***Emma***

***Chapter 27***

***Vol2Chapter9***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

Emma and Harriet go into Highbury, since Emma is concerned that another visit to Ford's will result in her bumping into Mr. Martin again. When they arrive at Highbury they are met by Mrs. Weston and Mr. Churchill who were calling on the Bates' to hear the new pianoforte.

The two try to convince Emma to join them, but she demurs. She joins Harriet in the Fords while Harriet tries to decide where to have her new dress fabric sent. They are interrupted by Miss Bates and Mrs. Weston who insist that Emma must join them. Emma can hardly refuse and agrees to accompany them to the house.

The next day, Emma basks in the afterglow of the party but feels uneasy about "betraying her suspicions of Jane Fairfax's feelings [for Mr. Dixon] to [Frank Churchill](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Frank_Churchill)." Harriet tells her that the Coles mentioned that the Cox daughters are interested in Mr. Martin. Emma dismisses them as "vulgar girls" and accompanies Harriet on a shopping trip in the village. They run into Mrs. Weston and Frank, who are on their way to visit the Bates women. Miss Bates then appears and asks Emma and Harriet to join them at her apartment when they finish shopping. Before they part ways, Miss Bates begins a long, disjointed monologue and happens to mention that Mr. Knightley has kindly sent the last of his apples for Jane.

Emma is thoroughly pleased with her evening at the Coles, but she is uncertain about the appropriateness of telling Frank about her suspicions about Jane or acknowledging the superiority of Jane’s musical abilities. At the Coles’ party, Harriet heard that Mr. Martin had dined with the Cox family, and there is a rumor that a Cox daughter would like to marry Mr. Martin. To distract and protect Harriet, Emma accompanies her on a shopping trip. They then decide to pay a visit to the Bates household and run into Frank and Mrs. Weston on their way. The visit seems to have been Frank’s idea, but he offers to stay with Emma and send Mrs. Weston to make the visit on her own. Emma sends him along, knowing that he will later come see her at Hartfield, but Miss Bates then comes into the shop to ask Emma to come give her opinion of Jane’s new pianoforte. In her rambling, Miss Bates reveals that Mr. Knightley has sent his last apples of the season to Jane, who is particularly fond of them.

***Analysis:***

It must be very painful for Emma, seeing as she does not like Miss Fairfax, to be forced into visiting the Bates' again. Were it not for Mr. Churchill, the reader is left to wonder if she would have gone at all.

***Analysis(25-27):***

Emma’s indecision about whether to attend the Coles’ dinner party brings the novel’s complicated treatment of the issue of class to the fore. It is difficult for us, as modern-day, democratically minded readers, to agree with Austen’s acceptance of the idea that class differences delineate real differences in intelligence and moral and emotional refinement. Yet Mr. Knightley’s objection to a match between Harriet and Mr. Elton, because Harriet’s unknown parentage means that she belongs to a lower class, makes it seem that Austen reinforces the class hierarchy. Throughout the novel, Knighley’s reason and judgment stand in as surrogates for Austen’s own, and whether or not she believes that class distinctions are always fair, Austen certainly does not aim to overturn the notion of class.

At the same time, Austen ridicules Emma’s scrupulous and wavering decision about whether to refuse the Coles’ invitation, emphasizing Emma’s vanity. When the narrator tells us that Emma “regretted that her father’s known habits would be giving her refusal less meaning than she could wish”—that Emma is worried that the Coles will think she has refused the invitation because her father is antisocial rather than because the Coles are beneath the Woodhouses—we see that Emma doesn’t simply believe herself superior to the Coles. She mean-spiritedly desires to make the Coles feel slighted. The fact that both Mr. Weston and Mr. Knightley accept the Coles’ invitation further reinforces the unreasonable nature of Emma’s scruples.

In her evaluation of Frank Churchill, Emma shows her understanding of class to be truly superficial and dangerous. When Frank elegantly laughs off his folly in going to London for a haircut, Emma observes, “[S]illy things do cease to be silly if they are done by sensible people in an impudent way. Wickedness is always wickedness, but folly is not always folly. It depends upon the character of those who handle it.” Frank does not seem to us the “sensible” person Emma tells herself he is, so we see that the real reason Emma excuses Frank’s frivolous behavior is his elegant, charming manner—the result of his high-class upbringing. Finally, when Mr. Knightley meets Emma at the Coles’, he mocks Emma’s approving statement that his arrival by carriage befits a gentleman, saying, “How lucky that we should arrive at the same moment; for, if we had met first in the drawing-room, I doubt whether you would have discerned me to be more of a gentleman than usual.” Knightley’s comment highlights the fact that Emma does sometimes base her class consciousness on appearances but also that, for Emma’s opinions of Knightley, their usual familiarity overrides this potentially dangerous way of looking at things.

***Summary part by part and analysis***

***Summary part 1:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) deems her delightful evening at the [Coles](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) worth the loss in “dignified seclusion,” though she feels some guilt about sharing her unfavorable suspicions towards [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax) with [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill). Reflecting on Jane’s superior musical performance, Emma practices piano. As she is playing Harriet arrives and applauds her performance.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma’s discomfort regarding Jane stems from a combination of jealousy and self-awareness; Jane holds up an unsettling alternative vision of accomplishment that push Emma to improve her piano playing.

***Summary part 2:***

[Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), with some distress, shares a report she has heard that the Cox daughters are interested in marrying [Mr. Martin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters). [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) rather coldly declares the Cox family to be very vulgar.

***Analysis part 2***

Emma continues to disregard all signs of Mr. Martin’s worthiness, including the good opinion of others regarding Mr. Martin.

***Summary part 3***:

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) and Harriet then go to visit the [Bateses](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), and run into [Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) and [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) in town on the way. Frank had reminded Mrs. Weston of a promise she supposedly made to hear the new piano, though Frank now offers to stay with Emma while Mrs. Weston goes on. However, [Miss Bates](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) soon enters the store herself and persuades Emma and Harriet to drop by as well. After much chattering about all manner of things including [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley)’s gift of Jane’s favorite apples, Miss Bates leads them back to her humble abode.

***Analysis part 3:***

Frank’s behavior reveals certain inconsistencies regarding the Bateses. Although he professes to find visits with them tiresome, he insists that his stepmother and he visit them. Yet, even after this suggestion, Frank appears willing to abandon the visit when encountering Emma and Harriet in town. Meanwhile, Mr. Knightley continues to reveal a genuine kindness and charity towards the Bateses.