

# Marriage and Status of English in Jane Austen's Emma

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Content Introduction	<p>Emma Woodhouse, aged 20 at the start of the novel, is a young, beautiful, witty, and privileged woman in <a href="#">Regency England</a>. She lives on the fictional estate of Hartfield in <a href="#">Surrey</a> in the village of Highbury with her elderly widowed father, a <a href="#">valetudinarian</a> who is excessively concerned for the health and safety of his loved ones. Emma's friend and only critic is the gentlemanly <a href="#">George Knightley</a>, her neighbour from the adjacent estate of Donwell, and the brother of her elder sister Isabella's husband, John. As the novel opens, Emma has just attended the wedding of Miss Taylor, her best friend and former <a href="#">governess</a>. Having introduced Miss Taylor to her future husband, Mr. Weston, Emma takes credit for their marriage, and decides that she rather likes <a href="#">matchmaking</a>.</p> <p>Against Mr. Knightley's advice, Emma forges ahead with her new interest, and tries to match her new friend Harriet Smith, a sweet, pretty, but none-too-bright <a href="#">parlour boarder</a> of seventeen—described as "the natural [i.e., <a href="#">illegitimate</a>] daughter of somebody"—to Mr. Elton, the local <a href="#">vicar</a>. Emma becomes convinced that Mr. Elton's constant attentions are a result of his attraction and growing love for Harriet.</p> <p>But before events can unfold as she plans, Emma must first persuade Harriet to refuse an advantageous marriage proposal. Her suitor is a respectable, educated, and well-spoken young</p>

farmer, Robert Martin, but Emma decides he isn't good enough for Harriet. Against her own wishes, the easily influenced Harriet rejects Mr. Martin.

Emma's schemes go awry when Mr. Elton, a social climber, fancies Emma is in love with him and proposes to her. Emma's friends had suggested that Mr. Elton's attentions were really directed at her, but she had misread the signs. Emma, rather shocked and a bit insulted, tells Mr. Elton that she had thought him attached to Harriet; however Elton is outraged at the very idea of marrying the socially inferior Harriet. After Emma rejects Mr. Elton, he leaves for a while for a sojourn in [Bath](#), and Harriet fancies herself heartbroken. Emma feels dreadful about misleading Harriet and resolves—briefly—to interfere less in people's lives.

## Abstract

Emma is a comic novel by Jane Austen, first published in 1816, about the perils of misconstrued romance. The main character, Emma Woodhouse, is described in the opening paragraph as "handsome, clever, and rich" but is also rather spoiled. Prior to starting the novel, Austen wrote, "I am going to take a heroine whom no-one but myself will much like."

### About Jane Austen

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 at Steventon, Hampshire, the seventh of the eight children of the Reverend George Austen and his wife Cassandra.

Family life was always important to her ,and plays a prominent role in her novels,where she repeatedly explores the relationships of parents and children and of siblings.She was fortunate in being born to what Marghanita Laski describes as ‘happy, talented, parents and .... A pleasant home’,and she enjoyed particularly close relationships with her brother Henry,four years older than herself, and her sister Cassandra, two years older. Another of her brothers, Edward, had, like Frank Churchill in

Emma, been adopted by wealthy relatives who were childless and was being brought up as their heir.

The Austens were comfortably off and life, though outwardly uneventful, must have been very pleasant. Middle-class life, especially rural life, in the southern counties of England is the favourite setting in Jane Austen's novels, which reflect the world she knew intimately from first-hand experience.

## **The story**

It has been said that the theme of Emma is growing up; also that its theme is marriage. Though this may look like a difference of opinion, the difference is only apparent, for the two questions are connected. At the beginning of the novel Emma is immature; in the course of it she moves toward maturity, partly as a result of some rather painful experiences in her relationships with other people, partly as a result of Mr. Knightley's patient, loving and scrupulous guidance of her developing moral sense. For illusion and self-deception – or, to put it more negatively, freedom from towards self-deception – was a cardinal attribute of maturity; and it is knowledge that she attains only in the closing portion of the novel involves a recognition that she loves George Knightley; and it is only at this point that she can be said to be ready for marriage. As Jane Austen saw it, the choice of a marriage partner is perhaps the most important and solemn decision that an individual undertakes. Her novels are full of marriage, accomplished or in prospect, and many of them are unsuccessful. In Emma, for instance, the implication is that the Eltons' marriage is built on such uncertain foundation as to make it very likely that before long it will produce domestic disharmony.

## **About characters of protagonists**

Emma is vain, conceited, a spoiled child, and a snob. She takes a dislike to Jane Fairfax for no better reason than that Jane seems to represent seriously, her self-appointed role as patroness of Harriet Smith and manipulator of her fortunes nearly cause disaster: if Harriet had been a different kind of personality, instead of shedding a few tears at her disappointment over Mr. Elton she might have gone off and drowned herself, and if she does not do so it is not Emma's fault. All this, however, is only one side of the picture. Emma has at least one important redeeming feature: her devotion to her father. He is a tiresome and demanding old man, and we might hardly be inclined

to blame her if she occasionally lacked patience with him. But she never does: her consideration for him, from start to finish, is admirably unselfish. To this we must add that she is prepared to acknowledge when she is in the wrong, and that, despite her faults (which Knightley, who is clearly a good judge of character. This makes her a complex character, neither so good as to be bland and uninteresting nor so unattractive as to forfeit our sympathy.

## **Comment on Jane Austen's "Emma"**

Emma has failed to see certain important things and has misunderstood others that she has seen. An early instance of the filtering of the narrative through the heroine's consciousness occurs in line 8 where we are told that for her to meet Frank again at the Crown 'would be better than a common meeting in a crowd', When we ask: 'Better for whom?' the answer must be, 'Better for Emma'.

If "Emma" is a love story, a study of growing up, and a comedy of errors and illusions, it is also a picture of 'The economic basis of society'- not, of course, in the abstract or generalised terms of a sociologist or historian, but in the concrete, vividly realised and dramatic terms of a great novelist.

Emma's misunderstandings from the main plot-interest of this comedy of errors that, at least at times, has serious undertones; and her discovery and acceptance of her own mistakes, together with the embarrassment and humiliation this entails, is an important element in her moral growth. In the course of the novel she finds out what the world is really like (the microcosm of Highbury, as already suggested, representing the larger world of experience). In this process of discovery and self-discovery Mr.Knightley is an important instrument, ready as he is to show Emma her faults and mistakes.

Emma's most important mistakes are about personal relationships and especially about love. The way in which the structure of the novel reflects her various errors and misunderstandings will be discussed in more detail later, but for the moment we may note that she makes at least five major mistakes. First, she believes Mr. Elton to be in love with Harriet where as he actually has designs upon herself; second, she believes Harriet to be in love with Frank Churchill whereas she loves Mr. Knightley; third, she believe the latter to love Harriet, although he loves Emma herself; fourth, she believes Jane Fairfax to be pining hopelessly for Mr.Dixon, whereas she is secretly engaged to

Frank; and fifth, perhaps most important to all, she does not realise that she herself is in love with Mr. Knightley and cannot bear that he should love or be loved by others.

Another minor error, Emma's short-lived belief that Frank is in love with her, is encouraged by Frank's behaviour, which is again deliberately deceptive. Finally, the knowledge of Mr. Knightley's true feelings, and of her own heart, are only arrived at after a more profound kind of self-deception has been thrown off.

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The storyline is very clear. Also, the character is very attractive. I think it can exactly attract the readers to read. Jane Austen describes the character in a very successful way. It make reads very enjoyable. Although there is few bad things. I think the good side is much more than the bad side. I am pursuing the book which is written by Jane Austen. I hope that the other will be nice.

## Reference

1. Austen, Jane/ Justice, George (EDT) (2011/09/08).*Emma*. Introduction and text. Oxford: W W Norton & Co Inc.
2. <https://hk.knowledge.yahoo.com/question/question?qid=7007010902444>