***Emma***

***Chapter 39***

***Vol3Chapter3***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

The next day dawns and Emma happily recalls her evening. Mr. Knightley's agreement with her on the Eltons and his kindness to Harriet seem to put everything between them on the right setting again. Mr. Churchill had stated he would not be able to visit her before leaving for Richmond, which suited Emma just perfectly. She was all set to have a perfectly wonderful summer with everything in its place.

However, as she gets ready to go take care of her two nephews, Harriet and Mr. Churchill come in through the gate. Harriet is very upset and is leaning heavily on Mr. Churchill. She gives an account of harrowing trial with gypsies and how she was unable to get away from them. The whole group surrounded her demanding money, and she was very much alone and frightened. Mr. Churchill, who was on his way to Richmond, came up on the group. After making them run away, he brought Harriet to Hartfield right away.

Emma is quite pleased that the two of them were thrown together in such a way and hopes that more will come of it. Mr. Churchill departs and Harriet recovers. Emma hopes to keep the news of the gypsies from her father, but within half an hour the entire village is talking of nothing else. Mr. Woodhouse is quite concerned and makes the girls promise never to go down the road where the incident took place again. The gypsies leave before they can be apprehended and everything soon returns to normal.

***Analysis:***

It seems that although Emma is disinterested in love for herself she cannot contain herself from hoping for love for all of those around her, particularly Harriet. With this latest event, it seems that Emma will quickly begin setting up a match between Harriet and Mr. Churchill, thus solving her problem with being in love with him herself.

***Detailed Summary:***

Emma looks back on her talk with Mr. Knightley at the ball with pleasure, and she rejoices that the Eltons’ rudeness has cured Harriet of her infatuation with Mr. Elton. Suddenly, Frank appears with Harriet, fainting, on his arm. When revived, Harriet tells the story of how she was walking with a friend, Miss Bickerton, when a Gypsy child approached to beg from them. Miss Bickerton, frightened, ran away, but Harriet was unable to follow because of a cramp she had gotten at the ball. Just as she started to panic, a group of Gypsies surrounded her and demanded money. Frank happened to be walking along and frightened the Gypsies away. Emma cannot help but wonder whether this romantic circumstance might make Harriet and Frank interesting to each other. The episode alarms Mr. Woodhouse and is occasion for gossip, but the Gypsies leave the neighborhood and no harm is done.

* As Emma thinks over the ball the next day, she’s satisfied to remember that Mr. Knightley shares her opinion about the Eltons.
* Even Harriet seems to be getting over Mr. Elton after his snub at the ball.
* Everything is as perfect as Emma could want it to be: Harriet is no longer in love, Mr. Knightley is not quarrelling with her, and Frank Churchill seems to be staying away from Hartfield.

ADVERTISING

* Emma settles down to play with her nephews for the morning.
* Before long, however, Frank and a very weak Harriet come in the gate.
* Emma rushes out to meet them. Harriet’s face is completely white.
* Together Emma and Frank assist her into the house, where she faints on the couch.
* Once Harriet recovers, she shares her story.
* Harriet and another classmate had been walking along a lane when a small band of gypsy children came up behind them.
* Harriet’s friend ran away.
* Harriet, whose muscles were cramped from dancing the night before, couldn’t really walk.
* The gypsy kids surround her threateningly.
* We know what you’re thinking. She’s scared of a group of kids? Seriously? But maybe they were really scary kids.
* Or maybe she’s just a wimp.
* Either way, she’s having a rough day.
* She offers the children a shilling to go away, but they seem to know a good thing when they’ve found it. They refuse to leave.
* Suddenly, Frank Churchill comes around the corner and rescues her.
* (Frank had meant to go back to London early in the morning, but he stayed to return a pair of scissors to Miss Bates.)
* Frank chases the children away and helps Harriet to Emma’s door.
* Frank leaves to begin his journey to London.
* Although Emma worries about Harriet, she’s actually rather delighted about this turn of events.
* Woman in distress + handsome hero = true love. Right?
* She’s sure that this rescue is the groundwork for Harriet and Frank’s love.
* Nonetheless, Emma worries about telling her father the news – and rightfully so.
* Mr. Woodhouse frets for days about the threat of savages on the loose.
* Our narrator informs us that the gypsies move out of Highbury before they can be found.
* Fortunately, upon hearing of the incident, all of Mr. Woodhouse’s neighbors make sure to ask him about his health. (C’mon, even *hearing* about a gypsy attack is enough to make any man sick!)

***Critical Study:***

The next morning Emma feels that Mr. Elton's slight of the night before will cure Harriet of her infatuation. Emma also does not regret that she will not see Frank, who has to be back at Richmond by the middle of the day. She is therefore surprised when Frank appears with a fainting Harriet on his arm. After Harriet has actually fainted, Emma learns that on a morning walk along the Richmond road her pretty friend has met with and been bullied by a party of gypsies, from whom Frank has luckily rescued her. When Harriet recovers, Frank must go on his belated way and Emma ponders upon how seemingly "every thing united to promise the most interesting consequences" for Harriet and Frank. But she contents herself that she will "not stir a step, nor drop a hint" to further her wish: It will be "a mere passive scheme." Meanwhile a warning about the gypsies is spread over Highbury, though the gypsies have hurried off before the town's young ladies can even begin to panic.

The important action of this chapter is not that which occurs completely "offstage" with the gypsies, but that which presents Emma's still-developing character. She is as much a schemer as ever, but her scheming is now modified. Trying to tell herself that she has practiced "enough of interference," she hopes to stick to passive wishing. Her imagination is as strong as ever, but she is at least trying to cope with her willfulness.

***Analysis:***

Frank Churchill and Harriet arrive at Hartfield the day after the ball. The night before, when Harriet was walking home, a party of gypsies approached Harriet and her companions and chased them. Harriet was assaulted by a group of them and was saved by Frank Churchill, who was on his way to return a pair of scissors to [Mrs. Bates](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#mrs-bates). Emma still wonders if Harriet and Frank Churchill might make a good couple but vows not to meddle. Soon the news of Frank's heroism is known throughout Highbury.

The story that Harriet Smith tells about Frank Churchill is a reminder that there are less reputable elements outside of the genteel estates of Hartfield and Randalls. The story is told from Harriet's point of view, therefore one can assume that some of the details of her assault have been exaggerated (she was accosted mainly by children, who could hardly prove too great a threat). Also notable is that Frank Churchill's destination is Mrs. Bates' home. It seems odd that, immediately after the ball, he would want to visit merely to borrow a pair of scissors. This seems like a feeble excuse for his visit and yet more evidence that he has a secret liaison with [Jane Fairfax](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#jane-fairfax). Emma reflects on what happened at the ball and concludes that "[Mr. Elton](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Elton) was not the superior creature she had believed him." Her reverie is interrupted when Frank walks in with a fainting Harriet. He says he came upon her just in time to rescue her from a band of gypsies demanding money. When Harriet recovers, Emma's mind jumps to the romantic possibilities of Frank's chivalrous rescue, but she promises herself not to attempt any more schemes on Harriet's behalf.

***Critical Analysis(ch37-39 OR Vol3 ch1-3)):***

Emma’s honest reflections about her lack of substantive feelings for Frank reveal her growing maturity. She no longer sees him as a character in the scenes she imagines for herself, someone who is important simply because he gives her the opportunity to show off her accomplishments and elegance. She recognizes that if their two-month separation has not cooled his love, “there were dangers and evils before her: caution for him and for herself would be necessary.” Rather than anticipating a dramatic scene, she now hopes that “she might be able to keep him from an absolute declaration. That would be so very painful a conclusion of their present acquaintance.” Emma’s decision to observe Frank to see how he feels, rather than to begin with an assumption about how he feels, enables her to understand that Frank is not in love with her. The narrator makes clear that Emma’s vanity is not at issue in this case—she is relieved, not offended, that Frank’s feelings are cooled, and at the dance, she seems to find more interest in puzzling about his odd mood than in courting his attention. When Frank and Emma dance, instead of imagining how elegant they look to others, she admires how elegant Mr. Knightley looks. Emma has become more concerned with observing others, and less concerned with being observed by others.

The Gypsies Harriet describes encountering in Chapter 39 seem a strange intrusion into the domestic realism of the story. It is almost as if they have wandered in from a different novel entirely. In the episode, Austen plays with the conventions of romantic melodrama, one of which was the rescue of a “damsel in distress” as the beginning to a romantic relationship. Yet, in the calculating context established by the novel, the encounter seems to predict a lack of destiny rather than a fated match. The improbability of Harriet’s encounter with Frank alerts us to the improbability of their ending up together. We can see that the extraordinary circumstances that have thrown Harriet and Frank together owe nothing to their shared values or qualities—a chance meeting and rescue present no evidence that the two belong together. And while Harriet’s passivity is in keeping with the conventions of a romance, it is not something that we would expect Austen’s novel to reward. The happiest women in the novel are not weak and passive, but both mentally and physically vigorous.

Emma’s willingness to accept the improbability of Harriet’s encounter with Frank as proof that there must be some sort of connection between the two indicates that her fancy has not been entirely cured of its tendency toward ungrounded speculation. Emma may be learning to place Mr. Knightley’s approval of her more recent actions above Frank Churchill’s charms, but she has a few more lessons to learn before she gains a full understanding of herself.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) reflects with pleasure on the events of the ball: [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley) and her own shared understanding of the rude [Eltons](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) and the amiability of [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill)’s diminished love for her, and Harriet’s disillusionment regarding [Mr. Elton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters). For after the episode at the ball, Emma has hopes that Harriet’s enduring love for Mr. Elton will be quite destroyed.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma’s reflections regarding the ball do her credit, as her pleasure is largely selfless: she delights in the agreement between her and Mr. Knightley, the thwarting of the Eltons’ rudeness, and the healing of Harriet.

***Summary part 2:***

[Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) arrives at Hartfield unexpectedly, with a frightened and pale [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) on his arm. It turns out that Harriet and a friend had been accosted by a gypsy child, begging for money, on their walk. Her friend had run away, but Harriet was unable to escape. More gypsies surrounded her, when Frank arrived on the scene and chased them away. He then escorted her to Hartfield.

***Analysis part 2***

The episode dramatizes the vulnerability that Harriet experiences as a young, unmarried lady with no man to "protect" her. She is physically helpless and prey to the gypsies, a vagabond group that lay outside Austen’s social system altogether. Their intrusion into the domestic realism of Highbury is as puzzling as it is dramatic.

***Summary Part 3:***

Once [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s safety is assured, Emma considers with some pleasure that the adventure may spark attraction between Harriet and [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill)—though she resolves that she will not actively involve herself. News of the episode speeds throughout Highbury, alarming [Mr. Woodhouse](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-woodhouse), but the gypsies soon take off. The gossip subsides into an exciting story Emma tells her nephews.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Despite her resolution to refrain from meddling in others’ love lives, Emma’s active imagination continues to envision matches. Emma’s fancy forms from the exciting incident of the gypsies a love story conforming to the conventions of the romantic melodrama genre.