***Emma***

***Chapter 40***

***Vol3Chapter4***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Harriet shows up at Emma’s house with a strange parcel under her arm.
* She explains that she’s ready to give up on Mr. Elton now (only a few months after he got married)!
* In the box, she’s collected trinkets which memorialize her love for him. She’s ready to burn it.
* Surprised, Emma asks Harriet what trinkets she could have collected.
* Harriet lovingly unwraps a wooden casket and pulls out a bit of "plaister" (sort of like a band-aid). Mr. Elton played with it once.
* It goes on. And believe us, it only gets more pathetic. It’s also pretty funny.
* Harriet’s got a pencil Mr. Elton used once.
* She’s got lots more stuff. All of it would raise a fortune on EBay.
* Actually, that’s not totally true. It’s all mostly worthless.
* Emma happens to think Harriet’s collection is pretty amusing, as well.
* She struggles to hide a laugh at the maudlin nature of her friend.
* Harriet insists on burning the entire contents of the box – even though Emma points out that the plaister might be useful later on. Who knows? Maybe she could cut herself while burning the box.
* After the box burns, Harriet confesses that she’s beginning to fall in love again.
* Surprised and rather relieved, Emma sits down to listen.
* Harriet humbly asks Emma if she thinks that Harriet should even think about the new man she admires.
* After all, this man is a perfect gentleman.
* He’s far above Harriet in rank and reputation – but Harriet is sure that he’s shown some signs of affection for her!
* And he recently saved her from a horrible situation.
* Determined not to meddle in any more love affairs, Emma asks Harriet never to reveal her crush’s name.
* (Of course, she’s absolutely sure that it’s Frank. After all, didn’t he save her from the gypsies?)
* Emma couldn’t be happier. Harriet and Frank would be *perfect* together.
* Sure, he’s more eligible than she is – but Harriet is sweet enough and pretty enough to make up for her lack of fortune.
* She resolves to *wish* them well.
* Beyond that, however, she’s not going to do anything to advance their love. She’s had enough matchmaking for now.
* Saying enough to make Harriet happy, however, Emma manages to convince her that it’s OK for her to think about (and even love) a man who outranks her socially.
* She tells Harriet, however, never to mention her man by name.
* That way, Emma’s not really helping her along.
* They leave each other, confident that they’ve *not* said enough so that they understand each other perfectly.
* ...and anytime there’s perfect understanding, there’s got to be trouble ahead!

***Brief Summary:***

Harriet arrives at Hartfield with a mysterious package. She tells Emma that since she is finally resigned to the loss of Mr. Elton, she will now destroy the mementos she has kept. Emma questions her and Harriet reveals that she has been keeping the end of a pencil he had used, as well as some plaster that was left over from a cut Mr. Elton received while at Hartfield.

Emma is very surprised that Harriet has been keeping these things and feels very ashamed of herself. Harriet decides to burn them both and then announces that she has no plans to ever marry. Emma asks her if this is because of what happened with Mr. Elton, to which Harriet responds in the negative.

However, Emma is able to catch a murmur from Harriet about not being worthy of someone. She immediately deduces that Harriet must mean Mr. Churchill and questions Harriet about it. Seeing that Harriet does have some affection for Mr. Churchill, Emma decides to begin matchmaking again in full force.

***Brief Analysis:***

Emma obviously blames herself for Harriet keeping these mementos, but this doesn't keep her from wanting to try matchmaking for Harriet again. More of Harriet's character is revealed by the fact that she kept these few items and the reader can't help but feel sorry for poor Harriet.

The reader also wonders if Harriet will be able to withstand more of Emma's matchmaking, especially since the last go at it was so completely disastrous.

***Detailed Summary:***

Harriet comes to tell Emma that her infatuation with Mr. Elton has passed and to relinquish the trinkets she has kept to remember him by. First, she shows Emma a bit of court-plaster (used at the time as a bandage) that she had lent to Mr. Elton when he cut himself. He had used what he needed but discarded the rest, which Harriet then kept. Emma feels guilty in recalling that she had lied and said that she did not have any court-plaster, so that Harriet would have the opportunity to be Elton’s healer. Harriet’s second trinket is a useless bit of pencil Elton had discarded. She throws both items into the fire, and Emma hopes that Frank might take Elton’s place. Her hopes seem to be rewarded when, during another conversation, Harriet says she will never marry, inciting Emma’s suspicion that Harriet does not think that she will marry because she is interested in someone of a higher class. After some hesitation, Emma asks if Harriet has feelings for someone of higher rank. Harriet says yes, and Emma comments that she is not surprised, given the service that this person rendered Harriet. Emma says that they must not discuss it anymore, and she advises Harriet to be cautious but not to give up all hope.

***Critical Study:***

A few days later Harriet appears with a small parcel in her hand, declaring that she can now see nothing extraordinary in Mr. Elton and showing Emma that the parcel is marked with "Most precious treasures" on the top. Taking from it a piece of court plaster and the end of an old pencil which had belonged to Mr. Elton and which she has carefully saved, she throws them behind the fire for Emma to see. Not many days afterward Harriet says that she will never marry and then continues inaudibly but with the final words: "so superior to Mr. Elton!" From their talking in very general and vague terms, Emma concludes that her friend is in love with Frank and both cautions and encourages her, thinking that, though he is her superior, such an attachment is "no bad thing for her friend."

The action of this chapter speaks for itself, but one should note the curious mixture of pathos and bathos in the character of Harriet and note also the conflictive elements in Emma, who in one breath feels shame for her part in the Elton affair and in the next breath encourages her friend along the same line. Worthy of notice also is the verbal irony in the polite and misleading generalizations that wrongly confirm Emma's guess as to who Harriet's new object of attachment is.

***Critical Analysis:***

Harriet visits Emma several days later to make a confession. She has a parcel with items that remindher of Mr. Elton, including a small box with a court plaster that was used to cover a small cut that Mr. Elton had. Harriet claims that she is now done obsessing over Mr. Elton and vows never to marry, for the person she prefers is too great her superior. Emma gives Harriet some hope that she might be able to marry this unnamed man.

Harriet Smith shows her more absurd and immature side in this scene, revealing a childish obsession with Mr. Elton. The remnants that she keeps as mementos are foolish trifles: a bit of a bandage, a small pencil, and such. This makes it quite clear that Harriet does not have very good judgment, an appraisal that causes some concern when she vows never to marry. Considering Harriet's lowly rank, vowing never to marry is as foolish a choice as keeping a bandage as a memento. In this declaration, Harriet continues to mirror and emulate Emma, vowing never to marry just as Emma did. Yet while Emma refuses to marry because she feels that she could never find someone who would measure up to her, Harriet refuses to marry because she feels she will never measure up to the unnamed man she adores.

Harriet and Emma are deliberately ambiguous about the object of Harriet's affection. The two only establish that the man saved her the night of the Crown Inn ball and is someone of high rank, so much so that it is unlikely that the match would ever be successfully made. Emma assumes that Harriet is referring to Frank Churchill, who rescued her from the gypsies, but both of these characteristics also apply to another respectable man of Highbury who showed kindness to Harriet Smith.

***Critical Analysis(ch39-40 OR Vol3 ch3-4)):***

A few days later, Harriet comes to Emma with a parcel of keepsakes. These pathetic treasures include a piece of court plaster (a type of sticky plaster applied to superficial wounds) that Mr. Elton had fidgeted with and a pencil stub without lead that he had discarded. She tells her friend that she plans to burn these mementos. Harriet says she will never marry, but she confesses that she now has feelings for another man who is out of her reach. Neither woman names the man, but Emma believes it is [Frank Churchill](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Frank_Churchill). She advises Harriet to be cautious.

When Harriet is attacked by the gypsies, Frank shows some chivalry, and once again Emma's imagination goes into overdrive. Old habits die hard, but at least Emma decides not to take an active part in putting them together.

When Harriet comes to Emma to burn her cherished mementos, Emma feels shame, wonder, and amusement, the narrator says. But she is relieved that Harriet is ready to move on from [Mr. Elton](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Elton). When Harriet says she shall never marry, Emma realizes that the new man she is pining for is out of her social reach. This time Harriet is cognizant of the distance between herself and her beloved. Emma's mind jumps to Frank, but Harriet is talking about someone else.

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

***Summary part 1:***

Harriet arrives at Hartfield some time later, and reveals to Emma her intentions to dispose of all former “tokens of affection” from Mr. Elton that she has previously cherished: a bit of bandage she gave Mr. Elton to bind his finger, and the remnant of a discarded pencil he once used. Harriet declares her shame that she ever thought him so perfect, and she throws these silly trinkets into the fire.

***Analysis part 1:***

The extent of Harriet’s folly and devotion regarding Mr. Elton becomes clear, as we learn the “tokens of affection” she has been cherishing—pieces of rubbish. The episode reveals the extent of Harriet’s initial ridiculous enchantment with Mr. Elton, her current disillusionment with him, and Emma’s unknowing damage to her friend’s feelings.

***Summary part 2:***

[Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) then declares her decision to never marry, as the one whom she now admires is too far above her. Emma believes she means [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill), and she eagerly affirms that Harriet’s feelings are understandable, given the service he rendered her. Neither Harriet nor Emma ever explicitly mention the gentleman in question by name; Harriet refers to his rescue with warmth, and Emma encourages her to proceed with caution but allow herself hope—there have been matches of greater disparity yet.

***Analysis part 2***

Though Harriet’s infatuation has been long lasting, it is quickly replaced. Emma attempts to be more discreet and less involved in the new match, but ironically this discretion in discussing Harriet’s new preference actually creates more opportunity for misperception, as Harriet is in fact referring to Mr. Knightley.