***Emma***

***Chapter 44***

***Vol3Chapter8***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Making fun of Miss Bates is different than all other times we’ve read about Emma’s mistakes: when she wakes up in the morning, Emma still feels rotten.
* She wishes, above all, that she could tell Mr. Knightley how sorry she feels.
* Emma leaves early in the morning to call on Miss Bates.
* She can’t really apologize, but at least she can show that she’s sorry!
* When she gets to the Bates house, the servant lets her in.
* There’s a strange scramble upstairs, though…almost as if people are running away.
* As it turns out, people were running away.
* Jane and Miss Bates, to be precise.
* Feeling even more penitent than before, Emma sits down to talk to Mrs. Bates.
* Eventually Miss Bates comes out of a back room, apologizing that Jane is "ill."
* Miss Bates, quick to forgive, begins chatting with Emma about Highbury gossip.
* Most surprisingly, she tells Emma that Jane has finally accepted the governess position that Mrs. Elton found (and shoved down her throat).
* She’ll work for a friend of the Sucklings.
* Really, it’s hard to imagine a better opportunity.
* Or at least, that’s what Mrs. Elton keeps saying.

***Brief Summary:***

Emma visits the Bates' household and hopes that Miss Bates will not hold the previous days events against her. To smooth things over, she immediately asks about Miss Fairfax. Emma learns that Miss Fairfax has taken a job as a governess with a friend of Mrs. Elton's. The Smallridge family lives near Maple Grove and Miss Fairfax is due to leave within two weeks time.

Mr. Churchill is mentioned briefly, and Emma thinks it odd that Miss Bates would know so much of his comings and goings but puts it aside.

All seems to be well with Miss Bates and Emma leaves quickly.

***Brief Analysis:***

Emma's apology, although not outright, is more in line with her character than the previous rudeness she displayed the day before. The announcement of Miss Fairfax's imminent departure is somewhat shocking and the reader is still left to conjecture about the possibility of a relationship between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax.

***Detailed Summary:***

On reflection, Emma decides that the Box Hill party was a disaster. Still feeling horrible about her treatment of Miss Bates, Emma soothes her conscience by visiting the Bateses first thing the following morning. Miss Bates’s humility and kindness are a further reproach to Emma’s bad behavior. During Emma’s visit, Jane remains in the bedroom with a headache.

Jane has just accepted the governess position recommended by Mrs. Elton, and Emma expresses surprise and genuine concern for the unhappiness Jane’s departure must cause everyone. Jane will leave within a fortnight (two weeks). Emma is surprised to learn that Frank departed the previous evening for Richmond, and she is struck by the difference between Mrs. Churchill’s power and Jane’s. She is ashamed of her earlier conjectures about Jane’s relationship with Mr. Dixon.

***Critical Study:***

As Emma spends the whole evening at backgammon with her father, she still feels wretched. Earlier than usual, she pays a visit to the Bateses the next morning, determined to make amends if possible. Wishing very much to give pleasure, she enters the house as Miss Bates and Jane seem to be escaping into the adjoining room. When Miss Bates returns, things are momentarily strained until Emma asks about Jane and Miss Bates becomes her old self, recounting in detail that Jane has accepted a situation as governess, that Mrs. Elton brought it about, and that Jane is to leave within a fortnight. It all came about the evening before at Mrs. Elton's: right before tea had come word that Frank had left for Richmond; shortly after tea Jane had agreed to accept the situation which Augusta had found. Emma is struck by the difference of importance between Mrs. Churchill and Jane Fairfax. She sits "musing on the difference of woman's destiny" as Miss Bates talks of the disposition of the pianoforte until Emma takes her leave.

Emma's success in mollifying Miss Bates demonstrates the goodwill and basic kind intentions of both women. As the reader will see, Jane's decision to take a job is vital to the working out of one major part of the plot; but it also works in the direction of Emma's growth in knowledge as she muses on woman's destiny.

***Critical Analysis(Ch 43-44):***

Emma visit Miss Bates the next day to make amends for her behavior and finds that Jane is sick and will not see company. Miss Bates tells Emma that Jane has decided to take Mrs. Elton up on her offer of a post in the family of one of her acquaintances. She also learns that Frank has gone back to Richmond. Emma begins reflecting on Jane's situation versus Mrs. Churchill's and the huge power differential between them. That leads her to think of the pianoforte and all the nasty conjectures she has made, and she feels ashamed.

The Box Hill picnic brings Frank and Jane's relationship to a crisis and also is a turning point for Emma in terms of her character formation. She is destined to change from a superficial person to a mature gentlewoman of power and means who can take her place beside [Mr. Knightley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Knightley) as a responsible grande dame. In *Emma*, social gatherings are symbolic of community cohesiveness, and everything goes wrong at Box Hill because friends and neighbors are harboring secrets and unresolved animosity. The Eltons are still very angry at Emma and Harriet. Frank and Jane are continuing what seems to be a very nasty lover's quarrel. Frank uses Emma to make Jane jealous by openly flirting with her. Emma senses that his flirtation has no meaning, but she is unaware that he is using her as a weapon. Frank exchanges angry words with Jane, inferring that he didn't really know who she was when he met her in Weymouth and that he was perhaps mistaken in falling in love. He implies that now that he knows her better, he might not want to spend the rest of his life with her. She answers that he certainly doesn't need to; he has plenty of time to withdraw from his commitment. Here, Jane is criticizing Frank for being weak and irresolute; their future together is being held hostage by his aunt, who arbitrarily orders him about.

Emma is certainly not positively influenced by the company she keeps, and Frank's nastiness rubs off on her at Box Hill, culminating in her insult of Miss Bates. Mr. Knightley is appalled by her bad behavior and feels it is his duty to call her on it. He says, "I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. ... were she your equal in situation—but Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. ... Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed!" Emma is mortified by her own behavior as Mr. Knightley holds the mirror up for her, and she is also sorry to have sunk so low in his estimation. Mr. Knightley's drubbing is just the shock she needs to set a new course. When she visits Miss Bates the next day to make amends, she is genuinely sorry. She wants to reach out to Jane too, but Jane refuses to come out of the bedroom. The intelligent Emma reflects on how one woman, Mrs. Churchill, gets to do whatever she wants because she is rich, while the other, [Jane Fairfax](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Jane_Fairfax), will be trapped forever by her economic circumstances and have few choices available to her.

***Significance:***

Ashamed of what she has done, Emma visits Miss Bates to apologize for her behavior at Box Hill, but she is not home. Emma waits for her with [Mrs. Bates](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#mrs-bates). Miss Bates does arrive and tells Emma that Jane was crying and writing letters to Colonel Campbell and Mrs. Dixon. She will be going to be the governess for Mrs. Smallridge of Maple Grove, thanks to Mrs. Elton, and will be paid well, according to Miss Bates. She also learns that Frank Churchill has suddenly left, since the Churchills requested that he return home.

**Analysis:** Emma is appropriately ashamed of her behavior, and her attempts to remedy her situation with Miss Bates are sincere and commendable. But Austen spends little time on Emma's newfound modesty, instead switching to news of Jane Fairfax. It is confirmed that Jane must enter a profession as a governess, a job that she earlier compared to the slave trade, and now she is in ill health. Despite Miss Bates' protests that she will be happy as a governess, Jane Fairfax is quite upset by this turn of events. Emma explicitly contrasts her fate with that of Mrs. Churchill. Jane Fairfax is a gracious, talented woman who must take a subservient position merely because of status, while Mrs. Churchill is a demanding, cruel woman who is important in society.

There is now some explanation for Frank Churchill's recent bad mood. Mrs. Churchill yet again demands that Frank Churchill return home. There is more evidence that the fates of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill are connected. Both suffer depression almost simultaneously, and both are set to leave Highbury around the same time.

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

***Summary part 1:***

Emma reflects miserably about the Box Hill expedition. She comforts herself a little regarding her good behavior to her father, but her conscience continues to torture her regarding her treatment of [Miss Bates](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters). The very next morning, Emma resolves to visit Miss Bates regularly.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma again demonstrates her ability to be severe on herself and improve. To her credit, once convicted of her faults, Emma earnestly attempts to correct them and improve her behavior.

***Summary part 2:***

Emma arrives at the Bateses to find Jane unwell, and she is ushered into the bedroom. [Miss Bates](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s gratitude further humbles Emma. Emma learns that Jane has just accepted the governess position [Mrs. Elton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) found for her; Jane spent the past day at Box Hill making up her mind. All of Emma’s former unkind feelings towards Jane are washed away by her sympathy, as Emma wishes Jane well with heartfelt warmth.

***Analysis part 2***

Emma at last begins to put aside her annoyance for the gossipy Miss Bates, as she fully appreciates her goodness and generosity. Like Harriet, Miss Bates does not begrudge Emma her wrongdoing, and this generosity further humbles Emma.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Miss Bates](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) also shares that Frank left for Richmond on [Mrs. Churchill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s summons the previous evening. The contrast between Mrs. Churchill’s and [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax)’s situation strikes Emma with particular poignancy, as she reflects on the former’s power and the latter’s dependence. She leaves the Bateses with sincere good will and regret for her previous unkindness.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Emma also at last puts aside her childish jealousy of Jane, towards whom she feels real female sympathy. She realizes that fate can be both fickle and cruel, endowing the cold Mrs. Churchill with power and leaving the good Jane socially impoverished.