***Emma***

***Chapter 42***

***Vol3Chapter6***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* The Sucklings are supposed to come to Highbury, but they never show.
* Mrs. Elton is severely put out.
* She had planned on showing off her sister (and, of course, her sister’s fancy ride) to the entire town.
* Now the summer seems like one long boring stretch of…boringness.
* Mrs. Elton decides to take matters into her own hands and propose a group outing. (Field trip! Yay!)
* She proposes that everyone (everyone who’s anyone, of course) take a trip to Box Hill. It’s a day trip, and the weather is lovely!
* Ironically, Emma and Mr. Weston had been planning their own trip to Box Hill.
* Without Mrs. Elton.
* As it turns out, Mr. Weston *may* have mentioned their plans to Mrs. Elton…
* Right before the scheduled trip, one of Mr. Weston’s horses goes lame.
* This throws their entire plan off.
* And, of course, it also throws Mrs. Elton into whining mode.
* She complains to Mr. Knightley, who suggests that the whole group come to Donwell Abbey (his estate) instead.
* The strawberries are ripe – and he’d love to have people over to pick them.
* Mrs. Elton, delighted at the new plan, insists that she be the "Lady Patroness" of the venture.
* Mr. Knightley curtly rejects her offer. (Insert typical Mrs. Elton gasps and long, windy responses here.)
* Mrs. Elton wants a donkey. It seems like all smart women have them these days.
* Mr. Knightley ignores most of this.
* Mrs. Elton wants to eat outside.
* Mr. Knightley thinks that that’s a horrible idea.
* He says that any party at his house will involve eating inside.
* Like civilized people do.
* Mrs. Elton wants to arrange the guest list (although she’s willing to allow Mr. Knightley to invite Emma and her father).
* Mr. Knightley ignores this, as well.
* Finally, Mrs. Elton wants to greet everyone once they arrive.
* Mr. Knightley wryly remarks that only one woman will ever arrange things at Donwell Abbey – Mrs. Knightley.
* Gasp. Mrs. Knightley? What Mrs. Knightley?
* OK, OK – Mr. K explains that there’s no missus yet.
* Until she exists, he plans to organize his own parties in his own way.
* The day of the party arrives. Everyone (even Mr. Woodhouse) comes.
* Except Frank, that is.
* He’s been delayed with his aunt – but he promises to come as soon as he can.
* The company has a delightful time picking strawberries.
* The narrator pauses several times to admire Donwell Abbey.
* It’s a beautiful, old, unpretentious house which rambles all over a large and beautiful lawn. Emma loves it.
* Mr. Knightley is thoughtful enough to leave out all sorts of collections of stuff for Mr. Woodhouse to look through inside. (Being outside all day in the sun would, of course, cause horrible things to happen to him. He’s sure of it.)
* Before lunch, Emma overhears Mrs. Elton pushing Jane to take a job which Mrs. Elton has found for her.
* Jane tries (several times) to say no, but a pushy woman is hard to ignore.
* Mrs. Elton determines that she’ll send an acceptance letter for Jane, anyway.
* She’s sure that Jane will change her mind.
* With friends like her, who needs enemies?
* After lunch, the group heads out for a walk.
* Emma notices that Mr. Knightley singles Harriet out and walks ahead with her.
* Curious about what they could be talking about, she sneaks up behind them (it’s not like she’s jealous or anything).
* It turns out that they’re talking about architecture.
* And Harriet actually sounds…well, if not intelligent, then close to it!
* Emma goes inside to check in on her father.
* He’s happily going through all the collections, and he wants to show Emma all of them.
* As Emma settles in for a full (and boring) afternoon, Jane Fairfax hurries to the door.
* Emma runs to meet her.
* Jane says that she intends to walk back to town – the situation here has become unbearable.
* For the first time, Emma feels sympathy for Jane.
* Miss Bates and Mrs. Elton would be enough to drive anyone crazy!
* She promises not to tell anyone that Jane is leaving.
* Grateful, Jane presses Emma’s hand and runs out.
* A few minutes after Jane leaves, Frank rushes into the house.
* He seems disgruntled and mutters a lot about the madness of walking out in the heat.
* Emma tries to calm him down, but it’s no use. Finally, he leaves to eat.
* When he returns, he’s in a much better mood.
* A good sandwich can make all the difference in the world!
* He flirts with Emma and promises to come with her (and only her) to Box Hill when they go the next day.

***Brief Summary:***

Mrs. Elton's relatives, the Sucklings, are delayed from visiting her at Highbury and she is very much in need of a party to make herself feel better. She resolves to go to Box Hill and invites a great many people to join her. However, a lame carriage horse throws these plans into turmoil.

Mr. Knightley offer Donwell Abbey and its famed strawberry patches for a party, to which Mrs. Elton readily agrees. She tries to invite all of her friends and make the party her own, but Mr. Knightley will not allow this. He arranges everything so that Mr. Woodhouse and Emma can come and enjoy themselves.

In the meantime, the horse recovers and it is decided that they will all visit Donwell Abbey on one day and Box Hill the next. Mr. Churchill is invited to come, but does not arrive until very late. Miss Fairfax slips away before his arrival, telling Emma to tell her aunt that she has left.

When Mr. Churchill finally does arrive, he is very cross and Emma is somewhat put off by his behavior. However, she asks him to meet all of them the next day at Box Hill, to which he at first says no but finally agrees.

Once it is discovered that Miss Fairfax has left, everyone decides to go home and meet the next day at Box Hill.

***Brief Analysis:***

Miss Fairfax's sudden departure from the party is very suspicious, as is Mr. Churchill's behavior when he arrives. Is his crossness merely the result of a long hot ride, or did he meet with Miss Fairfax before he arrived at the party?

Emma is persisting in her resolution not to love Mr. Churchill, which is made easier by his cross behavior at the party. She is still intent on setting Harriet up with Mr. Churchill, since she thinks Harriet is better equipped to deal with someone who seems to be unable to withstand even the slightest heat, something which is appalling to Emma.

***Detailed Analysis(Ch 40-42):***

An outing to Box Hill is planned, but it has to be postponed because of a lame horse. Mr. Knightley half-jokingly suggests that the party come to his estate instead. Mrs. Elton seizes upon the idea, and Knightley has to be firm to prevent her from planning all the details. Meanwhile, the lame horse heals, and it is decided that the Box Hill party will follow the one at Donwell Abbey, Knightley’s estate. At Donwell Abbey, Emma enjoys examining Knightley’s house and grounds. She overhears Jane resisting a governess “situation” that Mrs. Elton has found for her. Walking through the garden, Emma finds Harriet and Knightley looking out over the Martin family home and thinks the two an odd grouping, but is nevertheless convinced that Harriet is in good hands. Mrs. Weston is worried by the fact that Frank is late coming from Richmond. At the house, Emma encounters an agitated Jane, who asks her to tell everyone else that she has walked home. Frank then turns up out of humor and in the course of conversation says that he would like to go abroad. Emma teases him out of his mood, and he promises to join the Box Hill trip.

Even though Emma has resolved to use more discretion in promoting a match between Harriet and Frank than she used when encouraging Harriet’s affection for Mr. Elton, she manages to cause a misunderstanding precisely because she shies away from explicit statements. When Emma says of Harriet’s new object of affection, “The service he rendered you was enough to warm your heart,” she is referring to Frank, who saved Harriet from the Gypsies. Harriet, however, thinks of Mr. Knightley, who saved her from humiliation by asking her to dance.

In the way it keeps us in the dark about the truth of various characters’ feelings, Emma reads like a detective novel. The picnic presents subtle mysteries: Jane’s agitation is not explained, nor is Frank’s sudden ill temper. We suspect that Jane’s and Frank’s bad moods must be linked, but Austen keeps us in suspense as to what exactly has transpired. Even straightforward Mr. Knightley is drawn into the atmosphere of speculation when he suggests that Jane and Frank have been corresponding throughout Frank’s absence. Also, Knightley wrongly takes Emma’s statement that Frank has no feelings for Jane as a suggestion that Frank and Emma have some sort of romantic association. In truth, Emma’s confidence is purely the result of the unflattering things Frank has said to her about Jane.

The word game the party plays in Chapter 41 functions as a metaphor for all the games of private concealment and revelation that characterize Highbury society. Emma and Mr. Knightley are both able to decode the words that Frank makes, but, because they possess different kinds of information, they interpret these words differently. Knightley understands that the word “blunder” must refer to Frank’s misplaced question to Mrs. Weston about Mr. Perry’s carriage, a message that Emma is unable to decode. Emma interprets “Dixon” as a cruel joke on Jane, but Knightley rightly understands that Frank’s presentation of the word to Jane is a mark of some intimacy between them. When Knightley observes to himself, “These letters were but the vehicle for gallantry and trick. It was a child’s play, chosen to conceal a deeper game on Frank Churchill’s part,” he makes explicit the novel’s suggestion that social intercourse is a game with particular rules. Like a game, social interaction requires skill and sometimes produces winners and losers.

Although the narrator typically describes all events from Emma’s point of view, Chapter 41 is unique in that it is narrated entirely from Mr. Knightley’s point of view, depending on what he can see of the word games transpiring in the parlor. By shifting to Mr. Knightley’s point of view, we get a new perspective on the mixture of knowledge and bewilderment that each character experiences. This new emphasis on Mr. Knightley’s character and point of view subtly alerts us that he is becoming a central character.

***Critical Study:***

Mrs. Weston is expecting a baby, and Emma and Mr. Weston plan a quiet "exploring" trip to Box Hill. Augusta has of course been long wanting to make such a trip, and Mr. Weston suggests that his party and that of the Eltons unite, an idea that Emma does not like but accepts. When a lame carriage horse throws everything into "sad uncertainty," George answers Augusta that she should come to Donwell for strawberries instead. This immediately becomes a party, for which she insists that she do all the inviting of guests. But George is firm, saying that the only married woman he will ever "allow to invite what guests she pleases to Donwell" is Mrs. Knightley — "and, till she is in being, I will manage such matters myself." Augusta tries to pass this off humorously, finally only making an ass of herself. Later the lame horse mends and the trip to Box Hill is settled for the day after the party at Donwell.

Emma has not been to Donwell for some time, and on the day of the party she looks over the place with "honest pride and complacency" since it is a "family" estate now because of the nephews who will inherit it. Except for Frank, everyone is there as they gather strawberries and find seats in the shade. Augusta badgers Jane about accepting "a most desirable situation" until Jane suggests a walk to see the gardens.

During this activity Emma sees George and Harriet strolling and talking by themselves, and she joins them before they all go indoors to eat. Frank still has not arrived when all but Emma, who stays behind with Mr. Woodhouse, go to see the old Abbey fish ponds. Emma is alone in the hallway when Jane appears "with a look of escape," saying that she is going to walk home. She will not accept the offer of a carriage, giving as reason that she is "wearied in spirits" and needs the walk. Shortly after she goes, Frank arrives out of humour," observing that he has met Jane on the way and that he will not eat because it is so hot. Even as she gets him to eat something, Emma is glad to be through being in love with him. He tells her that he needs a change, that he is sick of England and wants to go abroad; but when the rest of the party return, his party-going inclination leads him to say that if Emma wants him to stay and join the group to Box Hill the next day, he will. She smiled her acceptance.

As this chapter well indicates, George is becoming more important in the plot. After his conversation with Augusta, it should be clear to the reader (if it has not already been) that he too is interested in marriage. He has earlier stated that he values good sense, strength, and openness in a wife: He now makes plain the kind of honor and consideration he will give her. At the same time he rather quietly but surely demonstrates his ability to deal with a wife who is overbearing and silly. When Augusta wishes she had a donkey to ride dust-free to the party, he says that Donwell Lane is never dusty but adds, "Come on a donkey, however, if you prefer it . . . I would wish every thing to be as much to your taste as possible."

A notable contrast is seen between Emma and Augusta during the party at Donwell. Augusta is still the officious and obnoxious manager, forcing her "help" upon poor Jane. On the other hand, almost as if Donwell has a sobering and symbolic effect on her, Emma not once tries any of her usual scheming. Once, when Frank is mentioned, she looks at Harriet only to observe that she behaves very well and betrays no emotion; and that is as close as she comes to willfulness, except for one later mere observation. Otherwise she seems to be quite at peace with herself and ready to offer understanding and pity to Jane. Obviously, if she wished, for Harriet's sake she could urge Frank to accompany them to Box Hill, but she does not do so. The decision to go is strictly Frank's.

The mystery of Jane and Frank is developed only briefly, just a bit to cloud the issue. Jane leaves the party early, but we do not know what has wearied her spirits. When Frank finally arrives, he looks "very deplorable." But being delayed by Mrs. Churchill's illness has never appeared to bother him before, and his being out of humor with the weather is hardly rational. In each case we know only that the man is upset about something.

***Critical Analysis:***

Mrs. Elton plans a picnic, and Mr. Knightley offers Donwell Abbey as the location. She presumes to make all of the invitations herself, even though it takes place at his estate, but Mr. Knightley tells her that only one woman can invite anyone to Donwell Abbey, and that is the future Mrs. Knightley, whoever she may turn out to be. During the picnic, Emma sees Mr. Knightley and Harriet together, which she finds odd. Jane Fairfax leaves early while Frank Churchill arrives late, primarily due to delays from Mrs. Churchill. Frank is not in a good mood during the party and, while talking with Emma, claims that he is not at all a fortunate person and that he wishes to leave England. He turns down Emma's invitation to a picnic at Box Hill the next day, but finally relents.

Mrs. Elton receives a long-awaited comeuppance in this chapter when her presumptions and breaks of etiquette reach an unreasonable level. Her great mistake is to demand the power to invite whomever she pleases to Donwell Abbey, a power that only Mr. Knightley may have. Mr. Knightley's reproach of Mrs. Elton contains an interesting comment. When he says that only the future Mrs. Knightley may invite whomever she chooses to his estate, he gives the first indication that he is interested in marriage. The automatic assumption before this point was that Mr. Knightley had resigned himself to remaining a bachelor.

It now seems more and more likely that Jane Fairfax will suffer the indignation of becoming a governess, and even worse, she may owe her position to Mrs. Elton's intervention. This chapter bolsters the suspicions that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are involved, considering the strange circumstances of his late arrival and her early departure ­ both are unhappy during their separate visits to the picnic at Donwell Abbey.

Also, Harriet spending time with Mr. Knightley is a notable change in events. This is a reminder of Harriet's earlier claim that she was in love with a man of great status. Harriet has shown no interest in Frank Churchill, so it must be assumed that Emma was mistaken and Harriet has developed feelings for Mr. Knightley.

***Significance: (Ch 41-42):***

[Mr. Knightley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Knightley) suspects Frank of "some double dealing in his pursuit of Emma," as well as "an inclination to trifle with [Jane Fairfax](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Jane_Fairfax)." During a group walk, Frank lets one of Jane's confidences slip, attributing it to Mrs. Weston. When the gathering goes indoors, Frank plays a word game with Emma and Jane. For Jane, he jumbles the letters for "blunder," referring to his slip of the tongue. For Emma, he jumbles the letters for "Dixon," and when she spells it out, he shows it to Jane, who gets angry. When everyone leaves, Mr. Knightley asks Emma the meaning of the word game, but she evades his question. He reveals to her his suspicions about Frank and Jane, but Emma tells him with great confidence that he is mistaken, and he becomes very irritated by her attitude and leaves abruptly.

The Highbury gentry decide to combine forces for a picnic to Box Hill, which is postponed because a carriage horse goes lame. After Mrs. Elton complains, Mr. Knightley suggests everyone come to Donwell Abbey instead to pick strawberries. The horse heals, so the Box Hill outing is planned for the following day. At Donwell Abbey, Emma admires the majesty of Knightley's estate. She then encounters a distraught Jane, who plans to leave early and walk home alone. Emma at first insists on a carriage, but then she agrees to Jane's decision to leave by herself. At the last minute, Frank shows up and seems to be in a bad mood.

Once again Frank's carelessness and malice, which masquerades as high spirits, is on display in his treatment of Emma and Jane. When the Highbury party are out walking, he mentions that Mr. Perry may be thinking of setting up a carriage, but this information is private and has been revealed by Mrs. Coles only to the Bates women and Jane. Clearly Frank has heard the news from Jane. Rather than feel embarrassed about his slip, he asks Emma for the box of letters her nephews use to play a word game, and when he gives Jane "blunder" to spell, he is apologizing for his mistake somewhat publicly and assumes no one will catch his meaning. Not to leave Emma out, he gives her "Dixon" to spell, but if that weren't bad enough, he shows the word to Jane, who understandably becomes angry. How much has he told her about Emma's suppositions about her and Mr. Dixon? Probably quite a lot. In a sense, he is making fun of both Emma and Jane.

[Mr. Knightley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Knightley) is now aware that Frank has been communicating nonverbally with Jane in public gatherings, and he must wonder how much Emma knows about it. This is why he asks her about the word game. This word game, as well as the earlier one that [Mr. Elton](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Elton) plays with Emma, symbolizes the misunderstandings people have because of a lack of communication—which is either inadvertent or deliberate. The games also represent the emotional games people play with one another's feelings. When Emma so adamantly denies Mr. Knightley's suspicions about Jane and Frank, he gets aggravated because she is pompous in her answer, accusing him of letting his imagination wander. She implies that she is entirely in Frank's confidence, and this annoys Mr. Knightley, first because he knows she is wrong and doesn't want to see her get hurt, and second because he is jealous.

By the time Highbury's residents come to Donwell Abbey to pick strawberries, things have heated up between Jane and Frank. A very angry and upset Jane leaves early, and when Frank comes from his aunt's he seems angry. Clearly a lover's quarrel has taken place, although nobody recognizes it as such. Meanwhile, Emma, like a typical Austenian heroine, has her moment when she views Knightley's estate: "It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive." Emma doesn't know it yet, but someday she will be mistress of all that she sees.***Summary part by part and analysis***

***Summary part 1:***

When [Mrs. Elton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s rich relatives fail to visit, [Mr. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) suggests that their parties ([Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) and her friends with Mrs. Elton and her friends) merge in an outing to Box Hill. However, a lame horse forces the postponement of the outing, and Mrs. Elton seizes instead on [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley)’s passing invitation to explore his estate, Donwell Abbey. She eagerly begins to make the arrangements, but Mr. Knightley asserts his authority over them. Meanwhile, the lame horse heals and the Box Hill trip is planned to follow the next day.

***Analysis part 1:***

Mrs. Elton and Emma’s set are constantly looking for a diversion, as the little town of Highbury provides limited excitement. When there are no new marriages or visitors, they rely on social visits and nature outings for entertainment. Mrs. Elton is as eager as ever to seize upon any invitations that may gratify her vanity.

***Summary part 2:***

At Donwell, [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) regards her friend’s estate with pleasure and pride. [Mrs. Elton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) badgers [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax) to accept a governess position that she has found for her, and Jane finally removes herself by proposing a walk. Emma spots [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley) and [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) in pleasant conversation leading the way.

***Analysis part 2***

Mr. Knightley reveals himself to be a generous judge of character, as he willingly amends his opinion of Harriet to include more virtues than he initially allowed. Emma shows her true generosity in delighting in her friend’s fortune.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) worries at [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill)’s delay, as he is expected from Richmond. While cooling off in the house, [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) encounters an agitated [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax). Jane appears distressed and exhausted, and she asks Emma to inform the others that she has left for home. Emma feels some sympathy for her. Just then, an out of humor Frank arrives. He has run into Jane as she left, and he complains about the heat. However, he agrees to join the Box Hill expedition the next day.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Emma begins to sympathize with Jane’s forbearance of her irritating friends, as she observes Jane’s real distress and desire for solitude. She realizes that despite Jane’s reserve, Jane must feel considerable irritation towards those who love her best—her annoying aunt and the presumptuous Mrs. Elton.