Madame Bovary Study Guide

Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert

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Introduction

After *Revue de Paris* published several installments of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the editor decided to remove from the novel several passages he determined would be offensive to France's conservative Second Empire (1852-1870), ruled by Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte III. Flaubert was understandably furious over the loss of control over his work. Yet, even after the offending passages were edited, the government soon banned the novel and charged Flaubert with obscenity due to its detailed depiction of the heroine's adulterous relationships. Charges were soon dropped, however, and the novel was published in two volumes in April 1857. *Madame Bovary* immediately gained a wide readership, due not only to its notoriety but also to its celebrated artistry.

Flaubert worked on the novel from September 1851 to April 1856, during which time he rewrote the manuscript several times, often spending days perfecting a single page or paragraph. The result of his painstaking creativity was a penetrating psychological study of its heroine, Emma Bovary, as she struggles to find fulfillment through a realization of her romantic fantasies of love and wealth. Flaubert's realistic portrait of the tragic fate of this complex woman has earned him the reputation as one of the most celebrated and influential novelists of the nineteenth century.

Author Biography

Gustave Flaubert was born on December 12, 1821, in Rouen, France, to Achille Cleophas (a physician) and Caroline (Fleuriot) Flaubert. Flaubert lived with his family in an apartment in the hospital where his father served as chief surgeon and professor. Stirling Haig, in his article on Flaubert in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, suggests that Flaubert, who was exposed to pain and suffering at the hospital throughout his childhood, developed a "gloomy perspective on life and death" that he would later weave into the fabric of his works.

Flaubert began writing in his childhood. By 1832, he had completed two texts: the seriousminded *Eloge de Corneille* (Tribute to Pierre Corneille, the seventeenth-century playwright) and the juvenile *La Belle Explication de la Fameuse Constipation* (The Fine Explanation of the Famous Constipation). While a student at the Collège Royal de Rouen, Flaubert devoured the classics and staged plays by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière. He started writing historical fiction (for school assignments) and psychological mysteries, elements of which foreshadow the characterizations in his novels.

After graduation, Flaubert entered law school in Paris, prodded by his parents. In 1844, he had what was most likely an episode of epilepsy. As a result, he gave up the law and turned to a literary career. The best of his early work, the novel *Novembre* (1885; translated [1934] as *November*) is a fictional account of Flaubert's sexual relationship with an older woman he had met in 1836 in Trouville.

Flaubert worked on his most famous and celebrated novel, *Madame Bovary*, from September 1851 until April 1856. The novel gained notoriety after the French government charged Flaubert with obscenity and stopped its publication, determining the work to be a challenge to moral decency. The charges and the ban, however, were soon dropped, and *Madame Bovary* would become one of the most celebrated novels of the nineteenth century. Ironically, Flaubert came to resent the attention paid to the novel, especially since, as a result, few of his other works received the consideration he thought they deserved. Yet, through his body of work, Flaubert has come to be regarded as one of the finest novelists of the nineteenth century. Flaubert died on May 8, 1880, in Croisset, France, ending a long and successful literary career.

Plot Summary

The narrative begins from the perspective of a French schoolboy, who records Charles Bovary's first day in his class. Everyone stares at Charles, the fifteen-year-old "new boy" from the country, who enters with an exceedingly embarrassed manner. His classmates soon begin to tease him, ostracizing him for his country manner and dress. The teacher also ridicules him when he can't understand Charles's pronunciation of his name and makes him sit on a dunce stool near him.

Charles is an average student, but others note that "he had not the least elegance of style." After his parents determine that he would make a fine doctor, he enrolls in medical school, where he becomes a mediocre student. He soon begins to enjoy his freedom at college, frequenting the tavern and playing dominos, which develops into "an initiation into the world, the introduction to forbidden pleasures." As a result, he fails his medical examinations. Later, he returns to school and, through careful memorization of the questions, retakes the exams and passes. Soon after, he moves to Tostes to begin his practice. When his mother decides he must marry, she finds him a forty-five-year-old wealthy widow. Charles finds Héloïse ugly and thin. After they marry, she takes control of the household and complains incessantly of health problems.

One night Charles is called away to a farmhouse to set a farmer's broken leg. The farmer, Monsieur Rouault, is a widower with one daughter, Emma. Charles is struck by her beauty and returns to the farmhouse as often as he can, ostensibly to check on her father but in reality because he is drawn to the farm and especially to her. When Héloïse finds out that Rouault has a beautiful daughter, she forbids Charles's return to the farm. After Héloïse loses her inheritance, Charles's parents accuse her of lying about her wealth and cause a scene. Héloïse becomes so upset that she falls ill and suddenly dies.

Charles returns to the farm and soon asks Rouault for his permission to marry Emma. Although he finds Charles rather dull, Rouault agrees, since he determines that Emma is not much use to him around the farm. After a suitable period, Emma and Charles marry at the farmhouse and then go on to Tostes. Charles clearly adores his wife and so becomes supremely happy and contented. Emma, however, is not satisfied. She had thought herself in love with Charles before they married, but those feelings failed to materialize. She finds none of the passion in her marriage that she has read about in books and dreamt about for herself. Although Charles is supremely content, their life together soon falls into monotony for her.

One evening she and Charles attend a ball at La Vaubyessard, the home of the Marquis d'Andervilliers, one of Charles's patients. This first experience with "the complexion of wealth" enthralls Emma, who desperately wants to become a part of this world. The memory of the ball and the lifestyle it represents develops into an obsession with her, reinforcing her sense of the meaninglessness and monotony of her life. A viscount, with whom she danced that evening, becomes the personification of all the romantic heroes she finds in the sentimental novels she reads.

When the dramatic event she hopes will transform her life fails to materialize, she begins to slip into depression, abandoning all her hobbies and domestic duties. Soon, her health suffers, and Charles decides they will move to Yonville-l'Abbaye, hoping that a change of scenery will improve her condition.

After they move, Emma finds herself pregnant; however, when she realizes that she cannot afford an elegant layette, she loses all interest in the upcoming birth and pays little attention to her daughter, Berthe, after she is born. In Yonville, Emma meets Léon Dupuis, a lawyer's clerk, who has her same romantic temperament. As the two spend a good deal of time together, they fall in love with each other. Refusing to declare her feelings for Léon, Emma turns her attentions to her family, showing new interest in her daughter. Her pride in remaining virtuous, however, clashes with her frustration over not being able to admit her love for Léon. When she tries to get advice and comfort from the local priest, he cannot understand her dilemma. Weary of not being able to express his love for Emma, or of not having it reciprocated, Léon decides to move to Rouen. His farewell to Emma is strained, as both suppress their feelings for each other and their pain over their separation.

After Léon leaves, Emma upbraids herself for not acknowledging her love for him and falls back into a deep depression, alleviated temporarily by extravagant spending sprees. One day, she meets Rodolphe Boulanger, a country squire, who comes to Charles for medical advice. He finds Emma quite attractive and so plans to seduce her, determining that "she's gaping for love like a carp on the kitchen table for water." They meet at the Agricultural Exposition, where Boulanger tries to convince her that men and women should give in to their desires. Weeks later, during a horseback ride in the woods, he seduces her.

The two enter into an affair, seeing and writing each other often. Their relationship fills Emma with a happiness she has never known. She often sneaks out in the early morning to Boulanger's bed. One morning as she returns home, she runs into Monsieur Binet and gives him a clumsy excuse for being there. Binet and others in the town begin to suspect that Emma is having an affair. Soon Boulanger's affections for her begin to wane.

Emma tries to shift her attentions back to Charles and so is encouraged when he plans to try out a new method for treating clubfoot. Emma and Charles are convinced that the success of the operation will make him famous. Charles, however, botches the operation on Hippolyte, a handyman at the inn, and as a result, the patient's gangrenous leg must be amputated. Emma becomes humiliated at the thought that such a man as her husband "could amount to anything, as if she had not already had sufficient evidence of his mediocrity twenty times over."

Emma's and Boulanger's love for each other becomes reinvigorated. When Monsieur Lherueux, the merchant, begins to press her for payment of her outstanding bills, she convinces Boulanger to run off with her to Italy. On the night they are to leave, however, he has second thoughts and abandons her. As a result, Emma falls into a deep depression and her health suffers. In an effort to cheer her up, Charles takes her to the

opera at Rouen, where she sees Léon. The two soon begin a passionate affair, and Emma borrows more money to support their extravagances. Yet, their passion cannot live up to their romantic imaginations, and as a result, it inevitably fades. Emma's bills mount up to the point at which she and Charles are threatened with financial ruin. When she cannot pay back the loans and can find no one, including Léon, to give her financial assistance, she becomes desperate. In an attempt to prostitute herself, she goes to Boulanger to plead for his help. He does not have the money to help her, however, and the bailiff comes to seize all of her and Charles's property.

Finding no way out of her dilemma, Emma takes arsenic and suffers an agonizing death. When Charles finds her love letters to Rodolphe, he blames fate rather than Emma and soon dies. Berthe moves in with an aunt and lives in poverty. The novel ends with Monsieur Homais winning the Legion of Honor.

Part 1: Chapter 1

Part 1: Chapter 1 Summary

When a new student rouses his classmates from their slumber, the students immediately see him as a misfit. He is characterized by his clothes and his manners as one who strives to, but does not fit into the upper bourgeois of his classmates. He nervously gives his name as Charles Bovary, and the reader is introduced to one of the principal characters of the novel.

Charles is a diligent student who is not very quick-witted and does not seem to possess any natural talents. It is only through hard work that he maintains his position at the middle of his class. It becomes evident that the only way Bovary will ever achieve anything is through perseverance and not through his natural talents.

Charles' father, Charles Denis Bartholome Bovary, is a former Army surgeon who was dismissed from his post after a controversy involving prescriptions. After his dismissal, he searched for a life of leisure as a farmer, but he quickly discovered that he could not make a fortune farming. He also developed a taste for liquor and women. He finally settled on marrying for the source of income, but he quickly went through his wife's dowry. Charles' mother had loved his father in the beginning of their marriage. With age, she soured toward him and grew tired of his wandering eye and drunkenness. Overtime she became bitter.

After Charles was born, his mother and father disagreed on his rearing and education, but they both spoiled him. He was the center of his mother's attention, and his father let him roam like a wild animal. He also was strict with young Charles—sending him to bed with no fire, teaching him to drink, and to ridicule religious processions.

When Charles was twelve, his mother finally prevailed, and he began taking lessons with the local priest. The priest was very busy and had very little time for lessons. It was decided that after his first communion he would be sent off to school. Before he finished his education, his parents took him out of school and placed him in a baccalaureate program in Rouen. He had a difficult time understanding his courses and quickly fell into a life of leisure. He began skipping lectures and frequenting the bars. Because of his lackadaisical attitude, he failed his final exam. His mother understood, and she arranged for him to retake the test. He crammed for the exam and finally passed.

His mother finds him a position in Tostes where the former doctor just died. She, not satisfied with him having only this position, seeks a wife for him. She settles on Madame Dubuc, a widow with a reasonable income. Although Madame Dubuc is described as ugly and drab, the elder Madame Bovary has to put in a considerable effort to win her over. Once she and Charles are married, she craves his every attention and constantly is worried about what he is doing and if he thinks about her. She always asks for a new tonic and for him to love her more.

Part 1: Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter of the novel sets up all the essential themes and introduces the reader to many of the primary characters. The description of Charles, his family, and his education are important in emphasizing that he and his life are ordinary. Gustav Flaubert has set out to write a novel about the ordinary middle-class.

This first chapter is important in establishing the backdrop of middle class provincial society. The novel also focuses on the dreariness of the middle class and on the difference between the middle and upper classes showing the tension between the two income brackets. Throughout the novel, the characters dream about moving up the social ladder. This dichotomy is introduced in the book's first paragraphs, as Charles is distinguished from his more refined classmates. Not only does the novel deal with the contrast between the upper and the middle class but also the contrast between the county and the city.

The first chapter is also important in establishing that Charles is heavily influenced by his mother, and his first wife sets the stage for his eventual marriage to Emma. Both his mother and his first wife are described as shrews and lacking the feminine charms that the reader later sees in Emma. This is important in establishing one of the archetypes of women that was prevalent during the Victorian period. The role and character of women will be closely examined throughout the novel.

Part 1: Chapter 2

Part 1: Chapter 2 Summary

The Bovary's are awakened in the middle of the night by a messenger asking Charles to come set a broken leg at Les Bertaux, an eighteen-mile ride from Tostes. He has been called to the house of Monsieur Rouault, a well-to-do farmer. Upon his arrival at the farm, he is taken up to meet the patient. Charles is thankful that the break is relatively simple and easily corrected. He is then invited to dine with Monsieur Rouault's daughter before he returns home. Thus, the reader is introduced to the novel's title character Emma.

Emma is described very sensually from the start. Charles notices all the feminine refinements she possesses. As he looks for his riding whip, he brushes against her, and they both blush. Instead of returning to Bertaux three days later, as promised, he returns the next day and then regularly after that. After Monsieur Rouault begins walking after forty-six days, Charles is thought to be a genius. He continues to visit Bertaux even though the patient has healed. He never questions why he enjoys his time on the farm so much.

His wife, Madame Bovary, is at first excited about his going to help Monsieur Rouault because of the expected fee he will receive, but then she grows suspicious. She finally confronts Charles, and her description of Emma is far different than the one outlined up to this point. She describes her as someone who puts on airs, and she describes Monsieur Rouault as someone struggling to pay his bills. Madame Bovary makes Charles swear that he will not return to Bertaux. He begins to notice how ugly and rigid the widow he married is in comparison with Emma.

When Charles' mother comes to visit, she greatly disagrees with the way his wife treats him. Then in early spring, Charles finds out that the notary who held all of his wife's money ran off with all his holdings and that she greatly exaggerated all her other assets. His mother, his father, his wife, and he all get in a huge argument after Madame Bovary's financial state is discovered. A week later, she dies while hanging the wash. When the funeral is all over, Charles returns home and realizes that his wife truly did love him.

Part 1: Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter is important in introducing Emma to the reader. The contrast between the current Madame Bovary and Emma shows that Emma is so lovely in comparison that Charles cannot help but be taken in by her charms. This chapter introduces another recurrent theme in the novel—the constant exchange of wealth. In today's day and age, we might call this "living paycheck to paycheck." Charles and his wife are doing well

until it is discovered that his wife has no wealth. In the novel, those in the middle class are always on the brink of losing everything.

Emma's sensual description sets her up for the rest of the novel to be different from Charles' mother and wife who are shrewish. Emma is the fanciful woman while the other women are the practical women.

This chapter also highlights some of Flaubert's unique approaches to writing. He first gives a distant description of Emma through the third person narrator. He only delves into Emma's thoughts later in the novel. He also uses vivid language to describe the scene in an attempt to bring the reader into the novel.

Part 1: Chapter 3

Part 1: Chapter 3 Summary

One morning Monsieur Rouault comes to pay Charles for setting his leg. He gives him seventy-five francs and a turkey. While there, he attempts to comfort Charles on the loss of his wife and invites him to visit Bertaux again. Charles decides to take him up on his offer.

He becomes accustomed to living by himself and enjoys not having someone to tell him what to do. One day, he arrives early at Bertaux, and he and Emma are left alone. During this visit, he and Emma bond while discussing childhood and time at school. She takes him to her room to show him all her memorabilia. It is after this visit that Charles considers what will become of Emma, and he decides that he should propose to her. Monsieur Rouault would not be displeased with Emma getting married. She is not an asset to him on the farm and as his business declines, he fears that he will not be able to provide an acceptable dowry.

Charles can never get up the nerve to ask Emma when the opportunity presents itself, but he finally breaks down and asks Monsieur Rouault for her hand. She accepts his proposal, and wedding plans begin to be arranged. They decide the wedding should not take place until the next spring to ensure that Charles' mourning period is over. During the winter, Emma occupies herself making her wardrobe.

Part 1: Chapter 3 Analysis

Charles' attitude toward his future wife is important in this chapter. His doting attitude continues through the entire novel allowing Emma enough leeway and influence to have her way. This chapter also gives more of a glimpse into Emma's character. Some essential details about Emma that will later lead to her demise are revealed. When she suggests that they have a midnight wedding with torches, Flaubert is showing that Emma has a taste for things that are eccentric and unusual.

Part 1: Chapter 4

Part 1: Chapter 4 Summary

The wedding guests begin to arrive in all manners of transportation. Some ride in two-wheeled charabancs and others in farm carts. In all forty-three guests arrive. The guests' clothes are described in detail with the wealthy wearing tails and the poor wearing only their best shirts. The wedding dinner is very elaborate, and Charles and Emma retire to their wedding chamber where she has given instructions not to let any tricks be played on them. Some of the wedding guests think that Monsieur Rouault is being snobby because he will not let the wedding games go forward, and they feel he slighted some of the guests.

The next day Emma does not give a hint of what conspired in the bedroom chamber, but Charles acts like a young man in love and shows a great deal of affection toward Emma. After the wedding, the newlyweds leave to Tostes. When they arrive at Charles' home, dinner is not prepared and Emma inspects the home.

Part 1: Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter reiterates the importance placed on status and wealth. The elaborate description of the guests and the wedding serve not only to give an accurate and complete view of a country wedding but also the descriptions serve to establish to which class each person belongs. The doting of Charles on Emma only grows during this chapter, foreshadowing his eventual blindness to her indiscretions. The chapter also shows Emma's desire to exceed her class. When she refuses to allow the usual wedding pranks to be played on her wedding night, she is showing that she thinks she should be above her status.

Part 1: Chapter 5

Part 1: Chapter 5 Summary

Emma takes a tour of the house. The house is described in great length as an ordinary middle class home in the country. Emma immediately begins making changes to the house. Charles feels completely happy, and the couple develops a routine of taking meals and going for walks together, and every morning Emma stands at the window as Charles leaves for his rounds. As Charles is experiencing the happiest time in his life, Emma begins to think she was mistaken about love. She remembers all the descriptions of love she had read about, and she realizes that she does not feel that with Charles.

Part 1: Chapter 5 Analysis

The description of the house adds another layer to the backdrop that Flaubert is creating of an ordinary middle class home. There is nothing extraordinary about this house. Emma's desire to change the house is not an attempt to exert her individuality or to change the home from how the former Madame Bovary had it but rather it is an attempt to fill her life with things that she thinks will bring her closer to finding her happiness. Her disappointment at not finding the love she expected and Charles' complete happiness with Emma are the foundation for the rest of the novel. Emma will constantly be trying to find the passion she seeks, while Charles will be oblivious to her quest because he is blinded by his complete love for her.

Part 1: Chapter 6

Part 1: Chapter 6 Summary

Emma has read many of the classis such as *Paul and Virginia*, and she has dreamed of living the charmed life of the characters in her books. Her father sent her to the covenant to study when she was thirteen. She completely threw herself into her studies. The nuns thought that she might even join the order. An old spinster came to the convent for a week every month to do the mending. She would teach the girls songs about love and tell them stories, and she always brought along a romance novel that she would allow the girls to borrow. After reading these books, Emma becomes infatuated with the love affairs and the passion of the characters. Later, even when she reads Walter Scott, she becomes obsessed with the historical and dreams of the lives of his characters.

When her mother died, she suffered a great deal even writing to her father that she wished she too could die. When her father comes to get her, the nuns are glad to see her go because she has slipped out of their control. When she first returns to Bertaux, she enjoys the farm life and giving orders, but soon she longs to be back at the convent. She becomes so bored with her life that she thinks she has nothing more to learn and nothing more to which to look forward. When she meets Charles, she easily persuades herself that she was falling in love. Now that she is living the life, she realizes that this in not the happy life of which she dreamt.

Part 1: Chapter 6 Analysis

This is the first look that Flaubert gives into Emma's mind. This chapter shows Emma as a romantic. She looks for the unusual, mystic, and romantic in every situation. Even in the convent, she seeks the passionate. Her happiness at farm and then her desire to return to the convent show Emma's constant need for change as well as her need to keep looking for something to bring her happiness.

When Charles appears, Emma does not think that her boring life is what she read about in novels. She does not understand why she has not found the passion about which she had dreamt. Throughout the novel, reading and books play an important role. Books are to Flaubert an image of civilization itself. As the ideas in the books are passed from reader to reader, they become baser. As the novel progresses, books have influence over the characters in the book. This chapter first establishes that influence.

Part 1: Chapter 7

Part 1: Chapter 7 Summary

Emma ponders if these, the honeymoon days of her marriage, are the best days of her life. She wonders why she cannot be in an exotic honeymoon location bonding with her husband. She thinks that if she were in one of these locales, she would certainly be happy because certain locations must produce a sense of happiness. She searches for something in common with Charles, but she finds that he is drab and has no interest in the finer things in life. Meanwhile, Charles continues to find everything she does incredibly interesting, and he treasures everything she does even going so far as to frame her sketches.

She, in an effort to produce some type of feeling within her self, caters to Charles. He submits to her every whim such as giving up his nightcap. Charles' mother comes to visit whenever there is a violent episode in her home; although Emma is kind to her, she is prejudiced against Emma. Madame Bovary senior thinks Emma spends too much and is wasteful. Her true disdain for Emma lies in the fact that Charles favors Emma over her. In an effort to keep the peace, Charles repeats his mother's suggestions to Emma, but Emma dismisses him and convinces him that he is wrong. When a patient of Charles' makes a gift of an Italian Greyhound to Emma, she adopts her new pet as a friend and confidant. On her strolls with her dog, she often wonders why she married in the first place, and she thinks about her friends from the convent and how they must surely be living better lives than she is living. In the fall, the marquis d'Andervilliers invites the Bovary's to a ball at his home. When Emma and Charles leave for La Vaubyessard, the marquis' home, Emma is full of anticipation.

Part 1: Chapter 7 Analysis

Emma continues to fantasize about a better life with a different husband. Her dreaming takes her away from what she perceives as her mundane life. She gives up on the notion of experiencing any true passion with Charles. The ball promises to bring her some of the excitement she has been looking for. This excitement is the first hint that she is going to seek her passion outside of her home and marriage. This chapter also introduces Emma's voice. Up until this point, the novel has only shown what Emma is thinking and what she is doing, but in this chapter Emma speaks her first words, "Why—why—did I ever marry?" It is poignant that her first words are questioning her marriage to Charles.

Part 1: Chapter 8

Part 1: Chapter 8 Summary

The Bovary's arrive at La Vaubyessard, and they are personally greeted by the marquis. The chateau is described a modern building with lavish design and rich accessories and decorations. Emma is disappointed with the marquis because she is an unattractive woman of about 40. At dinner, the men and women are separated, as was custom. Emma is shocked that many of the women did not put their gloves in their wine glasses indicating that they would not be drinking. At the dinner table with the women is the marquis' father-in-law who once was a queen's lover. Emma is fascinated by the old man. She cannot look away from him because he has been in court and slept in a queen's bed.

Emma tells Charles not to dance, as she gets ready for the ball. She implies that he is getting fat and that he is a country bumpkin who could never fit in with the aristocratic class. Emma is at first nervous about dancing, but she soon begins to enjoy herself and her surroundings. She notices some men who appear to be of a finer class and she eavesdrops on their conversation. They are having interesting conversations about other countries and things that are foreign to Emma.

As the night wears on, Emma reflects on her time ay Les Bertaux, and she thinks that she has somehow changed and is not the same person that she once was. Then she sees a secret exchange of a letter between lovers. For the closing waltz, she is led by Vicomte, and when they change partners, she admires him from afar.

Finally, Emma and Charles retire, but she lingers at the window imagining all the occupants of the other rooms and what they must be doing. After breakfast, they are shown the greenhouse and stables. They are led around on a special tour and Emma is taken away by all the interesting, exotic, and luxurious accoutrements at the home.

On their way home, Charles and Emma encounter riders. A few miles up when Charles has to stop to repair their cart, he discovers a cigar case dropped by one of the riders. Emma imagines that it belongs to Vicomte. When they finally arrive home, dinner is not made, and Emma loses her temper and fires the maid right on the spot. The Bovary's have a very simple dinner that is contrasted with the dinner put on at the marquis. Emma spends weeks remembering the ball and realizes a breach in her life has been created.

Part 1: Chapter 8 Analysis

The ball becomes one of the most defining moments of Emma's life. She then begins to resent that she does not live in luxury like the marquis. This chapter shows that she can fit in with aristocratic class unlike Charles who sticks out in their company. The conversation of the upper class men contrasts with Charles' conversations that are

boring and dull. The exchange between lovers is a foreshadowing of Emma's eventual indiscretions. This episode in Emma's life becomes the defining moment to which the rest of her life is compared. When she returns home, her life is so different and uninteresting in comparison that she finds it almost unbearable.

Part 1: Chapter 9

Part 1: Chapter 9 Summary

Emma often goes to the cigar case that Charles found on the road and wonders about its origins and who it belonged to. She dreams about Paris. When the fishmongers pass her windows she imagines them traveling to Paris. She buys a map of Paris and traces her fingers over all the streets. She begins subscribing to a fashion magazine and learns all she can about society. No matter what she does, her thoughts always return to Vicomte and Paris and she pines for all the social circles to which she feels she is entitled to belong.

All her surroundings remind her that she is living with less than what she thinks she deserves. She is even irritated with the stable boy because he is so poorly dressed. When she replaces Natasie, the maid whom she fired, she hires an orphan and attempts to train her to become a lady's maid. Although she spends most of her time locked in her room, Charles does not notice anything is amiss because he always comes home to a nice house and a hot meal. He is delighted with all the little changes she makes to the house in her constant attempts to make it into a nicer and more fashionable domicile such as replacing the sconces and coming up with new and clever names for meals.

Charles is in good health and good reputation so in the hopes of keeping himself up to date, he buys a medical journal. However, he always falls asleep after dinner while he is reading. Emma is infuriated because she wants a dedicated husband. She thinks if he cannot be handsome and clever, he should at least be one of those husbands who work late into the nights. She wishes that the Bovary name could be famous, but Charles has no ambition and Emma thinks he is dumber everyday.

In an effort to preserve her image, she attempts to make him dress correctly. He thinks she is concerned for him, but in reality, she is just trying to protect her image in the community. She longs for someone to open up to. She looks forward to the fall with the hopes that she will be invited to another ball, but an invitation never arrives. She is so disappointed that she gives up music, drawing, and reading. In her depression, she begins to notice her mundane surroundings where everything is always the same and will be the same for the rest of her life.

She loves to watch the traveling organ grinder when he comes by the house. She sees it as her only window into what is going on in the rest of the world. She begins to let the house go. When Charles' mother comes to visit, Emma says the things she wants to hear just to placate her. In February, her father comes to visit, and she is left alone to entertain him. When he leaves, she is glad to see him go. Eventually Charles thinks that Emma's nervous illness is cause for them to move. When Emma hears this, she begins to drink vinegar to make her illness worse. Finally, they settle on Yonville-l'Abbaye. When they leave for their new home, Emma is pregnant.

Part 1: Chapter 9 Analysis

This chapter shows the exhausting and wasteful life of Emma Bovary. It is in this chapter that she is turned into a tragic character. She wastes all her time tracing maps of Paris and longing for a life other than her own. Her current life is contrasted with the life of her fantasies. The comparison almost makes her real life seem unbearable. Flaubert introduces us to a woman so pathetic that she becomes physically ill.

In this chapter, she burns her bridal bouquet, and it signals the end of a chapter in her life. The bouquet symbolizes her life and marriage. When she burns it at the end of the chapter, we are being prepared for her to begin a new life without trying to find pleasure in the one she already has.

Part 2: Chapter 1

Part 2: Chapter 1 Summary

This chapter mainly deals with a description of Yonville-l'Abbaye. It is a one street town that it rather dull. It is a perfect example of small town, provincial France. The center of excitement in the town is Homais' pharmacy. Another interesting figure is the cemetery caretaker who grows potatoes in an empty part of the cemetery and is in charge of several maintenance activities around town.

Homais waits at the Lion d'Or, the local hotel, for the couple to arrive. The hotel has several boarders and houses the hirondelle, a bus like carriage. Monsieur Binet is one of the hotel boarders. He is described as having something to him, and the priest, is described as a strapping man. He and Homais argue about religion. The hirondelle finally arrives after being delayed because Emma's greyhound ran away. She blamed Charles for the greyhound getting away. Monsieur Lheureux, the shopkeeper, tries to comfort her to no avail.

Part 2: Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter describes the town, and it shows that Emma and Charles have moved from one boring town to another. The description is important in establishing that the new town does not hold much more promise for Emma than Tostes. It is also important in establishing that in a middle-class town, the characters with influence are not always dignitaries but rather they are the normal people of the town such as the pharmacist and cemetery keeper. Emma's greyhound running away is important in that it marks the complete separation of Emma with her former life. The greyhound is also her last confidant who inevitably must be replaced.

Part 2: Chapter 2

Part 2: Chapter 2 Summary

When the Bovary's arrive at the inn, they are greeted by Homais who has invited himself to dinner. While they wait for their table to be prepared, Emma warms herself by the kitchen fire. She is intensely watched by Leon Dupris, a border at Homais' who has also been invited to dinner. Leon is a clerk to the notary, and he is terribly bored in Yonville.

Dinner turns out to be as dull as any other part of this town. First, the diners discuss medicine in the area and then they discuss the weather. Emma and Leon turn from the group conversation and begin to talk to each other. They discuss the ocean and the mountains and far off places. They become quite familiar with each other—with him even resting his foot on her chair.

The Bovary's also learn that the previous doctor had spared no expense on his home, and they will be living in a nice house. When they arrive at the house, it is in disarray. When Emma goes to bed, she realizes that this bed is the fourth new bed she has slept in. Each new bed is a new chapter in her life. She figures that since her life has been so bad, it can only get better from here.

Part 2: Chapter 2 Analysis

Emma's first encounter with Leon is very important and has a huge impact on her. Leon is the first person she met that feels the same way she does. Her hope for her future is just another stage in her life where she thinks her pursuit of something new will lead her to happiness.

Part 2: Chapter 3

Part 2: Chapter 3 Summary

Emma sees Leon in the square the next day, and he waits all day to see her at dinner. The dinner the night before meant a great deal to him because he had never spoken with a woman for so long before. She does not come to dinner that night, and he is disappointed. Homais is especially kind to the Bovary's because he was called in for practicing medicine without a license, and he wants Charles to overlook his advice to clients.

Charles, meanwhile, is gloomy because he does not have any patients, and he is growing increasingly worried about money. He spends his time doting over Emma's pregnancy. She is happy to be pregnant until she cannot afford the layette she wants. When she realizes she cannot buy the layette, she seems to lose some affection for the pregnancy. She holds out hope that the child will be a boy.

When the baby is born, it is a girl. Emma spends a lot of time choosing a name. She finally settles on Berthe after a name she heard at the ball. Charles' father comes to stay for a month after the birth. Emma is fascinated by his tales of far off places and of his mistresses. She is even flattered when he indicates he is attracted to her.

One day Emma decides that she must see her child who was put with a wet nurse after its birth. She begins to get tired on the walk, and she meets Leon who accompanies her to the nurse's house. The time they spend together starts the town talking about their relationship. The wet nurse lives in squalor, and she asks Emma for extras. On the way home, Emma and Leon make small talk, but they sense there is something more to their feelings for each other. He drops Emma off at her house, and he goes to the hill to think about her. He thinks about how he does not think of Madame Homais as a woman and how Emma stands out in his mind among other women. Leon has visited the Bovary home several times, and Charles never seems happy to see him.

Part 2: Chapter 3 Analysis

At first, Emma is very happy with her pregnancy and sees it as a chance to add some excitement in her life, but when the child is born a girl, she soon loses interest in it. This only continues to highlight Emma's fickle nature and her inability to maintain interest in anything for a long period. Her lack of judgment in asking Leon to walk with her foreshadows her eventual indiscretions. It shows her desire to please herself more than her desire to maintain proper protocol.

The wet nurse's home is the only glimpse in the novel into the lives of the lower class. In the novel, Flaubert occasionally gives glimpses into the lives of the upper class, but he only allows the reader this one view of the squalor that many who live near Emma reside in. It is especially important because up until this point, the reader feels sorry for

Emma. The nurse provides a contrasting character to show how fortunate Emma is in her middle class life. Her dealings with the nurse also foreshadow her eventual dealings with the tradesmen and help that she deals with. She would rather give in than suffer through a confrontation, and this leads to her eventual downfall.

Part 2: Chapter 4

Part 2: Chapter 4 Summary

As winter approaches, Emma moves her bedroom into the parlor for warmth. From the window, she can see the street, and she watches Leon pass by twice a day. Monsieur Homais often calls on the Bovary's during dinner to discuss the news and patients. Justin, Monsieur Homais' nephew who is also his apprentice, also hangs around the Bovary home and many people suspect it is because he has a crush on the maid.

On Sundays, Monsieur Homais holds little soirees. The group plays cards, and Leon always helps Emma with her card playing. After cards, Monsieur Homais and Charles play dominos while Emma and Leon read together with a growing intimacy. Leon is also friendly with Charles who sees Leon and Emma's relationship as natural. Leon brings Charles a birthday gift and Emma exotic plants. Emma gives Leon an elaborate coverlet. Their obvious affection leads people to speculate that the pair is having an affair, but Leon can never get up the nerve to declare himself to Emma. Emma will not even speculate that she is in love with him until one day she discovers that she might be.

Part 2: Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter shows the growing intimacy between Leon and Emma that will not come to fruition until part three of the novel. Charles' complete lack of concern for the developing relationship between Leon and his wife foreshadows his future ignorance to her promiscuity.

Part 2: Chapter 5

Part 2: Chapter 5 Summary

In February, the group goes to see a new Flax mill being built. While there, Emma gets the chance for a side-by-side comparison of Charles and Leon. Charles is described as unattractive and growing fat while Leon is described as wildly appealing. That night Emma skips the Homais soiree and stays at home where she realizes that she loves Leon and he loves her.

The dry goods proprietor comes to offer her goods for sale and although she refuses, he lets her know that he is always available and can get her loaned money if need be. Leon comes to visit Emma and she sings Charles' praises. After Leon's visit, she immerses herself in household chores, church, and even has Berthe removed from the wet nurse. For awhile she diligently tries to take good care of Charles and her household.

Just as quickly as she threw herself into her domestic duties, she begins to grow silent and thin. The townspeople comment that she has class, but behind her façade, she is wild with desire. Leon does not suspect her love and she continues to repress her love in an effort to conceal it. Everything begins to grate on her nerves and she is exasperated that Charles does not notice. She imagines horrible things that could happen to put her in a position to reveal her love to Leon. She begins to cry and the maid suggests that she tell Charles, but Emma begs her not to say anything.

Part 2: Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter has an important side-by-side comparison of Charles and Leon that allows the reader to see both men through Emma's eyes. In the comparison, we see that Emma has truly started to despise her husband and that Leon has become an object of fascination for her. The dry goods proprietor, Lheureux, is also introduced. His offer of goods and money foreshadows Emma's eventual downfall. Lheureux is to become an important character in Emma's whimsy and in her death. Emma's devotion to her household and her sudden withdraw again highlight her impetuous nature. It also foreshadows her eventual illness and suicide.

Part 2: Chapter 6

Part 2: Chapter 6 Summary

Emma goes to see the priest before catechism class. The unruly boys keep distracting the priest. He does not understand how a woman like Emma can have any problems, so instead of confiding in him, she leaves. When Emma gets home, she is so upset that she pushes Berthe off of her, and the child falls and cuts her face. After Charles bandages Berthe, Emma spends the rest of the day consoling her.

Charles calls Leon aside because he wants to have a portrait of himself made for Emma. His devotion to Emma sets Leon thinking about how he has grown tired and bored of unrequited love. Leon immediately sets to convincing his mother that it is time for him to finish his law studies in Paris. He begins preparations for his departure but delays leaving for several weeks. Finally, when he is about to leave, he has a few moments alone with Emma. Although they both feel a great sadness at his leaving, they only shake hands. Homais drops by at dinner to discuss Paris and how Leon will fair in the city. In the end, Homais reveals that a huge agricultural show is coming to Yonville.

Part 2: Chapter 6 Analysis

Emma's encounter with the priest is important both as a character insight into Emma and as a criticism of the church. Emma goes to see the priest because she is seeking religious solace as a means of forgetting her own misery. She forgets that at the convent, she was unhappy and that her religious devotion there did not make her satisfied but rather spurred her to seek more excitement. Her religious interest is just another tool she uses to dull the reality of her life.

The priests' inability to see Emma's pain and his preoccupation with the boys is a subtle criticism of the church that is echoed throughout the entire novel from the description of the priest as handsome to Homais constant questioning of religious doctrine. Leon's departure without a consummation of his love for Emma is a stepping-stone for her next encounter. Her regret at not seizing her opportunity with Leon leaves her vulnerable and willing to take the next step with the next man she runs across.

Part 2: Chapter 7

Part 2: Chapter 7 Summary

After Leon leaves, Emma is very depressed much as she was in the days after the ball. She cannot pull her thoughts away from him. So in an effort to dull the pain, she decides she deserves to indulge herself. She begins to buy fancy things from the dry goods store, and she decides to learn Italian. However, as Emma does with all her pursuits, she quickly abandons them. She begins to have the vapors and Charles calls for his mother to visit to help Emma through her latest bout of depression.

Charles' mother suggests that he cancel her library subscription and that he encourage her to make some changes. She also encourages her son to be more forceful with Emma. His mother leaves on market day. On the same day, Monsieur Rodolphe Boulanger calls on Charles for a bloodletting. Rodolphe faints, as does Justin, so Emma is called on to help. Rodolphe is taken by Emma, and he thinks she must be bored living with such a dolt of a husband. He decides that he should take her as a mistress and that he will begin his seduction at the agricultural fair.

Part 2: Chapter 7 Analysis

Emma's regret over Leon leaving without professing her love actually causes her to become ill. In this sense, Flaubert sets Emma up to be something more than the middle class wife she is. She becomes almost a character from a story of courtly love. Indeed, her illness shows all the symptoms of unrequited love. Her erratic behavior of beginning a project only to tuck it away and her spending-sprees as rewards for staying faithful to Charles only show that she will never be satisfied. At the same time, they begin displaying the characteristics she possesses that will eventually kill her. Rodolphe is immediately able to see her irritation with her husband, her boredom, and that she is ready to have an affair. He seems to be the only one in the novel up to this point that is able to see Emma for what and who she is.

Part 2: Chapter 8

Part 2: Chapter 8 Summary

Finally, the agricultural fair arrives. The entire town has participated in the preparations and all turn out for the event. Rodolphe takes Emma around the fair with him, and as one of the town's major contributors to agriculture, he feels he has to hide from the attendees in order to spend time with Emma. He is dressed very elaborately in a way that sets him apart from the other town citizens and in a way that makes him more exciting that other men in Emma's life. During the speeches at the fair, Rodolphe professes his love for Emma, but despite her interest, she plays it cool and does not seem interested in his advances. A woman wins a monetary award for working at the same farm her entire life. She has worked at the farm since she was old enough to work and she will most likely die there. After the speeches, Rodolphe drops Emma off at her house. He goes off to think about her and the best way to approach her since his first attempt was unsuccessful. That night at the closing ceremonies, Emma pays close attention to Rodolphe. She is engrossed in him to the point that she does not even realize that the fireworks have gotten wet and will not go off.

Part 2: Chapter 8 Analysis

In this chapter, Flaubert shows his true writing talent. Even though it is a boring chapter to read full of descriptions and long speeches, these descriptions and accounts are important in establishing the plot of the novel through contrast, irony, and foreshadowing. The descriptions of the fair and its participants are important. The animals are described at great length and can be seen as symbols for the human participants at the fair. Flaubert contrasts the several groups of people present in order to show the base ignorance of the participants.

He also not so subtly gives a jab at the dignitaries by describing them as pompous and by showing their speeches as full of clichés. Even though the speeches are nothing special and are only a trite repeat of what every other politician has said before, they are highly praised.

Flaubert also uses a great sense of irony such as the passage when Rodolphe is confessing his love; he is saying it during the manure award. When it is discussed how Lheureux ruined the life of one of the men in town through the use of loans, Emma's eventual downfall is foreshadowed.

Part 2: Chapter 9

Part 2: Chapter 9 Summary

Six weeks go by before Emma hears from or sees Rodolphe again. On their next meeting, he again confesses his love for her, but she continues to resist. He works to impress Charles by calling him Doctor when he walks into the room, and he suggests to the doctor that Emma come horseback riding with him for her health. Emma resists Rodolphe's suggestion, but Charles convinces her by telling her she can purchase a new riding habit.

When Emma and Rodolphe go out riding, everyone comes to watch them ride in their striking outfits and with their expert horsemanship. They ride high on a hill where Rodolphe once again confesses his love. At first, she puts up a timid refusal but finally submits to his advances.

That night at dinner, she is distracted. Once rid of Charles, she locks herself in her room and jubilates that she has a lover. The couple begins exchanging letters. Then in her desperation to see him, she begins sneaking off to his house in the early morning hours. After several of these clandestine visits, he grows tired of her and tells her she is being careless and endangering her reputation.

Part 2: Chapter 9 Analysis

Emma falls madly in love with Rodolphe and fails to see that he is only using her to satisfy his brief fancy. Ironically, it is Charles who encourages this love affair by insisting on the horseback riding. Emma continues to build their love into something that it is not, imagining this is the love she has sought after.

His refusal of her visits to him in the early morning foreshadows his eventual betrayal and abandonment of Emma. Even though the reader knows from the beginning that Rodolphe only intends this to be a brief affair, his wanting her to stop her visits only serves as reinforcement.

Part 2: Chapter 10

Part 2: Chapter 10 Summary

Emma begins to share Rodolphe's fears and becomes more careful when going to visit him. One day she runs into Monsieur Binet duck hunting. She tells him that she is visiting the wet nurse. All day she worries because she knows Binet knows that Berthe was removed from the wet nurse more than a year ago. She worries that he will gossip about her indiscretion with the townspeople. Charles, in an effort to distract her from her mood, takes her to Homais' where she runs into Binet. Binet makes an innuendo to her early morning escapade, but he does not reveal her secret.

In light of this incident, Rodolphe and Emma find a better place to have their affair—in her garden or in Charles' consulting room. Because Rodolphe knows that he is loved, he begins to slack off in his affection toward her. Emma begins to feel guilt and thinks she should love Charles more.

Part 2: Chapter 10 Analysis

Binet is another character in the novel that can see Emma for what she is. Although he has the chance to out her, he does not. However, he is instrumental in helping Emma realize that she must be more careful about her affairs. Her prior lack of concern shows that Emma is only interested in herself and in immediate gratification of her needs.

It is another attack to Charles that they conduct their affair in his consulting him. This room is his designated space, and the couple's affront to his space reflects Rodolphe's affront to Charles' wife.

Part 2: Chapter 11

Part 2: Chapter 11 Summary

Homais encourages Charles to undertake a new operation that he has been reading about to cure the stable boy's clubfoot while at the same time enhancing both their reputations. Emma comes on board to help convince Charles because she thinks he can become the success that she has always dreamed he would be. Finally, he gives into their pressure and orders the prospectus on the surgery.

After being pressured by many people in the town, the boy yields to the surgery. After the surgery, every thinks it was a great success and there is a write-up about Charles in the newspaper.

One evening, Charles is summoned to the hotel where he finds the stable boy, Hippolyte, in such pain that he cannot bear it. His foot is swollen, and Charles decides to let it air but continues on his course of treatment for the surgery. After several days, Hippolyte does not improve and the gangrene begins to spread. Finally, another doctor is called in who berates both Charles and Homais for performing the surgery. In the end, Hippolyte's foot has to be amputated.

Charles is terribly depressed, and Emma is angry that she ever thought he could be more than a country bumpkin. Charles says he needs Emma and she thwarts him. His failure drives her right back into her lover's arms.

Part 2: Chapter 11 Analysis

This chapter serves as an interruption to the love affair. Emma has begun to doubt her affair with Rodolphe, and this new development offers her the perfect chance to renew her faith in Charles. Ultimately all Charles' effort does is reinforce his ineptness. His failure gives Emma renewed reason to pursue her affair and forever seals Charles as a failure.

Homais plays the antagonist for the entire operation and as he is in most of the novel, is only concerned with his reputation. He is the complete opposite of Charles.

Part 2: Chapter 12

Part 2: Chapter 12 Summary

Once again, Rodolphe and Emma's love is in full force. She often wrote him during the day, and they begin to pass notes back and forth through servants. She tries to convince him to take her away, but he resists.

It would appear that Justin is falling more in love with Felicite, Emma's maid, but she is much older than he is, and she is being courted by another. Justin always hangs around with her and watches her do Emma's laundry.

Emma convinces Charles to get Hippolyte two wooden legs to make up for his failure. The storekeeper once again appears with the bill for all her lavish expenses. She cannot pay the bill and manages to hold him off. Finally, when one of Charles' clients pay, she steals the money to pay the shop keeper.

Emma becomes bolder with her attitude and begins to wear different things, speak of politics and religion, and even goes so far as to be seen smoking in public. When Charles' mother comes, she is shocked by Emma's behavior. Emma and Charles' mom have a huge fight, and Emma finally surrenders and apologizes to Madame Bovary senior. After the fight, Emma calls for Rodolphe in a secret manner they have. When he comes, she relates that night's drama and convinces him to agree to go away with her.

She begins making preparations and ordering supplies for her trip. Rodolphe is not so keen on the idea of being saddled down with a woman and child and begins to think of ways to get out of it.

On the night before they are to leave, they meet. Rodolphe looks so sad, but Emma thinks it is because he is leaving his former life behind. After he leaves the meeting, he plans to rid himself of her.

Part 2: Chapter 12 Analysis

Emma and Rodolphe's relationship has new intensity, and Emma is once again not satisfied with the status quo of her life. She insists that they run away together—a notion that reinforces her romantic nature. While she plans to go away, she goes deeper in debt to Lheureux.

Part 2: Chapter 13

Part 2: Chapter 13 Summary

Rodolphe tires to write Emma a letter, but he cannot think of what to say. He goes through a box of old letters in hopes of remembering what he loved about Emma. He finally writes her a letter saying she would be better off without him and packs it in a box of fruit, their usual means of communicating.

When she gets the letter, she runs to the attic to read it and immediately thinks of suicide when she learns of his departure. Just as she is about to throw herself out the window, she is called to dinner. At dinner, she passes out and a new bout of illness begins. She is in a state of illness for forty-three days. Charles gives up his practice to sit by her, and he lets Felicite take over rule of the house. Finally, when Emma feels well enough to get up, she relapses because Charles takes her for a walk near the bench where she and Rodolphe sat. At the end of the chapter, it is revealed that Charles is having money problems.

Part 2: Chapter 13 Analysis

Emma's immediate thoughts of suicide foreshadow her eventual death. Her illness is brought on by Rodolphe's letter and can either be interpreted as Emma having a greater love than the average person, and that despite her faults, she can have a deep devotion. It can also be read as Emma reacting to the loss of her dream and the realization that she is stuck in her mundane life.

Charles' redeeming qualities are highlighted in the chapter. Although he is like a puppy to its master, he does display a deep devotion, genuine love and concern, and a deep passion for Emma through her illness.

Part 2: Chapter 14

Part 2: Chapter 14 Summary

Charles feels an obligation to pay Homais for all his prescriptions and supplies even though a doctor is usually exempt from these charges. The bills continue to pile up since Emma's illness and Felicite has taken over. She does not have the finesse with the household that Emma had. Then as a final blow, Charles gets a huge bill from the store for Emma's traveling supplies. In order to pay for all the bills, Charles takes out a loan from Lheureux even though he has no idea how he will make good on it.

Emma begins to take comfort in routine, and she once again takes up religion almost feverishly. When Charles' mother comes to visit, she and Emma actually enjoy each other's company.

Homais suggests to Charles that he take Emma to the opera as a distraction. Homais and the priest discuss religious doctrine. Finally, Charles agrees to go to the opera even though he does not have the money. He gets confused buying the tickets while Emma buys flowers and gloves.

The couple arrives at the opera before they even open the doors.

Part 2: Chapter 14 Analysis

After her illness abates, Emma takes up her old habits of adopting a hobby and then dropping it. Every endeavor she takes is at the expense of some other thing in her life. When she takes up charity work, her household suffers for her commitment.

Charles is so under Emma's spell that he is willing to sacrifice for her happiness as is evidenced in his going to the opera despite their financial situation.

His bumbling the purchase of the opera tickets and their early arrival once again show what a dolt Charles is and that he does not fit in with Emma who wants someone worldly.

Part 2: Chapter 15

Part 2: Chapter 15 Summary

Emma is overcome by the opera from the beginning. She is totally enthralled with the romanticism of the opera. The tale of the lovers drives her to memories of the past and she overcome almost to the point of fainting. When Charles goes to get her a drink, he runs into Leon.

Leon comes and sits with them. Emma is so overcome in his presence that she loses interest in the opera. Leon and Emma convince Charles to leave the show early to go to a café. The trio has idle conversation, but Emma and Leon sense that they have more to say to each other. Charles convinces Emma to stay on in Rouen to catch another showing of the Opera.

Part 2: Chapter 15 Analysis

The surroundings at the opera and the plight of the lovers in the show offer the perfect place for Leon to be reintroduced to the story. This chapter mostly serves as a launching point for the third part of the novel.

Part 3: Chapter 1

Part 3: Chapter 1 Summary

Leon had been very busy with his law studies, but he still found time for ladies. His teachers thought him to be a good student, and he thought of Emma every once in awhile. Overtime he forgets her.

After the play, he followed them to their hotel, and the next evening he met Emma in her hotel room. She was surprised that he knew where she was staying, as she had not told him, but she chalked it up to fate.

At her hotel, he confessed his love for her and she pushes him away under pretenses. They agree to meet the next day at the cathedral. That night, she writes him a letter telling him to move on, but decides she should deliver it in person.

The next day, Leon takes his time getting ready, and shows up at the cathedral on time where he has to wait for her. When she finally arrives, she does not give him the letter instead deciding to take a tour of the cathedral. Leon drags her away from the cathedral and pulls her into a cab. He forces the cab to drive around town all day with the shades drawn. After a few hours, scraps of paper fly out the window.

At six o'clock in the evening, Emma gets out of the carriage and sets off toward her hotel.

Part 3: Chapter 1 Analysis

Emma is much more easily convinced to undertake her affair with Leon than she was with Rodolphe.

Leon has changed during his time in Paris. He is no longer the timid young man he once was and he is much more skilled at the art of love.

The description of the church mirrors Emma's own religion—her religion of self-indulgence. The church, where she tries to find refuge from her desire, is contrasted with the stagecoach where she gives into her passions.

It is important to note that the stagecoach is described as a tomb. This consummation of her love to Leon indeed is a step down the slippery slope to her death.

Part 3: Chapter 2

Part 3: Chapter 2 Summary

When Emma arrives at her hotel, she has missed the coach to Yonville, and she has to hire a gig to catch the hirondelle. She finally catches up, and when she arrives at home, she is told to go straight to Homais' because there is an emergency.

When she gets to the pharmacy, Homais is busy yelling at Justin. A book on sexual exploits falls out of Justin's pocket, further infuriating Homais. Finally, he just blurts to Emma that her father in law has died.

Charles feels genuine grief at the death of his father, and his mother comes to mourn with him. The shopkeeper comes to talk to Charles about his note, and he sends Emma to discuss it with him. Lheureux tries to convince Emma to get a power of attorney so she can deal with all these small things. Emma mentions it to Charles, and he thinks they should consult a lawyer. She immediately volunteers to go consult with Leon and leaves for three days to Rouen.

Part 3: Chapter 2 Analysis

Emma's handling of the power of attorney foreshadows her eventual dealings with the shopkeeper. His suggestion for the power of attorney offers her an excuse to go see Leon, so she readily agrees. She cannot see that Lheureux is trying to take everything away from her and her family; she is only concerned with the immediate need to see Leon.

Part 3: Chapter 3

Part 3: Chapter 3 Summary

Leon and Emma spend three wonderful days together. For Emma this is like the honeymoon that she always desired with Charles. When they take a moonlit boat ride, the oarsman mentions a man that Emma believes to be Rodolphe and she shutters. Emma and Leon arrange for letter exchanges, and he says the power of attorney is in order.

Part 3: Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter sets the stage for Emma's deep fascination with Leon that will develop. He is giving her everything she wants. His approval of the power of attorney gives her the means for her eventual downfall.

Part 3: Chapter 4

Part 3: Chapter 4 Summary

Leon gets "airs" around the office, and he spends his time eagerly awaiting Emma's letters. Finally, he breaks down and goes to Yonville to visit her. While he is there, she gets upset and promises to find a way to see him on a regular basis.

Suddenly she takes up the piano again, but she is rusty and begs Charles to allow her to take lessons in Rouen. He will not allow her, but she makes a scene and every time she walks by the piano she make a snide comment until he finally gives in. She uses the piano lessons as an excuse to go to the city once a week to see her lover.

Part 3: Chapter 4 Analysis

Leon thinks his affair gives him status. His attitude at his office eventually determines the outcome of the couple's affair. Emma once again manipulates Charles to get what she wants, and it is only through his gullibility that she can once again continue her affair.

Part 3: Chapter 5

Part 3: Chapter 5 Summary

Every Thursday, she rises and leaves for Rouen without waking Charles. It has become her routine. She watches out the window with great anticipation for the Hirondelle to get to the city. She maintains a room at a hotel so as not to draw suspicion. She is supposedly using her hotel room to get ready for her lessons and to stay at after her lessons. She must walk through all the seedy parts of town to her and Leon's love hideaway. The hotel room they carry their affair on in is described as reminiscent of a honeymoon suite with gaudy decorations and an oversized bed. They become so accustomed to spending their time in this room, that they soon begin calling it "our room." Leon is amazed by Emma and her experience, her beauty, and her knowledge of how to carry on an affair. She even refers to him in the diminutive, as if he were a child. On the hill on the way back to Yonville, a beggar constantly badgers the riders of the coach. He is described as having some type of affliction of the eyes.

Always on Thursdays, Emma would be pensive. Charles would inevitably ask her if something was wrong, but she always told him that she was fine.

One day Charles has an encounter with Emma's supposed piano teacher. She does not recognize Emma's name, but Emma produces receipts for her lessons, and Charles believes her. On another occasion, Emma and Leon run into Monsieur Lheureux. She is frightened that he may talk, but he has something else in mind. Indeed, three days later he comes to her to ask for money.

When she tells him that she has no money, he suggests that she allow him to sell some property that she and Charles own. She agrees. He takes all the money from the property and issues another note.

Charles eventually finds out about all the notes Emma has written, but she just explains them away. Charles is left to ask his mother for help, but instead of sending money, she comes for a visit. Of course, Madame Bovary, senior found the spending to be excessive, and she convinces Charles to tear up the power of attorney. Emma allows Charles to do away with the document, but quickly persuades him to fill out another one.

Emma begins to get more reckless daring even to stay overnight in Rouen. She always manages to allay Charles' fears after a bout of inconsideration.

Part 3: Chapter 5 Analysis

It is in this chapter that Emma enters her second and final love affair. Flaubert uses juxtaposition and contrast throughout the chapter. Emma has become Rodolphe in her relationship. She is the one who must guide her new lover in the ways of having an

affair. As she grows more reckless in their relationship, she also gets deeper into financial trouble. The two plots mirror each other.

This chapter also introduces the beggar who seems to contrast in his ugliness the happiness that Emma has created for herself. In the novel, the beggar becomes a symbol of Emma's degradation and her eventual death.

Part 3: Chapter 6

Part 3: Chapter 6 Summary

Leon had often dined at Homais' during his trips to visit Emma, so he felt obliged to return the favor. Homais readily agreed on the pretense that it would do him some good to get away for awhile. He chooses to come on Thursday, the same day Leon is to meet Emma.

Leon cannot manage to ditch Homais and he spent a good portion of the day with him. He finally finds time to slip back to the hotel to let Emma know what happened. When Emma finds out that Leon has spent the afternoon with Homais instead of her, she is infuriated.

Leon is sensing that something is coming in between them, but he does not say anything.

One day after leaving Leon, she goes to sit in front of her convent. She remembers the first days of her marriage and the Vicomte. All her life seems so far removed from as whom she sees herself.

Soon after, her financial problems climax with the visit by the assistant of Monsieur Vincart, a loan shark. Lheureux, despite his promises, had sold Emma's promissory notes to Vincart, and he was demanding immediate payment. Emma goes to Lheureux to beg him for his help, but he refuses her. In a desperate attempt to find the capital, Emma demands the sum of Charles' inheritance, but there is none. She sends bills to Charles' patients and begins to sell her things. In her despair, Emma gives up taking care of the house and her child.

She becomes almost frenzied in her worry. Leon notices that she is acting strangely. His employer counsels him not to see Emma anymore, and he promises he will not for the sake of his future. However, he can't hold out and he agrees to see her. In her crying and over dramatics, Leon becomes bored with her. When she returns from their meeting, there is a sign on the door that everything they own will be auctioned.

She once again pleads with Lheureux, and he once again refuses her. As she storms out of his office, she screams, "You'll drive me to do something desperate."

Part 2: Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter is the climax of the story. Emma's financial state has finally come back to haunt her. Her love affair with Leon has taken its toll and in her recklessness, she has damaged her reputation.

During the first part of her relationship with Leon, she felt the love that she desired and had read about in books, but in this chapter, she realizes that her love has become as banal as her marriage. This foreshadows the end of their relationship.

Her final words to Lheureux not only serve as a threat but they also show the lengths that she will go to solve her problem.

Part 2: Chapter 7

Part 2: Chapter 7 Summary

The next day the sheriff comes to take inventory of all the Bovarys' property. She is stoical as they go through all her property including all the love letters she had saved from Rodolphe. She has somehow managed to keep Charles from finding out about their current state.

The next day, she leaves for Rouen determined to call on every banker she has ever heard of. She even convinces Leon to go out in search of money for her bail. He does not like the request and he promises to come to Yonville the next day. At the end of the day, she must return home. She does so with Homais on board. When Homais sees the beggar, he offers to help him find a cure for his affliction. That night she falls asleep to the idea that something extraordinary might happen to save her.

The next morning she is awakened by the sound of people gathering in the square. A sign announcing the auction of their possessions had been posted. Emma's maid suggests that she go see the town notary.

Emma decides to take her up on the offer. When she arrives, Maitre Guillaumin suggests that they have an affair. Emma realizes that he is asking her to sell her body to him, and she gets indignant and storms out. She next goes to Binet, the tax collector, to, we can only imagine, ask for an abatement of her taxes.

Finally, she goes to the nurse's house and flings herself on the bed. The nurse is perplexed as to why she is there, but it is the only safe place Emma can seek refuge. Emma suddenly remembers Leon's promise to come save her. She sends the nurse to see if he is waiting for her. When the nurse returns, she tells Emma that Leon is not there and has not been there.

In a final act of desperation, she heads for Rodolphe's house. Although she had just refused Guillaumin, she seems unaware that she will be in the same sense prostituting herself to Rodolphe.

Part 3: Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter is a digest of Emma's frenzied attempts to find money. She first goes to Leon, but he is desperate to break up with her and offers her little comfort. After an unsuccessful day in Rouen, she once again encounters the beggar. He is again a symbol of her failure and her doom.

Emma's refusal to sleep with the notary to get the money she needs shows that she thinks her previous endeavors are morally above what the notary offers because they

are in the pursuit of her dreams. She thinks that even if it means ruin, she cannot sacrifice her dignity.

Finally, she comes full circle and decides to return to Rodolphe.

Part 3: Chapter 8

Part 3: Chapter 8 Summary

Emma does not know how she was going to approach Rodolphe. She entered his house the same way she always had and found him in his bedroom. Rodolphe makes excuses for his breakup with her, and she believes him. Finally, after much reminiscing, she asks him for the money.

He tells her that he does not have it, which he genuinely does not, and she does not believe him. She quickly leaves him in a daze.

Emma is so distraught that she barely knows she is alive. Finally, she decides to go to the pharmacy. She persuades Justin to give her the key to Homais' room where he mixes his medicines. Because Justin has grown so fond of Emma, he cannot refuse her.

She immediately goes to the arsenic bottle and crams handfuls into her mouth. When she arrives at home, she feels a sudden peace.

Charles had arrived home much earlier than she had. He was in turmoil about the notice. When Emma arrives home, he asks her for an explanation. Instead of giving him an answer, she writes him a letter and tells him to read it the next day.

Within a short amount of time, she begins to feel ill. Charles tries to determine what she had eaten. While he sits at her side, she sees love in his eyes such that she had never known. Finally, they decide to call for other well known doctors in the area. Charles discovers it is arsenic after reading Emma's letter prematurely.

Emma calls for Berthe and she holds her and says goodbye. When the other doctors arrive, they try to give Charles some hope, but they know it is just a matter of time. Finally, Emma cries out, "The blind man." Then she dies.

Part 3: Chapter 8 Analysis

Rodolphe and Emma have not seen each other in quite sometime, and at her reappearance, Rodolphe again feels a surge of love for her. Rodolphe is the one person that Emma may have truly loved or had the dream of loving. She sees Rodolphe's refusal to give her any money as a second betrayal. This betrayal drives her to her suicide. Flaubert almost seems to be saying that without love or even the dream of love, the only option left is suicide.

Emma's death is once again mirrored by the beggar. Instead of being a peaceful and easy death as she thought it would be, her death turns out to be ugly. Her last words reflect that her demise is symbolized by the beggar.

Part 3: Chapter 9

Part 3: Chapter 9 Summary

Charles begs to stay with Emma in her chamber. However, everyone convinces Charles to leave her under the watchful eye of his friends. Homais encourages him to decide on a time for her funeral. Charles says he wants no expense spared. He decides to have her buried in a casket of oak inside a casket of mahogany inside a casket of lead.

Homais and the priest watch over the body together and have a long discussion on religion. Homais says he is not a Christian though he does respect Christianity. Charles continues to sneak into the room to say goodbye to her. Finally, her father arrives for the funeral.

Part 3: Chapter 9 Analysis

The rest of the novel is the denouement, the let down. It is spent tying up lose ends. It is important to notice that no expense is spared in her burial much as she did not spare expense in her life.

Part 3: Chapter 10

Part 3: Chapter 10 Summary

Homais' letter to Monsieur Rouault had not reached him for three days, and he headed to Yonville at a dead heat. Charles' friends gloss over the events surrounding Emma's death in an attempt to spare her father.

At the funeral, Charles watches and cries. When Emma is lowered into the ground, he tries to throw himself in with her. Charles' mother imagines them living the rest of their days together, and she is so relieved to finally have her son's affection back.

Part 3: Chapter 10 Analysis

This chapter shows the effect that Emma's death had on several people, the most profound being Charles. It also shows Charles coming full circle with his return to his mother. This return to his mother is mirrored in the cycle of wealth that Charles experiences. Everything in the novel is cyclical with the birth/death cycle being highlighted, Hippolyte's cycle of cripple to normal to cripple once again, and Charles' cycle of wealth.

Part 3: Chapter 11

Part 3: Chapter 11 Summary

Charles sends for Berthe who gradually forgets her mother. Many of Emma's bills come due and each time he thinks he has seen the last of them another one crops up. Leon sends him a wedding announcement, and Charles imagines that he must be happy.

One day, Charles discovers Rodolphe's goodbye letter. He denies that anything could have happened. He is forced to sell all his possessions and it pains him to see Berthe dressed in rags.

Homais finds great success and even writes a book. He also adopts bohemian ways and tries to live the life of a successful man.

Finally, Charles discovers all of Emma's love letters. He sees Rodolphe, and tells him that he does not blame him. The next day, Charles dies on the bench where Emma had carried on her love affair.

Berthe goes to live with her grandmother who eventually dies, and she is sent to work in a cotton mill.

Part 3: Chapter 11 Analysis

In this final chapter everything is settled. Charles becomes broke, finds out about his wife's affairs, and dies. Although Emma caused so much pain and turmoil, she is a sympathetic character because at least she had dreams and was willing to die for them.

Characters

Monsieur Binet

Monsieur Binet, Yonville's tax collector, does not often participate in the social life of the town. Monsieur Homais claims he is "a dead fish" with "no imagination, no wit, nothing of what makes a man a social light." He serves as a foil to Emma when she runs into him one morning as she is returning from Boulanger's estate. Emma turns to him for help when she is about to lose her home, but he refuses to help her. Two of the village women watch through the window, suspecting that Emma is "making advances to him," which appears to be confirmed when he immediately jumps back exclaiming, "What are you thinking of, Madame?" The women see this as evidence of Binet's courage.

Monsieur Rodolphe Boulanger

Rodolphe Boulanger, a thirty-four-year-old country squire, is "cynical in temperament and keen of intellect." He seduces Emma during a horseback ride in the woods after a careful manipulation of her feelings. When he first meets her, he immediately comprehends the problems in her relationship with Charles and so determines that she will be vulnerable to him. He notes that she has been starved for passion and eloquent words of love and so tells her that some force beyond his control drove him to her. His ability to understand her predicament and provide her with the romantic words and the attention she craves causes her to fall in love with him.

His callous and shallow nature become apparent in his decision to discard her after their affair begins to bore him. He decides that Emma is like all mistresses: "the charm of newness, slipping down little by little like a garment, revealed unclothed the eternal monotony of passion."

Abbé Bournisien

Abbé Bournisien, Yonville's priest, suggests his lack of perception when Emma comes to him, trying to explain her unhappiness and looking for strength to resist her feelings for Léon. He insists to Emma that any woman who has enough to eat and a fire in winter should be perfectly happy. As a result of his lack of understanding, she does not confide in him and turns her back on religion as a source of comfort.

Berthe Bovary

Berthe Bovary is the daughter of Charles and Emma Bovary.

Charles Bovary

From the beginning of the novel, Flaubert characterizes Charles as dull, dim, and graceless. The narrator notes that his conversation was "flat as the sidewalk of the street and the ideas of everyone he spoke to passed through it without exciting emotion, laughter, or contemplation." Charles has few interests besides his family. He does not care about the theater or books and has never learned any skills like swimming or fencing that would make him an interesting companion or husband. His name suggests his "bovine," cud-chewing personality.

Many of Charles's patients in both Tostes and Yonville, however, appreciate his lack of airs. They also admire his sense of responsibility. Yet his inability to develop a firm grasp of the intricacies of his profession results in his botching of a clubfoot operation, and his patient subsequently suffers the amputation of his leg.

Charles adores Emma, which, combined with his weak will, allows her to control his life. He turns a blind eye to her financial extravagances and her attentions to other men, which Emma usually does not take great pains to hide. His lack of perception extends to his relationship with her. Often, Charles has no idea what Emma is thinking or feeling, unless her health obviously begins to deteriorate. His lack of ambition and his country habits, coupled with his weak nature, irritate and depress Emma. Yet Charles is ever loyal to her, even after he discovers that she has been having affairs with Rodolphe Boulanger and Léon Dupuis. His intense love for her ultimately destroys him, however. Soon after she commits suicide, Charles wastes away and dies.

Monsieur Charles-Denis-Bartholomé Bovary

Monsieur Bovary, Charles's father, was a former assistant surgeon-major. After he was forced to leave the service, Bovary found a wife with a large dowry so he could live comfortably. He failed, however, at farming, since he drank and ate up his profits. Eventually, Charles's vain, braggart father became a bitter drunk, "disgusted with humanity" in his later years.

Madame Emma Bovary

Emma's sensuality becomes apparent as soon as Charles meets her. While she is sewing, she pricks her fingers and raises them up to her mouth to suck them. Later, she licks every drop of liquor from the bottom of a glass with her tongue. Charles does not encourage this quality in her. Soon after they are married, she becomes bored by the monotony of their life together.

Discontented with her life on the farm, she agrees to marry Charles, confusing her desire for a better, more comfortable life with feelings of love for him. She had thought herself in love with Charles before they married, but those feelings failed to materialize. Soon after their marriage, she waits for a dramatic event to transform her life. When

none occurs and she finds no fulfillment in her relationship with him, she develops an appreciation for the things money can buy. The narrator notes that she "confused, in her longing, the sensual appeals of luxury with the joys of the heart, elegance of manners with delicacy of sentiment." Her desire to live a life full of luxury leads to her destruction.

Frustrated by her inability to afford the lifestyle she feels she deserves, Emma turns to other men to satisfy her passionate nature. Her romantic vision of love, however, destroys her relationships, not only with her husband but also with her lovers. When Charles fails to live up to her expectations of what a man should be, she dreams about finding lovers like those she reads about in sentimental novels. When her marriage provides none of the passion she finds in these books, she wonders "just what was meant, in real life, by the words felicity, passion and intoxication, which had seemed so beautiful" on the page.

She falls in love with Léon and Rodolphe when they compare favorably to Charles. However, neither can live up to her romantic vision of love. As a result, she alienates both men. Inevitably, she rediscovers in adultery all the uniformity of marriage. As she drains "every pleasure by wishing it to be too intense," she succumbs to a "universal numbness" that, coupled with her financial troubles, prompts her to commit suicide.

Madame Héloïse Bovary

Héloïse Bovary, Charles's first wife, is a fortyfive- year-old wealthy widow when Charles marries her. Charles is not content with this woman, whom his mother determined he should marry, finding her ugly and thin. She takes control of the household and complains incessantly of her health, which turns out to be actually quite frail. When her family loses its fortune, and Charles's parents angrily accuse her of fraud, she falls ill and dies.

Madame Bovary

Mrs. Bovary, Charles's mother, had once adored her husband, which irritated him. When she was first married, she was a happy and affectionate woman, but as she was forced to face her husband's infidelities and overindulgences, she became difficult, irritable, and nervous. She swallowed her frustration "in a mute stoicism." Unhappy with her marriage, she spoiled Charles, transferring to him all of her lost ambitions.

She tries to extend her control over Charles after he becomes an adult by choosing his wife. Her control slips, however, when Charles marries Emma, whom Madame Bovary considers "too refined in her airs for their financial position." She also becomes jealous of Charles's love for Emma. In an effort to reassert her dominance, she makes frequent visits to the couple and continually corrects Emma's housekeeping.

Monsieur Léon Dupuis

Emma meets Léon Dupuis, a lawyer's clerk, soon after she and Charles move to Yonville. Léon has the same romantic sensibility as does Emma; his thoughts, like hers, are constantly "interweaving with fiction." He admits to her that his heart "becomes involved" with the characters he reads about, as it "beats underneath their costumes." Emma and Léon feed off each other's romantic imagination as they consummate their relationship. When they link hands, "the past, the future, reminiscences and dreams, all were blended in the charm" of the moment.

Eventually Léon tries to revolt against Emma's absorption of his personality. Yet his timid nature allows her to dominate him, even as his affection for her wanes. Even after he becomes bored by her demands, he is indecisive about their future, allowing her to dictate when and where they meet.

Félicité

Fourteen years old when she comes to work as Emma's maid, Félicité is an orphan "with a sweet face." Emma tries to make a ladies' maid of her and Félicité obeys without question. However, after Emma dies, she steals most of her clothes.

Monsieur Homais

Monsieur Homais, the pharmacist, is the Bovarys' neighbor. The pompous Homais pontificates about religion, society, and human nature, which does not earn him many friends. He tries to hide his illegal medical activities and treats Charles with exceptional kindness in order to ensure that Charles will not turn him in to the authorities. Charles, however, is too unobservant to notice.

Justin

Justin, a boy who works in the pharmacy, falls in love with Emma□so much so that he cannot refuse her when she asks him to let her into the cabinet where Monsieur Homais keeps arsenic.

Madame Lefrançois

Madame Lefrançois, the widowed innkeeper at Yonville, complains and gossips a great deal about her customers.

Monsieur Lhereux

Monsieur Lhereux, Yonville's linen draper, encourages Emma's extravagant spending habits through clever sales tactics. Initially "polite to the point of obsequiousness," Lhereux grovels in front of his customers until he makes a sale. He convinces Emma to purchase expensive items that she cannot afford by preying on her desire for elegance and allowing her to buy on credit. When Emma's bills mount, he demands payment and shows no remorse or consideration for her dilemma.

Themes

Search for Self

When Emma first marries Charles, she does not have a clear sense of identity. However, she knows that she does not want to be stuck on the farm for the rest of her life. Initially, she assumes that what she feels for Charles will develop into love and that she will become content to be a doctor's wife. Soon, though, when her feelings for Charles fail to materialize, she enters into a severe depression, feeling herself to be displaced and unable to endure the monotony of her life and marriage.

Passion

In an effort to alleviate her depression, she turns to sentimental novels, imagining herself as the heroine who falls passionately in love with a dashing man who rescues her from a life of poverty and desperation. Her imagination re-creates these fictional figures into two men, with whom she enters into passionate affairs. Her sexual relations with these men give her a sense of identity, at least for a time.

Class Consciousness

Emma's search for identity and fulfillment also centers on issues of class. Soon after she marries Charles and realizes that she cannot find contentment in her relationship with him, she begins to buy things for the house and for herself. Emma's spending, however, soon puts the family in debt. When she attends the ball at La Vaubyessard, Emma sees for the first time, "the complexion of wealth" that characterizes the upper class. From that point on, Emma desperately tries to become a part of that world through her relationship with Rodolphe and through extravagant purchases.

Emma's desire to move up in class leads to disaster for those around her as well as herself. She transfers her ambitions to Charles, who determines that he can perform a new surgery on clubfoots. However, when he performs the untested operation on a local man, he botches the procedure, which results in the amputation of the patient's leg.

When she realizes that Charles will never help them move above their station, her extravagant spending increases to the point of financial ruin. In a desperate attempt to acquire money and thus to save herself from the public humiliation of the auctioning off of her property, she tries to prostitute herself. When that tactic fails, Emma finds suicide her only recourse. Her death devastates Charles, who dies soon after, and Berthe, their child, becomes orphaned and impoverished.

Style

Structure

Flaubert often illustrates Emma's character and situation through a juxtaposition of scenes in the novel. Most of these instances involve Emma's mingling of past memories with present reality. One occurs when Emma is at the ball. As she looks out the windows and observes the servants on the lawn, separated from the evening's glamour and festivities, she envisions herself "as she had been once" on her father's farm. The juxtaposition of past and present reinforces Emma's obsession with "this luxurious life" that she witnesses at the ball. Another instance occurs when she is looking at Léon one day. As she gazes at him, she conjures an image of Charles as she has seen him so many times in the past. The juxtaposition of her image of Charles with her gaze on Léon prompts her to compare the two. Deciding that Charles is infinitely inferior, she promptly falls in love with Léon.

Flaubert uses a different kind of juxtaposition during the scene at the agricultural fair. Here he jumps back and forth between two simultaneous events: Rodolphe's initial seduction of Emma and the awarding of prizes at the fair. As a result, Flaubert highlights Rodolphe's calculated, selfserving attempt to lure Emma into his bed.

Symbol

Flaubert also uses symbolization to reinforce his themes. He adds a note of foreshadowing at the ball when Emma sees a guest rumored to have been Marie Antoinette's lover. The description of the slovenly man with bloodshot eyes and "drops of gravy falling from his lips" reinforces the fact that he has "led a life wild with debauch" and forecasts Emma's own decline. In another scene, at the close of the agricultural exposition, the crowd enjoys a display of fireworks. In an effort to allay fears that they might start fires, Monsieur Binet notes that no sparks have fallen. Yet, destruction is eminent for Emma, as her affair with Rodolphe has been sparked.

Historical Context

Realism

The term realism first appeared in a Parisian periodical of 1826, as noted by Haig in his article on Flaubert in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. The journalist defines the term as a movement that would "lead to the imitation not of artistic masterpieces but of the originals that nature offers us." Later in the article, the writer determines that realist works could in the future be considered "the literature of truth." Realism became a popular form of painting, especially in works by Gustave Courbet, and literature in the mid-nineteenth century. Novelists in this movement turned away from what they considered the artificiality of romanticism to a focus on the commonplace in the context of everyday contemporary life. They rejected the idealism and celebration of the imagination typical of romantic novels and instead took a serious look at believable characters and their often problematic interactions with society. In order to accomplish this goal, realistic novels focus on the commonplace and eliminate the unlikely coincidences and excessive emotionalism of romanticism. Novelists like Samuel Clemens discard traditional sentimental novelistic forms as they chronicle the strengths and weaknesses of ordinary people confronting difficult social problems, like the restrictive conventions nineteenth-century African Americans suffered under. Writers who embraced realism use settings and plots details that reflect their characters' daily lives and realistic dialogue that replicates natural speech patterns.

Realism in *Madame Bovary* emerges in Flaubert's discarding of the idealism of traditional romantic literature in his exploration of the day-today life of Emma Bovary. Other writers like Honoré Balzac and Stendhal had also focused on the daily life of their characters; however, those characters lead exciting lives and can not be considered "ordinary." Flaubert was one of the first to chronicle in his fiction the often monotonous and sordid life of the middle class.

Censorship in Nineteenth-Century France

France's Second Empire (1852-1870), ruled by Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte III, set a moral tone by repressing challenges to traditional codes of conduct. The government allowed authors to write about characters who threatened the accepted tenets of society; however, they expected the characters to be justly punished for such actions. They supported didactic literature that encouraged readers to condemn immoral behavior, such as adultery. However, when Flaubert refused to denounce Emma in *Madame Bovary* for her actions and Emma herself did not ask for forgiveness, Flaubert was charged with pornography and blasphemy, and the book was banned. All charges against him were eventually dropped and the ban lifted. However, Haig notes that the judge who discharged the case did so with a warning of the excesses of realism, a novelistic form that he considered both "vulgaire et souvent choquant" (vulgar and often

shocking). Although Flaubert did not consider himself a realist, critics have placed the novel in this literary school.

Critical Overview

When *Madame Bovary* was published in installments in *Revue de Paris* in 1857, its realistic subject matter earned the novel immediate notoriety, which was enhanced when the French government soon banned it and charged Flaubert with obscenity. Its initial reception was mixed. Many readers were shocked by the novel's "immoral" characterizations but praised Flaubert's undeniable artistry. Others were offended more by the novel's obvious link to realism, as noted by Lennard J. Davis, in his article on Flaubert for *European Writers*. Davis cites one critic who insisted that *Madame Bovary* "represents an obsession with description. Details are counted one by one, all are given equal value" and that, as a result, "there is neither emotion nor feeling for life in this novel." Davis notes another reviewer who claimed that Flaubert was an "unwavering analyst . . . a describer of the minutest subtlety" but that a machine made "in Birmingham or Manchester out of good English steel" could have written a comparable novel. Most scholars, however, have celebrated the work as one of the finest of its age. F. W. J. Hemmings in *The Age of Realism* insists, "this finely balanced mixture, where Emma is concerned of empathy and critical objectivity . . . has earned the novel its celebrity as the first masterpiece of the realist esthetic."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Perkins is an associate professor of English and American literature and film at Prince George's Community College and has published several articles on British and American authors. In this essay, she examines Flaubert's exploration of naturalistic themes in Flaubert's novel.

[The wind-tower] was a giant, standing with its back
to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree . . .
the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual
nature in the wind, and nature in the vision
of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, not beneficent,
not treacherous, not wise. But she was indifferent,
flatly indifferent."

This famous passage from Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat," which focuses on four men in a small dinghy struggling against the current to make it to shore, is often quoted as an apt expression of the tenets of naturalism, a literary movement that emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in France, America, and England. Writers included in this group, such as Crane, Emile Zola, and Theodore Dreiser, expressed in their works a biological and/or environmental determinism that prevented their characters from exercising their free will and thus controlling their fates. Crane often focused on the social and economic factors that overpowered his characters. Zola's and Dreiser's works include this type of environmental determinism, coupled with an exploration of the influences of heredity, in their portraits of the animalistic nature of men and women engaged in the endless and brutal struggle for survival. In *Madame Bovary*, completed in 1856, Gustave Flaubert's treatment of the main character in *Madame Bovary*, proves the novel to be an important precursor of the naturalist movement. As Flaubert explores the environmental and biological forces that shape Emma Bovary's character and experience, he raises important questions about how much influence we have over our destinies.

Two biological factors help determine Emma's fate: her innate sensuality and her romantic imagination. Her sensuality becomes apparent as soon as Charles meets her. As he watches her sew, she pricks her fingers on the needle. Immediately she raises them up to her mouth and sucks them. Later, when they are drinking liquor, she drains her glass and licks, with the tip of her tongue, the final drops. Her passionate nature could have been allowed full expression in marriage and thus resulted in a satisfying relationship and a contented life for Emma. However, Charles's "placid dullness" quickly dampens her passion. She notes that if Charles had been receptive to her spirited nature, "a sudden overflow would have poured from her heart as the ripe fruit falls from a tree when one lays hand to it." She expects him to "initiate [her] into the forces of passion . . . but he taught nothing . . . knew nothing, desired nothing." As a result, Emma could only wonder "just what was meant, in real life, by the words felicity, passion and intoxication, which had seemed so beautiful to her in books."

Emma turns to sentimental novels, with their dashing heroes, in an attempt to imaginatively live the passionate life she desires. Her imagination recreates these fictional figures into two men, with whom she enters into adulterous affairs. Her attraction for Léon turns to love one afternoon as she gazes at him and at the same time conjures an image of Charles as she has seen him so many times in the past. When the juxtaposition of the images of these two men causes her to compare them, Léon emerges as the superior. Thereafter, Léon becomes the focal point for her marital boredom as he reappears in her imagination "taller, more handsome, more polished, more indistinct" than he actually is. Thus, by the time the two are reunited, Emma is primed to fulfill her romantic dream of a passionate relationship with him.

Her imaginative vision of the opera singer becomes the final determining force that propels her into an affair with Léon. As she listens to the singer, his voice "seemed to her no more than the echo of her own consciousness and the illusion which cast its spell over her, something out of her own life." When she sees Léon at the opera, she transfers her feelings for the singer to him, making their union inevitable.

Emma's affair with Rodolphe is sparked by her evening at La Vaubyeeard, where, for the first time, she experiences the intoxicating world of the upper class, a world she wants desperately to make her own. The evening is capped by her waltz with a viscount, which embodies for her the "luxurious life which she must soon abandon." Later, as Rodolphe tries to convince her to give in to her desires, she recalls images of the viscount and of Léon. The juxtaposition of these images with the presence of Rodolphe and his amorous words causes an imaginative fusion for Emma, who is now ready to allow herself to be seduced.

Emma's fate is determined not only by her nature and her vivid imagination. These biological forces combine with environmental factors that help propel Emma to her tragic end. Flaubert notes the social reality of the world Emma is so desperate to enter as he describes the gentlemen seated at the dinner table at La Vaubyeeard: "in their indifferent glances was the serenity of passions daily gratified." Their "brutality" emerges "in fairly unexacting matters where force is employed and in which vanity takes pleasure: the handling of blooded horses and the society of abandoned women."

Rodolphe recognizes Emma as one such "abandoned woman." He callously manipulates her feelings after he determines that she is "gaping for love like a carp on the kitchen table for water." Thus he knows that he will be able to seduce her with loving words and attention. Revealing his self-serving nature, he worries about "how to get rid of her afterwards." Her affair with Rodolphe initially brings her the fulfillment she lacked in her relationship with Charles. However, soon Rodolphe decides that "Emma was like all mistresses; the charm of newness, slipping down little by little like a garment, revealed unclothed the eternal monotony of passion." As a result, he abandons her, leaving her more despondent than she had been before the affair.

Emma's financial situation exacerbates her depression, causing her to spend more extravagantly and thus increasing her debt. Her vision of herself enjoying the comforts of the upper class prompts her to surround herself with artifacts from that world. She

notes the lack of control she has over their financial situation and over her romantic imagination when she decides that she would rather have a boy than a girl, since "a man, at least is free . . . but a woman is continually restrained." She insists that a woman is governed by "the fragilities of the flesh and the restrictions of the law. Her will . . . flutters in every wind; there is always some desire urging her on, some convention restraining her."

As in the situation that the men in Crane's open boat discover for themselves, no benevolent force comes to Emma's aid. She feels a sense of abandonment after she tries to talk to the local priest but cannot make him understand her desperate plight. When she tries to explain her unfulfilled needs to him, he insists that all one requires is to be warm and well fed. After Rodolphe leaves her, she again searches for spiritual solace "but no sensation of rapture descended to her from heaven, and she would rise, her legs wearied, with a vague consciousness of having been vastly cheated." Susanna Lee, in her article on the novel for *Symposium*, writes that "God's absence or indifference . . . is a foundational event in *Madame Bovary*, the explicit reason for Emma's contaminated existence."

Emma's passionate nature and her vivid imagination combine with the social forces of her age to determine her fate. As Emma faces the disintegration of her love affair with Léon and the humiliation of her financial situation, she desperately searches for some form of salvation, but can find none. As a result, she determines that her only escape can be through death. Flaubert's compelling portrait of a desperately unfulfilled woman in *Madame Bovary* places the novel firmly in the naturalist tradition as it engages readers in a tragic study of free will and determinism.

Source: Wendy Perkins, Critical Essay on *Madame Bovary*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, VanderWolk examines the "considerations of gender" in Madame Bovary *to identify Flaubert's views on masculine versus feminine writing.*

Questions of gender in recent French literary criticism have generally been posed by feminist critics. Writers such as Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray have pointed out that men do not need to pose such questions, as they are already in possession of the dominant language system. "What does it mean to write as a woman or to read as a woman?" has been a common question in feminist criticism whether one speaks of a feminist critique, a *Female Aesthetic*, gynocritics, or gynesis. Male critics have indeed rarely felt the need to formally pose such a question, but with the rise of gender theory, the comparative study of sexual difference, men have felt empowered to ask: "What does it mean to write as a man or to read as a man?" All of this is complicated by the question of essentialism and the debate over whether or not critics should distinguish between male and female modes of writing and reading. All anti-essentialist feeling rejects biological sex as the determining factor in writing or reading. Yet even after one eliminates biological sex as a consideration, the masculine/feminine opposition does not disappear. Feminists in particular continue to struggle with the question of whether it is best to assimilate or differentiate feminist views from the mainstream, whether to identify an "écriture féminine" or aspire to an "écriture" that would be equally accessible to women. The most fruitful avenue of exploration seems to be to raise questions of gender, both biological and non-biological, and asking such questions may, after all, be the most significant contribution of feminist criticism to the study of literature.

Writers as diverse as Jean de Meung, Christine de Pisan, Marguerite de Navarre, Rousseau, Stendhal, and Balzac have debated various influences□ positive and negative□of women writers and readers in particular. The twentieth century has expanded and heightened the discussion, in both intellectual and emotional terms. In this paper, I will examine Gustave Flaubert's thinking about the problem of masculine versus feminine writing to show that many of the questions pertinent today were being asked over a century ago by an author whose misogyny today's feminists would find reprehensible. While Flaubert was concerned with maintaining a "masculine" style, a stylistic study of his writing yields less than a thematic one. It is in the very threads of Flaubert's story that we find categories of sexual difference which give rise to the questions we are highlighting here. A brief examination of considerations of gender in *Madame Bovary* will show how Flaubert attempted to put his views into literary practice and will underline the importance of the questions raised for twentieth-century gender criticism.

In a letter to his longtime lover, Louise Colet, Flaubert declares: "Je suis un homme-plume. Je sens par elle, à cause d'elle, par rapport à elle et beaucoup plus avec elle." "Homme and "plume" are key words in the formulation of Flaubert's aesthetic, for they represent the author in his entirety. The man□and I think we must read the masculine into this term rather than the generic "man"□ would not exist without the pen□this is a

common thread throughout Flaubert's correspondence. But just as importantly, the pen's existence depends on the man, the essentially masculine man who controls the language system. Flaubert was keenly aware of the role of gender in writing, and he used male images to describe the writing process: "Cet homme qui se dit si calme est plein de doutes sur lui-même. Il voudrait savoir jusqu'à quel cran il peut monter et la puissance exacte de ses muscles. Mais demander cela, c'est être bien ambitieux, car la connaissance précise de sa force n'est peut-être autre que le génie." This notion of strength is seen in Flaubert's development of an impersonal style: "Rappelons-nous toujours que l'impersonnalité est le signe de la Force." "Homme" and "plume" thus become inextricable forces in an aesthetic based on the assumption of male ownership of the pen.

Flaubert's correspondence reveals him to be a misogynist, his reflections on women and sex consisting mainly of vulgarities transmitted to male friends and condescending homilies sent to Louise Colet. Sartre points out that for Flaubert, "comme pour ses amis, la copulation est éminemment publique; les filles sont propriété collective, on partouse, on se raconte grossièrement les parties de jambes en l'air, on se communique les bonnes adresses." Despite such stereotypical male attitudes, however, and perhaps because of them, Flaubert was deeply concerned with questions of gender difference when it came to literary creation. He writes, "j'aime les phrases mâles et non les phrases femelles comme celles de Lamartine", and though we can imagine what he means, Flaubert never specifically spells it out.

Ironically, the most powerful character to emerge from this fundamentally masculine enterprise was a female, Emma Bovary. In creating his heroine, Flaubert was forced to examine how a male creates a female character and how much transference took place between himself and Emma. Baudelaire immediately recognized the male in Emma, calling her androgyny her greatest strength as a literary character, "une âme virile dans un charmant corps féminin." While Emma is indeed androgynous, we can say the same for her creator. While he has infused his character with a masculine part of himself, he has in turn assumed a certain female sensibility in his characterization and even his most sacredly impersonal language. Paradoxically, then, Flaubert would seem to be the kind of androgynous writer feminist theorists have idealized yet without any of the sensibilities feminists attach to their notion of such a writer.

Flaubert was acutely aware of his emotional involvement with his character, and he occasionally found himself almost physically ill after a difficult passage. He writes to Louise Colet:

> Il faut t'aimer pour t'écrire ce soir, car je suis épuisé. J'ai un casque de fer sur le crâne. Depuis deux heures de l'après-midi, j'écris de la "Bovary." Je suis à la Baisade, en plein, au milieu. On sue et on a la gorge serrée. Voilà une des rares journées de ma vie que j'ai passée dans l'Illusion, complètement, et depuis un bout jusqu'à l'autre. Tantôt à six heures, au moment où j'écrivais le mot "attaque de nerfs," j'étais

si emporté, je gueulais si fort, et sentais si profondément
ce que ma petite femme éprouvait, que j'ai eu
peur moi-même d'en avoir une.

Flaubert has invested himself in the novel through identification with Emma. He is polymorphic as well as androgynous. The fictive illusion captures him as do the fictive illusions of Emma's reading. Yet the misogyny remains very much in evidence in a term such as "ma petite femme." There exists at once sameness and difference, and the feminine Other Flaubert finds within himself bears no resemblance to the other woman Hélène Cixous describes: "There always remains in woman that force which produces/is produced by the other□in particular, the other woman . . . Text: my body□shot through with streams of song; I don't mean the overbearing, clutchy "mother" but, rather, what touches you, the equivoice that affects you, fills your breast with an urge to come to language and launches your force . . that part of you that leaves a space between yourself and urges you to inscribe in language your woman's style." Everything is different/difference here between Flaubert's Other and Cixous's as well as between their conception of "force" in writing. And the difference does not stem solely from biological considerations but is seated in the fabric of writing itself. Flaubert is concerned with the preservation of the dominance of male over female, whether in the conception of a Romantic heroine or the formulation of a writing style. Cixous, on the other hand, proposes that a woman can write with a force equal to the male's. Flaubert's "androgyny," then, is a false one, as his incorporation in his character remains incomplete. Yet we must be careful not to dismiss the emotional input of the author, for it is significantly sexually inflected, and it raises questions of gender in our minds as well as Flaubert's.

Emma's well-documented projection into the literary characters she envies is not accompanied by any of the defenses Flaubert provides for himself when he projects himself into his character. In her utter reliance on the validity of literature, she loses herself in the illusions of metaphor, what René Girard calls "external mediation." Despite Flaubert's complete dispersal of self into every element □human and natural□of his scene, he is still conscious of the fiction: "Mais je redoute le réveil, les désillusions des pages recopiées." Taken into the seduction scene during the act of creation, Flaubert the artist still realizes he must go through the work of revision. After allowing the restraints of self to be broken, Flaubert returns to assert his mastery over the written word. The illusion of immediacy and immersion is broken. Fiction is no longer authentic life; he is no longer seduced by the metaphor. This is the ultimate masculine act, the immersion in language, the realm of the Father.

Emma, whose lack of gender definition has been noted, finds her downfall in her inability to leave fiction, especially a fiction she has entered after the very seduction scene Flaubert has just described writing. Lucette Czyba has noted this dichotomy between Flaubert's and Emma's relation to fiction. Czyba sees the writing of *Madame Bovary* as a "dépassement" of Flaubert's romantic youth. "Le texte ne reproduit pas en effet passivement les thèmes anesthésiants de l'idéologie dont l'héroïne est victime mais les présente de façon à produire activement les conditions d'une lecture démystificatrice." Emma's attitude, however, is "'romantique' car elle conserve l'illusion

d'éprouver des désirs spontanés alors qu'ils sont en fait médiatisés." Emma's incorporation into fantasy is a complete metamorphosis. Her present and her past are part of the metaphor. Yet her fictive world eventually disintegrates. The very scene in which her mental illusions are destroyed is also, like the seduction scene, one which demonstrates Flaubert's dispersal into the novel.

Rejected by Rodolphe, ignored by Léon, all Emma has left is the memory of her loves. Forced into recognizing that her literary models have failed her, she experiences an *attaque de nerfs* that resembles Flaubert's own nervous attacks which began in early 1844. In a letter to Hippolyte Taine, Flaubert described those attacks as "une maladie de la mémoire, un relâchement de ce qu'elle recèle. On sent les images s'échapper de vous comme des flots de sang." Flaubert's description of Emma's attack echoes his own: "elle ne souffrait que de son amour, et sentait son âme l'abandonner par ce souvenir, comme les blessés, en agonisant, sentent l'existence qui s'en va par leur plaie qui saigne."

Association between the open wounds and death is deliberate on Flaubert's part; if Flaubert's own attacks signaled a possibility of literal death, Emma's attacks correspond to the death of her fictional self. The distinct images of Emma's memory explode "à la fois, d'un seul bond, comme les mille pièces d'un feu d'artifice." She is fragmented, a disassociated body. Her memory has become divorced from herself, and without her fictive models or her memory, she no longer has the assurance of identity. Emma's body is divorced from the body's experience and from language. Lacan's theory of the fragmented body describes this process at separation: "This experience (when the body senses its split from the Real) can neither be included in the Imaginary, the realm of illusory wholeness, nor can it be part of the Symbolic, the domain which grants a conditional identity. The traumatic moment can thus return in psychosis as the experience of the 'fragmented body', unique for every subject, remainder and reminder of this fracture, appearing in art as images of grotesque dismemberment." Emma feels herself fragmenting, and language fails to prevent it from happening. Without the prerogative of the masculine, i.e., writing, Emma is condemned to fragmentation.

Critics such as Michal Peled Ginsburg see Emma's downfall more in her inability to narrate than in her immersion in literary reverie. If Emma were able to tell her story as other Flaubertian characters have (*Mémoires d'un fou*, *Novembre*, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*), she would be conscious of the repetitive nature of her experience and would then have the power to escape the complete immobility in which she finds herself. Ginsburg writes: "Emma dreams not too much but too little □too little not in terms of the practical welfare of a provincial woman but in terms of the possibility of creating fiction, of coming into being as a narrator." Flaubert thus keeps Emma in a woman's place, in silence.

Marguerite Duras generalizes this idea of men imposing silence on women: "The silence in women is such that anything that falls into it has an enormous reverberation. Whereas in men, this silence no longer exists . . . Because men have established the principle of virile force. And everything that emerged from this virile force□including words, unilateral words□reinforced the silence of women. In my opinion, women have

never expressed themselves." Yet Emma's silence has repercussions that go beyond the simple recognition of women's silence. Emma is not simply a woman who does not write; she is a fictional character whose creator does not permit her to do so. By looking at some of her attempts to write, we may better understand Flaubert's motives.

Emma, while dreaming of becoming a famous novelist, writes only letters to her lovers. As Naomi Schor has pointed out, Emma's letter writing goes through three stages. At first, Emma writes letters in order to receive letters from her lovers. She takes "pleasure in the communication forbidden, impossible on the speech plane." Emma later uses her correspondence in an attempt to revive a waning passion: ". . . dans les lettres qu'Emma lui envoyait, il était question de fleurs, de vers, de la lune et des étoiles, ressources naïves d'une passion affaiblie, qui essayait de s'aviver à tous les secours extérieurs." Finally, when Emma sees in Léon only the same emptiness she found in her husband, she attempts to remystify him in writing: ". . . en écrivant, elle percevait un autre homme, un fantôme fait de ses plus ardents souvenirs, de ses lectures les plus belles, de ses convoitises les plus fortes." Emma the writer thus remains as ineffectual as the women Hélène Cixous describes who write in secret because they are ashamed, because writing is "reserved for the great□that is for 'great men'." By the end of this third stage, Emma no longer writes in hopes of having a letter in return; she writes to purge herself of the monotony of her life.

Schor concludes her analysis of Emma's writing by claiming that on one level, at least, Emma triumphs over Homais and comes to represent Flaubert's view that writing has a feminine sex:

> It is not by chance that the writing apprenticeship and the 'virility apprenticeship,' if I may call it that, follow paths which ultimately converge at the time of Emma's affair with Léon, for their affair marks the triumph of the imaginary over the real, this being the precondition of all writing. If, insofar as the effect *on* the real is concerned, Homais' writing surpasses Emma's; considered in terms of the 'reality effect,' it is without any doubt Emma's (Flaubert's) writing that surpasses Homais' for the 'reality effect' can only be achieved through a total renunciation of any real satisfaction, can only be the just reward of sublimation, i.e., castration. For Flaubert writing thus has a sex, the sex of an assumed lack, the feminine sex."

If we reconsider "the triumph of the imaginary over the real" as an essential precondition of writing, Schor's conclusion can be brought into question. It the imaginary is seen as stemming from the collection of experiences each author has in his or her memory, then we could say that the triumph of memory over the real is the essential precondition of writing. And since Emma's memories focus largely on works of literature, for her□and I submit for Flaubert□writing retains the masculinecoded connotation it has traditionally had. Writing thus does not represent a lack, but a fulfillment in the transformation of

memory into language. Flaubert's desire to write "des phrases mâles" is representative of his desire to translate his memories into writing.

Flaubert, unlike Emma, captures his memories and activates them in his literary creation. According to Charles Bernheimer, Flaubert creates "with the blood issuing from the wound of memory, be it Emma's, his own, or the accumulated archival memory of the nineteenth century." Flaubert thus escapes the fate he has prepared for his main character. By dispersing himself throughout his fiction, Flaubert becomes an integral part of each work. He becomes his own reader as he grapples with his memories, and in a sense becomes the hero of his own work. Victor Brombert surely speaks for many readers when he writes: "A curious symbiotic relationship exists between Flaubert and his heroine. The novelist . . . draws his fictional creature toward himself, and discovers himself in Emma even more than he projects himself into her . . . [Flaubert] is to some extent playing hide and seek with himself." This relationship between author and character is not as curious as it seems when one takes gender into account. Flaubert is fascinated by Emma's femaleness, just as he endows her with a certain maleness. As we have seen, he does not allow Emma to win the game of hide and seek that he is playing not only with himself but with her, but if he did not let her play, she would lose much of her force as a character.

If Flaubert is the hero of his own work, then he must necessarily be a reader of himself, creating a new relationship between author and reader. Marcel Proust's observation "En réalité chaque lecteur est quand il lit le propre lecteur de soimême" remains true, but the author has added himself to our numbers. By doing so, he allows the reader to share his memories, and in a sense to become a collaborator of the work. Fusion of author and character results in a fraternity between author and reader which allows the reader to find truth and beauty in the universal. For Flaubert, this universal is decidedly masculine-tinted for it can be attained only through the strength of masculine prose (presumably, Lamartine would be excluded).

Reader/writer/participant/reader once again these are all facets of the man who was in constant pursuit of truth, beauty, and self-understanding. Flaubert never allowed his character to escape her *bovarysme* because he never allowed her to discover the unifying process of the artist. In 1852 he sent this very Baudelairian statement to Louise Colet: "Ne faut-il pas pour être artiste, voir tout d'une façon différente à celle des autres hommes?". Flaubert's characters were among the "autres hommes" whose view of the world and whose goals were often different from the artist's. Their search for self-understanding was invariably derailed by an equally strong desire for happiness, a goal of second rank in Flaubert's hierarchy: "Ne sens-tu pas qu'il y a quelque chose de plus élevé que le bonheur? que l'amour et que la Religion, parce qu'il prend sa source dans un ordre plus impersonnel? . . . Je veux dire l'idée." The artist is able to accomplish what his characters cannot: he can transfer his memories and personal preoccupations into writing, and by reading the idea of himself which he has created, he can better understand himself.

This last statement must, however, be viewed in the context of Flaubert's own terminology as it pertains to gender, for otherwise it would be incomplete. He writes of

these "autres hommes," a group into which I have placed his characters, including Emma Bovary. Although I have attributed to her certain masculine traits, she is decidedly female. Going one step further, if we ignore the physical sex of these "autres hommes" for a moment, is Flaubert not indeed referring to those who are not artists and therefore not controllers of language, i.e., females? Is not the list of things that Flaubert disdains□happiness, love, and religion□an enumeration of interests that nineteenth-century French society assigned primarily to women? And finally, in distancing himself from anything personal, is Flaubert not trying to eliminate the feminine from his writing? Flaubert was a man writing with the force of a man for an audience of men who presumably would best understand his work. (He always had his male friends, Alfred Le Poittevin or Louis Bouilhet, critique his work, rather than Louise Colet. He preferred to critique hers.) Yet his encounter with Emma Bovary clouded the waters somewhat for him, and he was forced to reexamine his position, even though he did not fundamentally change it.

Flaubert's notion of the idea ("Idée") is clearly linked to his fascination with the power ("Force") of writing, the strength so closely gender-identified with the masculine. His correspondence describes this "Idée" not as an idea, for Flaubert even writes that he is not much interested in ideas, but rather as an integral part of style: ". . . l'âme courbée se déploie dans cet azur, qui ne s'arrête qu'aux frontières du Vrai. Où la Forme, en effet, manque, l'Idée n'est plus." The composing of *Madame Bovary* was Flaubert's conscious attempt to eliminate all but "la Forme," to write his "livre sur rien." Even though he is unable to succeed in such an undertaking, it is important that he was always conscious of his stated goal. Even if Emma Bovary shares some of herself with Flaubert, and even if the text writes its author as much as the author writes it, Flaubert never ceased to write the masculine, attempting to eliminate "les phrases femelles" and all attachment to anything outside the cherished "Idée."

Flaubert's concept of writing presents a direct contrast to modern-day feminist theories of feminine writing. For Hélène Cixous, for example, "l'écriture féminine" is located in a realm where all difference has been abolished. There are no rigid boundaries of style because writing is a never-ending process:

The book□I could reread it with the help of memory
and forgetting. Start over again. From another perspective,
from another and yet another. Reading, I discovered
that writing is endless. Everlasting. Eternal.
Writing or God. God the writing. The writing God.

Although there is no difference here, it is still the realm of the omnipotent, represented for Cixous by the omnipotent mother. Thus it is that writing, while emanating from a sexless world, can, for Cixous, be gender-identified as feminine; hence the appellation "l'écriture féminine."

In light of definitions of "l'écriture féminine," what then is the place of Flaubert's "écriture masculine" in the history of literary criticism? Certainly, since the rise of feminist criticism, style based solely on a masculine conception of strength has been roundly

condemned. And yet some of the more forceful proponents of a new writing that might be considered genderless call for just such a strong language, but one that will not be limited to males. Kristeva speaks of a "spasmodic force" of the unconscious which disrupts women's language because of their strong links with the pre- Oedipal mother-figure. Yet it is actually disrupting the traditional male-dominated system of language and, far from weakening feminine writing, strengthens it from within the system. "For Kristeva . . . there is a *specific practice of writing* that is itself 'revolutionary', analogous to sexual and political transformation, and that by its very existence testifies to the possibility of transforming the symbolic order from the inside." An author's biological sex is thus secondary to the subject position she or he takes up in determining revolutionary potential.

Certain patterns appear throughout the feminist aesthetic which help shed light on our discussion of Flaubert's view of language in relation to twentieth-century critics. First, we see as a given of feminist theory a rejection of the appropriation of language. The goal is to carve out a place for women's writing, inside or outside of the established order. Second, women's writing squarely places itself in the sociopolitical arena. One cannot discuss women's writing without examining its revolutionary effects outside the world of literature. Finally, for Kristeva and others, gender distinctions disappear. There is no longer any "écriture féminine" or "écriture masculine," only "écriture."

We seem to have come full circle here. For it could be argued that before feminist criticism there was only "écriture." The radical difference, of course, is that this previous writing was generally written by males for a public subsumed in a maledominant society. Literature by and for females could not be taken quite as seriously. Flaubert wrote according to that essentially male model, but he was not totally comfortable with the assumption of the masculine in his writing. He had to prove constantly to himself that his language was sufficiently "male," so that he would not fall into the trap of Romanticism, into the "female" phrases of Lamartine. Flaubert would certainly have been aghast at the feminine writing proposed by Cixous, for he was fighting to conserve and perfect the traditional Symbolic order.

It would be an injustice to see Flaubert as simply a proponent of male dominance. While he stands for the system feminists are resisting, he was open to questions of gender in the creative process. From a non-gender-identified writing came a style that was consciously male. At the same time, he became aware of the dangers of such a fundamental strategy. Emma Bovary taught him the power of the feminine and allowed him to see himself as he never had before. Flaubert opened a debate that would soon be taken up by Zola in his criticism of Hugo and would continue throughout the Naturalist and Symbolist periods.

Flaubert's world, a world of men, by men, and for men, is not likely to return, precisely because male ownership of language can no longer be taken for granted. Yet through his struggle to preserve that domain, Flaubert necessarily gained consciousness of its arbitrariness. By posing questions concerning gender, Flaubert unwittingly contributed to the evolution of viable alternatives to writing the masculine.

Source: William C. VanderWolk, "Writing the Masculine: Gender and Creativity in *Madame Bovary*," in *Romance Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, May 1990, pp. 147-56.

Adaptations

There have been eight film versions of *Madame Bovary*, and five television versions. The most famous adaptation was directed by Vincente Minnelli in 1949 for MGM. Jennifer Jones starred as Emma and Van Heflin as Charles.

Topics for Further Study

Watch the 1949 MGM film version of *Madame Bovary*, especially the scene at the ball when Emma is dancing. Choose another scene in the novel that focuses on Emma's passionate nature and describe how you would film it.

Compare Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* to Emma, analyzing their motivations and their fate.

Research the rights of women in France during the mid-nineteenth century. How much freedom and opportunity would a woman like Emma have in that culture?

Investigate the lives of the French middle class during the nineteenth century. How strict was their class system? What moral standards did they follow?

Compare and Contrast

Mid-nineteenth century: In 1835, French philosopher Victor Cousin first uses the phrase "l'Art pour l'Art" ("Art for Art's sake") to define a new literary movement that promotes style over other literary elements. Flaubert is greatly influenced by this movement.

Today: The confessional narrative gains a prominent position in the literary world.

Mid-nineteenth century: In 1848, the first American convention concerning women's rights is held in Seneca Falls, New York.

Today: Women have made major gains in their fight for equality and although some bills□like the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment Bill□still have not passed to this day, discrimination against women is now against the law.

Mid-nineteenth century: The Second Empire begins in France in 1852. French social mores, under the leadership of Bonaparte III, include a devotion to a strict moral code, at least in public.

Today: Some see the election of George W. Bush to the office of president as the result of America's desire to return to a more conservative sense of morality.

What Do I Read Next?

Flaubert's heartwarming short story "Un coeur simple," collected in *Trois Contes* (1977), has been celebrated for its realistic portrait of human dignity and compassion.

In *L'Education sentimentale*, published in 1869, Flaubert presents his assessment of his generation in the story of Frédéric Moreau and his friends in Paris during the 1840s.

Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (1984), written by Lynn Hunt, offers a comprehensive overview of French culture during and after the Revolution.

In *Anna Karenina*, published in 1877, Leo Tolstoy chronicles the passion and tragic fate of his married heroine as she enters into an affair with a dashing officer.

Further Study

Ginsburg, Michal Peled, *Flaubert Writing: A Study in Narrative Strategies*, Stanford University Press, 1986.

Ginsburg presents a penetrating analysis of the structure and style of Flaubert's work.

Green, Anne, *Flaubert and the Historical Novel*, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Green places the novel into its historical and cultural context.

Knight, Diana, *Flaubert and the Historical Novel*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Knight presents a comprehensive psychological study of Emma Bovary and compares her to Flaubert's other characters.

Levin, Harry, *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists*, Oxford University Press, 1963.

Levin places the novel in the realist tradition and compares it to other works in this movement.

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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:

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