***Emma***

***Chapter 30***

***Vol2Chapter12***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

Emma discusses the upcoming ball with Mr. Knightley, who doesn't seem to care one way or another if it takes place at all. Instead of arguing the point with him she resolves to put his quarrelsomeness out of her mind and focus on the big event.

Two days later while Emma is eating breakfast, she receives a note from Mrs. Weston. The note states that Mr. Weston received a letter from Mr. Churchill, Frank's uncle that he must return immediately as his aunt is very ill.

The ball is called off and Mr. Churchill stops at Hartfield before he leaves. He wonders if he will ever be able to return, but promises Emma that there will be a ball when he does. He seems on the verge of saying something very important to her, but Emma steers the conversation in hopes of avoiding it. Mr. Churchill leaves and Emma is left without a ball or the new friend that kept her company nearly every day for fourteen days.

In the days that follow, Emma realizes that she misses Mr. Churchill very much and seems dissatisfied with everything at Hartfield. She realizes she must be in love.

Emma is worried that Frank’s aunt, Mrs. Churchill, will refuse Frank permission to stay on for the ball, which is scheduled for a few days after his visit is scheduled to end. To everyone’s relief, he receives this permission. Only Mr. Knightley refuses to look forward to the ball: he does not seem interested in dancing. Emma takes Knightley’s diffidence as further proof that he is not interested in Jane, who in a rare moment of openness confesses how much she looks forward to the ball.

Two days later, Frank is called back to Enscombe because his aunt is ill. The ball is postponed indefinitely, and Frank comes to Emma to say goodbye. He is clearly dejected and speaks haltingly—for a moment, it seems as if he is going to declare something serious. Interrupted by his father, Frank departs, and Emma is depressed. Highbury society is, it seems for Emma, severely diminished without Frank’s charms. Emma concludes that she must be “a little in love” with Frank after all.

As the ball is being planned, Frank is called back home by his aunt, who is seriously ill. When Frank says good-bye to Emma, he seems anxious to discuss something. Emma discourages him, thinking he wants to make a declaration of love. Fortunately, Mr. Woodhouse enters and cuts the conversation short. Emma feels despondent when Frank leaves, concluding that "she *must* be a little in love with him, in spite of every previous determination against it."

***Analysis:***

Finally, we see some crumbling in Emma's resolve to remain unmarried. The sudden departure of Mr. Churchill throws everyone but solid Mr. Knightley into chaos as the ball is cancelled.

It is interesting to watch Emma's character grow, as she believes she really has fallen in love with Mr. Churchill and it is left to the reader to wonder if he ever will be allowed to return.

***Detailed Summary(29-30):***

One evening at Randalls, Frank and Emma become determined to set up an evening for a real dance. Mr. Woodhouse is naturally against such a scheme for reasons of health, but the Westons are quite for it as they measure rooms to decide their suitability and the number of couples wanted. Late the next morning Frank arrives at Hartfield to announce that the dance will be held at the Crown Inn. When Mr. Woodhouse argues against the place, Frank adroitly answers his objections and takes Emma off to the Crown, which the Westons are inspecting. "They can do nothing satisfactorily without you," he tells Emma. After they have really settled the questions about using the place, Frank suggests that they need "a large council," which should include Miss Bates. This leads to his going for both the aunt and the niece. Since Frank has written the Churchills for permission to extend his visit a few days, everything for the dance seems to be in order, especially for the Westons, who note that Frank has "secured" Emma for the first two dances.

Word comes that Frank may stay longer, and Emma is now certain of her ball except for "Mr. Knightley's provoking indifference about it," an indifference much in contrast to Jane's animated hopes for the social event.

Two days later everything is overthrown when a letter comes stating that Mrs. Churchill is ill and that Frank must return home immediately. Frank comes by Hartfield to say goodbye and Emma learns that he has already done the same at the Bates household. He seems about to declare himself on something when he pauses in mid-sentence as if to read her thoughts. Afraid of what he might be about to say, Emma calmly continues about the rightness of his visit to the Bateses. There is silence, during which he sighs. Once again he breaks off in the middle of a sentence, and Emma thinks that he is more in love with her than she supposed. But at that moment Mr. Weston enters and Frank, saying that he will look forward to hearing from them in Highbury, leaves with his father.

For Emma it is a sad change, with no more meetings with Frank and now with no immediate probability of a ball. Quite rationally she begins to think "that she must be a little in love with him, in spite of every previous determination against it." George, who she thinks will be glad there is to be no ball, on the contrary shows "no triumphant happiness"; however, Jane Fairfax's composure about the situation is "odious," in spite of her being unwell and suffering from headaches.

***Detailed Analysis(29-30):***

Emma is deceiving herself more and more about Frank. He is a charming companion, but in addition she chooses to interpret his words and actions in only one way: as they might apply to herself. This is part of the ironic reversal in which her attitude, for a change, is being conditioned by others, not the least of whom is Frank himself. The reversal is possible, though, because of the continuity of Emma's vanity. In the moments before parting, she assumes that he is about to declare something in reference to her. Later the reader learns that he was about to say something quite different, that he would have been giving her credit for insight that she did not have. The irony is delayed but nonetheless is there for the reader who looks back at the politely clever ways in which Frank manages to come in contact with Jane or finds excuses for bringing her upon a scene.

Among the instances of satire here, the reader might notice the continued presentation of Mr. Woodhouse's character, the undue concern about getting the opinions of others in reference to using the Crown Inn for the ball, and the way in which the wish becomes father to acceptance as the group inspects the faults of the Crown. At the end of this section is brief but effective contrast between Frank and George and between Emma and Jane.

***Analysis (28-30):***

During Emma and Frank’s visit to the Bates’, Emma, Frank, and Jane are all aware that the dialogue taking place has a subtext, but Austen crafts Frank’s words so that the subtexts Emma and Jane read differ from one another. At this point in the novel, our misperceptions are likely to closely match Emma’s, and we follow her in believing that Frank’s teasing of Jane about the origins of her piano cruelly refers to Mr. Dixon.

Though Emma gossips maliciously about Jane, her selfless protectiveness of Jane when she believes Frank to be teasing her shows that Emma’s willingness to amuse herself at the expense of another has limits. When we later learn that the piano is actually a gift from Frank, Jane’s secret fiancé, we realize that his teasing is more good-natured, emphasizing his own gesture of affection. Frank’s request that Jane play one of the waltzes from the previous night’s dance is similarly misinterpreted by Emma. He says:

If you are very kind, [you will play] one of the waltzes we danced last night; let me live them over again. You did not enjoy them as I did; you appeared tired the whole time. I believe you were glad we danced no longer; I would have given worlds—all the worlds one ever has to give—for another half-hour.

As Frank’s dance partner, Emma believes that Frank’s directs his compliment toward her—that he implies to Jane that she did not enjoy the dancing because Emma and Frank were not dancing together. Once Frank’s relationship with Jane is revealed, it becomes clear that that Frank would have given worlds for another half-hour not because he wished to dance more with Emma, but because he wanted the opportunity to ask Jane. When Jane complies with Frank’s request by playing a tune that Frank recognizes as one that was danced at Weymouth, Jane flushes, and Emma assumes Jane is embarrassed because she had danced with Mr. Dixon to that song. In hindsight, it is clear that Frank was Jane’s partner.

When Frank takes his leave of Emma before returning to Enscombe, our confusion about his feelings for Emma increases. After mentioning to Emma that he has already said goodbye to the Bateses and Jane, Frank hesitates, then says, “[P]erhaps, Miss Woodhouse—I think you can hardly be quite without suspicion—.” This remark sounds to us, as it does to Emma, like the prelude to some sort of admission of love. Once we know Frank’s true circumstances, though, it becomes clear that Frank is considering making Emma a genuine friend by letting her in on his and Jane’s secret.

Emma’s thoughts about Frank reveal to us that she is lying to herself about loving him; she only enjoys the attention Frank’s courtship brings her. She takes pleasure in dancing with him because everyone else admires what a fine couple they are, not because the two share any intimacy. She is excited with the prospect of seeing him each day because she knows that he admires her and because she suspects that he harbors feelings for her. She misses his company because it has enlivened Highbury, but she does not miss him as a person. At the conclusion of Chapter 30, Emma’s attempt to convince herself that she loves Frank—“I must be in love; I should be the oddest creature in the world if I were not—for a few weeks at least”—shows us that Emma does not (yet) truly understand what love feels like.

***Critical Study:***

A letter arrives from Mr. Churchill to urge his nephew's instant return due to Mrs. Churchill’s sudden illness. This ruins the preparations for the ball, and they must postpone the event. When Frank leaves, Emma is certain that he almost tells her that he loved her. She convinces herself that she is in love.

Mrs. Churchill exhibits a great influence on her nephew, essentially ordering him home when she feels unwell. There is little sense that Mrs. Churchill’s actions are informed by actual health concerns. She becomes most ill and most in need of her family's company when she wishes to exert control on Frank Churchill.

There is a moment before he leaves in which Frank Churchill nearly breaks down his consistent air of insincerity. He speaks of his warm regard for Hartfield and shows a genuine wish to reveal some honest or true emotion. It is this moment in which Emma believes that Frank Churchill may be in love with her. However, whether or not Frank is interested in Emma or someone else entirely is still unclear. When Frank is prepared to admit to something, it is soon after he mentions a visit he made to see Miss Bates, in which he implies that he spoke to [Jane Fairfax](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#jane-fairfax).

This is perhaps the best evidence that Frank Churchill does not intend to manipulate Emma into believing that he loves her, but that his attention to her stems instead from his naturally social demeanor. There is a sincerity of emotion here that is never present in Mr. Elton. Despite Frank Churchill's faults, in this matter, his purpose is not to deceive.

Nevertheless, Emma finds herself believing that Frank might love her and convinces herself that she might be in love with him. Emma, who has previously thought of romance only in practical terms, finds herself considering actual love. However, she has no concrete idea what love actually entails. She lists as examples of her love listlessness, weariness, and stupidity, indicating a passing fancy or crush and not substantial emotion. Furthermore, this doubt is inconsistent with Emma's normal behavior. She usually holds firm to her emotions to the point of stubbornness ­ as she did with [Harriet Smith](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#harriet-smith) ­ and the fact that she is unsure whether or not she is in love is a good indication that she is not.

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

***Summary part 1:***

Plans for the ball are set. [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) finds [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley)’s indifference towards it annoying, as he seems determined against enjoying himself there. Emma feels slighted, but she considers his attitude to be evidence for his lack of interest in [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax), who anticipates the ball with pleasure.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma and Frank are both characters who are preoccupied with their own pleasure; though good-natured, they are often insensitive and dismissive of feelings that differ from theirs.

***Summary part 2:***

However, plans for the ball are cut short when a [letter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/symbols/letters) from [Mrs. Churchill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) calls Frank home on account of her ill-health. Frank calls on [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) before he leaves, and he displays distress and hesitation. He seems about to confess something serious, and Emma supposes he is even more in love with her than she realized. She is relieved when [Mr. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s entrance interrupts their conversation, preventing Frank from completing whatever he intended to say.

***Analysis part 2***

Frank’s behavior appears to the reader and Emma as love for her. Yet, unbeknownst to us, there is another reading behind his hesitation: he believes Emma is aware of his secret with Jane. Frank interprets Emma’s understanding exactly as is convenient for him, displaying the same self-interested misperceptions that affect Emma.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) misses [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) after he is gone, and she reflects on his good qualities and what she believes to have been his almost confession of love for her. As she notes her own feelings of listlessness and Frank’s many virtues, she concludes that she must be “a little in love with him.” With some sighing, Emma thinks how dull and tedious Hartfield will be without him. [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley), however, seems cheerful about Frank’s departure—though he sympathizes with others’ disappointment.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Emma’s self-conscious assessment of her feelings is somewhat comical, as it reveals the extent to which she delights in control. Just as she orchestrates everyone else’s lives around her according to her fancies, she also measures her own feelings against the pleasant romantic narrative she has devised for herself.