

Theme and Construction of the Novel

A Vain Aristocrat

In *Emma*, we have the story of a young lady, Emma Woodhouse, who, being idle and not a little vain of her position and her superior power of judgment, indulged in fancies which brought distress to others and some mortification, followed by repentance, to herself. She fancies first that she can raise a girl of illegitimate birth and moderate education to her own level of refinement; that this girl, Harriet Smith, is too good, as she is now her chosen companion, for the honest farmer, Robert Martin.

Emma, meanwhile, begins to look on Mr. Elton, the young and self-seeking Vicar of Highbury, as the destined husband of Harriet and busies herself about bringing the two together. To her double annoyance, Mr. Elton finally proposes to Emma next and her pride and insight both suffer a set-back. Emma fancies herself in love with Frank Churchill, the handsome, high-spirited, aristocratic young son of Mr. Weston.

After a time, she finds out that she does not really care for him and her next scheme is to bring about an attachment between this young man and her protegee, Harriet Smith. She fancies that Jane Fairfax, the orphaned daughter of the sister of her poor neighbour, Miss Bates, is harbouring an unlawful love for a married man. She tells Frank Churchill about her suspicions regarding Jane Fairfax and this becomes a subject of merriment for them. Emma has yet to learn all this, while Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill are secretly engaged, the most disconcerting of all is the discovery that Harriet is nourishing a fancy for her own that she has won the love of Emma's dearest, truest, and oldest friend, Mr. Knightley.

All of a sudden, Emma realizes that she herself is in love with Mr. Knightley and that she cannot lose him to any other woman. She does not have long to wait in the agony of suspense. At the news of Frank Churchill's engagement, Mr. Knightley hastens to her side believing that she is in need of solace, after being so villainously

betrayed. He is overjoyed to find Emma heartfree and he cannot help giving expression to his own true love which will no longer be hid. Emma herself, though overcome with joy and speechless with astonishment for a moment, soon makes him happy by the avowal of her own love and they are married soon after Harriet has been led to the altar by her faithful Robert Martin.

Illusion and Reality

This is the story of *Emma* and the main interest of its theme lies in the disparity between Emma's misapprehensions and the truth which is finally borne on upon her at the end of each blundering scheme of hers. The whole theme is dealt with in the spirit of comedy and Emma is shown to be the victim of her own illusions.

It may be said that the book turns on the contrast between appearance and reality or, more correctly, that the significance of the novel lies in the variety of illusions and in the complexity of reality.

A well-knit plot

According to Orlo Williams, we may profitably apply to *Emma*, analysis of the kind which Mr. Percy Lubbock speaks of in his *Craft of Fiction*. "The construction of *Emma*, in point of fact," says Orlo Williams, "is a masterpiece of finished grace in seven well-balanced movements which vary in length and in tempo but follow one another in a harmonious succession of stresses and relaxations which is most interesting to follow."

The first of these moments, which takes the first seventeen chapters, is concerned with the Harriet Smith-Elton debacle. By the end of the First Chapter the stage is already set for Emma's first mistake and only a heroine is wanting for this little comedy. The heroine soon appears in the person of the young boarder whom Mr. Goddard, the mistress of the local boarding-school, introduces at Hartfield. This girl is soon taken in hand by Emma and her humble life is turned upside down with the severing of her connections with the Yeomanry, represented by Robert Martin and his family. The wings of Emma's fancy are at full stretch as she believes that she can improve the mind and the lot of the pretty but brainless Harriet. While Emma is busily scheming to bring about the union of Harriet and Elton, Mr. Knightley and Mr. Weston discuss her faults and foibles in Chapter V. With our knowledge of Emma's character thus enlarged, we can better enjoy the comedy of her deception of herself, Harriet and Mr. Elton as it proceeds rapidly with the episode of Elton's taking Harriet's portrait to London to be framed and the writing of the charade.

The blind assurance of Emma's self-satisfied arguments with Mr. Knightley and her meeting with Mr. Elton in Vicarage Lane and the interlude provided by the arrival of John Knightley at Hartfield are all highly entertaining and they culminate in the Christ-

was dinner at Randalls. This dinner-party is so carefully arranged through three whole chapters that it prepares us for the masterstroke of Mr. Elton's declaration to Emma and description of their mutual discomfiture in the crawling carriage. The first movement of the story now comes to an end with Emma's depressed reflections, her buoyant recovery and the departure of Mr. Elton for Bath.

The second movement, though slower, is excellently managed. After her first fancy had been dissipated in anger and self-reproach, Emma now embarks upon her second. This consists in the assumption of a special relation to Frank Churchill when he shall appear at Highbury. Though a conversation with Mr. Knightley in which she, good-humouredly defends Frank Churchill, Emma is made to reinstate herself in the reader's opinion, before she indulges in her third fancy. Meanwhile, Miss Bates comes on the scene with her inimitable conversation and conveys the news of her niece's coming to stay for a time in Highbury. Emma fancies that the reason for Jane Fairfax's coming to Highbury is her unfortunate attachment to Mr. Dixon. There is short pause now in the narrative to acquaint the reader with Jane's past history and Emma's reluctance to befriend her. Miss Bates now announces Mr. Elton's engagement which causes great perturbation to Harriet.

Next, we are told of the embarrassment of her meeting with the Martins at the local shop and Emma's odious part in Harriet's want of good manners to the Martins. The last chapter of this second movement in the plot introduces Frank Churchill, handsome, provocative and quite ready to meet Emma halfway in flirtation.

The third movement which is short and sparkling, shows us how skilfully Jane Austen suggests the excitement aroused among the ladies of Highbury by Frank Churchill's presence among them. Emma and Frank are always marching together triumphantly before the admiring Westons and Bateses. There is the walk through the village, the examination of the ball-room at the Crown, the project of a dance and Frank's first discussion of Jane with Emma. Here he maliciously encourages her to talk of her fancied reading of Jane's character. Following the episode of Frank's visit to London to have his hair-cut, is the dinner-party at the Coles' where the talk is all of Jane's new piano and conjectures about its donor. Emma's fatuous self-confidence is here ironically exposed. She is fooled by Frank to the top of her bent. She now preens herself on the appearance and happiness of her protegee, Harriet. She plainly tells Mr. Weston that Mr. Knightley should never marry.

In the next two chapters there is much brilliant comedy, especially in the meeting of Miss Bates with the company from Hartfield, her soliloquies on Jane's piano and the broken rivet in her mother's spectacles, the congregation of the company in the

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Bates's sitting-room etc. This movement of the story closes with the preparations for the ball and the sudden suspense brought on by Frank's abrupt departure and his mysterious appearance on taking leave of Emma. "Thus she is left alone, embroidering the theme of her second fancy into a singularly unimpassioned love-motive."

At the opening of the fourth movement of the plot, we see Emma quietly pondering over the state of her heart and that of Frank Churchill. At the end of this movement, she is again alone and has already fancied herself out of love with Frank. Though she believes herself loved by Frank, she hopes that the sentiment will admit of a gentle cooling into a warm friendship. This hope leads to her fourth fancy that she may bestow on Harriet the place in Frank's affections, already vacated by her. Meanwhile, Mr. Elton has arrived in Highbury and she now holds the centre of the stage with the broad comedy of her vulgarity. This ridiculous character is given full play, culminating in the dinner-party at Hartfield where she patronises Emma, calls Mr. Woodhouse her dear old beau and talks interminably of her prosperous brother-in-law, Mr. Suckling.

The fifth movement is full of action. In the next six chapters which comprise this movement we notice the turning round of the fates upon the offending Emma. There is the opening ball at the Crown so often praised for its masterly description. The next day, Harriet walks into Hartfield, fainting upon the arm of Frank Churchill after he had saved her from a group of gypsies who had scared her. Emma's fourth fancy now bursts into sudden growth and it is encouraged by Harriet's confession of a new attachment and Emma's misunderstanding of her supposed confidence. Frank now makes a blunder regarding the source of some local gossip and Mr. Knightley is angered by signs of intelligence between Jane Fairfax and the acknowledged suitor of Emma. Next comes the strawberry-party at Donwell, from which Jane makes a distressed escape while Frank gives way to ill-temper. Thus, we come to the great finale of the picnic on Box Hill where Emma flirts shamelessly with Frank Churchill, is rude to Miss Bates and gets scolded by Mr. Knightley. As she drives home the tears flow freely down her cheeks and she makes no attempt to check them.

The sixth movement, though a little overburdened by the clearing of the misunderstanding between Jane and Frank, completes the march of the fates against Emma. When she is worried over having caused pain to Harriet by the news of Frank's secret engagement to Jane, Harriet deals her an unexpected and terrible blow. As the quiet and submissive Harriet expresses her belief that Mr. Knightley is in love with her, Emma is literally stunned and abashed to the ground. She repents of her follies particularly that of attempting to improve the lot of Harriet. The future looks desolate enough to the proud girl who fears she may have to lose her

dearest and oldest friend to the silly Harriet. It suddenly dawns upon her that she has all along been loving Mr. Knightley without being aware of it. Now she cannot afford to lose him, particularly to Harriet.

The seventh and last movement of the story now succeeds to the dull and moaning chords which close the sixth. There is great agitation at first in the meeting of Emma with Mr. Knightley, but it calms down to a peaceful resolution of all the discordant elements after the unexpectedly provoked declaration in the shrubbery. Now there is a gradual falling away into repose and very soon the wedding-bells ring for Harriet and Emma. Jane Fairfax also is to be married to Frank Churchill soon after the period of mourning for his aunt is over.

A balanced plot

Having thus analysed the whole structure of the novel, we see that Jane Austen has a mastery of vital rhythm, not only in sentences but also in the whole fabric of her creation. Speaking about this, Orlo Williams says, "With subtle variations, climax answers repose. No two movements are alike, but all are bound together by a natural affinity, like the movements of Purcell's Golden Sonata; and within their limits all the moods, all the graces and all the less boisterous humours have their diverting ways and interchange. As in an opera by Mozart, one bewitching theme succeeds another; our enjoyment is never strained and never relaxed. By ingenious, yet easy alterations of key and measure of piquant solos and triumphant 'tutti' our consciousness is held continuously enthralled, until the last chord has been struck. We return again, when the element of surprise is quite worn away and again we are subjugated. It is no wonder that having once surrendered to this enchantress, we are always in her power, listening to such bright and graceful music, so pure in form, so delicate in texture."

Illusion to Reality

The basic movement of *Emma* is from delusion to self-recognition and from illusion to reality. Emma Woodhouse at the beginning of the novel is the victim of her own delusions. She thinks that she is extremely intolligent and clever and that she can see into the thoughts, feelings and desires of those around her. She is universally admired and spoilt by her family and friends and thus comes to have a very high opinion of herself. When Miss Talar, her sole companion at Hartfield for so many years marries Mr. Weston and goes to live with him at Randalls, half a mile away, she begins to occupy her idle hours by trying to order the lives of her close associates like Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith.

But after imagining herself to be succeeding very well in being ing about an attachment between Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith, Emma is rudely awakened to the truth that Mr. Elton has been daying his attentions to herself and not to Harriet. This should

have shaken Emma's faith in her own judgment and insight into human character.

But instead of giving up further attempts at seeing into other people's hearts and arranging their marriages for them she promptly goes on indulging in similar other foolish fancies. The first of these is concerned with her imaginary love for Frank Churchill. It takes only a little time for even a self-deceiving fool like Emma to realize this discovery about the state of her own heart, her next attempt is to bring about an attachment between her protegee, Harriet Smith and Mr. Frank Churchill whom she believes to be in love with her, while speaking with Harriet and insisting on mentioning no names, she makes the mistake of leading the silly girl to believe that she would encourage her to love Mr. Knightley. This is the most shocking blunder that Emma makes as far as her own feelings are concerned. When Harriet admits that she has elevated her thoughts to the squire of Donwell Abbey, the scales suddenly seem to fall from Emma's eyes. She suddenly realizes that her love for Mr. Knightley which has all along been masquerading as a friendship, is the most important thing in her life. It is her jealousy of her prospective rival that leads to self-recognition and the acceptance of reality in place of her many delusions about herself as well as other people. Jane Austen exhibits consummate art in depicting Emma's gradual progress out of her errors into moral and emotional maturity. Emma arrives at self-knowledge only through bitter experience.

Again and again the voice of common-sense tries to make itself heard through the warnings of Mr. Knightley, but being the victim of her own delusions, Emma does not listen to it. But when she has had disillusionment after disillusionment and when her greatest disillusionment comes with the realization that none but herself should marry Mr. Knightley, Emma seems to have arrived at self-knowledge. She would not have had this self-knowledge but for the harsh lessons her own experiences of life had taught. From Emma's story, Jane Austen wants us to understand the disparity between things and persons as they are and as they seem to be. ●

Emma

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Emma, by Jane Austen, is a novel about the perils of misconstrued romance. The novel was first published in December 1815. As in her other novels, Austen explores the concerns and difficulties of genteel women living in Georgian-Regency England; she also creates a lively 'comedy of manners' among her characters.

Before she began the novel, Austen wrote, "I am going to take a heroine whom no-one but myself will much like."^[1] In the very first sentence she introduces the title character as "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich." Emma, however, is also rather spoiled; she greatly overestimates her own matchmaking abilities; and she is blind to the dangers of meddling in other people's lives and is often mistaken about the meanings of others' actions.

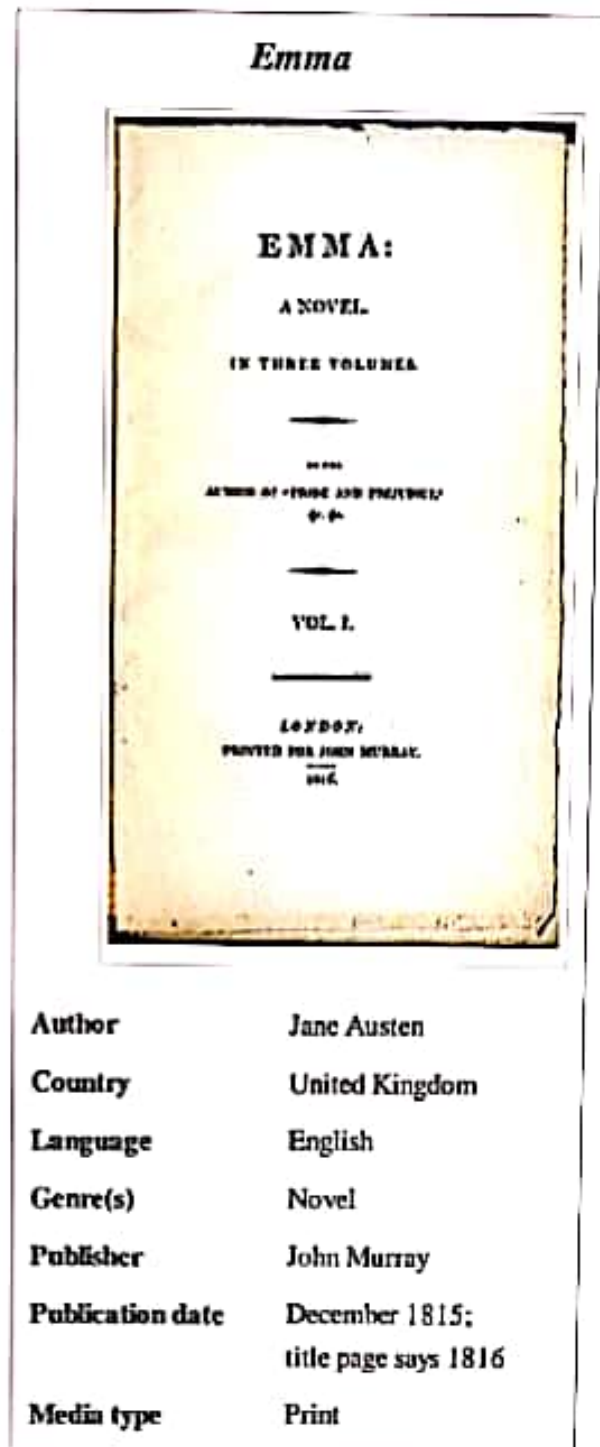
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Plot summary

Although convinced that she herself will never marry, Emma Woodhouse, a precocious twenty-year-old resident of the village of Highbury, imagines herself to be naturally gifted in conjuring love matches. After self-declared success at matchmaking between her governess and Mr. Weston, a village widower, Emma takes it upon herself to find an eligible match for her new friend, Harriet Smith. Though Harriet's parentage is unknown, Emma is convinced that Harriet deserves to be a gentleman's wife and sets her friend's sights on Mr. Elton, the village vicar. Meanwhile, Emma persuades Harriet to reject the proposal of Robert Martin, a well-to-do farmer for whom Harriet clearly has feelings.

Harriet becomes infatuated with Mr. Elton under Emma's encouragement, but Emma's plans go awry when Elton makes it clear that his affection is for Emma, not Harriet. Emma realizes that her obsession with making a match for Harriet has blinded her to the true nature of the situation. Mr. Knightley, Emma's brother-in-law and



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treasured friend, watches Emma's matchmaking efforts with a critical eye. He believes that Mr. Martin is a worthy young man whom Harriet would be lucky to marry. He and Emma quarrel over Emma's meddling, and, as usual, Mr. Knightley proves to be the wiser of the pair. Elton, spurned by Emma and offended by her insinuation that Harriet is his equal, leaves for the town of Bath and marries a young woman there almost immediately.

Emma is left to comfort Harriet and to wonder about the character of a new visitor expected in Highbury—Mr. Weston's son, Frank Churchill. Frank is set to visit his father in Highbury after having been raised by his aunt and uncle in London, who have also adopted him as their heir. Emma knows nothing about Frank, who has long been deterred from visiting his father by his aunt's illnesses and complaints. Mr. Knightley is immediately suspicious of the young man, especially after Frank rushes back to London merely to have his hair cut. Emma, however, finds Frank delightful and notices that his charms are directed mainly toward her. Though she plans to discourage these charms, she finds herself flattered and engages in a flirtation with the young man. Emma greets Jane Fairfax, another addition to the Highbury set, with less enthusiasm. Jane is beautiful and accomplished, but Emma dislikes her because of her reserve and, the narrator insinuates, because she is jealous of Jane.

Suspicion, intrigue, and misunderstandings ensue. Mr. Knightley defends Jane, saying that she deserves compassion because, unlike Emma, she has no independent fortune and must soon leave home to work as a governess. Mrs. Weston suspects that the warmth of Mr. Knightley's defense comes from romantic feelings, an implication Emma resists. Everyone assumes that Frank and Emma are forming an attachment, though Emma soon dismisses Frank as a potential suitor and imagines him as a match for Harriet. At a village ball, Knightley earns Emma's approval by offering to dance with Harriet, who has just been humiliated by Mr. Elton and his new wife. The next day, Frank saves Harriet from Gypsy beggars. When Harriet tells Emma that she has fallen in love with a man above her social station, Emma believes that she means Frank. Knightley begins to suspect that Frank and Jane have a secret understanding, and he attempts to warn Emma. Emma laughs at Knightley's suggestion and loses Knightley's approval when she flirts with Frank and insults Miss Bates, a kindhearted spinster and Jane's aunt, at a picnic. When Knightley reprimands Emma, she weeps.

News comes that Frank's aunt has died, and this event paves the way for an unexpected revelation that slowly solves the mysteries. Frank and Jane have been secretly engaged; his attentions to Emma have been a screen to hide his true preference. With his aunt's death and his uncle's approval, Frank can now marry Jane, the woman he loves. Emma worries that Harriet will be crushed, but she soon discovers that it is Knightley, not Frank, who is the object of Harriet's affection. Harriet believes that Knightley shares her feelings. Emma finds herself upset by Harriet's revelation, and her distress forces her to realize that she is in love with Knightley. Emma expects Knightley to tell her he loves Harriet, but, to her delight, Knightley declares his love for Emma. Harriet is soon comforted by a second proposal from Robert Martin, which she accepts. The novel ends with the marriage of Harriet and Mr. Martin and that of Emma and Mr. Knightley, resolving the question of who loves whom after all.

Principal characters

Emma Woodhouse, the protagonist of the story, is a beautiful, high-spirited, intelligent, and 'slightly' spoiled young woman of 21. Her mother died when she was very young, and she has been mistress of the house ever since, certainly since her older sister got married. While she is in many ways mature for her age, Emma makes some serious mistakes, mainly due to her conviction that she is always right and her lack of real world experience. Although she has vowed she will never ever marry, she delights in making matches for others. She seems unable to fall in love, until jealousy makes her realize that she has loved Mr Knightley all along.

George Knightley, about 37. He is a close friend of Emma, and her only critic, though he cares deeply for her. Mr Knightley is the owner of the neighbouring estate of Donwell Abbey, which includes extensive grounds and

a farm. He is the elder brother of Mr John Knightley—the husband of Emma's elder sister Isabella. Mr Knightley is very annoyed with Emma for persuading Harriet to turn down Mr Martin, thinking that the advantage is all on Harriet's side; he also warns Emma against matchmaking Harriet with Mr Elton, correctly guessing that Mr Elton has a much higher opinion of himself. He is suspicious of Frank Churchill and his motives; although his suspicion turns out to be based mainly on jealousy of the younger man, his instincts are proven correct by the revelation that Frank Churchill is not all that he seems.

Mr Frank Churchill, Mr Weston's son by his previous marriage, an amiable young man who manages to be liked by everyone except Mr Knightley, who considers him quite immature, although this partially results from his jealousy of Frank's supposed 'pursuit' of Emma. After his mother's death he was raised by his wealthy aunt and uncle, whose last name he took. Frank enjoys dancing and music and living life to the fullest. Frank may be viewed as a careless but less villainous version of characters from other Austen novels, such as Mr Wickham from *Pride and Prejudice* or Willoughby from *Sense and Sensibility*.

Jane Fairfax, an orphan whose only family consists of an aunt, Miss Bates, and a grandmother, Mrs Bates. She is regarded as a very beautiful, clever, and elegant woman, with the best of manners, and is also very well-educated and exceptionally talented at singing and playing the piano; in fact, she is the sole person that Emma envies. She has little fortune, however, and seems destined to become a governess – a prospect she dislikes.

Harriet Smith, a young friend of Emma's, is a very pretty but unsophisticated girl who is too easily led by others, especially Emma; she has been educated at a nearby school. The illegitimate daughter of initially unknown parents, she is revealed in the last chapter to be the daughter of a fairly rich and decent tradesman, although not a "gentleman". Emma takes Harriet under her wing early in the novel, and she becomes the subject of some of Emma's misguided matchmaking attempts. Harriet initially rebuffs a marriage proposal from farmer Robert Martin because of Emma's belief that he is beneath her, despite Harriet's own doubtful origins. She then develops a passion for Mr Knightley, which is the catalyst for Emma realising her own feelings. Ultimately, Harriet and Mr Martin are wed, despite Emma's meddling.

Philip Elton is a good-looking, well mannered and ambitious young vicar. Emma wants him to marry Harriet; he wants to marry Emma. Mr Elton displays his mercenary nature by quickly marrying another woman of means after Emma's rejection.

Augusta Elton, formerly Miss Hawkins, is Mr Elton's moneyed but obnoxious wife. She is a boasting, domineering, pretentious woman who likes to be the centre of attention and is generally disliked by Emma and her circle. She patronizes Jane, which earns Jane the sympathy of others.

Mrs Anne Weston, formerly Miss Taylor, was Emma's governess for sixteen years and remains her closest friend and confidante after she marries Mr Weston in the opening chapter. She is a sensible woman who adores Emma. Mrs Weston acts as a surrogate mother to her former charge and, occasionally, as a voice of moderation and reason.

Mr Weston, a recently wealthy man living in the vicinity of Hartfield. He marries Emma's former governess, Miss Taylor, and by his first marriage is father to Frank Churchill, who was adopted and raised by his late wife's brother and sister-in-law. Mr Weston is a sanguine, optimistic man, who enjoys socializing.

Miss Bates, a friendly, garrulous spinster whose mother, Mrs Bates, is a friend of Mr Woodhouse. Her accomplished niece, Jane Fairfax, is the light of her life. One day, Emma humiliates her on a day out in the country, when she pointedly alludes to her tiresome prolixity. Afterward, Mr Knightley sternly rebukes Emma. Shamed, she tries to make amends.

Henry Woodhouse, Emma's father, is always concerned for his own health and comfort, and to the extent that it does not interfere with his own, the health and comfort of his friends. He assumes a great many things are hazardous to one's health, and is generally a difficult person to handle because he is always fussing about the trifling things which bother him and which he assumes must bother everyone else just the same, to the point of trying to deny his visitors foods he thinks too rich. He laments that "poor Isabella" and especially "poor Miss Taylor" have married and been taken away from him, because since he is unhappy about their being gone, he assumes they must be miserable as well.

Isabella Woodhouse is the elder sister of Emma and daughter of Henry. She is married to John Knightley, and spends much of her time at home caring for her five children (including Henry, 'little' John, Bella and 'little' Emma).

John Knightley is Isabella's husband and George's younger brother. He is an old acquaintance of Jane Fairfax. He indulges his family's desires for visits and vacations, though he would prefer to stay at home, especially if the weather is less than perfect.

Criticism and themes

Criticism

Early reviews of *Emma* were generally favorable, but there were some criticisms about the lack of story. John Murray remarked that it lacked "incident and Romance";^[2] Maria Edgeworth, the author of *Belinda*, to whom Austen had sent a complimentary copy, wrote:^[2]

there was no story in it, except that Miss Emma found that the man whom she designed for Harriet's lover was an admirer of her own – & he was affronted at being refused by Emma & Harriet wore the willow – and *smooth, thin water-gruel* is according to Emma's father's opinion a very good thing & it is very difficult to make a cook understand what you mean by *smooth, thin water-gruel*!!

Themes

Emma Woodhouse is the first Austen heroine with no financial concerns, which, she declares to the naïve Miss Smith, is the reason that she has no inducement to marry. This is a great departure from Austen's other novels, in which the quest for marriage and financial security are often important themes in the stories. Emma's ample financial resources are one of the factors that make this novel much lighter than Austen's earlier works, such as *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Fairfax's prospects, in contrast, are bleak.

In contrast to other Austen heroines Emma seems immune to romantic attraction. Unlike Marianne Dashwood, who is attracted to the wrong man before she settles on the right one, Emma shows no romantic interest in the men she meets. She is genuinely surprised (and somewhat disgusted) when Mr Elton declares his love for her—much in the way Elizabeth Bennet singularly reacts to the obsequious Mr Collins. Her fancy for Frank Churchill represents more of a longing for a little drama in her life than a longing for romantic love. Notably too, Emma utterly fails to understand the budding affection between Harriet Smith and Robert Martin; she interprets the prospective match solely in terms of financial settlements and social ambition. It is only after Harriet Smith reveals her interest in Mr Knightley that Emma realizes her own feelings for him.

While Emma differs strikingly from Austen's other heroines in these two respects, she resembles Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot, among others, in another way; she is an intelligent young woman with too little to do and no ability to change her location or everyday routine. Though her family is loving and her economic status

secure, Emma's everyday life is dull indeed; she has few companions her own age when the novel begins. Her determined though inept matchmaking may represent a muted protest against the narrow scope of a wealthy woman's life, especially that of a woman who is single and childless.

Film and television adaptations

Emma has been the subject of many adaptations:^[3]

- 1948: *Emma*
- 1972: *Emma* (BBC television), starring Doran Godwin as Emma.
- 1995: *Clueless* (a loose modern adaptation), starring Alicia Silverstone as Cher Horowitz (Emma).
- 1996: *Emma*, starring Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma.
- 1996: *Emma*, starring Kate Beckinsale as Emma.
- 2009: *Emma* (BBC television), starring Romola Garai as Emma.
- 2010: *Aisha*, starring Sonam Kapoor as Aisha (*Emma* – Hindi language Version), produced by Rhea Kapoor^[4]
- 2010: *Emma*, starring Sarah Cotton as Emma.

Emma in popular culture

- The novel *Emma* is featured in the film *Naked* (1993) by Mike Leigh, in which the character Johnny (played by David Thewlis) confuses the title and the name of the author.
- *Emma* provides the basis for the plot of *Clueless* (1995) by Amy Heckerling. The role is performed by Alicia Silverstone.
- *Emma* was the correct answer to the £1,000 question in an episode of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* in the UK in January 1999. John Davidson, a dog holder from Northumberland, was asked which of the girls' names was the subject of a Jane Austen novel, out of Emily, Jane, Emma and Sophie (Davidson incorrectly guessed Jane, costing him £500 and therefore became the first contestant to win nothing).
- Joan Aiken wrote a companion novel, *Jane Fairfax: The Secret Story of the Second Heroine in Jane Austen's Emma*.
- Reginald Hill wrote a 1987 short story "Poor Emma" (included in the 2007 paperback *There are no Ghosts in the Soviet Union*) in which finances and security play the central role.
- *The Importance of Being Emma*, a novel by Juliet Archer, is a modern version of *Emma*.
- *Emma and the Werewolves: Jane Austen and Adam Rann*, a mashup novel by Adam Rann. A mashup novel appropriates text and the author's name from an original source that is no longer protected by copyright, integrating new narrative into the original to create a new (mashup) story on the back of the original. Typically, the mashup story is a sendup of the original story. Also typical, the mashup publisher prints the original author's name in a manner that falsely represents the original as a joint author or collaborator in the mashup novel.
- Gwyneth Paltrow played Emma in the 1996 movie.
- Romola Garai played Emma in the 2009 BBC Series based on the book.
- Andrew Trees' novel "Academy X," about an unnamed prep school in New York City, utilizes "Emma" throughout the plot. The main character, John, is head of the English department and teaches "Emma" to his senior literature class. The character of Caitlin is often compared to the eponymous heroine because of her looks, money, and high-standing position in the social hierarchy of the school.
- The Bollywood film *Aisha* (2010) is an adaptation of *Emma*.