***Emma***

***Chapter 31***

***Vol2Chapter13***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

As the absence of Mr. Churchill sinks in, Emma begins to talk herself out of love with him, and remakes her vow to remain single. She spends a great deal of time crafting their relationship in her head, but always ending it only in friendship and never anything more.

A letter arrives at Randalls from Mr. Churchill and Emma is allowed to read it in its entirety. She is mentioned in the letter quite often, in warm tones. Harriet is mentioned briefly as Emma's beautiful little friend. After reading the letter, Emma is further convinced that she is not really in love with Mr. Churchill at all.

In fact, she begins to wonder if there couldn't be a possibility of matching Harriet with Mr. Churchill, since he referred to her so nicely in the letter. However, poor Harriet is still very much in love with Mr. Elton. Since Mr. Churchill left all the attention in Highbury has been turned back to Mr. Elton and his bride, leaving Emma quite worried about Harriet. She finally asks Harriet to stop thinking and talking of Mr. Elton, since it reminds Emma that she was the cause of such harm to Harriet. Of course, not so much for Emma's sake but for Harriet's does she make this request.

Emma imagines the course that her and Frank’s love affair will run. In her mind, her fantasy always ends with her refusing Frank. She believes she loves him, but not so much that her happiness depends upon him, and that he loves her, but that his feelings are probably changeable. She reads his first letter to Mrs. Weston after returning to Enscombe and admires the genuineness of the warm feelings Frank expresses for Highbury. His brief mention of Harriet makes Emma speculate that Harriet could replace her in his affections, but she reaffirms her resolution to cease matchmaking.

Village gossip turns to Mr. Elton, who will soon arrive in Highbury with his new bride. Harriet is flustered by the prospect of Elton’s return, and Emma suggests that if Harriet will not forget Elton for her own sake, she should do so for Emma’s, for Harriet’s persistent attachment is a reminder of Emma’s guilt. Harriet repents, and Emma is moved by the warmth of Harriet’s love for her. Emma concludes that tenderness of heart, which Harriet possesses and which Emma believes she herself lacks, is tremendously valuable.

Emma becomes more convinced she is in love with Frank, even though in all her imagined scenarios she turns him down. She reads a long letter that Frank wrote to Mrs. Weston and is gratified by his feeling of affection and gratitude toward those in Highbury. In the meantime, everyone is talking about [Mr. Elton](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Elton) and his upcoming wedding. Harriet continues to pine but resolves to cheer up for Emma's sake, which leads Emma to reflect that "there is no charm equal to tenderness of heart."

***Analysis:***

Emma's manipulative tactics rear their head again, as she gets Harriet to stop talking about Mr. Elton incessantly. Her ability to convince herself that she is not in love with Mr. Churchill is very interesting, as is her wondering if a match could be made for Harriet.

On one hand, Emma appears to be very concerned about her friend, and on the other she appears to be very self-serving. Emma's character is extremely complicated, further illustrating the machinations that were common to women during this time period and throughout history.

***Detailed Analysis(29-31):***

Frank continues to do what he can to enliven the social scene at Hartfield, and most everyone is happy to help him. Although he seems to enjoy Emma's company, he continues to use her as a way of hiding his true relationship with Jane. Emma, for her part, sees that his gallantry is rather in his own self-interest, although she interprets those interests to be related to the ball and not to Jane. No doubt Frank senses that Emma is not particularly attached to him, which allows him to justify his flirtation as harmless.

When Frank is suddenly called home by his aunt, he is sad to leave, but not primarily on Emma's account. He tries to broach the subject of his attachment to Jane with her before he leaves. They are speaking about his farewell visit to the Bates household, and he says of Miss Bates that while she is someone "one *must* laugh at," she is not someone he would wish to slight. He then says, "Perhaps, Miss Woodhouse—I think you can hardly be quite without suspicion." Frank trails off and seems to be trying to read Emma's thoughts, and then Emma makes a comment, cutting him off. In this exchange, there is misunderstanding on both sides. Frank believes that Emma suspects his attachment to Jane. He takes her continual references to Jane as her way of teasing him, which is somewhat understandable. But like Emma, he is too busy projecting his own desires—that Emma understand how things stand between him and Jane—to see the situation clearly. Emma, meanwhile, thinks he is about to declare his love for her, which is why she cuts him off. "He had *almost* told her he loved her," she thinks," which makes her conclude that she is at least a little in love with him.

After Frank leaves, it is natural for Emma to be a little down, as Frank is fun to be with. Her feelings of sadness solidify the idea that she is really in love with him, even though in her imagination she refuses any declaration of love. Harriet, however, is suffering more than Emma because she cannot get over [Mr. Elton](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Elton). Emma tries to hasten the process, and Harriet obliges. Emma thinks, "I would not change you for the clearest-headed, longest-sighted, best-judging female breathing." Emma is comparing Harriet to Jane and, in a sense, also to herself. She is waxing somewhat romantic about Harriet's ability to feel, perhaps because of her own lack of real feeling for Frank. But Emma is hiding her own true feelings from herself, feelings that are focused in another direction.

***Critical Study:***

 Emma has no doubt that she is in love but wonders how much she can actually love Frank Churchill if she is no less happy during his absence. She realizes that she is not in love to her vow never to marry or quit her father. Emma starts to wonder if Frank might instead be a good match for Harriet. Emma scolds Harriet for worrying about Mr. Elton, claiming that it is a constant reminder of her mistake. She asks Harriet to speak less of Mr. Elton for her own sake, and Harriet apologies for being ungrateful.

After Emma has opened herself to the idea of falling in love with Frank Churchill (and not simply marrying him as a pragmatic move), she realizes that she does not truly love him. Her realization shows a practical reasoning and introspection previously uncharacteristic of Emma. Still, although she does not love Frank Churchill, she still enjoys his attention. It bolsters her own very high self-regard to know that a man such as Frank is so attentive to her.

However, Emma continues to make the same errors that caused her so much aggravation earlier in the book. She has not learned the lesson of Mr. Elton and fancies the idea of making a match between Frank Churchill and Harriet. She knows the dangers of such thinking and actions but is inordinately tempted.

What Emma does realize with regard to Harriet Smith is how unfortunately obsessive she can be with regards to Mr. Elton. This vexes Emma for a number of reasons. It is a reminder of Emma's mistake in judgment, and, in talking about Mr. Elton, Harriet does not serve her primary purpose to Emma. Harriet is useful by flattering Emma, and, in this situation, she annoys. The situation is only remedied when Harriet apologizes and resumes her role as the obedient, dutiful friend.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) continues to imagine herself in love with [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) and fantasizes various scenarios of their dalliance. However, all of them end in her rejection of him and the subsiding of their romance into friendship. Emma concludes she is happier remaining single, and she believes Frank’s feelings for her to be warm but changeable.

***Analysis part 1:***

Despite Emma’s imagined love for Frank, it is an affection that leaves her with no doubt that she is still perfectly in control of the situation. It is not the kind of love that disarms and humbles Emma as Mr. Knightley wishes for her earlier in the novel.

***Summary part 2:***

[Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) receives a letter from [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill), which [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) reads with great pleasure. A mention of [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) in the letter makes Emma briefly speculate that her friend might replace her in Frank’s affections, but then remembers her vow to abstain from matchmaking.

***Analysis part 2***

Emma cannot resist the impulses of her fancy, even under rather ridiculous circumstances, as she pleasantly imagines a match between Harriet and the man she claims to be in love with. This also, of course, calls into question the depth of Emma's "love" for Frank.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mr. Elton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) now becomes the center of attention for town gossip, in light of his impending arrival accompanied by his bride. [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) attempts to comfort the flustered [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), and she at last begs her friend to cease dwelling on Mr. Elton for Emma’s own sake. This appeal works immediately, and Emma is warmed by Harriet’s deep love for her. She feels that such tenderness of heart cannot be esteemed highly enough, and that Harriet is her superior in this regard.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The confined nature of town life results in its changeable preoccupation with various social changes—the arrival of a stranger, or a marriage, being of great excitement. Harriet remains particularly tender and vulnerable in regard to Mr. Elton, and it is only her love for Emma—neither concern for her own well being nor for her dignity—that compels her to refrain from active distress. Harriet forces herself to not be sad for the benefit of Emma, which feeds Emma's own vanity.