inescapable quality imbedded within Bast's character. In contrast to the wealthy, the poor Bast lacks courtesy, intelligence, health, and the ability to be loved. "His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food." The "food" turns out to be Democracy and the false notion of all persons having been created equal.

Similarly, but from the opposite end of the social spectrum, Margaret Schlegel tells her aunt, Mrs. Munt, that "the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence, of love, but the absence of coin." Mrs. Munt believes that to be a terribly cynical notion, but Margaret quickly demonstrates the realities behind her argument. She draws an analogy between money and the firmness of the islands upon which she and her class stand; her particular island has a value of six hundred pounds per year. Those beneath that class—or considerably below that income—wallow in the seas of poverty. "The poor," she maintains, "cannot always reach those whom they want to love, and they can hardly ever escape from those whom they love no longer. We rich can. Imagine the tragedy last June, if Helen [Schlegel] and Paul Wilcox had been poor people, and couldn't invoke railways and motor-cars to part them." In other words, the poor, if unhappiness comes their way, must remain unhappy, while the rich can at least purchase tickets for the journey away from the place of their anxiety. In an interesting word play, Mrs. Munt asks Margaret if she favors the rich or the poor, to which Margaret changes the question significandy by substituting the words "poverty" and "riches." Both women opt to favor "riches," since the inanimate economic status (or condition) becomes easier to confront than the hearts and minds of actual persons who reside in those categories. Forster, as usual, chastises those self-appointed critics of the human social condition who work terribly hard to avoid consideration of human beings; they feel much safer in formulating generalizations about collections of faceless groups or masses.

Social Sensitivity

Howards End is set in the Edwardian Era, so named after King Edward VII of England. Although his reign spanned only nine years, from 1901-1910, many historians extend the period to the start of the First World War in 1914, because of the influence of the King's personality on the attitude of the day; his hedonism characterized the era. He loved ceremonial and state occasions and enjoyed extravagant entertaining; in fact, one of his first undertakings as king was to redecorate the Royal Palaces.

An avid sportsman, King Edward particularly enjoyed horse racing, hunting, and "motoring." Motoring, essentially viewed as a sport in the early years of Edward's reign, quickly became an indispensable part of everyday life. In Howards End, the Wilcoxes rely quite heavily on their motor.

The king surrounded himself with wealthy people, befriending those who had made their fortunes in new ventures like the railway and steamship industry, and the South African diamond mines. They conducted themselves in a crude, ostentatious manner, which the king enthusiastically embraced. King Edward was also a notorious womanizer, and his wife, Queen Alexandra, eventually resigned herself to his numerous affairs. Such behavior did not endear him to the old nobility, and inevitably King Edward's rakish ways came to symbolize a certain reaction against the primness of Victorian sensibilities. The pursuit of pleasurable diversions were the hallmark of the period, with outings to musical halls, theaters, sporting events and weekend parties in the country considered fashionable. In Howards End, Evie's weekend wedding at Onitron represents the Edwardian flair for lavish entertaining.

The Edwardian Era was also a time of great social and political change. Industrialization, which had begun in the nineteenth century, forced many people to leave their farms for employment in the cities. By 1910, the majority of the population lived in urban areas. London, particularly, was expanding rapidly, and urban sprawl became a problem. The new tramway system and "tube train," which partly alleviated traffic congestion in downtown London, facilitated the growth of suburbia. A dramatic restructuring of downtown London occurred to accommodate more people and more new businesses, and many old buildings were torn down in the process. When the Schlegels' lease expires on Wickham Place, Margaret tells Ruth Wilcox that she supposes Wickham Place will be torn down and a new apartment building will be built in its place.

At the same time, many new inventions, such as the telephone, typewriter, electric motor, and the automobile, revolutionized daily life. Labor saving devices such as the gas cooker and the vacuum cleaner allowed more time for leisure activities. In the growing business economy, the typewriter and the telephone were great assets, and opportunities for office workers grew. Many women filled these jobs, happy to leave the labor-intensive, low-paying jobs in the garment industry. Even well-to-do women began to pursue work outside the home. No longer content with only their embroidery or painting lessons, many wealthy women began opening their own businesses.

A dominant issue during the Edwardian Era was the issue of women's suffrage, and many women became involved in the movement. Early on, the suffrage campaign split into two factions, one group more militant than the other in its methods. The militant group, led by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, employed tactics designed to attract widespread attention to the cause.

Known as the "suffragettes," they began by heckling political meetings, breaking windows, and chaining themselves to railings.

After 1911, however, women still had not received the vote, so the suffragettes initiated more violent strategies. The nation was shocked when they resorted to committing arson, cutting telephone wires, slashing paintings in public galleries, and throwing bombs. Imprisoned suffragettes held hunger strikes, which led to forcible feedings, which in turn led to fierce public debate. Finally, in 1918, women over 30 were given the right vote; women 21 and over were finally extended the same right in 1928. In Howards End, the Schlegel sisters are keenly interested in the suffrage issue and believe in equality for women, while the Wilcoxes dismiss the idea of women voting as pure nonsense.

Techniques

Forster's principal technique in Howards End originated from the now "old-fashioned," simple, but always effective elements of personal relationships and the conflicting values that invariably arise from them. The very title of the novel stands as the signpost for a place, and the meaning behind that sign represents a search for a home. Thus, Forster sends the Schlegels, dissatisfied with imperialistic militarism and reactionism, out of Germany to search for a home. In Germany the Schlegels had met the Wilcoxes, and the relationships begin there. One discovers, however, that for Forster, those relationships create only conflict or disruption. Both families reject the notion of a union between Paul Wilcox and Helen Schlagel. Ruth Wilcox appears to have nothing in common with her husband outside of the fact that she married him, while her ties with her sons and daughter ended with the cutting of the umbilical cord. Ruth Wilcox's death ends her relationship with Margaret Schlegel.

Helen Schlegel's honest attempts to comfort the fallen Leonard Bast result in her own fall from the graces of Edwardian morality. Henry Wilcox marries Margaret Schlegel for companionship, not for love. Charles Wilcox's distorted sense of antiquated honor earns him three years of imprisonment and nearly destroys his father.

At Howards End reigns the Wilcox family, thoroughly and traditionally English. Led by Henry Wilcox, the family confronts the world on a totally practical level, but they have no notion of private human values. At Howards End, Henry Wilcox defends the late nineteenth-century assumption that the London business/industrial leader has the right to own and preside over land in the not too distant country. Margaret Schlegel (and to a lesser degree her sister Helen) hurl against those values the ideals of humility and kindness, of love rather than pity, of concern over the less fortunate. Margaret seeks a home not in commercialized London, but in peaceful Howards End; she seeks to integrate her values with those of the Wilcox family. Forster's novel becomes "Modern" in the sense that he preaches the sermon of balance.

Body must be balanced with mind; woman must walk with man; humanity must soften materialism. All of that must be accomplished before the clouds of "red rust" completely eradicate the countryside.

Literary Qualities

Howards End is a highly symbolic novel; many critics have described it as parable with archetypal or mythic characters. The Wilcoxes symbolize the practical, materialistic, enterprising sort of people who have contributed to England's prosperity and strengthened the empire. The Schlegels symbolize the intellectual and artistic types who possess humanistic values and recognize the importance of the spirit. Margaret and Henry's marriage demonstrates the relationship between these two personalities, emphasizing a balance between the two. Of all the Wilcoxes, Ruth is the only one who does not fit the Wilcox "mold." She is withdrawn from modern life, intuitive, spiritual, and not at all intellectual, but as Lionel Trilling states, representative of traditional values and ancestral knowledge. Along with Miss Avery, the caretaker of Howards End, Ruth Wilcox symbolizes the importance of the human connection to nature and the earth. The wych elm tree with the pig's teeth, the vine, and the hayfield at Howards End also emphasize this connection. The movement of the seasons and the rhythms of nature are contrasted to the senseless movement of the modern, industrialized city, symbolized by the motorcar. The motorcar is never portrayed in a very attractive light: chaos and confusion seem to follow it everywhere, as in the scene where Charles hits the cat.

Other important symbols include the Schlegel books and bookcase and family sword at Howards End, which play so significantly in Leonard's death. When Leonard falls from Charles's blow with the sword and literally buries himself in books, it appears that the culture and intellectual sophistication he so desperately sought become his ruin. It is noteworthy that the sword and books belong to the Schlegels, however. Ostensibly, it seems that Leonard dies at the hand of the Wilcoxes—Henry, by giving him bad advice, and Charles, by actually dealing the final blow with the sword. But if Helen had not been overwhelmed by her sense of injustice, her anger toward the Wilcoxes, and her pity for Leonard, he would at least still have his life.

The novel's bitter irony is that the person who tried to help Leonard the most effectively destroyed him.

Thematic Overview

Howards End represented for Forster, in 1910, his conscious concern over shifting social values and the foreboding ugliness and confusion that, in his view, threatened the peace, beauty, and stability of the rural dominance of Edwardian England. Can the "gentlefolk" who occupy Howards End endure in the new twentieth century, or will they suffocate from the "red rust" on the horizon emanating from London? Thus, the principal theme of the novel focuses upon social and economic threats and social and economic classes. Margaret, Helen, and Tibby Schlegel—half English, half German; impulsive but imaginative—care about art, music, literature, and enlightening conversation. Henry, Paul, Charles, and Evie Wilcox clamor after money and business, distrusting and dodging emotion, ignoring imagination, and admiring only motherly innocence. Forster plants his thesis of contrasts directly at the head of the thirteenth of his forty-four chapters, when he gently and quietly asserts that The Schlegel household continued to lead its life of cultured but not ignoble ease, still swimming gracefully on the grey tides of London.

Concerts and plays swept past them, money had been spent and renewed . . . and the city herself, emblematic of their lives, rose and fell in a continual flux, while her shallows washed more widely against the hills of Surrey and over the fields of Hertfordshire ... . month by month the roads smelt more strongly of petrol, and were more difficult to cross, and human beings heard each other speak with greater difficulty, breathed less of the air, and saw less of the sky.

The careless reader would think that within this fictional environment, Forster need only mass the forces of peace and tradition and overrun the great enemies, modernity and commercialism.

However, Forster writes creative fiction, not melodrama. He not only identifies the problem but suggests and strives for a solution. On the other side of the cultural divide stand the Wilcoxes, who see the Schlegel sisters' views of life as sheltered and academic. For Wilcox and his children, such issues as sexual or social equality, women's suffrage, socialism, art and literature ("except when conducive for strengthening the character") represent complete nonsense. For Henry Wilcox, particularly, one sound and stable businessman does more good for the world than a dozen reformers.

His son Charles cannot understand the need to be polite to servants, since that class does not understand the meaning of the term. For Charles, conversation of stocks and bonds, not the sounds of Beethoven, permeate the air around Howards End, while the Times of London provides practically the sum total of his father's literary diet. Management of the family tea urn proves Evie Wilcox's forte. Once Forster has delineated the principal differences between his character groups, what does he do? How does he solve his thematic problem?

The answer lies, initially and most simply, in the epigraph on the title page of the novel: "Only connect. . ." Forster creates a web of connections that, by themselves and by late twentieth-century standards of the genre, at times appear almost comical, but in totality they demonstrate at least the possibility of solution. Despite the deep differences in their opinions, Helen Schlegel attempts to connect by falling in love with the Wilcox family. For Helen, however, love needs to manifest itself through an actual, close relationship, which causes a problem.

Charles already has a girl; Henry's age and Evie's youth eliminate two other candidates; Ruth Wilcox, Henry's wife, has nothing in common with Helen in terms of taste, knowledge, or interest. That leaves only Paul, with whom Helen believes she connects even before she meets him. When he does arrive, fresh from passing an examination and ripe for flirtation prior to departure for Nigeria, he and Helen seemingly do connect. What follows becomes known as the "Wilcox episode": the inevitable caress, kiss, and "I love you"—after which Helen recognizes the fear in Paul and both break off the connection. "I felt for a moment," confesses Helen, "that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf clubs, and that if it fell, I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness."

However, remember that Helen does not stand as the principal character of Howards End. Forster reserves that role for her sister, Margaret, who attempts to connect and eventually succeeds—to a degree. The threads of connection begin when Margaret, in response to Helen's labeling the Wilcoxes as frauds, declares, "The Wilcoxes struck me as being genuine people, particularly the wife." Although Margaret, too, has little in common with Ruth Wilcox, the two manage somewhat of a relationship, built upon the tolerance and sympathy that naturally flows inside both of them. In an age when few people of influence recognized that female virtues extended outside the kitchen or the drawing room, Forster, within the fictional environment of Howards End, created two women with whom he would endow sufficient strength to make the connection work. Unfortunately, Ruth Wilcox will not live to see the end of the novel, but shortly before her death, she wills Howards End, the symbol of traditional strength and traditional dignity, to Margaret. That act would appear to have cemented the connection. However, Forster avoids the trap of a simple and redundant "theylived-happily-ever-after" ending that would have served only to reduce a potentially first-rate novel into a superficial conversation peace. Even in the most countrified of times, life can become terribly complicated, and the novelist does indeed complicate matters. Forster still wants to close the chasm between past and future, and he does so the only way he can. After the death of Ruth Wilcox, the remaining Wilcoxes do not live up to their part of the bargain. So, what remains for Forster? Henry Wilcox slowly begins to see Margaret Schlegel as a valid substitute for the departed Ruth, while Margaret, for her part, works hard to fashion, in her own mind, the positive side of Henry. Henry Wilcox belongs to that ancient caste of Englishmen who, through sheer practicality, have civilized an empire; those men themselves might not embrace culture or engage in intellectual pursuits, but they have provided others with the luxury of doing so. Thus, Margaret Schlegel makes her peace with modern commercialism and in the end marries Henry. Of course Helen Schlegel's pregnancy by way of Leonard Bast and Charles Wilcox's imprisonment for the murder of Leonard almost break Henry, but Margaret remains firm.

She has enough strength to "save" both sister and husband, and as her reward, Forster sees to it that she receives her rightful inheritance, Howards End. After all, Margaret has won the game: "There was something uncanny about her triumph.

She, who had never expected to conquer any one, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives."

Themes

Connection

The major theme of *Howards End* is connection□connection between the private and the public life, connection between individuals□and how difficult it is to create and sustain these connections. *Howards End* focuses mainly on two families: the Schlegels, who represent intellectualism, imagination, and idealism□the inner life of the mind□and the Wilcoxes, who represent English practicality, expansionism, commercialism, and the external world of business and politics. For the Schlegels, personal relationships precede public ones and the individual is more important than any organization. For the Wilcoxes, the reverse is true; social formalities and the rules of the business world reign supreme.

Through the marriage of Margaret Schlegel and Henry Wilcox, these two very different worlds are connected. Margaret, unlike her wildly idealistic sister Helen, moves toward an understanding of the Wilcoxes. Helen's initial encounter with the Wilcoxes proves disastrous, but Margaret begins to realize that many of the things she values, such as art and culture, would not exist without the economic and social stability created by people such as the Wilcoxes. "More and more," she says, "do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it."

Margaret and Henry's marriage nearly comes to an end, however, when Henry is unable to make an important connection between his sexual transgression with Jacky Bast and Helen's liaison with Leonard Bast. Margaret and Helen want to spend the night together at Howards End before Helen returns to Germany to have her baby. But the hypocritical Henry cannot tolerate the presence of a "fallen woman" on his property, and refuses to allow Margaret and Helen to remain there for the night. As the critic Malcolm Bradbury has written, Margaret insists on the "primacy of the standard of personal sympathy" while Henry emphasizes "the standard of social propriety." Margaret and Helen defy Henry by staying the night at Howards End, where they reestablish their relationship. By the novel's end, events force Henry to reconsider his values. He is reconciled to Helen, and along with Margaret and Helen's illegitimate son, they live together at Howards End under Margaret's guardianship.

Class Conflict

Another important theme in *Howards End* concerns straggle and conflict within the middle class. The aristocracy and the very poor do not make an appearance in this novel; the novelist states that "[w]e are not concerned with the very poor," but instead with the "gentlefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk." The three families in *Howards End* each represent different levels of the middle class The Schlegels occupy the middle position, somewhere between the Basts, who exist at the lower fringes of the middle class, and the Wilcoxes, who belong to the upper-middle

class. Leonard Bast, the clerk, lives near the "abyss" of poverty, while the Schlegels live comfortably on family money, and Henry Wilcox, the wealthy business man who grows steadily richer, has money for "motors" and country houses.

Leonard Bast is somewhat obsessed by class differences, and tries to improve himself by becoming "cultured." He reads books such as Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and attends concerts. He meets the Schlegel sisters at a concert performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and becomes interested in them mainly because they seem to take his intellectual aspirations seriously. The Schlegels are fascinated by Leonard and his situation, but Leonard's connection to the Schlegels ultimately proves fatal. When Margaret and Helen hear from Mr. Wilcox that the company Leonard works for is about to go bankrupt, they advise him to find another position. The information proves to be unsound, but Leonard follows it, taking and then losing another position. As a result, he and his wife Jacky are left nearly penniless. In the scene where Leonard, Jacky, and Helen storm into Evie's opulent wedding, Forster illustrates the huge social and economic gulf between the nearly destitute Basts and the wealthy Wilcoxes. This scene, as the critic Frederick P. W. McDowell has noted, "suggests that the impersonal forces by which the Wilcoxes prosper have operated at the expense of Leonard and his class."

Leonard is destroyed by a combination of the Wilcox's indifference and Helen's sympathy Helen tries to convince Henry that he has a responsibility to help Leonard, because his advice essentially caused Leonard's ruin. When that proves futile, Helen's sympathy for Leonard overwhelms her and she sleeps with him. Upon discovering that Leonard is Helen's "lover," the brutish Charles Wilcox beats Leonard with the flat of the Schlegel family sword. Leonard dies not from the beating, but from a weak heart. He sinks to the floor, knocks over a bookcase and is buried in an avalanche of books, seemingly a victim of his own desire for self-improvement

Future of England

Closely related to the themes of connection and class conflict in *Howards End* is the theme of inheritance. The novel concerns itself with the question of who shall inherit England At the time *Howards End* was published, England was undergoing great social change. The issue of women's emancipation, commercial and imperial expansion, and the possibility of war with Germany were all factors that contributed to a general feeling of uncertainty about the future of England.

According to the critic Lionel Trilling, Howards End itself symbolizes England It belongs to Ruth Wilcox, who descends from the yeoman class, and represents England's past. Before Ruth dies, she befriends Margaret Schlegel, and on her deathbed she scribbles a note leaving Howards End to Margaret. She cannot leave it to her family because the only feeling they have for it is one of ownership; they do not understand its spiritual importance as she knows Margaret will. The Wilcoxes dismiss Ruth's note as impossible, and disregard it completely, ignoring the rightful heir. But Margaret's connection with Ruth Wilcox in the novel is strong. Not only is she Ruth's spiritual heir,

but she actually becomes Mrs. Wilcox and, ironically, inherits Howards End through her marriage to Henry.

Foster's answer to the question of who shall inherit England seems to suggest a shared inheritance. As the novel draws to a close, the intellectual Schlegels and the practical Wilcoxes are residing together at Howards End, and its immediate heir, Helen's illegitimate son, seems to symbolize a classless future.

Style

Setting

The various locales represented in *Howards End* are related to the theme of inheritance and which of England's landscapes□countryside, city, or suburbs□will claim the future. During the Edwardian era, a great migration from the countryside to the city transpired, mainly because England was shifting from an agrarian nation to an industrialized nation. London, in particular, was growing at an alarming rate, and a great deal of rebuilding and restructuring of the city occurred. New modes of transportation, such as the automobile, tramcars, autobuses, and the subway, allowed people more mobility than ever before. Urban and suburban development, or "sprawl," followed the subway and tramway lines. The novel is wary of this type of progress and movement, preferring the stability of the country life and homes like Howards End versus the impersonal, chaotic world of London.

The three families in *Howards End* occupy three different locales: the Schlegels live in London, the Wilcoxes split their time between homes in London and the countryside (easily facilitated by their "motor"), and the Basts live in suburbia. A great deal of movement occurs between country and city, and moving house is a major activity in the novel. For Ruth Wilcox, nothing is worse than being separated from your home. When she hears that the Schlegels' lease on Wickham Place will expire and they will be forced to move, she is greatly distressed. "To be parted from your house, your father's house□it oughtn't to be allowed.... Can what they call civilization be right, if people mayn't die in the room where they were born?" she says to Margaret.

Symbolism

Howards End is a highly symbolic novel; many critics have described it as parable with archetypal or mythic characters. The Wilcoxes symbolize the practical, materialistic, enterprising sort of people who have contributed to England's prosperity and strengthened the empire. The Schlegels symbolize the intellectual and artistic types who possess humanistic values and recognize the importance of the spirit. Margaret and Henry's marriage demonstrates the relationship between these two personalities, emphasizing a balance between the two.

Of all the Wilcoxes, Ruth is the only one who does not fit the Wilcox "mold." She is withdrawn from modern life, intuitive, spiritual, and not at all intellectual, but as Lionel Trilling states, representative of traditional values and ancestral knowledge. Along with Miss Avery, the caretaker of Howards End, Ruth Wilcox symbolizes the importance of the human connection to nature and the earth. The wych elm tree with the pig's teeth, the vine, and the hayfield at Howards End also emphasize this connection. The movement of the seasons and the rhythms of nature are contrasted to the senseless movement of the modern, industrialized city, symbolized by the motorcar. The motorcar

is never portrayed in a very attractive light: chaos and confusion seem to follow it everywhere, as in the scene where Charles hits the cat.

Other important symbols include the Schlegel books and bookcase and family sword at Howards End, which play so significantly in Leonard's death. When Leonard falls from Charles's blow with the sword and literally buries himself in books, it appears that the culture and intellectual sophistication he so desperately sought become his ruin. It is noteworthy that the sword and books belong to the Schlegels, however. Ostensibly, it seems that Leonard dies at the hand of the Wilcoxes□Henry, by giving him bad advice, and Charles, by actually dealing the final blow with the sword. But if Helen had not been overwhelmed by her sense of injustice, her anger toward the Wilcoxes, and her pity for Leonard, he would at least still have his life. The novel's bitter irony is that the person who tried to help Leonard the most effectively destroyed him.

Humor

Forster received high praise for his use of humor. Many situations in the novel are quite satirical or ironic. One of the earliest comic scenes in the novel involves Aunt Juley's trip to Howards End on Helen's behalf. When Aunt Juley mistakes Charles for Paul, the comedy begins. The discovery of the error only leads to an argument over Helen's behavior, which progresses to an argument over which family is better, the Schlegels or the Wilcoxes. The silly argument betrays the well-mannered facade of two supposedly well-bred gentlefolk. It also foreshadows the more serious conflict that will arise between the two families.

Another humorous scene involves Margaret trying to engage Tibby in a discussion about his future. She wants Tibby to think seriously of taking up a profession after he graduates. Of course, her reasons have nothing to do with the need for money. Rather, she believes it would build character. When she mentions a man's desire to work, Tibby replies, "I have no experience of this profound desire to which you allude." The aesthetic Tibby has no reason to consider a profession because he is financially secure. One of his satirical comments is that he prefers "civilization without activity."

Another semi-comic scene is the Wilcox family meeting concerning Ruth's bequest of Howards End The Wilcoxes operate the meeting in an impersonal, business-like manner that reflects their style. Their mistrust of personal relations leads Charles to suggest that perhaps Margaret manipulated his mother into leaving her Howards End. Dolly irrationally fears that Margaret, as they speak, may be on her way to turn them all out of the house. The scene illustrates how suspicious and ill-mannered the Wilcoxes can be, and how they always suppose people are trying to get something out of them.

Historical Context

The Influence of King Edward VII

The Edwardian Era is so named after King Edward VII of England Although King Edward's reign spanned only nine years, from 1901-1910, many historians extend the period to the start of the First World War in 1914. King Edward's personality had a major influence on the attitude of the day; his hedonism characterized the era He loved ceremonial and state occasions and enjoyed extravagant entertaining; in fact, one of his first undertakings as king was to redecorate the Royal Palaces An avid sportsman, King Edward particularly enjoyed horse racing, hunting, and "motoring." Motoring, essentially viewed as a sport in the early years of Edward's reign, quickly became an indispensable part of everyday life. In *Howards End,* the Wilcoxes rely quite heavily on their motor.

The king surrounded himself with wealthy people, befriending those who had made their fortunes in new ventures like the railway and steamship industry, and the South African diamond mines. They conducted themselves in a crude, ostentatious manner, which the king enthusiastically embraced. King Edward was also a notorious womanizer, and his wife, Queen Alexandra, eventually resigned herself to his numerous affairs. Such behavior did not endear him to the old nobility, and inevitably King Edward's rakish ways came to symbolize a certain, reaction against the primness of Victorian sensibilities. The pursuit of pleasurable diversions were the hallmark of the period, with outings to musical halls, theaters, sporting events and weekend parties in the country considered fashionable. In *Howards End,* Evie's weekend wedding at Omtron represents the Edwardian flair for lavish entertaining.

Despite his flamboyant social life, King Edward took an active part in important political issues. Well-traveled and fluent in several languages, the king participated in international affairs and helped establish better relations with France. The alliance with France became crucial as England felt increasingly challenged by the German economy in world markets. The threat of German dominance in Europe seemed real as Germany built up its navy and formed alliances with Austria-Hungary and Italy. The battle lines were being drawn for World War I, and an uneasy atmosphere pervaded all of Europe

On the domestic front, one issue that captured the king's attention was the acute, widespread poverty in England High unemployment plagued the urban areas, and welfare did not yet exist. Only a relatively small percentage of the population could live the opulent, glamorous lifestyle made fashionable by the king and his friends. The gap between the rich and the poor grew rapidly during this time; the rich were getting richer by investing in various moneymaking schemes in overseas markets throughout the Empire. Many people were troubled by the fact that poverty should be so common during a time of unprecedented prosperity. King Edward drew public attention to the issue by personally visiting some of the worst slums in London and reporting his experience to the House of Lords. He became a dedicated member of the Royal Commissions, whose task it was to alleviate the problems of the poor, and he supported

the idea of state aid for the aged poor, which later became one of the first forms of welfare.

Social Change during the Edwardian Era

The Edwardian Era was a time of great social and political change. Industrialization, which had begun in the nineteenth century, forced many people to leave their farms for employment in the cities. By 1910, the majority of the population lived in urban areas. London, particularly, was expanding rapidly, and urban sprawl became a problem. The new tramway system and "tube train," which partly alleviated traffic congestion in downtown London, facilitated the growth of suburbia. A dramatic restructuring of downtown London occurred to accommodate more people and more new businesses, and many old buildings were torn down in the process. When the Schlegels' lease expires on Wickham Place, Margaret tells Ruth Wilcox that she supposes Wichham Place will be torn down and a new apartment building will be built in its place.

At the same time, many new inventions, such as the telephone, typewriter, electric motor, and the automobile, revolutionized daily life. Labor-saving devices such as the gas cooker and the vacuum cleaner allowed more time for leisure activities. In the growing business economy, the typewriter and the telephone were great assets, and opportunities for office workers grew. Many women filled these jobs, happy to leave the labor-intensive, low-paying jobs in the garment industry. Even well-to-do women began to pursue work outside the home. No longer content with only their embroidery or painting lessons, many wealthy women began opening their own businesses.

A dominant issue during the Edwardian Era was the issue of women's suffrage, and many women became involved in the movement. Early on, the suffrage campaign split into two factions, one group more militant than the other in its methods. The militant group, led by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, employed tactics designed to attract widespread attention to the cause. Known as the "suffragettes," they began by heckling political meetings, breaking windows, and chaining themselves to railings. After 1911, however, women still had not received the vote, so the suffragettes initiated more violent strategies. The nation was shocked when they resorted to committing arson, cutting telephone wires, slashing paintings in public galleries, and throwing bombs. Imprisoned suffragettes held hunger strikes, which led to forcible feedings, which in turn led to fierce public debate. Finally, in 1918, women over 30 were given the right vote; women 21 and over were finally extended the same right in 1928. In *Howards End,* the Schlegel sisters are keenly interested in the suffrage issue and believe in equality for women, while the Wilcoxes dismiss the idea of women voting as pure nonsense.

Critical Overview

Howards End was critically very well received in England upon its publication in 1910. Critics declared it the best of Forster's novels, with some proclaiming it Forster's masterpiece. An unsigned review in *The Times Literary Review* stated that Forster's "highly original talent" had found "full and ripe expression" with *Howards End* Forster had begun to emerge as one of the greatest English novelists of his day.

In general, reviewers praised Forster's highly detailed and accurate portrayal of Edwardian society in the novel. "In subtle, incisive analysis of class distinctions, manners, and conventions, he is simply inimitable," proclaimed the *Morning Leader* in an unsigned review of *Howards End.* Forster also gained recognition for his creation of believable, compelling characters; his considerable powers of perception and imagination, especially concerning the complexity of human nature and relationships; and his keen wit and sense of humor, which he employed to great effect in his sometimes satirical depiction of England's upper classes. His poetical style and beautiful descriptions were singled out for praise, also. *The Times Literary Review* noted the "odd charming vein of poetry which slips delicately in and out of his story, showing itself for a moment in the description of a place or a person, and vanishing the instant it has said enough to suggest something rare and romantic and intangible about the person or the place."

Although the majority of reviews were extremely favorable, some critics felt certain aspects of plot development in *Howards End* seemed unrealistic. General criticism was expressed over whether Margaret would actually marry Henry, or whether Helen, a cultured Edwardian lady, would submit to a sexual encounter with a lower-middle class man like Leonard Bast. Others cited the sequence of events beginning with the highly coincidental death of Leonard, the resulting imprisonment of Charles, and Henry's subsequent '"breakdown" as too convenient. Many reviewers found the resolution of the story somewhat artificial, "not representative," but "rather melodramatic." They questioned whether the Wilcox and Schlegel families could indeed come together at Howards End and live happily ever after. But even critics who found these plot developments implausible still endorsed the novel as a whole, with some admitting they were nitpicking at an otherwise great work.

Howards End remains one of Forster's most important novels, along with *A Passage to India,* Even though Forster published no more novels after *A Passage to India,* his popularity grew steadily in England and expanded to America with the publication of Lionel Trilling's book of criticism, *EM. Forster.* Forster's novels, established early as classics, concern themselves with the mythic and archetypal aspects of human experience and all its complexities. His formidable talents as a writer include his realistic, yet ironical and satirical portraits of Edwardian society, a talent that aligns him with such great novelists as Jane Austen, and marks his novels as descendants of the English "novel of manners." Forster's novels are distinguished by their intense personal quality, their poetical style, their humor, insight, and intelligence as well as their committed humanism. Frederick P.W. McDowell has written that readers are attracted to

Forster's works because of "a fascination exerted by characters who grip our minds; a wit and beauty present in an always limpid style; a passionate involvement with life in all its variety; a view of existence alive to its comic incongruities and to its tragic implications; and a steady adherence to humanistic values."

Film adaptations of Forster's work, including the Merchant Ivory production of *Howards End,* have widened Forster's audience. The posthumous publication of his letters, two short story collections, and a novel, *Maurice,* has continued his legacy. Widely considered a literary genius, Forster's works place him in the company of other great modern writers such as Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford, Joseph Conrad, and D. H. Lawrence.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Dougherty is a Ph.D. candidate at Tufts University. In this essay, she discusses Forster's depictions of the characters' relationships to their dwelling places in Howards End.

Daniel Born notes that "discussion of values in *Howards End* is never ... pursued apart from a material context of physical living space." In *Howards End,* a novel which takes its name from the Wilcox family's country house, the "material contexts" of the characters and their relationships to these material contexts defines each of the three families: the Schlegels, the Wilcoxes, and the Basts. As Michael Levenson notes, *Howards End* is a novel "not of three classes, but of three households." Throughout the novel, each of the three families is defined by their relationships to their physical living spaces. These differing relationships are, in fact, shown to be in conflict in the novel, and this conflict is resolved only uneasily by the novel's end.

The novel begins with Helen's descriptions of Howards End, where she has gone to visit the Wilcoxes. In the opening paragraphs of her first letter to Margaret, she writes:

It isn't going to be what we expected. It is old and little, and altogether delightful□red brick. From hall you go right or left into dining-room or drawing-room. Hall itself is practically a room You open another door in it, and there are the stairs going up in a sort of tunnel to the first-floor. Three bedrooms in a row there, and three attics in a row above. That isn't all the house really, but it's all that one notices□ nine windows as you look up from the front garden.

Then there's a very big wych-elm□to the left as you look up□leaning a little over the house, and standing on the boundary between the garden and meadow. I quite love that tree already. Also ordinary elms, oaks□no nastier than ordinary oaks□pear trees, apples trees, and a vine. . I only want to show that it isn't the least what we expected. Why did we settle that their house would be all gables and wiggles, and their garden all gamboge-coloured paths. I believe simply because we associate them with expensive hotels□Mrs. Wilcox trailing in beautiful dresses down long corridors, Mr Wilcox bullying porters, etc.

Helen's letter to her sister shows that the Schlegels have spent some time speculating on what Howards End was going to be like, based on their acquaintance with the house's owners. Clearly, the Schlegels believe that one's house is, or should be, a reflection of one's personality, of one's personal relations. Howards End does not seem the type of house that Wilcoxes would live in, and it is true that only Mrs. Wilcox has a personal relationship with Howards End. The house has stood for centuries, sheltering Mrs. Wilcox's ancestors, who worked the land and lived in close relationship to it The romanticized and pastoral Howards End stands in contrast to the ever-changing landscape of London. Of the Schlegels' house, Wickham Place, the narrator says

Their house was in Wickham Place, and fairly quiet, for a lofty promontory of buildings separated it from a main thoroughfare. One had the sense of a backwater, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the visible sea, and ebbed into a profound silence while the waves without were still beating. Though the promontory consisted of flats□expensive, with cavernous entrance halls, full of concierges and palms□it fulfilled its purpose, and gained for the older houses opposite a certain measure of peace. These, too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would arise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London

The sea is a recurring metaphor in the novel: as when Margaret says that they "stand upon money as upon islands," the sea represents the ever-changing and threatening reality of modern life.

The Schlegels, in their house on Wickham Place, are protected from the roiling sea of modern life, and their house is another island upon which they stand. Yet the Schlegels' house is constantly threatened by the "sea" around it: they will eventually lose their lease, and their house will be torn down to build more flats. The ever-increasing London masses have lost their relationship to the "precious soil" on which they live, and as a result lost what Frederick Crews calls "the last fortress of individualism in a world of urban sameness." Mrs. Wilcox reacts with horror when Margaret tells her the Schlegels will lose their house:

"It is monstrous, Miss Schlegel, it isn't right I had no idea that this was hanging over you. I do pity you from the bottom of my heart To be parted from your house, your father's house□it oughtn't to be allowed. It is worse than dying. I would rather die than□Oh, poor girls' Can what they call civilization be right, if people mayn't die in the room where they were born9 My dear, I am so sorry□

It seems that Mrs. Wilcox is about to say that she would rather die than be parted from her house, but in fact she has been parted from it, because her husband has decided they should take a flat in London. The forces of "civilization," in the person of Mr Wilcox, are stronger than the forces of continuity and individualism. The other Wilcoxes do not have Mrs. Wilcox's reverence for Howards End, and at the end of her life, Ruth chooses to leave Howards End to Margaret, believing Margaret to be her spiritual heir. Ruth's husband and children do not understand this decision, seeing Howards End solely as a piece of property□not a very useful or valuable one, but one which legally belongs to them. They decide to disregard their mother's wish, and do not inform Margaret of Mrs. Wilcox's bequest.

Two years after the novel's action commences, the Schlegels do lose their house, and become subject to the threatening sea of modern life. In this, they become like the Basts, of whose flat the narrator says that "it struck that shallow makeshift note that is so often heard in the modern dwelling-place. It had been too easily gained, and could be relinquished too easily." The Basts, who are always barely able to survive financially, do not have any islands on which to stand. When they are financially ruined, they lose their flat and do not have the means to let another one. The Schlegels feel spintually and emotionally bereft when they lose their house, but they can get another one; the

Basts do not have the luxury of ever living in a house that is meaningful to them, though Leonard would like to Perry Meisel notes of Bast that he is "a grossly thematic reminder that the state of one's psyche and of one's economy are disastrously intertwined." Bast's tentative hold on financial solvency is echoed in his tentative interest in, and acquisition of, culture: like his flat, Bast's quest for meaning in his life can also be all-too-easily lost in the Basts' struggle for survival.

Like the Basts' flat, the various dwelling-places of the Wilcoxes have all been easily gained and can be easily relinquished, with the exception of Howards End. Henry Wilcox values property not for its meaning, but for its use, and he often decides that property he has acquired is unsuitable for his needs As Levenson notes, Wilcox, unlike Leonard Bast, is a beneficiary, rather than a victim, of the ever-changing nature of modern life. When Henry and Margaret are engaged, Margaret keenly wants to settle into a house of her own, but they never seem to find one to which she is allowed to become attached. The differences in their attitudes toward Oniton, a house Henry has acquired, completely sum up the differences in their characters. Henry's attitude toward Oniton is perfectly prosaic:

Omton had been a discovery of Mr Wilcox's□a discovery of which he was not altogether proud. It was up towards the Welsh border, and so difficult of access that he had concluded it must be something special A ruined castle stood in the grounds. But having got there, what was one to do? The shooting was bad, the fishing indifferent, and women-folk reported the scenery as nothing much. The place turned out to be in the wrong part of Shropshire, damn it, and though he never damned his own property aloud, he was only waiting to get it off his hands, and then to let fly. Evie' s marriage was its last appearance in public As soon as a tenant was found, it became a house for which he never had had much use, and had less now, and like Howards End, faded into Limbo

Henry bases his opinion of Oniton on the property's use to him: whether he can entertain business guests in it, whether it increases his status, whether it offers him sufficient recreation. When he decides not to live at Oniton, he does not give it up, but lets it to a tenant so he can derive an income from it. It is as if actually living in a house is a poor investment, when one can rent it out and get money from it. The narrator notes that the Wilcoxes are an imperial family, always looking for new parts of England to conquer, as the English have conquered the globe. Henry's attitude towards his home at Oniton contrasts sharply with Margaret's:

Margaret was fascinated with Oniton She had said that she loved it, but it was rather its romantic tension that held her. The rounded Druids of whom she had caught glimpses in her drive, the rivers hurrying down from them to England, the carelessly modelled masses of the lower hills, thrilled her with poetry. The house was insignificant, but the prospect from it would be an eternal joy, and she thought of all the Mends she would have to stop in it, and of the conversion of Henry himself to a rural life Society, too, promised favourably. The rector of the parish had dined with them last night, and she found that he was a friend of her father's, and so knew what to find in her. She liked him. He would introduce her to the town.

Margaret is stirred by the poetry of Oniton, and moreover, the community surrounding it links her to her father, because the rector had been a friend of his. Though she recognizes that the house itself is insignificant, she thinks not at all of the property's value in the real world, but only of its personal meaning to her. The Schlegels are interested in poetry and personal relations, the Wilcoxes in prose and investments. Yet, as for the first Mrs. Wilcox, her husband's wishes take precedence over Margaret's. They do not settle at Oniton. Margaret becomes estranged from her sister Helen because she has allied herself with the Wilcoxes: she no longer tries to influence Henry, but acquiesces to his wishes. It is only when Margaret and Helen meet at Howards End that Margaret sees that the Schlegels are threatened in a world run by Wilcoxes. She and Helen are reconciled to each other at Howards End, surrounded by their furniture and other possessions, when they realize that "they never could be parted because their love was rooted in common things." It is the history they share, represented by what they have jointly owned and jointly experienced, that binds them together. Because they value this common history, they also value Howards End, which is linked to the history of Mrs. Wilcox's family, to organic relationships rooted in a rural life. As Wilfred Stone notes, "[t]hough the Wilcoxes hold the 'title-deeds' and the 'door-keys,' these evidences of ownership do not impress the Schlegels," who instead value the meanings they can create from the physical space in which they live, meanings which can be more easily created at Howards End than in the impersonal and temporary dwelling-places of London.

The conclusion of the novel sees Howards End rescued from limbo: it becomes a home in which Henry Wilcox, the Schlegel sisters, and the child of Leonard Bast can live together in a life rooted to the precious soil and contained in a house which has witnessed the births and deaths of generations. Yet as Born notes, "that Forster interrupts his final scene with awareness of the encroaching London mass suggests he is not entirely happy with this one-sided vision of serene, private, poeticized culture." Though the Schlegels have conquered the Wilcoxes, the forces of "civilization" still loom in the distance. Though Howards End may represent an idealized solution to the problems of a modernizing England, the sea still threatens the island on which the new family stands

Source: Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Maskell evaluates Howards End *for Forster's beliefs found in Forster's "What I Believe" and finds that Forster fails to embody his beliefs in the novel.*

Mr Forster's place in the canon is an unusual one. He enjoys, securely, a reputation of the most insecure kind□that of a major figure□definitely that□who falls just short□but clearly short□of true greatness. A reputation which might be expected to stimulate objections from all quarters stimulates them from virtually none. No one, apparently, wants to see him promoted into the ranks of the acknowledged masters and hardly anyone wants to see him pushed out of the canon altogether. He is the occasion of no very serious or very interesting debate When he is praised, he is praised extravagantly but harmlessly ... Mr Forster's peculiar reputation rests, it might be guessed, not so much on what he's done as on what he's been taken to represent; and it would be a mean spirit indeed who, given what he *has* been taken to represent, would look with an unfriendly eye upon what he's done.

Looked upon so, Mr. Forster has done little more than generate in himself and others an enthusiasm for platitudes Let us consider two documents, 'What I Believe', Mr Forster's personal manifesto, and *Howards End,* the novel in which he tries most directly to embody the values of the manifesto.

In the essay he says he's in favour of private decencies, personal relationships, people who are sensitive and creative□the lovers, artists and homemakers□good temper, good will, tolerance, loyalty, sympathy, friendship and Love the Beloved Republic and against public affairs, Great Men, force and violence and people who see life in terms of power.... We have to take Mr Forster's word for it that he knows not only the words for love and sympathy, but the things themselves. It's only by turning to the novel that we have any chance of bringing the essay's claims into question; it's there we are forced to turn for the knowledge that will make good these claims. And, turning and looking, what we find is not quite a vacancy but yet more fine sentiments and, dominating the palpables of tone, characterization and plot, an assortment of snobberies and a pervasive self-satisfaction.

The intentions of *Howards End* are explicit and impeccable. It urges its readers to 'only connect...' to build within themselves 'the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion' for then 'love is born, and alights on the highest curve, glowing against the grey, sober against the fire' and, like the essay, the novel insists 'it is the private life that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision' Its heroes and heroines are those who 'attempt personal relations', its villains 'the hurrying men who know so much and connect so little'; its triumphs occur when 'truer relationships gleam'.

But fine sentiments and would-be noble phrases don't even make good feelings let alone good novels. And if, in an essay, a writer can't get away with just naming the things he believes in, how much less so can he in a novel, when his 'beliefs' must be

acted out as particular, concrete instances? Talk, for the novelist even more obviously than for die essayist, won't suffice He must deliver the goods. And if he can't, if he doesn't really own the feelings he lays claim to, his novel will betray him.... *Howards End* betrays Forster. He preaches in it love and sympathy and is caught furtively practicing the everyday, casual snobberies of any other upper-class Cambridge don of the turn of the century.

The part of the novel that offers the most direct (but by no means the only) challenge to his sympathies is the story of his near working-class figure Leonard Bast. From an essay, 'The Challenge of our Time', one might think him well-equipped to present class relations in England. He says of his own education, for instance, that though it was humane 'it was imperfect, inasmuch as we none of us realized our economic position. In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts, and we did not realize that all the time we were exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward races abroad, and getting bigger profits from our investments than we should'. But, again as Lawrence said, trust the tale not the teller. It is one thing to describe a case of social injustice in an essay, and in terms which were, after all, even in 1910, fairly common property, another thing entirely to write a novel in which the characters are seen, have to be seen, not just as illustrations of a thesis but as creatures who, whatever dire circumstances, have the same human identity and physiognomy as their author. But Forster, for all his good intentions, can't see that the Basts and he do share a common condition. They are objects to him, objects to feel things for and to have attitudes towards□it makes no difference whether he sympathizes with them, feels sorry for them, condescends to them or sneers at them. These apparently divergent feelings belong to a single paradigm, one governed by the powerful unconscious assumptions of an upper-class world-view which divides die world into 'us' and 'them'. Whatever Forster 'feels for' the Basts he feels securely as one of 'us' regarding 'them'. The Basts are nothing, have nothing, represent nothing that could bring into question for Forster himself and his world. And having no authority over their author they are dead as characters.

Forster's good intentions are, on their own terms, genuine enough. But the good intentions only work as a leavening upon the snobbery. The 'facts' of Leonard Bast's 'case' are obviously meant as social criticism but, as presented, they draw our attention, not without creating a certain risibility, to Mr Forster as commentator rather than to society as commented-on. Leonard, Mr Forster tells us, was 'inferior to most rich people, there is not the least doubt of it. He was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable' and his wife Jacky is 'brutally stupid'. Not only is Leonard deprived of his livelihood by an unjust and all-powerful social machine and not only is he without the cultivation of the Schlegels but, additionally, he has none of the rude vigour, physical or psychological, of the middle-class barbarians like Charles Wilcox, without whose spirit 'life might never have moved out of protoplasm'.

The other boundary of [Bast's] social world, the proletarian 'abyss' where his origins are among the 'submerged', is only a threat and a teror to him.... Somehow, he has entirely escaped being influenced by his family background. We are told certain things about

it□that a grandfather was a Lincolnshire farm-labourer, his father a Cockney tradesman, a brother a lay-reader and that two sisters married commercial travellers□but none of this information is active *within* Forster's characterization of him. It is only supplied at all because Forster thinks he ought to give him a genealogy. Once he has given it he promptly forgets it because he doesn't know how to use it. Leonard isn't seen as a son or brother at all let alone one born into a particular class. The point isn't that Leonard is presented as one thing when he ought to have been presented as another, that his presentation is 'unrealistic', but that what is missing from him as a person isn't presented by Forster *as* missing. Properly speaking, it isn't missing from the character but from the book. *Howards End nowhere* contains any sense of what the alternative to Leonard might be. Leonard doesn't have merely an incomplete relation to his family and class presented as such but no relation at all.

He is without any moral or emotional history because Forster, although he would like to be writing about 'a real man', can't help running off another version of that comic Cockney stereotype which is (perhaps 'was') so indelibly printed on the middle-class imagination.... Forster wants to be generous towards Leonard, wants to present a young man with a sense of honour and of self, but the materials available to him are woefully inadequate. Leonard's would-be Cockney is stilted and inanely self-preoccupied, the sense units short and repetitive and the vocabulary picked up from the 'Music Hall' or a dictionary of Cockney English, picked up and thrown down in a heap without any sense of how, when or where the words are used. It's a fair measure of Forster's linguistic insensi-tivity that it's not clear whether 'in trouble' does or does not mean 'pregnant'.

Forster's tone, characteristically, is condescending, and at its worst when he is paying Leonard compliments: 'the naive and sweet-tempered boy for whom Nature intended him', 'no one felt uneasy as he tittupped along the pavements, the heart of a man ticking fast in his chest', 'within his cramped little mind dwelt something that was greater than Jefferies' books□the spirit that led Jefferies to write them'. The trouble with these remarks is not, perhaps, so much their snobbery as their simple fatuity:

it is an adventure for a clerk to walk for a few hours in darkness. You may laugh at him, you who have slept nights out on the veldt, with your rifle beside you and all the atmosphere of adventure pat And you also may laugh who think adventures silly But do not be surprised if Leonard is shy whenever he meets you, and if the Schlegels rather than Jacky hear about the dawn.

This from someone who is supposed to be a major modern English novelist, preceded in importance only by Conrad, James, Lawrence and Joyce, someone often compared to Lawrence and Jane Austen It's difficult to say what is most ridiculous about the passage, its sloppiness about the darkness and dawn, its willingness to take adventures on the veldt seriously, its arch pretence that we might meet Leonard Bast or, what we are presently concerned with, its condescension for clerks.

[Forster's] dominant attitude to the Basts is made up of a distaste for the unattractive surfaces of working-class life and an amused superiority at its bad taste ...

The presence in the tone of the condescension and the contempt is, of course, bound up with the absence from the characterization of any 'solidity of specification'.... Forster condescends towards the Basts because they are stock figures for whom condescension is the stock response. His compassion and concern for people such as they is nothing more than feeling sorry for them for not being like himself. He both pities and admires Leonard but he pities him for lacking his own spiritual and moral advantages and admires him for wanting them. It is not Jane Austen whom he resembles but Emma Woodhouse: she too, thinks 'a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind, and sour the temper Those who can barely live, and who live perforce in a very small, and generally very inferior, society, may well be illiberal and cross'. At bottom, Forster's response to the Basts is the same as hers to the poor cottagers of Highbury: 'These are the sights, Harriet, to do one good'....

That Forster's concern for the victims of social injustice is make-believe is evidenced not only by his presentation of the Basts but also by the relationship their story bears to the rest of the novel. What really matters to Forster is not the fate of the Basts but that of the Wilcoxes and Schlegels. The Basts are just a side-show. The imaginative centre of *Howards End* is the division between and reconciliation of its two middle-class families. Whether the reconciliation between Wilcox and Schlegel, 'prose' and 'passion', that Margaret Schlegel works for and the novel welcomes is seen as one between social groups, the entrepreneurs and the intelligentsia, or psychological types, or whether it is read as a command to the individual to lead a whole life, it is equally irrelevant to the problems of the Basts, which are caused by an unfair division of wealth and labour and which cannot be solved without upsetting the life led by the Schlegels and, one might add, the public of *Howards End*

Far from wishing the removal of the injustices the Basts suffer from, *Howards End* wants to see preserved a world that permits the kind of 'personal' life enjoyed by Margaret Schlegel□even if the price is being reconciled to the necessity of the Wilcoxes and the injustices attendant upon the circumstances in which they flourish. Margaret in an argument with her sister Helen says,

If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even Just savagery No□perhaps not even that Without their spirit life might never have moved out of protoplasm. More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it.

In these remarks, as in so many others, it's hard to sort out the bad faith from what is merely inept. Margaret avoids (and Forster avoids) having to comment on the morality of the social relationships that subsist under capitalism by appealing in a very general way to the desirability of 'progress'; she gives the credit for 'progress' to the entrepreneur class and measures 'progress* by the security of existence enjoyed by 'us literary people'. Her last sentence could be anybody's recognition of what side his bread was buttered on but it's presented to us as the mark of her moral lucidity. Forster puts no distance between himself and this would-be clearheadedness; on the contrary, he shows it triumphing over Helen's muddy-minded liberalism. Helen not only gets worsted

in the argument but by the end of the book has come round to 'appreciating' Henry Wilcox just as Margaret does.

Forster *is* critical of the Wilcoxes (that is to say, he often sneers at them) but he is critical not so much of their social role as of their personal inadequacies. Yet were Henry and Charles Wilcox the most loving-hearted and cultivated of men, their economic relationship with the Basts would still be a suspect one. Denying the Wilcoxes any likeable personal qualities isn't a social criticism; it's merely an intellectual's snobbery. It *obscures* the social significance of business, is an evasion of those very issues which, pursued, might have led Forster to see the role of the Schlegels, his rentier figures, as a parasitic one. As it is, he has it both ways. He sneers at the Wilcoxes for lacking the cultivation he's got and admires **them for having a certain** kind of confidence and power which he's without but which makes his kind of life possible□and admires them for this, moreover, in the language *of Room at the Top:* Charles is 'dark, clean-shaven and seemed accustomed to command', Henry is 'one of those men who know the principal hotel by instinct' and whose 'management' of practical things is always 'excellent'. As people, the Wilcoxes may be unattractive but as representatives of the capitalist spirit they *are,* as Lawrence said in a letter to Forster, 'glorified*.

Forster's failure with the Basts and the social issues their story raises is hardly attributable merely to a lack of firsthand experience. Nor is it necessary to explain it in Marxist terms as a 'necessary' consequence of his 'objective' class position. It seems to me a failure of intelligence and imagination, a failure to be a good enough novelist. Forster's presentation of his middle-class characters is just as coarse as that of his lower-class ones.

Forster's authorial comments regularly show only a perverse pleasure in scoring off bis characters. It is one thing to dramatize a character who is 'rubbishy', say Mrs Elton in *Emma,* which requires both that one be a novelist and have a grasp of the possible other case, quite another to invent characters only in order to call them names.

In Forster's account of the Basts his lack of curiosity in the lower classes creates a moral vacuum which is filled by the stock snobberies of a rich man; in his account of the Wilcoxes his lack of curiosity in businessmen creates a vacuum which is filled by the stock snobberies of an intellectual and aesthete. The Basts and the Wilcoxes are unreal. And Forster's sympathy and respect for them are unreal. But the moral failure isn't *additional* to the artistic one. The possession of sufficient moral imagination to put oneself in the place of the unfamiliar and to deal with it generously ... is the very condition of being able to give it an air of reality.

Forster's failure with his middle-class characters isn't limited/though, to the morally unfamiliar, to the Wilcoxes. He fails just as badly with the Schlegels too. The Schlegel sisters and Mrs Wilcox are just as unreal as the Basts and the other Wilcoxes Forster can no more give the air of reality to upper-class decency and cultivation than he can to upper-class business or lower-class aspiration. And in this instance the failure to cope with the supposedly familiar, the supposedly humane and sensitive Schlegels, is identical with the failure to cope with the unfamiliar, with the Basts and Wilcoxes. Not

himself having a sufficiently sensitive and generous imagination to render the Basts and Wilcoxes decently, how could Forster ever have successfully embodied sensitivity, decency and imagination in the Schlegels" His failure with the Schlegels is not so much a failure to recognize the place of private decencies and personal relations in the larger social context (his is *not* the case of Jane Austen) but a failure to represent them at all, a failure to know what they really are. Forster's grasp of the private life as embodied in the Schlegels and Mrs Wilcox (the very heart of his book) is every bit as unsure as his grasp of business life and the life of the lower classes. There is no more knowledge of love, sympathy, affection, etc. in the portrait of the Schlegels than in 'What I Believe'. There are merely gestures on a larger scale, gestures whose import has equally to be taken on trust, gestures that are hopelessly inadequate for the job they are asked to do.

Put to the test of embodying his 'beliefs' in a novel Forster is too much the creature of his upbringing, and not enough of a novelist, to do more than display, side by side, the aimless good intentions and the incurable snobberies of a no-doubt kindly but fundamentally self-regarding, upper-class English intellectual of the turn of the century. *Howards End* has the interest of a social document but none, that I can see, of the interests of a novel. The most interesting question about it is how it got its reputation, and particularly its reputation as a novel which embodies a spirit concerned with what is 'decent, human, and enlarging in daily conduct'. A large part of the answer must be, presumably, that its American readers are typically innocent of English life, particularly our class system, and are often infatuated with our upper classes, and that its English readers, being exclusively middle-class, find their own world-view mirrored in it. One enjoys reading a fairy-story, the other enjoys looking at a flattering portrait of himself. Both, no doubt, find agreeable the mildness of its social criticism and the generous vagueness of its solutions□only connect, let truer relationships gleam, build that rainbow bridge, and all may be well.

A Passage to India seems to me equally unreal, equally as factitious and unnecessary a novel. Its characters are equally stereotyped and its incidents just as merely illustrative of the stereotyped. Reading it, I have the impression, as new characters and incidents are introduced, of watching a series of *exempla* pass by, of listening to a succession of 'points' being made in illustration of the double thesis that the principled Anglo-Indians are coarse and the unprincipled Indians sensitive. Neither side seems to me to be dealt with any greater understanding than the Wilcoxes and Basts. Aziz seems to me just as insensitive and prejudiced a portrait of a member of a subject race as Leonard Bast is of a member of a lower class. He even shares Leonard's taste in paintings: 'Aziz in an occidental moment would have hung Maud Goodmans on the walls'. Robust, self-sufficient Indians have as little place in Forster's world as robust, self-sufficient Cockneys. Forster's Indians 'are deprived of their adulthood, live in a perpetual childhood' The phraseology of his 'positives' in A *Passage to India* is just as empty and unfulfilled as of those in *Howards End:* 'the sanctity of personal relations', 'the fire of good fellowship in their eyes', 'the divine lips of beauty', 'centuries of carnal embracement', 'a sense of unity, of kinship with the heavenly bodies', etc. A *Passage to India* seems to *me* as comprehensively *not* a novel as *Howards End,* fully as much a thing of unrealized intentions.

Source: Duke Maskell, "Mr Forster's Fine Feelings," in *Cambridge Quarterly,* Spring, 1971, pp 222-35

Adaptations

Howards End was adapted for the stage by Lance Sieveking and Richard Cottrell and was produced in London in 1967.

The BBC production of *Howards End,* adapted by Pauline Macaulay, was broadcast in 1970.

A film adaptation of *Howards End* was released by Merchant Ivory Production in 1992, starring Emma Thompson and Anthony Hopkins. The film garnered nine Academy Award nominations, winning for Best Actress (for Thompson), Best Screenplay Adaptation, and Best Art Direction. It is available from Columbia TriStar Home Video.

Topics for Further Study

Research the career of the famous German composer, Ludwig van Beethoven, focusing especially on his composition of the Fifth Symphony.

Trace the evolution of the British Empire from 1910 to the Commonwealth of Nations today. What are some key differences between imperialist Britain of the Victorian and Edwardian eras and Britain now?

What were the forces that led to WWI, and what was Britain's involvement?

Analyze the history of the class structure in Britain What were some of the political, social, and economic issues facing the proletariat class and the middle class in 1910. Can you relate them to Forster's depiction of Leonard and Jacky Bast?

Compare and Contrast

1910: The British Empire includes India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, parts of Africa and Indonesia, and many islands scattered across the globe.

Today: Many countries formerly a part of the British Empire have achieved sovereignty but hold membership in the Commonwealth of Nations, an association of independent and dependent nations which recognize the United Kingdom of Great Britain as Head of the Commonwealth.

1910: The cost of a Rolls Royce is approximately 1,100 British pounds; less expensive motorcars can be had for approximately 200 British pounds.

Today: The cost of a Rolls Royce is approximately 125,000 British pounds; less expensive cars can be had for approximately 6,000 British pounds.

1910: A college education at Oxford or Cambridge University is reserved only for the wealthy.

Today: Scholarships and aid from state funds have made an Oxford or Cambridge education much more affordable.

1910: For the first time in British history, a majority of the population lives in urban areas.

Today: Approximately 80 percent of the British population lives in urban areas.

What Do I Read Next?

In *Bloomsbury Recalled* (1996), Quentin Bell, son of Clive and Vanessa Bell, offers one of the most recent memoirs recounting the personalities and adventures of that famous literary group.

Joseph Conrad's 1899 novel, *Heart of Darkness,* reveals the injustices of British imperialism in Africa.

In Forster's first novel, *Where Angels Fear To Tread,* (1905) he contrasts the vibrant, free life of Italians with the artificial, hypocritical and bourgeois h'fe of the suburban Londoners who visit an Italian village.

Forster's novel, *The Longest Journey,* published in 1907 tells the story of two half brothers, one of them illegitimate.

A Room with a View is Forster's 1908 novel about a young woman's love affair and her struggle with Victorian conventions.

Forster's last and most highly regarded novel, *A Passage to India* (1924) details the social and historical milieu of colonial India, and one Englishwoman's experience there.

Forster's posthumously published novel, *Maurice* (1971) tells the story of a young man's discovery of his own homosexuality.

Fellow Bloomsbury Group member Lytton Stra-chey revolutionized the genre of biography with his *Eminent Victorians,* offering unusually unflattering portraits of four British cultural heroes, including Florence Nightingale. Critics suggest that his incisive criticisms take on the difference between mere "moral righteousness" and "true humanitarianisrn."

Virginia Woolfs 1925 novel, *Mrs. Dalloway,* is at once the story of Clarissa Dalloway's party and a critique of the British social system.

Woolfs 1927 novel, *To the Lighthouse* focuses on the inner life and experiences of an English family.

Key Questions

The problems associated with personal relationships and conflicting social values are enduring concerns. The debate over priorities constitutes a principal topic in this novel: civilized living, art, a conversation among friends collides with the business side of life, the friction nurtured by distrust. However, the differences between the male Wilcoxes and the female Schlegels attract as well as distract them from one another. Love and steadiness, according to Forster, balance strain and misunderstanding. Thus, in the end, Margaret Schlegel succeeds in bridging the mistrust that divides the men and women. She inherits Howards End, Forster's symbol of human dignity and endurance.

1. When one considers the thematic word connect as it relates to the Schlegels and Wilcoxes, a significant problem arises. The word appears easier to formulate than to practice, since even the most sincere among intellectuals would admit to the difficulty in attaining any form of wholeness in a modern age fractured by different views and priorities. If the difficulty of that task held true in 1910, what about the present? Is English society (or any society, for that matter) any more or less fractured now than it was during the writing of Howards End?

2. Is Leonard Bast a tragic figure? Why or why not? Discuss Forster's attitude toward Bast. Why cannot the Schlegel sisters "save" him? Is Bast too much of a stereotype of his class to be considered seriously as a fictional character?

3. There are those critical commentators who want to assign Howards End with certain qualities of an epic. Are they correct? Why or why not?

4. Are Margaret Schlegel's reasons for marrying Henry Wilcox valid? Why or why not?

5. "To trust people is a luxury that only the wealthy can indulge," writes Forster; "the poor cannot afford it." If that statement holds true, what can the poor afford? Why should "trust" be limited by and to a certain social class?

6. Relate the question of who will inherit Howards End to the larger issue of who will inherit England. How and why the does the ownership of Howards End affect the theme and plot of the novel?

7. Could one support the argument that Ruth Wilcox, not Margaret Schlegel, constitutes the principal character of Howards End? Why or why not?

8. Howards End has been described as both a social comedy and a parable. Define each term and demonstrate how the novel does nor does not fit each term.

9. Forster has been given credit for his zest and his energy as a writer of fiction. Where does one find those qualities in Howards End? How do those qualities contribute to the artistry of the novel?

10. Critical commentators have referred to Howards End as an experimental view of the solution to human problems. Is that an accurate reference? Why or why not?

Topics for Discussion

1. What were the forces that led to WWI, and what was Britain's involvement?

2. Analyze the history of the class structure in Britain. What were some of the political, social, and economic issues facing the proletariat class and the middle class in 1910? Can you relate them to Forster's depiction of Leonard and Jacky Bast?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research the career of the famous German composer, Ludwig van Beethoven, focusing especially on his composition of the Fifth Symphony.

2. Trace the evolution of the British Empire from 1910 to the Commonwealth of Nations today. What are some key differences between imperialist Britain of the Victorian and Edwardian eras and Britain now?

Literary Precedents

Howards End fits nicely into the long list of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English novels of social conscience. However, the piece cannot be easily compared. Certainly, Forster's close contemporaries, George Gissing and W.

Somerset Maugham—not to mention Charles Dickens, not a contemporary but perhaps one of the earliest and the most sensitive of all social consciences—expressed honest concerns for the plight of humanity, but all three tended to focus their "concerns" upon the sickness and poverty of the lowest social classes. With the possible exception of Leonard Bast, in whom one can find a few drops of nobility, Forster stays free of the slums.

One thinks momentarily of a comparison between Forster and H. G. Wells, since characters from both writers divide their time between the city and the country.

However, Wells has too pronounced a Socialist agenda for the Forster of 1910.

In coming to grips with the issues of progress, feminism, and the changing morality of the age, Howards End might well be placed on the same bookshelf as a number of novels of social conscience published shortly before and shortly after his piece: Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsemere (1888); Leonard Merrick's The Man Who Was Good (1892) and Conrad in Quest of His Youth (1903); Hugh Walpole's Fortitude (1913), The Duchess of Wrexe (1914), and the Cathedral (1922); J. D.

Beresford's Jacob Stahltrilogy (1911-1915); and, Compton MacKenzie's Sinister Street (1913-1914) and The Altar Steps (1922).

Further Study

Forster, E M., *Aspects of the Novel,* E. Arnold, 1963 A collection of lectures delivered by Forster on the art of the novelist

Forster, E.M , *Marianne Thornton. A Domestic Biography, 1797-1887,* Harcourt Brace, 1956

This biography of Forster's paternal aunt, Marianne Thornton, is also a study of Forster's own intellectual origins and family lineage.

Furbank, P. N, *E.* M. *Forster A Life,* Harcourt Brace Jo-vanovich, 1978

The definitive biography of E M, Forster.

Gardner, Phihp, ed, *EM. Forster The Critical Heritage,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.

This book is a collection of mostly early criticism on Forster's works.

Lago, Mary, and P N Furbank, eds , *Selected Letters ofE M. Forster, 2* Vols, Belknap Press, 1983-1985. A collection of E. M Forster's letters

Bibliography

Born, Daniel, "Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt," *Novel- A Forum on Fiction,* Vol. 25, No. 2, 1992, pp. 141-159

Bradbury, Malcolm, "Howards End," in *Forster. A Collection of Critical Essays,* edited by Malcolm Bradbury, Prentice-Hall Inc , 1966, pp 131.

Crews, Frederick, *EM. Forster The Perils of Humanism,* Princeton University Press, 1962.

Levenson, Michael, "Liberalism and Symbolism in *Howards End,"* in his *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality,* Cambridge Umversity Press, 1990, pp 78-93.

McDowell, Frederick P. W., "'Glimpses of the Diviner Wheels': Howards End," in *E M, Forster,* revised edition, Twayne Publishing, 1982, pp. 82.

"Unexplained Riches and Unused Methods of Release': Nonfictional Prose and General Estimate," in *E M Forster,* revised edition, Twayne Publishing, 1982, pp 149-159.

Meisel, Perry, "Howards End- Private Worlds and Public Languages," in his *The Myth of the Modern A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850,* Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 173-182

Morning Leader,*"The part and the whole,"* October 28, 1910, pp. 3.

Review, in *The Times Literary Supplement,* No 459, October 27, 1910, pp 421.

Stone, Wilfred, "Howards End* Red-Bloods and Mollycoddles," in his *The Cave and the Mountain- A Study of E.M. Forster,* Stanford University Press, 1966.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Novels for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
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

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

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