

# **Mansfield Park Study Guide**

## **Mansfield Park by Jane Austen**

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# Plot Summary

Fanny Price is the eldest daughter in a large family of small means. When she is nine years old, she is sent to live with her wealthier relations in the country, the Bertram family and her Aunt Norris. Fanny is a very timid child and feels very inferior around her four cousins, Julia, Maria, Edmund, and Tom. Julia and Maria are just slightly older than Fanny, but they never include her or help her feel a part of the household. Tom is much older than Fanny and just tolerates her, but Edmund becomes Fanny's friend and benefactor, helping her with her education and making sure she is looked after when the rest of the family neglects her. Fanny stays in touch with her older brother William, but she hardly ever gets to see him.

Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris come to depend on Fanny, but they usually treat her like a maidservant rather than a relative. As the children become young adults, they are introduced to another family on the property, the Crawfords. Mrs. Norris has helped arrange a match for Maria with a very wealthy, very ignorant man named Mr. Rushforth, and Maria enters into the engagement because she longs for his wealth. Henry Crawford is a charismatic young man, and Julia and Maria Bertram both fall in love with him. Fanny sees the impropriety of Maria and Henry's flirtations and is wary of the Crawfords.

Edmund falls in love with Henry's sister Mary, even though they don't have much in common. Edmund is determined to become a clergyman, and Mary is very ambitious and wishes that Edmund were to inherit Mansfield Park, but Edmund is the younger brother and will only inherit a living. During a bout of bad weather, Tom brings home a friend named Mr. Yates, and Mr. Yates proposes that the young people put on a play. They decide on a play called *Lovers' Vows*, and Maria and Henry Crawford form one of the couples in the play while Mary and Edmund form the other. Fanny refuses to join the play because she knows her uncle, who is out of the country on business, would never approve of it.

Sir Thomas Bertram returns from his trip early, and the play is broken up. Soon thereafter, Maria marries Mr. Rushworth and Julia goes to stay with her sister and brother-in-law. Henry Crawford then decides to try and make Fanny fall in love with him, but in so doing, he falls in love with her. He proposes to her, and she refuses him, bringing the wrath of her uncle and aunts on her. They see Henry as a very advantageous match for a girl who has no money, for he is very well off, but Fanny understands his character and will not give in.

In an effort to get his niece to understand the folly of her ways, Sir Bertram sends Fanny to her native home in Portsmouth for several months. While she is there she misses the comforts and tranquility of Mansfield Park immensely, and she even begins to feel that she might be able to tolerate Mr. Crawford when he comes to her and treats her so kindly and gently. But then Mr. Crawford and Maria run away together, causing a scandal that is in all the newspapers. Mary Crawford's reaction to these events shows Edmund her true colors, and he is heartbroken, knowing he can never marry her now.



Julia elopes to Scotland with Mr. Yates. Fanny and her younger sister Susan return to Mansfield Park. In the end, Fanny marries Edmund and Susan becomes Lady Bertram's companion. Maria and Mr. Crawford separate, and Mrs. Norris and Maria go to live in another country to escape the scorn.



# Chapters 1, 2, and 3

## Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

The first chapter introduces the main character and her family, giving thirty years of family history. In short, Miss Maria Ward makes a very good match with Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park. This good match is expected to raise the fortunes of her younger sisters. The next younger sister marries a Reverend, Mr. Norris, and they settle in Mansfield near the Bertrams. The youngest sister, Frances, however, marries a lieutenant named Mr. Price who is in the marines and has no education, connections, or fortune.

The Prices live far from the Bertrams and Norris's, and a wedge between the families forms. However, when Mrs. Price is pregnant with her ninth child, she writes to her sisters asking if they could help sponsor one of her children. The letter results in increased communication and kindness among the families.

When Fanny is fifteen, Mr. Norris dies. Tom has racked up excessive debts, and Sir Bertram must use part of Edmund's living to pay for Tom's extravagances. Sir Bertram has also had problems with his West India estate and wishes to offload some of his own expenses, so he tells Fanny that she is to go live with Mrs. Norris. Fanny is dismayed by this news because she knows she is unloved by her Aunt Norris. When Sir and Lady Bertram speak with Mrs. Norris, they are surprised to find that she is not willing to have Fanny live with her, and Fanny and Mrs. Norris are both relieved.

A Dr. Grant and his lovely wife move into the house the Norrises lived in until Mr. Norris' death. Mrs. Norris has moved to a smaller cottage. Dr. and Mrs. Grant are interesting people, and Lady Bertram soon feels jealous of Mrs. Grant's beauty.

## Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

Instead of taking the boy, Mrs. Norris convinces Lady and Sir Bertram that they should take the nine-year-old girl, Fanny. Sir Bertram is hesitant. He has two sons and two daughters of his own to worry about, and he is nervous about the responsibility of an additional child from a different social rank, but he eventually concedes.

The family background in this chapter may seem a bit confusing with the introduction of so many names and relationships, but it is vital to the rest of the story. The conversation between Mrs. Norris and Lady and Sir Bertram regarding the social distinction between the Bertram girls and the Price girl is foreshadowing of the conflict to come. Sir Bertram wants to make sure that Miss Price realizes that she does not have the same privileges and connections as the Bertram family, but he still wants the girls all to be friends. Mrs. Norris, in her sycophantic way, wants to oblige him and agrees heartily with the emphasis on class distinction.



This is interesting because Mrs. Norris and Sir Bertram are not equal peers regarding class. Although they are closer to each other socioeconomically than they are to the Prices, Mrs. Norris does not have a landed title as Sir Bertram does. In fact, the Norrises depend on the Bertrams for their living. Yet, Mrs. Norris seems more than willing to remind the young Price girl that she is not equal to Julia and Maria Bertram.

The Price's eldest daughter, Fanny, travels to Northampton and is met by Mrs. Norris. Fanny Price is ten years old, very small for her age, and very shy. She draws a sharp contrast to the Bertram children who are very handsome and confident. The two boys are sixteen and seventeen, and the girls are twelve and fourteen. Mrs. Norris lectures Fanny about her place in the household and how grateful she ought to be. Fanny is so tired and overwhelmed by the journey and the situation that she cries and is sent to bed.

The Bertram girls are not impressed with Fanny, and Fanny is afraid of everyone. She is also uncomfortable in the grandeur of the large house, afraid she is going to ruin something at every turn. After a week of this discomfort, the sixteen-year-old boy Edmund finds Fanny sitting on a step crying. He consoles her and helps her to feel better. He finds out that she especially misses her older brother William. He encourages her to write a letter to William, and he furnishes her with writing paper and envelopes.

Only once does Fanny see William during these years. Sir Bertram helps William to visit during a Christmas holiday. William becomes a sailor, so Fanny is delighted to be able to see him before he goes away. Edmund is the only Bertram who takes an interest in Fanny. He recommends books to her and helps her with her education. She loves him more than anyone in the world except for William.

After this episode with Edmund, Fanny begins to feel more comfortable, but the girls still disdain her. Fanny puts up with their treatment, figuring she deserves it as their lowly cousin. The children grow up. The Bertram girls become beautiful young women. Tom becomes extravagant and careless. Edmund is upright and wants to be a clergyman.

In this chapter, we begin to see the character development of Fanny Price, the protagonist of the novel. When we first meet Fanny, she is the most timid of children, bursting into tears after a stressful day of travel and introductions. The Bertrams are not impressed with her, and the Bertram girls, who should be friends to her because of their ages, see no worth in Fanny. She finds an unusual ally in the younger of the Bertram sons, and this relationship is key to Fanny's development and the development of the story.

This chapter covers several years; it's a summary of events intended to give additional background to the first chapter, which also covered a long time span. These distant histories increase the reader's anticipation for more familiarity with the characters and plot. These first two chapters also give set points for each of the characters in their development. We can measure their development or disintegration based on these initial character sketches.



Sir Bertram leaves for Antigua, where he hopes to settle some of his business affairs, and he takes Tom with him in hopes of separating him from some of the bad influences in England which have led him to a life of excess. Julia and Maria do not seem upset by their father's departure, even though he is to be gone for nearly a year. Fanny is relieved that Sir Bertram is leaving because she never feels comfortable in his presence. The morning before he leaves, Sir Bertram tells Fanny she should write William and invite him to visit Mansfield as soon as his squadron arrives in England.

It's clear that Fanny's relationship with most of the Bertram family has not improved by the time she is fifteen. The Bertrams don't want her around anymore, and Mrs. Norris doesn't want her either. They all consider her a burden, and she herself feels she is a burden. This illustrates the impact the Bertrams have had on her self-esteem.

Fanny's situation also illustrates the culture in which the story is set. Women and girls are completely dependent upon their connections for their situation and comfort. Fanny is not in a position to guide her own life. She can only control it within very narrow parameters.



# Chapters 4 and 5

## Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Sir Bertram arrives in Antigua safely, and life goes on at Mansfield Park. Julia and Maria are now considered the "belles of the neighborhood," and they spend their time socializing and beautifying themselves. As the man of the house, Edmund takes care of the accounts and details. The winter passes and spring arrives.

Fanny is deprived of one of her greatest pleasures, riding the old gray pony. Her aunts tell her she can ride one of her cousins' horses whenever they don't need to, but they always need them on nice days, and Fanny never gets to ride. The lack of exercise and fresh air affects her health, but no one goes out of the way to resolve the problem. Edmund finally notices the problem and exchanges one of his own horses for a horse more appropriate for Fanny to ride.

Mr. Rushworth, an awkward, extremely rich young man, falls in love with Maria Bertram, and although she doesn't like him, she intends to marry him for money. They set a tentative wedding date in the future when Sir Thomas Bertram will be back in England.

Chapter 5 begins with a conversation between Mary and Henry Crawford. They are discussing the Bertram girls, and Mary tells her brother that he will like Maria best in the end, even though he may profess to like Julia best. Henry says that engaged girls are always more fun to be around than single girls because they are sure of themselves and less anxious. On the other side, the Bertram girls are both enraptured with Henry Crawford, and Mary Crawford believes Tom Bertram would make a good match for herself, being the eldest son of a wealthy family.

Mary Crawford wants to know about Fanny. She sees that Fanny dines with the family but she says very little and doesn't join them on many social occasions. She wonders if Fanny is "out" in society yet. Edmund defends her shyness and praises her modesty. When Mary hears that Fanny has never been to a ball, she says that Fanny is decidedly "not out."

## Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

Two additional characters enter the story, Mr. and Miss Crawford, the brother and sister of Mrs. Grant. They come to stay with Dr. and Mrs. Grant, and everyone is excited about this new company. Mr. Crawford is very handsome, and Mary Crawford is elegant and charming. Mary Crawford warns the Bertram girls that they should stay away from her brother Henry unless they want their hearts to be broken.

The author narrows the focus of the novel in this chapter and introduces some secondary characters who are outside the main household but who will be influential in the plot development. These new characters, Mr. Rushworth, Mary Crawford, and Henry





Crawford, enter the scene just at the time when other situations are presented: Sir Bertram being out of the country, and the Bertram girls' arrival as the belles of the neighborhood. The juxtaposition of these circumstances is foreshadowing of the action to come.

Edmund continues to prove himself as a reliable and attentive friend to Fanny. When her needs are overlooked by everyone else, he comes to the rescue. This is evident when he sacrifices one of his own horses so Fanny will have a horse to ride that is appropriate for her size and skill. In a way, Edmund is a savior to Fanny. He can be relied upon when everyone else fails her.

Mary Crawford's seeming obsession with whether or not Fanny Price is "out" in society is a cultural phenomenon of the time and place, an integral characteristic of the setting. In the early 19th century in England, especially in rural areas where Jane Austen lived, there were strict social conventions about when and where a single young woman could appear in society.

Normally, a young woman would have a formal "debut," usually at a ball, and after this debut she would be admitted to any social event. Being "out" in society also meant that a young woman could be courted by young men seeking marriage. Mary Crawford's great interest in Fanny's status shows that she wants to know whether or not Fanny is a rival for men's attentions.



# Chapters 6, 7, and 8

## Chapters 6, 7, and 8 Summary

The young people discuss Mr. Rushworth's estate and what improvements could be made to it. Mr. Rushworth wants everyone's opinions about it. Edmund is beginning to admire Mary Crawford. She is very beautiful, but he feels uncomfortable about the way she speaks so freely and critically of others.

After discussing Mr. Rushworth's property, which is called Sotherton, Mrs. Norris suggests that they all go to visit Sotherton so they might give their opinions "on the spot." They would all be able to discuss the estate better after having been to it. Julia and Maria are delighted with the idea. Maria especially wants to see the estate and make sure her marriage to Mr. Rushworth is worth it.

Edmund discovers that Mary Crawford enjoys horseback riding, so he asks Fanny for permission to ride the mare he has traded for her. Fanny doesn't feel at all slighted by this; instead, she feels grateful that he would ask her permission at all. The other members of the family never condescend to ask her anything. Edmund and Mary go riding, and they stay out much longer than anticipated, which causes Fanny to wait for much of the morning before she can take her ride. Everyone is greatly impressed by Mary's horseback riding skills. Edmund asks Fanny if Mary can have the horse for an entire morning, and Fanny humors him by saying she will be too tired tomorrow to ride at all.

The chapter begins with a conversation between Edmund and Fanny about Mary Crawford. They both admire her greatly, and they think she is very beautiful. However, Edmund asks Fanny if she noticed anything indecorous about Mary's conversation. Fanny immediately recalls Mary's disparaging comment about her uncle. Edmund confirms his disapproval of Mary's comment but tries to soften it by saying that Mary doesn't owe her uncle as much gratitude as she owes her aunt.

From the first conversation of the chapter between Edmund and Fanny, we see they have developed a sort of moral checks-and-balances system between themselves. They can be frank with each other, and they check their opinions against each other to make sure they are being fair. Edmund is developing a crush on Mary Crawford, but he still retains the ability to judge her character.

Fanny's gratitude toward Edmund when he asks permission to take away her horse may seem odd. He is asking her for her greatest pleasure, and he's asking that it be used by a woman that Fanny is not terribly fond of, and yet she feels gratitude for something so small as being asked permission. This situation tells the reader how poorly Fanny has been treated by her aunt, uncle, and cousins. Her poor treatment is reinforced by the last scene in the chapter, wherein her aunts and cousins have been so thoughtless



toward her that she is lying on the couch in the drawing room when Edmund and Julia return home.

Mrs. Norris tells Mrs. Rushworth that Lady Bertram will not be able to go and that Fanny will have to stay behind to keep Lady Bertram company. Mrs. Norris arranges everything so there will be no room for Fanny in the carriage. Edmund is incensed, and says that he will stay home so Fanny can go. Quickly, arrangements are made to include Fanny as well.

When the barouche box arrives in the morning, Julia gets the superior seat with the good view next to Mr. Crawford, which makes her sister Maria very unhappy. Sotherton is ten miles from Mansfield Park, but the day is very pleasant. Fanny is excited about seeing parts of the country she has never seen before. Maria sulks as she watches Julia and Mr. Crawford laugh and have fun together. However, as they approach Sotherton and Maria sees how grand the estate is, and she realizes she will be mistress of this great property, her spirits rise.

## Chapters 6, 7, and 8 Analysis

Jane Austen uses a great deal of dialogue in some chapters, and this is one of those chapters. The dialogue helps the reader to get a feel for the relationships among the characters. In this case, Fanny's diffidence is very clear; she hardly ever speaks unless she is directly addressed. We also get a feel for Mary's confidence and familiarity. She does not behave as formally as some of the other characters, and this bothers Edmund. It's also clear that Fanny and Edmund have a special relationship when Fanny mentions a Cowper poem to Edmund, and he is very amused by it.

Because Edmund feels guilty about his neglect of Fanny, her horseback rides resume the next day. She feels healthier and happier. Mr. Rushworth arrives with his mother to invite the Bertrams to accompany him to his estate at Sotherton the next day. Maria and Julia urge Mr. Rushworth to invite Mr. Crawford, so he goes down the parsonage and invites him as well.

Maria's poorer character traits become painfully obvious during the ride to Sotherton from Mansfield Park. Although she is engaged to Mr. Rushworth, she feels jealous of Mr. Crawford's attentions to her younger sister. Mr. Crawford is better looking and more congenial than Mr. Rushworth. Maria seeks immediate gratification, which can only be obtained at the present through Mr. Crawford. Her spirits only rise when she sees the grandeur of Sotherton. Her vanity and pride are soothed by the riches that will soon be hers.

Earlier in the chapter, Edmund plays a sort of Savior figure for Fanny when he sacrifices his own spot in the barouche for her. Of course, because of his favored position in this society, he is accommodated anyway. Because of Edmund's rank and position, he can be a savior to Fanny.



# Chapter 9 and 10

## Chapter 9 and 10 Summary

Mr. Rushworth is already at Sotherton, and he meets his guests at the door. The group eats a lavish mid-day meal in the dining room. Mr. Rushworth is most concerned about Mr. Crawford's opinion of the grounds and wants to know how he would like to proceed with the tour. Mrs. Rushworth wants to show the house to Maria, and Maria is delighted to look at her future home.

When they come to the chapel, Fanny tells Edmund that she is disappointed by the chapel. It does not seem dignified enough for worship. But she is thrilled with the rest of the house, and she becomes Mrs. Rushworth's chief listener during the tour because the others are unimpressed by large houses, having spent so much time in many. Mrs. Rushworth tells how this chapel was once in use both morning and evening for prayers and devotionals, which the servants attended as well as the family, but Mr. Rushworth's father has discontinued the tradition. At this, Mary Crawford tells Edmund that each generation has its improvements.

The group goes outside to examine the grounds, and they naturally divide into groups. Mr. Crawford, Mr. Rushworth, and Maria form one group; Edmund, Mary Crawford, and Fanny form another group; and Julia, Mrs. Norris, and Mrs. Rushworth form a third. Mary Crawford finds a nice wood she would like to walk in, but it is surrounded by a fence with a locked gate. They find a flight of stairs that takes them into the cool wood. Mary Crawford interrogates Edmund as to why he would want to be a clergyman. Edmund thinks Fanny looks tired, so all three sit down on a bench to rest. Mary is restless, however, and she soon wants to get up and walk. Edmund and Mary leave Fanny on the bench to go walking.

Fanny waits on the bench for Edward and Miss Crawford to return, and finally Mr. Rushworth, Mr. Crawford, and Miss Bertram (Maria) come along and find her all alone. They wish to pass through the gate, but Mr. Rushworth has forgotten the key. He runs back to the house to get it. Maria and Mr. Crawford begin flirting with each other almost as soon as Mr. Rushworth leaves their presence, and Fanny feels very uncomfortable. Maria and Mr. Crawford climb over the fence, despite Fanny's protests, and Fanny is left to convey the news to Mr. Rushworth that they have gone to the other side of the fence.

Julia comes upon Fanny next and is upset because she's had to spend so much time with Mrs. Rushworth. She wants to know where Maria and Mr. Crawford are, and she climbs over the fence as well. Mr. Rushworth returns with the key, and Fanny tells him where everyone has gone. He is gloomy and sits down with Fanny to wait for their return. Mr. Rushworth asks Fanny what she thinks of Mr. Crawford. Mr. Rushworth can tell that Maria prefers Crawford.



## Chapter 9 and 10 Analysis

Julia notices that Mr. Rushworth and Maria are standing near the altar together as if they were already at their wedding ceremony. Mr. Crawford whispers to Maria that he does not like to see her standing so near the altar. Julia says it's a pity Edmund isn't a priest already, for here they are all together, and Edmund could perform the ceremony. Maria asks Mr. Crawford if he'll give her away. This is the first time Mary Crawford has heard that Edmund is determined to be a clergyman. She feels embarrassed about her religious slights.

The wedding scene in the chapel at Sotherton is both foreshadowing and nostalgia for what could have been if each character could rise above his or her weaknesses. Mr. Crawford's interference with the romantic scene at the altar creates a small amount of conflict but hints at a large amount of conflict in the chapters to come. This scene is a sort of microcosm for the book as a whole. The reactions of the other characters to this scene magnify their character traits. Mary Crawford is irreverent; Julia is morally inappropriate; Mr. Rushworth is impotent, and Fanny and Edmund watch these blunders in judgmental horror.

Out on the grounds, Mary expresses surprise that Edmund wishes to become a clergyman. She thinks that a handsome young man of respectable means should be out in society, not tucked away in a church somewhere. Her opinions are transparent, though, when she changes them in order to gain his favor.

Edmund's self-sacrificing nature is tested during his walk with Mary and Fanny in the woods. He can tell Fanny needs a break, but he forces a longer-than-necessary rest upon her so he can have some time alone with Mary Crawford. As always, Fanny feels nothing but gratitude for his thoughtfulness.

Maria and Julia prove themselves to be as shallow as they have always been. Maria is too concerned with her own pleasure to worry about how her fiancé feels. She contrives a false errand for him (to get the key to the gate) to get him out of her way so she can spend time alone with Mr. Crawford. Julia complains to Fanny about how she has had to spend several hours with the older ladies while Fanny always gets to have fun, which is a very unfair statement.

Fanny's purpose in this chapter is to act as a narrator/observer. She stays in one place, the bench in the woods, while the other characters come and go. The action takes place around her, but she is stationary. This symbolizes the solidity of Fanny's character. She is not a dynamic character like Edmund; she remains the same from beginning to end.



# Chapter 11, 12, and 13

## Chapter 11, 12, and 13 Summary

Sir Thomas Bertram writes to his family that he will be returning to England as soon as November, and this news is disagreeable to his daughters. Maria is disappointed because when her father returns, she will have to marry Mr. Rushworth. Sir Bertram's return becomes the main topic of conversation. Edmund plans to take orders (officially become a clergyman) upon his father's return, and this causes anxiety for Mary Crawford.

Mary questions Edmund about his motivation behind wanting to be a clergyman. He admits that he is influenced by the living that his father can provide to him, but that he would probably want to be a clergyman anyway. Mary says it would be madness to take orders without first obtaining the guarantee of a living. Fanny, of course, sides with Edmund in this conversation.

Tom Bertram, Edmund's brother, returns to Mansfield Park for a short time toward the beginning of September. At the same time, Henry Crawford leaves for about two weeks to attend to some business. Maria and Julia, who each regards herself as Mr. Crawford's favorite, miss him terribly and are out of sorts during this period.

At an informal dance, Mrs. Rushworth and Mrs. Norris talk about how Julia and Mr. Crawford make such a nice match. Mrs. Norris believes they will marry. Tom sits down by Fanny and complains to her about how tired he is and how dull the company is. He asks her if she wants to dance, and when she declines, he says he's relieved to hear it. But when Mrs. Norris asks Tom to join her in a game of cards, he takes Fanny's hand and leads her to the dance floor.

Tom Bertram invites his friend John Yates to visit at Mansfield Park. John Yates is the son of a lord and resembles Tom in habits, work ethic, and morals. He has recently been visiting a household where the young people were putting on a play, and Mr. Yates is completely absorbed in dramatics as a consequence. He proposes that the young people at Mansfield Park put on a play, and nearly everyone is thrilled with the idea.

Tom thinks they should build a theater, and everyone tries to persuade Edmund to join them. Julia agrees that Maria's part should be chosen very carefully, but Maria thinks her engagement puts her own judgment above her mother's and father's. Henry Crawford arrives from the parsonage with news that his sister Mary is on board with the play, and Edmund feels he must give in.

## Chapter 11, 12, and 13 Analysis

Edmund is very much infatuated with Mary at this point. He admires her manners, her walk, her grace, her beauty, and everything else about her. Fanny agrees with all of



Edmund's compliments for Mary Crawford. At the end of the chapter, Edmund and Fanny stand by the window, pointing out constellations. She wants to go outside with him and look at the stars, but Edmund is pulled back to the piano where Mary is singing with the others.

The disagreement between Edmund Bertram and Mary Crawford over a profession in the church is fast becoming a point of conflict. Edmund's intentions to take orders cannot be mentioned without Mary getting uptight and trying to dissuade him from his goal. Despite the conflict, Edmund is as much in love with her as ever.

The scene at the end of the chapter with Edmund and Fanny looking at the stars out of the window isolates them briefly from the rest of the group and shows what they have in common. While the others are entertaining themselves, Edmund and Fanny talk about knowledge and beauty in the corner. Their spirits are as expansive as the others' are shallow.

Tom joins the ranks of the shallow characters during his conversation with Fanny at the dance. His comments are low, especially when he talks about how bored Mrs. Grant must be with her dull husband, and he thinks only of his own comfort. When he asks Fanny to dance a second time, Fanny knows it is only because he considers dancing with her to be less of an evil than playing cards with Mrs. Norris.

Fanny talks with Edmund about Mr. Crawford's preference for Maria. Edmund thinks Mr. Crawford has pleasing manners around all women, and that a man often is friendlier with his favorite lady's sister than he is with the lady. Fanny wants to believe Edmund, and her opinions have almost always been shaped by his, but she doesn't quite believe him in this case.

Maria's attachment to Mr. Crawford grows ever stronger, and Julia's attachment to him has not lessened at all. Thus, we see the formation of several love triangles. Julia and Maria both love Mr. Crawford, and Mr. Rushworth and Mr. Crawford both appear to love Maria. These conflicts propel the plot forward as the reader wants to see how they will be resolved.

Edmund counsels against the play, saying that it would be injudicious to undertake such an amusement while their father is undergoing a dangerous journey and that Maria would be put in an indelicate situation as her activities will be scrutinized due to her engagement. Everyone but Fanny disagrees with Edmund. A moral line is drawn when Tom and John Yates announce their intent to put on a play. Each character must choose which side of the line to be on. Fanny and Edmund stand on one side, and every other character stands on the other. Edmund puts up a good fight at the beginning, but when Mary Crawford willingly joins the play, he feels a bit deflated.

This conflict is one of the largest of the story because it positions characters in two camps, the safe camp and the at-risk camp. Every character who wholeheartedly joins the play is put at-risk in some way by his or her decision. When Edmund and Julia speak of Maria's delicate situation, they couldn't be more right.





# Chapters 14, 15, and 16

## Chapters 14, 15, and 16 Summary

The group embarks on the project of choosing a play that will be agreeable to everyone, and this is no small task. Julia, Maria, John Yates, and Henry Crawford want a tragedy, and Tom and Mary want a comedy. Fanny watches with interest as they all jockey and vie for their favorite plays. She observes that they all have selfish interests in their arguments.

Finally, they settle on a play called *Lover's Vows*, the very play John Yates performed previously with another group of friends. Then they must decide who should play the parts. Julia and Maria both want to play the part of Agatha, who will be the lover of Henry Crawford's character. Henry wants Maria to play Agatha, and Julia is crushed.

Mr. Rushworth arrives, and he is quickly cast as Count Cassel. He is pleased with his part because he will wear a fancy costume, but Maria helps him shorten his lines so he doesn't have so much to memorize. Edmund has been away for most of the morning and has not yet heard that "*Lover's Vows*" is to be the play of choice. When he returns he is shocked that they would choose such a vulgar play for their home theater and lectures Maria about how she should have been an example to the group and disapproved of the choice.

Edmund tells Maria that their father would surely be against such a play being performed in his house, and he encourages her to turn down the part and not participate in the play, but Maria says that if she turns down the part, Julia will get it instead of her.

Fanny goes to bed distressed by Tom's incessant attacks to get her to join their play. In the morning, she still worries about it. She does not want to displease anyone, but she also doesn't want to compromise her principles. Fanny's room is described. When the Bertram children were young, the room was their nursery. By the time Fanny came to live with them, the nursery was no longer in use, so it became her room. Its furnishings have never been updated, but Fanny likes it very much. Everyone else considers Fanny's room to be quite inferior, but Fanny likes the solitude it provides her.

This morning, Edmund comes to Fanny's room and asks if he may come in and speak with her. He wants her opinion. No one ever asks Fanny her opinion, and she is afraid to give it. The previous evening, Tom proposed involving a gentleman in the neighborhood to act in the play since they are short on people to take all the parts. This gentleman's name is Charles Maddox. Edmund thinks that it is highly inappropriate to involve an outsider in their play, and the only way he can think of to solve this problem is to take the part himself. Edmund also says he would take the part to help Mary Crawford, so she wouldn't have to act with a stranger.





## Chapters 14, 15, and 16 Analysis

After the parts are chosen, Maria goes down to the parsonage to tell Mary about her part. Tom and John go to the room that is now being called "The Theater," and the others disburse as well. Fanny is left alone in the drawing room, and she picks up the script to read it. She is astonished that they have chosen a play of such low morals. She is sure that her cousins are unaware of the contents of the play because she believes their modesty would prohibit their participating in it. Again, Fanny remains a solid fixture among so many moving parts. She is the sun at the center of the solar system and remains fixed while the planets move around in their own orbits. She observes the action but remains apart from it.

John Yates is an outside force that comes in and shakes up the characters, plot, and even the setting. When he comes in and proposes the play, he brings new life to the immoral movement among the bulk of the characters. The play is soon enthusiastically embraced and even the house is being rearranged to make room for a theater. With the setting altered, it will be easier for the characters to drop their inhibitions and behave differently than they normally would.

They adjourn to dinner, and everyone is now upset because their fun is being spoiled by Edmund, but Edmund's influence is not great enough to keep them from their goal, and as soon as dinner is over, they are back to discussing roles, costumes, and rehearsals. Mary Crawford tells Edmund that he should play the part of Anhalt because Anhalt is a clergyman. Tom asks Fanny to play Cottager's Wife, but Fanny vehemently declines. Mrs. Norris calls Fanny "an ungrateful, obstinate girl" for not wanting to act in the play. Fanny is nearly in tears now, and Mary Crawford kindly helps her to feel better, for which Fanny is very grateful.

Mr. Rushworth proves himself to be as shallow as Maria in this chapter. All he can think about or talk about is his own importance in the play, how many fine costumes he will have and how many lines he must memorize. It is difficult for the reader to feel sorry for such a man.

When Tom asks Fanny to participate in the play, she does not hesitate to turn him down, but they press her until she is disarmed. The final straw comes when Mrs. Norris calls her ungrateful and obstinate. Fanny is anything but ungrateful and obstinate, and the criticism pricks her. She finds an unlikely ally in Mary Crawford.

Fanny tells Edmund she thinks there must be some alternative to his going against his original resolution. He says that he will not go through with it without her approval. Fanny does not give her approval to his idea, but when she talks about how kind Mary Crawford was to her the night before, Edmund takes this as Fanny's approval. He then tells her that he will leave her to her reading and goes down to tell Mary he will join the play. Fanny feels heavy-hearted. She is upset that Edmund has compromised himself for Mary.

In recent chapters, we have seen Fanny in public places where the other characters orbit her like planets. She is the fixed observer of the action. In this chapter, however, we find Fanny alone in her own sanctuary where she is queen of her domain, a domain that no one else wants because they feel it is beneath them.

When Edmund comes to visit Fanny in her domain, he approaches her as a subject would approach a queen for advice. Fanny remains as fixed in her opinion as ever, even though it distresses her to disagree with Edmund. Fanny proves her unchangeable nature in this scene, and Edmund shows himself to be vulnerable once again to the pressures of those in his social class and family.



# Chapter 17, 18 and 19

## Chapter 17, 18 and 19 Summary

Tom and Maria are surprised and delighted that Edmund has decided to join the play. Now they won't have to get Charles Maddox to take the part. Since Edmund has caved, they think Fanny might also cave and take the part of the Cottager's Wife, but she will not. Mrs. Grant offers to take that part, much to Fanny's relief.

Fanny listens to each of the characters as they complain about their various problems, how they're irritated with how someone delivers a speech or how some parts are too long and some are too short. The characters hold rehearsals together, and Fanny often attends the rehearsals for her own enjoyment. She considers Henry Crawford to be the best actor in the group.

That evening, the entire group gathers to rehearse the first three acts. Mrs. Grant sends word that she will not be able to make it, and everyone is upset about this. They all beg Fanny to please do Mrs. Grant's part, and Maria says that Fanny knows it just as well as Mrs. Grant does, which is true. Fanny finally succumbs, and just at that moment, Sir Thomas Bertram arrives home from his long journey.

There is a love scene that Edmund and Mary must perform together in the play, and they are both uncomfortable about rehearsing it together. One day, Mary finds Fanny in her room and tells her that she doesn't feel ready to rehearse it with Edmund. She asks Fanny if she can practice with her first. They begin practicing together, and Edmund knocks on Fanny's door. He has come looking for Fanny for the very same reason Mary has come. He wants to practice with Fanny before he has to rehearse with Mary. Edmund and Mary practice together with Fanny prompting them when they forget their lines. The rehearsal between Edmund and Mary in Fanny's room makes an odd scene. Edmund and Mary both feel safe with Fanny and seek her help and reassurance because they are nervous about the scene. They both have feelings for each other, and therefore, they do not want to utter the words that verify their affection. Fanny unwittingly facilitates the meeting and rightfully feels uncomfortable. Although she likes Mary, she does not think that she is worthy of Edmund Bertram.

After resisting time and again the others' requests to join the play, Fanny finally succumbs at just the moment Sir Thomas returns. This creates a small emotional climax in the plot. Sir Thomas is one of the main reasons that Fanny has rejected the idea of the play from the beginning. She thinks that Sir Thomas will not approve of the play, and she tries to uphold his wishes while he is gone. It's as if he knows that his last bit of influence has tumbled with Fanny, and that is why he returns at this particular moment.

At the moment that Sir Thomas is announced, Henry Crawford is holding Maria Bertram's hand to his chest and declaring his love for her. Immediately, everyone is in an uproar, but Henry keeps hold of Maria's hand. Julia notices that Henry is holding



Maria's hand, and she becomes very angry. She leaves the room first, saying, "I need not be afraid of appearing before him." Then the other three siblings and Mr. Rushworth leave the room to meet Sir Thomas as well. Fanny remains behind with the Crawfords and Mr. Yates.

This leaves Mr. Yates alone by himself in the theater, where he is practicing his lines with a great flourish. Sir Thomas hears Mr. Yates' voice and wanders into the theater to find out what is going on. Tom tells his father about the play, downplaying it significantly. Mr. Yates explains that they were having a rather successful rehearsal, but now the Crawfords have left and they will have to postpone the rehearsal until tomorrow. Mr. Rushworth says he is tired of rehearsing and he would much rather sit around doing nothing like they used to do. Sir Thomas likes Mr. Rushworth's comment and says he is glad to have an ally.

## Chapter 17, 18 and 19 Analysis

Julia is obviously suffering from her feelings for Henry Crawford and her jealousy of Maria, but no one notices except Fanny. Fanny does not feel she can take liberties with Julia so she doesn't speak to her about it. Mary Crawford tells Fanny that Maria's feelings for Henry are obvious, and Fanny says that Maria has feelings only for her fiancé Mr. Rushworth. Mary balks at this and says that Maria has feelings for Mr. Rushworth's estate but certainly not for the man himself.

Mary's absolute frankness with Fanny foreshadows her future actions. Thoughts are followed by words, and words are followed by actions. If this statement is true, then Mary has already stepped closer to acting in a way that will be difficult if not impossible to retract. Fanny speaks of Maria as she ought to be rather than as she really is. This trait exhibits Fanny's optimism about the family that has brought her up.

Fanny is shocked to receive such a welcome from Sir Thomas. He calls her his "dear little Fanny" and kisses her and marvels at how she has grown. Sir Thomas is the life of the party this evening, telling stories and being inquisitive about everyone. Mrs. Norris feels robbed because she counts on being the one to always spread important news, and the butler was the only one Sir Thomas spoke with before his arrival. Mrs. Bertram is very glad to see her husband. The Crawfords leave to go back to the parsonage.

At the beginning of the chapter the characters all feel "caught." Even Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris feel they've been doing something they shouldn't have been doing, and Sir Thomas will not be pleased. Therefore, Sir Thomas' geniality is a surprise to all of them, especially to Fanny who has never felt remotely close to equal with Sir Thomas's children. She feels especially grateful to Sir Thomas for inquiring after her brother William.

Maria's inappropriate relationship with Henry Crawford has become completely obvious to everyone, even to Mr. Rushworth, who has no defenses except to criticize Mr. Crawford. For example, when Sir Thomas asks about the Crawfords, Mr. Rushworth

says, "I do not say he is not gentleman-like, considering; but you should tell your father he is not above five feet eight, or he will be expecting a well-looking man."



# Chapters 20 and 21

## Chapters 20 and 21 Summary

Edmund goes to his father first thing the next morning to explain about the play. He says that they're all to blame except for Fanny. Sir Thomas speaks with Mrs. Norris and expresses disappointment that she did not dissuade the young people from such an ill-advised scheme. Mrs. Norris disarms him by changing the subject repeatedly and flattering his vanity.

The following morning, Mr. Crawford appears at Mansfield Park before breakfast and is introduced to Sir Thomas. Maria is thrilled to see him and anxious to introduce the man she loves to her father, but she soon realizes that his only reason for visiting is to tell them that he is leaving the parsonage for quite some time. He has some business to attend to and will be going to Bath with his uncle. Two hours later, he is gone from the parsonage, and Maria despairs.

Under Sir Thomas, Mansfield Park is altogether a different place than it was while he was gone. Now there is little contact with the household at the parsonage; the Rushworths are the only family they associate with on a regular basis. Fanny and Edmund discuss the changes, and Edmund regrets that they don't see the Grants and Mary Crawford as often. He misses the liveliness they brought to the household. Fanny says she enjoys the quiet evenings now and that she loves listening to Sir Thomas' tales of his travels. Edmund says that Sir Thomas is very impressed with Fanny and that Sir Thomas has noticed the way she has become very pretty since he went away.

The next day, Sir Thomas, Tom, and Edmund dine with Mr. Rushworth at Sotherton. This is really the first chance Sir Thomas has had to get to know his new son-in-law, and he's not impressed. He sees that Mr. Rushworth is an ignorant man, and he doesn't want his daughter to be miserable with him. Sir Thomas asks Maria if she would like to break the engagement, but she assures him that she wouldn't think of breaking the engagement.

## Chapters 20 and 21 Analysis

The play, which has consumed so much time, focus, and energy, is over as quickly as it was begun. It appears that all the feelings aroused by the play are over just as quickly when Mr. Crawford arrives at Mansfield Park to announce that he will be leaving. Maria has involved herself so thoroughly with the idea of loving Mr. Crawford, that she is ready to throw Mr. Rushworth over completely just as Mr. Crawford is preparing to leave.

Although Sir Thomas creates a small climax in the plot, the air deflates rather quickly. As soon as the play is disrupted, many of the small tensions are released. Julia is no longer upset about Mr. Crawford and Maria; Edmund and Fanny are no longer torn between



their allegiances and their morals, and Mrs. Norris no longer holds as much power over Fanny as she had. The lull in the plot must be supplanted by a new conflict.

The pacing of this chapter is very fast, skipping over the event of the marriage as if it were an afterthought. It is clear, then, that the wedding is not very consequential to the plot, unlike the weddings in other Austen novels. Normally, the story ends with the wedding, but in this story, the wedding occurs almost exactly in the middle of the novel.

The reader becomes better acquainted with Sir Thomas in this novel. From his interactions with Maria, it is clear he is an affectionate father, more concerned with the happiness of his children than he is with his own reputation. He is willing to deal with the possible scandal induced by a broken engagement rather than see his daughter improperly matched to a man she doesn't love.

Maria has resolved to marry Mr. Rushworth as a triumph over Henry Crawford. She will not allow Henry to get the best of her, and she will never let him know that he destroyed her happiness. Mr. Rushworth and Maria are married in November. It is a lovely and proper wedding, and after the wedding, the young couple takes a house in Brighton for several weeks. Julia, reconciled with her sister, goes with them to Brighton. The house at Mansfield is now quite quiet, and Fanny wanders around the house missing them.



# Chapters 22, 23, and 24

## Chapters 22, 23, and 24 Summary

After Julia and Maria leave for Brighton, Fanny finds that she has a new place in the household. Her value has increased both at the Park and at the parsonage. Fanny gets caught in the rain near the parsonage one day and spends several hours with Mary Crawford and Mrs. Grant. They enjoy her company immensely, and Mary plays the harp for her. This is the origin of the intimacy that develops between Fanny, Mary Crawford, and Mrs. Grant.

Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris are disconcerted by the Grants' inviting Fanny to dinner. They try to persuade Fanny to stay home with them, but Edmund convinces them to let her go. Upon hearing about the discussion, Sir Thomas also agrees with Edmund that Fanny should accept the invitation. His only surprise is that Fanny hasn't been asked to dinner previously.

Fanny is expecting to dine just with Mary, Edmund, and the Grants, but Mr. Crawford is there as well. At dinner, Mr. Crawford speaks with fondness about the play and how happy and alive everyone felt. He says that it's too bad Sir Thomas arrived when he did, but Fanny says she is glad he returned when he did because the play was very imprudent. Edmund and Mr. Crawford talk about Edmund's taking orders soon, and Mary feels sad the rest of the evening. After dinner, Mary plays the harp and Fanny listens to her music while the men play whist with the Grants.

The following morning, Henry Crawford tells his sister that he intends to stay at Mansfield for a while and make it his goal to win Fanny Price's heart. He says that she used to be a very modest, almost plain-looking girl but now she is "absolutely pretty." Mary thinks he is only thinking this way because there are no tall women around with whom to compare her.

Henry decides that the way to her heart will be through her brother William, so he takes an interest in William. Through Henry's connections, he procures a leave of absence for William to visit his sister. Fanny is thrilled with this development, of course, and within ten days William arrives. Everyone loves William, and Henry Crawford is surprised by how much he admires the young sailor. William talks about his adventures on the sea, and Sir Thomas especially likes to listen to them. Henry Crawford almost feels jealous of William's life.

## Chapters 22, 23, and 24 Analysis

Having taken several principal characters away from the scenes (Maria, Tom, Julia, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Rushworth, and Mr. Yates), new dynamics among the characters can be explored. Mary Crawford has not changed, but she is no longer surrounded by the livelier characters, and she is desperate for social interaction. Fanny is amiable and





flexible, so she makes a ready companion for almost anyone, and Mary adopts her as her own.

Edmund has not given up trying to make things work with Mary, even though it's increasingly clear that they're just too different to have an honest, long-term respectful relationship. Mary seems to be a compromise between Fanny and Edmund's sisters. Mary is slightly more down-to-earth than the Bertram girls and slightly less self-centered, but not by much.

Fanny doesn't always feel comfortable with Mary Crawford's conversation, however. For example, Mary talks about how she thinks it could be pleasant to live in the country for half the year, as long as she were surrounded by a nice group of family and always had company to keep things lively. She talks about how there's no need to envy Maria with her large estate and that Maria can at least always fill her house with company and throw balls. Mary also says she's glad that Tom is away again so that Edmund may be called Mr. Bertram again, which sounds much more gentlemanly than Mr. Edmund Bertram.

Edmund is pleased with this new friendship between Fanny and Mary because they are the dearest people to him, and he likes to spend time with them both. Mary says to Edmund that she means to be rich because a large income "is the best recipe for happiness." Edmund knows he cannot provide a large income, being the younger brother. Edmund says he intends only not to be poor. Fanny is becoming uncomfortable with this conversation and wishes to leave when she realizes that Edmund intends to leave as well. As they are leaving, the Grants invite Fanny and Edmund to dinner the next day. Fanny is not at all used to such invitations, and she allows Edmund to answer for them.

Besides the dinner at Sortherton, Fanny has hardly ever eaten out before, so she takes great pleasure in this outing. Mrs. Norris tries to smother her pleasure, however, by talking about the folly of people who step out of rank. Fanny just tries to humor her aunt and not take it personally. Mrs. Norris is shocked that Sir Thomas gets the carriage for Fanny, that he thinks it would be unthinkable for his niece to walk to dinner this time of year.

A new era begins in chapter twenty-three, and the changes come in several ways. First, Mrs. Norris feels jealous of Fanny. Fanny is being appreciated because of her kindness and patience; whereas, Mrs. Norris is annoying to others because of her self-centeredness and smallness. However, Mrs. Norris thinks only of class differences, and she always considers herself to be above Fanny in this regard.

Second, with Maria and Julia gone, Fanny has risen in everyone's esteem. Sir Thomas dotes on her, and the neighbors invite her to dinner. Mr. Crawford is especially interested in Fanny's company, and Edmund defends her as vehemently as ever. Fanny enjoys all the new attention, but her disposition has not changed. She is still shy and prefers quiet, but she surprises herself with her boldness in response to Mr. Crawford's speeches.



The author uses a literary technique in this chapter to increase suspense. The point of view is third-person omniscient, meaning the narrator knows more than the characters do. The narrator reveals Henry Crawford's scheme to the reader, so the reader know Fanny is danger. Fanny, however, has no idea that Henry Crawford is scheming to make her fall in love with him. When Fanny smiles at Henry toward the end of the chapter, the reader feels the tension because the protagonist is in danger and doesn't even realize it.

Fanny's best allies are men, and she doesn't seem to have any genuine female friends. Her female cousins have never been friends to her, and her aunts could be considered her enemies. However, Sir Thomas is now her ardent defender as well as Edmund, who has always stood up for her. And of course there's William, her older brother and dearest friend.



# Chapters 25, 26, 27, and 28

## Chapters 25, 26, 27, and 28 Summary

Like he did with Mr. Rushworth, Mr. Crawford begins making suggestions for ways that Edmund can turn his house into a gentleman's residence. Mary Crawford listens intently to this conversation. The comparison to Sotherton comes up, and Fanny remembers how Mr. Crawford behaved with Maria that day. Mr. Crawford says to Fanny in a low voice that he hopes she does not judge him based on his actions that day, and he explains that he has changed a great deal since that time.

As the evening progresses, most of the characters gravitate toward the fire, but Fanny and William remain off by themselves, playing cards and talking quietly. Mr. Crawford wants to get Fanny's attention again. They talk about a ball, and Fanny says she likes dancing but tires easily. William remembers a time they all danced when they were little, and he says that Fanny is a very good dancer. Fanny is embarrassed by this. At the end, Edmund brings Fanny her shawl, but Mr. Crawford grabs it and puts it around her shoulders.

Sir Thomas wants to throw a ball at the house before William leaves to go back to sea. Mrs. Norris thinks he must be talking about giving a ball when Maria and Julia are back, but he corrects her and says that this ball would be for their cousins. The ball is planned for the 22nd of November since William has to report back on the 24th.

Edmund has decided to go ahead and take his orders the week of Christmas, and Mary Crawford feels she must decide whether or not she could live the life of a clergyman's wife. In the meantime, Fanny is trying to decide what to wear to the ball, so she walks down to the parsonage to consult Mary and Mrs. Grant. Mary is glad to help her decide. Mary knows Fanny has a beautiful cross that William gave her, but Fanny doesn't have a chain for it. Mary takes down a jewelry box and offers Fanny one of her own chains. Fanny resists, but Mary urges her to take one, and Fanny finally accepts it gratefully. Then Mary tells Fanny that she must think of her brother Henry whenever she wears the chain because he is the one who bought it for Mary. Fanny feels horrified by this.

When Fanny arrives home she finds Edmund in her room writing at her table. He is writing her a note to say he has bought her a chain to go with William's cross so she can wear it to the ball. He ordered it a while ago, but there was some delay in getting it. She is so grateful for it, but she wants to consult him about what to do with the necklace Mary gave her. She explains the situation, and Edmund is pleased Mary would be so thoughtful. He begs her not to return it as she wanted to do. He advises her to wear Mary's chain to the ball and to keep his chain for more casual occasions.

Edmund goes down to the parsonage to ask Mary for the first two dances. She accepts, but she says that it will be the last time she will dance with him because she is determined to never dance with a clergyman. Edmund comes back to the Park



heartbroken and wants to speak with Fanny about it. Fanny listens to his woes but asks him to not say anything he will regret.

When Fanny arrives in the drawing room, everyone is impressed with how beautiful she looks. Edmund asks Fanny to save two dances for him, and this is all she could possibly ask for. Soon, they hear carriages arriving, and the Grants and Crawfords enter. Sir Thomas has Fanny and Mr. Crawford lead off the ball, and Fanny cannot believe that she is being placed above so many elegant young women. She has never been treated like her cousins before.

## Chapters 25, 26, 27, and 28 Analysis

The social interaction between the two families now resembles what it had been in the fall when the play was in full swing. The addition of Henry Crawford and William Price to the households increases the social functions, and Sir Thomas doesn't mind visitors as much as he did when Mr. Rushworth and Mr. Yates were around.

The card game is an extended metaphor for the relationships in the story. Fanny is playing the game, and Henry is coaching her. Henry interrupts his own conversation to advise her, saying, "No, no, you must not part with the queen. You have bought her too dearly, and your brother does not offer half her value. No, no, sir, hands off—hands off." In effect, these words could be addressed to Edmund. Edmund has bought Fanny dearly, and Henry does not offer half her value. He does not even know what her value is; whereas, Edmund has seen Fanny's value all along.

Sir Thomas grows ever more thoughtful as he becomes better acquainted with Fanny and William. He sees the innate goodness in them and responds with generosity and kindness. Edmund is pleased about the close relationship between his cousins and his father. Mrs. Norris and Lady Bertram remain static, however, while Sir Thomas' character is dynamic.

This chapter shows us the duplicity in Mary Crawford's character. At the same time she considers giving up some of her luxuries to become a clergyman's wife, she plays co-conspirator in her brother's scheme to win Fanny's heart. While she behaves as a very dear friend to Fanny, she is in fact trying to catch her in a lair.

In his mind, Edmund has turned Mary into something she is not. Fanny can see the discrepancies, but Edmund cannot and he is torn. The chains given to Fanny by the Crawfords and Edmund symbolize ownership of her heart. The cross represents religion, and it is given to her by William, her closest relative. The chain represents her love and devotion. It goes with the cross, with religion, but it is a conjugal commitment as well. She feels that she must choose between them. She wants to choose Edmund, but everyone else wants her to choose the Crawfords.

Fanny does not fully realize it, but this ball is intended to be her "coming out." Sir Thomas sees that Henry Crawford is interested in Fanny, and she must be presented to society before she can be properly courted. Sir Thomas is looking out for her best



interest, but being a society man, he looks more at wealth and security than he does compatibility and happiness.

Fanny realizes that she loves Edmund and that although he has called her one of his two dearest friends, she comes second to Mary in his heart. She chides herself for even thinking that Edmund could consider her his very dearest friend, but that is the desire of her heart.

Fanny Price has so little experience in real society that she doesn't realize that this ball marks her "coming out." She also doesn't realize that her uncle Sir Thomas is preparing the way to marry her off to Henry Crawford. Again, this literary device creates suspense. Now, not only Mary and Henry Crawford have designs on Fanny but her own beloved uncle does as well. The reader knows that Fanny has tremendous strength of character, but we don't know if it will be enough to withstand all these powerful outside forces.



# Chapters 29, 30, 31, and 32

## Chapters 29, 30, 31, and 32 Summary

Breakfast is a quick affair the next morning, and then William and Mr. Crawford are gone. Later in the morning, Edmund leaves them for a week, and the house is quiet with Fanny being the only young person left. She feels very melancholy and tries to speak with Lady Bertram about the ball, but Lady Bertram is disinterested and boring.

Julia will not be returning to Mansfield Park any time soon, for she has asked permission to go to town for the season with Maria, and Sir Thomas thinks this is best for both sisters. Mary Crawford is still at the parsonage, however, and Mary and Fanny visit later in the week. Mary has begun to feel badly about the way she treated Edmund at the ball, and she asks Fanny when he will be back. She also asks about the family Edmund is staying with, the Owens, because she knows there are three grown daughters in the family and she is jealous.

When Henry Crawford returns to the parsonage, he tells Mary he is determined to marry Fanny Price. He says that his original designs have changed. Mary exclaims that Fanny is a very lucky girl and that there is no way she will turn him down. Henry feels badly for his original designs against her. He says that he did not know her then as he knows her now, and he never would have thought of seducing her had he known her better.

Before he even came to see Mary at the parsonage, he stopped at Mansfield Park to visit Fanny and Lady Bertram. This meeting has made him feel that his intentions are right. He is bewitched by Fanny's goodness, kindness, and patience. Mary asks him what Maria and Julia will think about his proposal, and he says he does not care what they think. He hopes they will realize how abominable they have been to Fanny all along.

Henry Crawford visits Mansfield Park again the next morning, arriving two hours before normal calling hours. He tells Fanny that her brother William has been made a Lieutenant, and he has been hoping to give her the news himself. Fanny is so excited that she cannot speak. He hands her letters to show her that the promotion has indeed happened. One of the letters is from the Admiral, and the other two letters also bear record of William's promotion.

This is the reason that Crawford went to London, to facilitate the promotion. Fanny is so excited that she jumps up to go tell her uncle the good news, but Henry doesn't want to miss this opportunity. He takes her hand and leads her back to her seat and proposes to her. She is very upset by this and tells him that it cannot be and that he must not think of her. She rushes out of the room and stays upstairs until she is sure that Mr. Crawford has left the house. Then she descends to tell Sir Thomas the good news about William.



That very day, Mr. Crawford returns to the house for dinner and hands her a note from his sister that says she is delighted that her brother intends to marry her and encouraging her to give her consent. This is very disturbing to Fanny because she assumes that Mr. Crawford was not serious about the proposal, and this letter seems to confirm that he is. Fanny is silent most of the evening, but before Mr. Crawford leaves, he asks Fanny if she has a reply letter to give to Mary. She hurriedly writes a reply note saying thank you for the congratulations as they apply to William, but as for herself she hopes that Miss Crawford will never again mention the subject.

The next morning, Henry Crawford returns to the house at an early hour once again. Sir Thomas comes to her room himself, which has never happened before and looks around. He is surprised that there is no fire in her room (Mrs. Norris has ordered that Fanny's room never gets a fire) and says he will correct the oversight. Sir Thomas tells her that Mr. Crawford has come to see him about marrying Fanny. He tells her that Mr. Crawford is still in Sir Thomas' room and wants to see her. She tells him that she doesn't want to see him, and she thought she made it clear yesterday that she does not return his feelings. Sir Thomas is shocked and very angry that she would presume to refuse the proposal of a man that would be such an advantageous match in rank and station.

## Chapters 29, 30, 31, and 32 Analysis

When Mary Crawford and Fanny Price first became acquaintances, Mary firmly had the upper hand. Fanny was shy and intimidated by her, and Mary didn't think much at all about Fanny, who was always in the shadow of Julia and Maria Bertram. But now it appears that Fanny has the upper hand. Fanny is being pursued by Mary's brother, and Fanny knows Edmund better than perhaps anyone. Mary presses Fanny for information that might be advantageous to her, but Fanny is soon annoyed by this tactic. When Edmund and William leave, Fanny is left quite alone and friendless, but she is not without power and respect. Fanny remains calm through the conversation but becomes annoyed with Mary as Mary makes presumptions about Edmund and asks too many questions.

Already in his mind, Henry Crawford sees himself as Fanny's savior. He believes that Edmund's kindness to Fanny does not have the same depth as his own kindness will have: "What can Sir Thomas and Edmund together do, what do they do for her happiness, comfort, honour, and dignity in the world to what I shall do?" He has romanticized his supposed relationship with Fanny, and the reader may suspect that he has romantic tendencies, which led to his inappropriate flirtation with Maria.

An emotional climax peaks in chapter 31 with two events that affect Fanny greatly and are orchestrated by Mr. Crawford. First, Mr. Crawford arranges for a promotion for William that will benefit him for the rest of his life. Such intervention in William's career is no small thing, and Fanny feels extremely grateful for it.



The second event is the marriage proposal from Mr. Crawford, which distresses her greatly. At a time when she wishes to express gratitude for Mr. Crawford's benevolence toward William, Fanny finds that she must reject him. Then she understands that Mr. Crawford's interest in William is not wholly unselfish; rather, it is used as manipulation to get Fanny to bend to his will.

This places Fanny in a precarious situation because she does not want to disappoint her aunt and uncle who have been so good to her. But she also doesn't want to compromise her principles. Because of the way Mr. Crawford behaved with Maria, Fanny knows he is not an honorable man, and yet, she is beginning to feel trapped by her circumstances.

Fanny does not want to tell Sir Thomas the real reason she disapproves of Mr. Crawford because the real reason involves Maria; therefore, Sir Thomas cannot understand why she is being so headstrong and obstinate. He tells her that she has "disappointed every expectation I had formed, and proved yourself of a character the very reverse of what I had supposed." This speech breaks Fanny's heart. After a long lecture, Sir Thomas tells Fanny that she must go give Mr. Crawford her answer herself, but she falls apart at the thought and he goes to tell Mr. Crawford. At dinnertime, Fanny is relieved that Sir Thomas doesn't mention anything to the others about what happened. After dinner, he calls for her and finds she has been summoned to speak with Mr. Crawford himself.

The way in which Sir Thomas handles Fanny's rejection of Mr. Crawford shows that although he has come to appreciate Fanny's good points, he does not fully respect or understand her. The lecture he gives her is so cruel and condemnatory that it is clear once again that Fanny has only one ally in the world: Edmund. And Edmund is away at the time of her greatest need.

Sir Thomas' reaction also tells us about his values. He values manners, propriety, and wealth above anything else, and therefore, Mr. Crawford is a perfectly wonderful candidate for a marriage partner for Fanny. Fanny values integrity, honesty, and goodness, and these values are not to be found in Mr. Crawford.





# Chapters 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37

## Chapters 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37 Summary

Mr. Crawford is not ready to give up. He is very much in love and believes that if he perseveres, Fanny will give in at last, and Sir Thomas also believes that Fanny will fall in love with Crawford in the end. Because her manner is so gentle, Mr. Crawford feels that there is reason to hope. She doesn't want to hurt his feelings, but she is firm. When he doesn't give up, however, Fanny becomes angry.

Edmund returns and has heard nothing yet of Mr. Crawford's proposal and Fanny's refusal. He has extended his trip two weeks in order to avoid Miss Crawford, but he encounters Mr. and Miss Crawford walking in the village before he even arrives home. After dinner, Sir Thomas and Edmund speak privately together, and Fanny knows they are talking about her and her refusal of Mr. Crawford. What she doesn't know is that Edmund, too, is disappointed that she has refused Mr. Crawford. Edmund thinks that Mr. Crawford came on too strong and that he needs to give Fanny time to fall in love with him.

A day is fixed for the Crawfords to leave Mansfield, and Sir Thomas convinces Edmund to use his influence with Fanny to try one last time and see if she will not bend. Edmund joins Fanny for a walk in the shrubbery. After Fanny understands that Edmund does not blame her, she feels comfortable again. Edmund tells her that she was perfectly right in refusing the proposal if she did not love him. However, Edmund tells Fanny that she should prove herself "grateful and tender-hearted; and then you will be the perfect model of a woman, which I have always believed you born for."

The Crawfords leave the following morning and Sir Thomas tries to make Fanny miss Henry. William has a ten-days' leave and plans to visit Mansfield Park. He arrives in his Lieutenant's uniform, and Fanny is so glad to see him. Sir Thomas thinks that if Fanny goes to visit her family in Portsmouth, she will realize how important a good income is and this will make her want to marry Henry Crawford.

She will stay in Portsmouth for two months, and she is excited to see her birth family. Her only regret is that she will not see Edmund for two months. She also worries that Lady Bertram will be uncomfortable without her. Fanny writes to Portsmouth to ask if they would like her to visit. William is excited about the plan. Edmund delays a trip to London because he doesn't want to leave his parents at a time when everyone is leaving them.

## Chapters 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37 Analysis

Fanny feels she must explain to Sir Thomas once again how she feels on the subject, but Sir Thomas says it is unnecessary, that he understands her perfectly, and there is no reason to ever talk about the subject again. He breaks his promise, however, and



tells Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris about what has happened. Lady Bertram is pleased with the news because it raises Fanny in her esteem. She tells Fanny that it is her responsibility to marry a man of good fortune.

Sir Thomas' broken promise is reminiscent of his daughter's behavior toward Mr. Rushworth. The Bertram tendency seems to be to make promises and keep them until it is no longer convenient as Maria kept her engagement until Mr. Crawford came along and looked like a more agreeable partner. It seems cruelly unfair that Fanny should have to deal with these inconsistencies and weaknesses when she is suffering to protect the family's honor.

Mr. Crawford is invited to dinner, and after dinner they all convene in the drawing room. Edmund watches Fanny intently to figure out if she has any attachment whatsoever to Mr. Crawford, and he decides that she does. Fanny is frustrated, though, with all the attention. She cannot agree with anything Mr. Crawford says, but they all encourage her to speak. When she does, she disagrees with him.

It appears that even Edmund has failed Fanny and that she must stand alone with her ideals. Edmund thinks that time will help Fanny to overcome her diffidence and supposed dislike of Mr. Crawford. In modern days, a woman might just leave such a situation, but it should be noted that Fanny has nowhere to go unless she goes back to live with her biological family, but even this would have to be arranged by Sir Thomas.

Fanny speaks with Edmund more openly than she does with anyone else, so it is a disappointment to her to not be understood by him. Previously, it has appeared that Edmund is the most unaffected of the Bertram family, but it is clear that he is affected by the prejudices that affect the rest of his family. He thinks that a woman's happiness has more to do with comfort and status than love and affection.

Fanny reacts so strongly against this speech that it shocks Edmund. Edmund advises her to not judge him based on his actions during the play. Fanny says that she observed more than he did and that Mr. Rushworth was often quite jealous. She also tells Edmund that Julia thought Mr. Crawford was paying her attentions as well. Edmund refuses to see any of this. He tells Fanny that she should see Miss Crawford before they leave, but he warns her that Mary is very angry with her.

Most of this chapter is written in dialogue, but the dialogue gives us as many images as straight prose would. Jane Austen is a master of dialogue. The conversations not only seem natural and speech-like, but they also further the plot and character development in the most effective way for these characters and this story.

Fanny points out the fallacy that a woman should fall in love with a man just because he falls in love with her. Edmund resolves to not speak with her about Crawford again unless it's about news that will make her happy. They talk about his visit to the Owens where he had a pleasant time. This talk has not helped Fanny's spirits, Edmund can tell, and they end the walk.



Based on his conversation with Fanny, Edmund believes that the whole problem lies in Crawford's haste and that the problem will work itself out with time and they will be happy together in the end. Fanny dreads her visit with Mary Crawford. Mary arrives, and they walk together. Mary is very straightforward and expresses her condemnation, but she also tells Fanny how much she loves her, and this softens Fanny. Mary tells Fanny that her brother knew about the necklace beforehand, and Fanny tells her that that wasn't fair. In fact, the necklace was entirely Henry Crawford's idea. Mary says that her brother has always been a flirt who wreaks havoc on young girls' affections and that she has often scolded him for it.

Fanny is the object of schemes by everyone. This trip home to Portsmouth is not designed with her welfare in mind, but rather it's designed as a manipulation to get her to marry Henry Crawford. Feeling as tenderly as she does, Fanny doesn't want to hurt those around her. She's not willing to harden herself enough to write them off.

Portsmouth will be an entirely new setting for the reader. When the story began, we never saw Fanny in her native home. Our first glimpse of Fanny is when she is introduced to the Bertram household at Mansfield Park. She is bewildered and shy as the newest, youngest, child in the household and the only member of the household taken in because of charity. To see Fanny in her native environment will be enlightening.



## Chapters 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43

### Chapters 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43 Summary

Fanny's spirits rise as she travels with William. It is very pleasant to have so much time alone with him to talk. William knows what happened between Fanny and Mr. Crawford, and he's disappointed that his sister doesn't love Mr. Crawford. Because of what Mr. Crawford did for William, William thinks Mr. Crawford is the best of men. But he doesn't want to upset her, so he doesn't broach the subject.

They stop at a stage house for the night, and in the morning they set out for Portsmouth once more. They finally arrive at the Price home, and Fanny is greeted with stares by the younger children. Her mother hugs her, and she is shown in to the parlor. Fanny soon sees that her family is coarser than she would have expected. The children talk to their mother in a way that surprises her.

William leaves on the ship, and by the end of the first week, Fanny misses him and Mansfield Park very much. Fanny tries to be useful and enjoys getting to know her mother, whom she thinks resembles Lady Bertram more than Mrs. Norris. She spends time with the younger children and tries to help them with their studies.

She receives a welcome letter from Mary Crawford. Mary gives Fanny news of her cousins. Julia is being pursued by a Baron Wildenhaim, but Mary isn't impressed with him. Mary misses Edmund, who has been detained longer than expected. Mary asks Fanny to write her back and tell her about all the dashing young captains she disdains for Henry's sake.

Mr. Crawford comes to visit Fanny at her parents' house in Portsmouth. She has not expected him, so this is a big surprise. She introduces him to her family as "William's friend." He asks Mrs. Price if he may take a walk with her daughters, and soon, Fanny, Susan, and Mr. Crawford are taking a walk towards High Street. They meet Mr. Price in High Street, and Fanny is embarrassed to introduce him to Mr. Crawford, but she is surprised to see that her father's manners in public are very different from his manners at home, and he is genial and friendly with Mr. Crawford. Mr. Price offers to give Mr. Crawford a tour of the dock-yard, and they all turn in that direction.

### Chapters 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43 Analysis

This change in setting is dramatic. In all of Jane Austen's novels, this is the only time that a character visits a house like the Price's. The change is a great one indeed, and Fanny finds the noise and contention and closeness exhausting. She has never realized how civilized the Bertrams really are until this moment, and she longs for her attic bedroom at Mansfield Park, the bedroom that nobody else in the household wanted.



Fanny is disappointed in her father. He smells of alcohol and speaks coarsely. Instead of speaking with her, he takes out the newspaper and begins to read. Fanny begins to feel claustrophobic and yearns for peace and solitude. William's friend, Mr. Campbell, arrives to talk about the Thrush, the ship that William and his friend will be embarking on soon. She cannot wait until bedtime when it will be quiet. She shares a room with her fourteen-year-old sister Susan.

One wonders how different Fanny Price would be if she had been raised entirely in the Price household instead of in the Bertram household. Whereas earlier in the novel, the reader may have pitied Fanny for being an outsider in the Bertram home, now they see how lucky she has been to have been taken out of a home where the father is a drunk and the mother cannot manage her children.

Fanny sees in her younger sister Susan a noble spirit who has not had a proper upbringing. Susan is prone to arguing with her mother. She is very intelligent and quite pretty, and Fanny thinks she can help Susan. Fanny helps Susan choose books that will help her education, and she teaches her to speak in a more dignified way, to not argue so much with her siblings and parents, and to use better manners.

These chapters show us another of Fanny's good traits. When she is in a difficult situation, she looks around for areas where she might improve her situation instead of just suffering from it. Instead of shying away from Susan, she decides to help educate her. In essence, she becomes to Susan what Edmund has always been to her. Edmund has guided Fanny in her education and upbringing, and now Fanny can turn around and help someone else in the same way.

Sir Thomas' plan seems to be working just as well as he'd hoped. Fanny has never before appreciated her upbringing at Mansfield Park as she does now. She longs for the quiet and order of Mansfield Park, which is a far cry from the disorder and mess of her parents' home in Portsmouth. The days go slowly, but at least she knows there is an end in sight.

Although she is relieved that Henry is gone, her spirits are low. She has missed her friends while she's been at Portsmouth, and Henry is something of a friend. She begins to think more about Mr. Crawford because he has been so kind and gentle with her lately. Even though he is seeing the humble nature in which her family lives, he is still very attentive and loving.

Two days later, Fanny receives a letter from Mary Crawford. She says that she has been thinking about Edmund more than is good for her and she hopes that Henry and she will be able to come get Fanny soon. They would like to show her Everingham and maybe pass through London to show her around. She also says that Henry is going to visit the Rushworths, and she's very curious as to how they're doing; she thinks Henry is curious, too.

As the ebbs and flows of the plot have gone, just when Fanny is on the verge of succumbing to temptation or to finding herself in grave danger, some outside force



changes the situation or rescues her. Her feelings towards Mr. Crawford are changing just now. She is seeing him in a different light and in her friendless situation, she longs for the familiarities of Mansfield Park. Therefore, the tension is high as the reader wonders what will happen next.



# Chapters 44, 45, and 46

## Chapters 44, 45, and 46 Summary

Edmund saw Henry Crawford at Mrs. Fraser's home, and he's as impressed with him as ever. Henry and Maria saw each other there, and there was definite coolness on Maria's part. Edmund says that Sir Thomas plans to fetch Fanny himself, but he won't be able to do it until after Easter. Fanny is upset to hear this because she feels ready to go back to Mansfield right away.

Within a few days Fanny receives a letter from her aunt, Lady Bertram. She says that Tom went to London with a group of young men, and after a good deal of drinking he came down with a fever and has been very ill ever since. Edmund is leaving to retrieve Tom and bring him back to Mansfield Park to convalesce. Fanny is consumed with worry for the Bertram family.

After about a week at Mansfield, Tom's danger is over and he begins to recover from his illness. Easter finally comes and Fanny has still not heard anything about how much longer she must remain at Portsmouth. Lady Bertram often writes that she wants her to come back, but there is never any definite word about how she is to return.

After a drought of letters, she receives a letter from Mary Crawford. Mary has heard of Tom's illness and wants to know whether or not Tom has died, because if he has, then Edmund would inherit Sir Thomas' property. She thinks that Edmund would do more good with the money and property than Tom would. Fanny is disgusted with this part of the letter, but then Mary says that they are anxious to get back to Mansfield Park, and they would love to come get Fanny and take her with them, and this is very tempting to Fanny.

Fanny receives another letter from Mary, and this one is puzzling. It says that a scandalous rumor has reached her, and she's writing to discredit it before it spreads into the country. Mary says there has been a mistake about Henry, and it will all clear up in a day or two, and if they are gone, it is only because they have gone to Mansfield Park and taken Julia with them. No rumor has reached Fanny, so she doesn't know what to make of this letter.

After a few days she receives a letter from Edmund saying the Mr. Crawford and Maria cannot be found. In addition to Maria's folly, Julia has eloped with Yates and gone to Scotland. Edmund writes to propose Fanny's returning home because Lady Bertram wants her desperately. Edmund says he will be in Portsmouth the next morning to retrieve her, and Sir Thomas wishes that Susan come for a few months as well. Fanny is so excited to be returning to Mansfield Park at a time when she can help those she loves.



## Chapters 44, 45, and 46 Analysis

Fanny's stay at Portsmouth is supposed to last two months. Seven weeks have gone by when Fanny receives a lengthy letter from Edmund. Edmund says he was in London for three weeks and saw Mary often while he was there. Edmund was very disappointed in the way Mary behaved while she was around the Frasers, the family with whom she is staying in London. Still, he cannot give her up. He says she's the only woman in the world he could think of as his wife.

Back when Fanny stood still in the action at Mansfield Park and the other characters orbited her, nobody realized how much they had become accustomed to depending on Fanny. Now that trouble has arisen at Mansfield Park, she receives many letters. They seek her comfort and solace. They sent her away to make her appreciate them, but they find that they also are learning to appreciate her more. Thus, Sir Thomas' plan has unwittingly served another purpose. The meeting between Henry and Maria at the Frasers' is foreshadowing.

Mary's letter to Fanny justifies Fanny's previous thoughts about the Crawfords. She sees that money is still more important than anything else to Mary, that Edmund would be forgiven of being a clergyman if he had enough money. She also sees that Henry Crawford has not broken all ties with Maria, and this is disappointing to Fanny.

Fanny had begun to think that Henry Crawford really loved her, but from the letter she figures that there must have been some serious attentions given to Maria from Henry. The next day doesn't bring a letter, so she still doesn't know what to think. But then Fanny's father reads something about the Rushworths in the newspaper. The newspaper states that the beautiful Mrs. Rushworth has left her husband's roof and left with the "captivating Mr. C." Fanny tells her father that it must be a mistake, but after receiving Mary's letter she knows that it must be true. She cannot sleep that night. She lies awake wondering what the consequences will be.

The author does not say this, but Fanny is vindicated by the events of chapter 46. Fanny feels sorrow and empathy for her family's plight, but she does not mention that she feels vindicated. Now everyone will understand her refusal of Crawford, and Edmund will see Mary without the rose-colored glasses he's been wearing ever since he first met her. But this is left for the reader to interpret and internalize.

Although there have been mentions of Sir Thomas and Henry Crawford bringing Fanny back to Mansfield Park, it is Edmund who rescues her in the end. This keeps the Edmund-as-savior metaphor intact, which was begun in the very first chapters of the book when as a teenager Edmund paid attention to his young cousin and welcomed her to Mansfield Park. Now, at the end of the crisis, he is the one to welcome her once again.





# Chapters 47 and 48

## Chapters 47 and 48 Summary

Edmund is silent for several days, but on a rainy Sunday afternoon he opens up to Fanny, and they talk about all that has passed. Edmund shares with Fanny a conversation he had with Mary after the scandal came to light. More than their indiscretion, Mary regrets that Mr. Crawford and Maria were caught. She thinks that with time, Maria can be welcomed back into good society if her family embraces them and helps to support them. Edmund's eyes have been opened to Mary's true nature, and he is heartbroken.

Tom regains his health and eventually becomes a steady man who doesn't just live for himself. Maria doesn't end up marrying Mr. Crawford. They continue together for a while but they grow to hate each other and then they separate. Mr. Rushworth divorces Maria and hopes for a better marriage the second go-round. Mrs. Norris moves away from Mansfield and moves to another country with Maria, somewhere remote enough that Maria can start over again.

## Chapters 47 and 48 Analysis

This chapter marks the catharsis of the novel for Fanny. She is redeemed, and she knows she's redeemed. Edmund sees now that Fanny has known all along about the true character of Mary and Henry Crawford, and now he sees the truth as well. Although Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris are still muddled in their thinking and their placement of the blame, Sir Thomas realizes his mistake in trying to force Fanny to marry Henry Crawford.

Chapter 48 is a sort of epilogue. It tells how the characters fare after the crisis is over. Sir Thomas Bertram suffers the longest because he feels guilty as a father that his children have not turned out better. Tom nearly drank himself to death; Julia and Maria run off with men of poor character, and even Edmund has been duped by Mary Crawford.

The author steps out of the narrator role and speaks as the author at the beginning of this chapter. She says she does not want to dwell on unhappiness, so she gives the good news about the resolution of the story. This ending follows Austen's typical happily-ever-after ending. Edmund and Fanny rescue each other in the end by marrying one another and providing lifelong comfort. Mrs. Norris, the annoyer of everyone, is banished with Maria to another country. Tom becomes a respectable son, and the Crawfords disappear so they can't meddle with the family any more.

Mrs. Norris' removal from Mansfield Park is a boon to Sir Thomas and other members of the household. Dr. Grant gets a post at Westminster, and the Grants move away from Mansfield as well. Edmund realizes that Fanny is the dearest person in his life, and he

wants to marry her. Sir Thomas would never have considered approving of the match before, but now he is tired of ambition and wealth-seeking, and Fanny is the daughter he has always wanted. So Edmund and Fanny marry, and Susan takes Fanny's place as the niece to comfort Lady Bertram.



# Characters

## Fanny Price

Fanny Price is the second child of a struggling family. Her father is in the military, and her mother has so many children that she feels overwhelmed and unable to meet all the children's needs. Therefore, Fanny's mother writes a letter to her two sisters asking for assistance after the birth of her ninth child. They decide that relieving their sister of one of her children would be of the most help. Fanny, then ten years old, goes to live with her aunt, uncle, and cousins at Mansfield Park.

Fanny is a timid young woman. She adores her cousin Edmund who takes an interest in Fanny and helps her with her educations. Fanny's opinions and thoughts seem to be shaped by Edmund, but perhaps they just think alike. Fanny has high moral standards, which fit well with Edmund's goal of becoming a clergyman.

Just a few years younger than her cousins Julia and Maria, Fanny never becomes close to her female cousins. They treat her as if she were from a different social class from them, and in fact she is, but being raised in the same house they should behave as sisters. Fanny disapproves of the way Julia and Maria conduct themselves in regards to Mr. Crawford, and she faces a lot of stress as a result of her high moral standards.

## Edmund Bertram

Edmund is the younger son in the Bertram family, but he is older than both of his sisters, Maria and Julia. It is unclear how Edmund has become such an honorable young man, as his brother and both of his sisters are shallow, selfish people. Always the responsible one, the others look to him as his father's favorite and the reliable child in the family.

Edmund becomes infatuated with Mary Crawford, the sister of Mrs. Grant, who lives at the parsonage on the Bertram's estate. Although Mary is elegant, beautiful, and spunky, she has very different standards and ideals from Edmund. Edmund faces an internal conflict when he falls in love with Mary. He must decide whether to compromise on his morals or follow his heart.

Edmund assists Fanny in her education, and is loved by her in return. The similarities between the two are at the level of personality and morality, and they are drawn close together because of this.

## Maria Bertram

Maria Bertram is the third child and eldest girl in the Bertram family. She is considered by most to be more beautiful than her sister, although they are both lovely young women. Maria is well-educated, talented, and elegant, but she lacks moral sensibilities.



She becomes engaged to Mr. Rushworth, who has a vast fortune because she desires a luxurious future. She does not love him, however, and when Mr. Crawford arrives in the neighborhood, she quickly falls in love with him despite her engagement to another man. Maria seems incapable of making a self-sacrificing decision. She wants wealth as well as passion and does not want to sacrifice anything.

## **Julia Bertram**

Julia Bertram is the youngest of the Bertram children. Like Maria, she is well-educated and beautiful, but she doesn't seem to have the same confidence that Maria has. Although she has every material thing she could want, she often feels she is lacking or that everyone else is in a better position than she. Julia lacks the moral courage to say that anything is right or wrong. She feels jealous of Mr. Crawford's attachment to Maria. She seems more upset that Maria has all the gentlemen's attention than she is about the shame Maria brings on the family.

## **Tom Bertram**

Tom is the eldest of the Bertram children. He is the heir to Mansfield Park, but he is irresponsible and completely self-centered. Instead of learning to take care of the estate, he racks up gambling debts and other expenses, and the rest of the family must bear the burden of his indiscretions.

## **Lady Bertram**

Lady Bertram is the sister of Fanny Price's mother. She is largely indolent and impressionable. She is more concerned with her children's comfort than their character, having spoiled them in their youth and turned a blind eye to their self-centered personalities.

## **Mrs. Norris**

Mrs. Norris is Lady Bertram's sister and Fanny Price's aunt. Not only is Mrs. Norris a sycophant, but she enjoys keeping Fanny under her thumb because it makes her feel more important. Mrs. Norris doesn't have the wealth or title that her sister Lady Bertram has, so she draws distinctions between herself and Fanny in order to feel of a higher class.

## **Henry Crawford**

Henry Crawford is a small man who somehow gains the favor of women wherever he goes. He is charming, but Fanny does not fall under his spell. Henry Crawford flirts shamelessly with Julia and Maria Bertram, even though Maria is engaged to Mr.



Rushworth. Later, when Henry falls for Fanny, he thinks himself to be genuinely in love with her, but Fanny does not fall for his flatteries.

## **Mary Crawford**

Mary Crawford is Henry's sister, and Mary falls in love with Edmund Bertram. She is calculating about her affections from the beginning, considering which of the two Bertram sons would make a better match. She initially thinks that Tom would make a better match because he is the heir to Mansfield Park, but when she learns about the character of the two brothers, she thinks Edmund would be best. Unfortunately, Edmund has chosen a profession that she disapproves of, and this causes conflict in their relationship.

## **Sir Thomas Bertram**

Sir Thomas Bertram is the father of Tom, Edmund, Maria, and Julia, and the uncle of Fanny Price. Although Sir Thomas is absent for several parts of the story, his influence as the moral disciplinarian is felt throughout. Fanny is mortified by the thought of disappointing her unaffectionate uncle, but Sir Thomas' own children just wait until he leaves town to misbehave.



# Objects/Places

## Mansfield Park

Mansfield Park is the home of the Bertram family. It is a country estate, one of the premier estates in the area.

## The Parsonage

The Parsonage is the home at Mansfield Park where the parson lives. For most of the novel, the Parsonage is occupied by Dr. and Mrs. Grant. Mrs. Grant is the older sister of Henry and Mary Crawford, and the Crawfords often stay with the Grants.

## Sotherton

Sotherton is the estate of Mr. Rushworth. It is the scene of Henry Crawford's and Maria's first serious flirtation, and it becomes Maria's home after she marries.

## Portsmouth

Portsmouth is the town Fanny grew up in before she went to live at Mansfield Park. She spends several months in Portsmouth after she refuses Mr. Crawford's proposal.

## Cross

William Price, Fanny's favorite brother, gives her a cross to wear around her neck while he's out to sea. It is Fanny's favorite and only piece of jewelry.

## Chain

Mr. Crawford and Edmund both give Fanny a gold chain to wear to her first ball. The chain is to hold William's cross. The chain represents Fanny's loyalty. She is advised by all to wear Mr. Crawford's, but she wants to wear Edmund's.

## Theater

A temporary theater is rigged in the ballroom for the production of the play *Lovers' Vows*. The theater is quickly dismantled as soon as Sir Thomas returns from his trip, and order is reinstated at Mansfield Park.



## London

Edmund, Tom, the Crawfords, Julia, and Maria all visit London from time to time. When Edmund sees Mary Crawford in London and sees the way she reacts in that society, he realizes he cannot marry her.

## Harp

Mary Crawford plays the harp, and the harp is one of the things that draws Edmund to her.

## HMS Thrush

The HMS Thrush is the ship on which William sails. Henry Crawford helps him to become a lieutenant on the ship.



# Themes

## Ambition

The theme of ambition and how it influences the characters and plot throughout the story is a driving force of the plot. The story begins with the background of the three sisters who head the families prominent in the story. Lady Bertram married very well, meaning she married above her station. Mrs. Norris married less well, but she still has a respectable spot in society, and Mrs. Price married decidedly beneath her. The way in which they married has influenced their entire lives. Whereas Lady Bertram lives a very comfortable life physically, Mrs. Price works very hard just to keep her head above water.

What the author points out with this theme is that ambition does not always lead to happiness. The characters that find themselves most content at the end of the story are Fanny and William Price, the children of Mrs. Price, the sister who married so far beneath her. Fanny and William have not been corrupted by ambition and worldly pleasure as their cousins have. Besides experiencing contentment, Fanny and William also have the capacity to offer comfort and contentment to those around them. Sir Thomas finds his greatest joy in his nieces and nephews and his greatest sorrow in his ambitious, worldly children, except for Edmund.

## Propriety

Fanny Price is the epitome of propriety in this novel. She always seems to retain a level-headedness that surpasses that of those around her. From the start, Fanny tries to always do what is proper, moral, and best, and this preserves her and keeps her unscathed by the scandal that rocks the Bertram family.

When Fanny goes with the rest of the young people to Sotherton, she is willing to sit alone by herself rather than doing anything improper. This willingness to do what is right instead of what is merely acceptable allows her to watch those around her and witness their true characters. She sees that Mr. Crawford pays no attention to rules of conduct such as how to behave with an engaged woman, and she sees Mr. Rushworth's jealousy. She sees how selfish Julia is about the way she spends her time, and that Tom throws out convention in order to please himself.

Even Edmund falls short at times from obeying rules of propriety. He rationalizes his actions until he gives in, such as when he joins the play after first announcing that he will never participate in it. Later, he promises himself that he will never bother Fanny about her refusal of Mr. Crawford's proposal, but he gives in and talks to her about it when his father asks him to, which causes Fanny great distress. Next to Fanny, however, he is the most stolid character, and therefore it is appropriate that they end up together in the end.





## Selfishness

Selfishness runs like thread through the novel as selfish characters bring destruction upon themselves. So many of the characters are selfish that it is difficult to choose one as the most selfish, but Mrs. Norris' selfishness seems to have caused the most destruction. Mrs. Norris is a small-minded person who always wants recognition above anything else. She wants to be the first to spread news, and she wants others to see that she holds positions of influence above others.

Her selfishness causes her to develop a sycophantic role with Maria, which further bloats Maria's self-concept and leads her to believe that she can get away with anything because of her wealth and beauty. Of course, Maria is not above social and moral conventions, and when she commits adultery and leaves her husband, she becomes a societal outcast. Julia's selfishness leads her to a marriage with another selfish person. Lady Bertram's selfishness leads her to be a hands-off mother whose children run wild if they want to. Tom's selfishness nearly leads to his death when he drinks himself into a life-threatening illness. Mary Crawford's selfishness robs her of a potentially wonderful marriage with Edmund Bertram because Edmund will not be able to provide her with the fashionable life to which she aspires.



# Style

## Point of View

Mansfield Park is written from the third-person omniscient point of view. Because of this point of view, the reader gets to see what's happening to many different characters without the other characters' knowledge. In third-person narrative, the reader is not as intimately connected with the protagonist as s/he would be if the narrative were written in the first person, but the author's command of letter writing and dialogue is so thorough that the reader often does hear first-person accounts.

The author uses a literary technique in some parts to increase suspense. The point of view is third-person omniscient, meaning the narrator knows more than the characters do. The narrator reveals Henry Crawford's scheme to the reader, so the reader know that Fanny is danger. Fanny, however, has no idea that Henry Crawford is scheming to make her fall in love with him. When Fanny smiles at Henry toward the end of the chapter, the reader feels the tension because the protagonist is in danger and doesn't even realize it.

## Setting

Most of the story is set in the English countryside in the early 19th century. The characters are mostly upper-class with much leisure time on their hands. The gentlemen don't have occupations, so they have a great deal of time for visiting and interacting. Many of the upper-class families have homes both in town and in the country. They spend winters in London and summers in the country. The Bertrams, however, spend all year in the country.

Unlike many Austen novels, however, this novel is partially set in a lower-class household in Portsmouth. Fanny's father works in the dock-yards, and the family lives in a small house in town, which is an enormous contrast from the setting at Mansfield Park. Spending time in this setting helps Fanny to appreciate more than ever all the Bertrams have done for her.

## Language and Meaning

Coming at the end of the Age of Reason and not quite yet to the Romantic Age, the language in this novel can be considered stiff. Most of the words have Latin, not Germanic, roots, which to our modern ears sounds esoteric. Some words that we rarely use today are used repeatedly, and the meanings may be somewhat different. For example, "intercourse" means "conversation." Instead of getting upset, people are "vexed."



Austen uses a great deal of dialogue in this and her other novels. She uses dialogue as the main convention for character development. For example, she doesn't have to tell us that Mr. Rushworth is ignorant. She just has him keep talking about his two-and-forty lines that he has to memorize for the play, and he continually talks about his fine, pink satin cape.

## Structure

The novel is divided into 48 chapters which follow chronologically. The first chapter gives an overview of the history of the Bertram, Norris, and Price families and then proceeds to the time when Fanny is nine years old and first goes to live at Mansfield Park. Her early teenage years are skipped over almost entirely and then the pacing slows down when she reaches eighteen years of age and is on the verge of entering society.

There are no major flashbacks in the novel. The last chapter serves as a sort of epilogue, telling the fates of all the major characters as relates to the action of the novel. The ending represents our idea of poetic justice. The closest characters we have to villains (Henry Crawford, Maria Bertram Rushworth, and Mrs. Norris) find themselves cast out and miserable after all they have done to serve themselves at the expense of others.



## Quotes

"Being now in her twenty-first year, Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with Mr. Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object, it became, by the same rule of moral obligation, her evident duty to marry Mr. Rushworth if she could." Page 36

"When they came within the influence of Sotherton associations, it was better for Miss Bertram, who might be said to have two strings to her bow. She had Rushworth-feelings, and Crawford-feelings, and in the vicinity of Sotherton, the former had considerable effect." Page 81

"'I think the man who could often quarrel with Fanny,' said Edmund, affectionately, 'must be beyond the reach of any sermons.'" Page 111

"The scheme advanced. Opposition was vain; and as to Mrs. Norris, he was mistaken in supposing she would wish to make any. She started no difficulties that were not talked down in five minutes by her eldest nephew and niece, who were all-powerful with her; and, as the whole arrangement was to bring very little expense to any body, and none at all to herself, as she foresaw in it all the comforts of hurry, bustle, and importance, and derived the immediate advantage of fancying herself obliged to leave her own house, where she had been living a month at her own cost, and take up her abode in their's, that every hour might be spent in their service; she was, in fact, exceedingly delighted with the project." Page 129

"I am sorry for Miss Crawford; but I am more sorry to see you drawn in to do what you had resolved against, and what you are known to think will be disagreeable to my uncle. It will be such a triumph to the others!" Page 153

"Mrs. Norris, most happy to assist in the duties of the day, by spending it at the Park to support her sister's spirits, and drinking the health of Mr. and Mrs. Rushworth in a supernumerary glass or two, was all joyous delight—for she had made the match—she had done every thing—and no one would have supposed, from her confident triumph, that she had ever heard of conjugal infelicity in her life, or could have the smallest insight into the disposition of the niece who had been brought up under her eye." Page 200

"In thus sending her away, Sir Thomas perhaps might not be thinking merely of her health. It might occur to him, that Mr. Crawford had been sitting by her long enough, or he might mean to recommend her as a wife by shewing her persuadableness." Page 279

"I care neither what they say, nor what they feel. They will now see what sort of woman it is that can attach me, that can attach a man of sense. I wish the discovery may do them any good. And they will now see their cousin treated as she ought to be, and I



wish they may be heartily ashamed of their own abominable neglect and unkindness."  
Page 294

"I had thought you peculiarly free from willfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence of spirit, which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women, and which in young women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offense. But you have now shown me that you can be willful and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you—without even asking their advice. You have shown yourself very, very different from anything that I had imagined." Pages 313-314

"It often grieved her to the heart—to think of the contrast between them—to think that where nature had made so little difference, circumstances should have made so much, and that her mother, as handsome as Lady Bertram, and some years her junior, should have an appearance so much more worn and faded, so comfortless, so slatternly, so shabby." Page 406

"In her usefulness, in Fanny's excellence, in William's continued good conduct, and rising fame, and in the general well-doing and success of the other members of the family, all assisting to advance each other, and doing credit to his countenance and aid, Sir Thomas saw repeated, and for ever repeated reason to rejoice in what he had done for them all, and acknowledge the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure." Pages 471-472



## Topics for Discussion

Describe the relationship between Edmund and Fanny. Do they complement each other? Are they "two peas in a pod"?

Why do you think Mrs. Norris treats Fanny so poorly? Does Fanny handle the poor treatment well?

Discuss consequences. What are the consequences of Tom's indiscretions? What are the consequences of Maria's actions? What consequences must Henry Crawford face at the end of the story?

What do you think Edmund sees in Mary Crawford? What does Mary see in him?

How would Fanny Price be portrayed in a modern-day version of Mansfield Park?

Why do you think Fanny's dearest relations (Edmund and William) are male?

Does Fanny remain true to her moral standards throughout the book? Does her character grow or change at all?