***Emma***

***Chapter 46***

***Vol3Chapter10***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Mr. Weston comes to Hartfield just to ask Emma to come back with him to Randalls.
* Mrs. Weston has to talk to her – alone.
* Surprised and frightened, Emma joins him immediately.
* Mr. Weston’s not very good at keeping secrets.
* He’s upset, and he tries to calm Emma down by telling her that it *might* not be as bad as he thinks it is. (What’s "it?" Well, read on…)
* Sure that something happened to her sister’s family, Emma begs him to tell her immediately.
* Mr. Weston assures her that nothing is wrong with the Knightleys.
* Somewhat reassured, Emma hurries along.
* When they get to Randalls, Mrs. Weston takes Emma by the hand and tells her that Frank is engaged – to Jane Fairfax.
* We’ll pause here so that you can catch your breath.
* Jane Fairfax??? And Frank???? Who would have guessed it?
* OK, Mr. Knightley guessed, but who pays attention to him, anyway?
* It gets worse. Frank and Jane became *secretly* engaged when they met a year ago.
* They’ve been hiding their love ever since.
* Mrs. Weston, terrified that Emma’s heart is broken, tries to console her.
* It takes a few tries – and a lot of smiles – before Emma can convince the Westons that, by a strange fluke, she’s no longer in love with Frank.
* Nonetheless, Emma condemns the underhanded way Frank has conducted his business ever since he arrived in Highbury (and we all know she’s thinking of the things she’s said, as well!)
* Mrs. Weston assures Emma that Frank has suffered greatly in the past few months – which isn’t quite easy to believe, is it?
* Nonetheless, as soon as Mrs. Churchill died, Frank confessed his engagement to his uncle – and then ran to Highbury to tell Jane.
* Frank’s already rushed back to his uncle, leaving an astonished set of parents in his wake.
* Emma wonders aloud if Frank’s concealment led to unjust or even unkind things being said about Jane.
* Mrs. Weston is sure that *she* never even thought anything but the best of Jane.
* Emma, of course, remains silent.
* Initially, Mr. Weston condemns the marriage…
* …but that’s really only because he’s worried about Emma.
* Once he finds out where Emma’s heart stands, he’s actually really happy.
* Jane Fairfax is pretty great.
* In fact, this may be the best thing that Frank has ever done.
* It’s lucky that he’s easy to convince, huh?

***Brief Summary:***

Mr. Weston arrives at Hartfield with an urgent message for Emma. She must come at once at Mrs. Weston's request. He will not reveal the nature of the request; only that it is urgent.

Emma leaves with him immediately, absolutely certain that something has happened to her sister or her nieces and nephews. Mr. Weston will only say that it has nothing to do with them and that he cannot reveal anything more.

They arrive at Randalls and Mr. Weston leaves Emma with his wife. Mrs. Weston looks quite terrible as she drops the bombshell that Mr. Churchill has been secretly engaged to Miss Fairfax since the previous October.

This is quite shocking as everyone feels that he has misled them, and Emma regrets some of the confidences she had with Mr. Churchill regarding Miss Fairfax.

Mrs. Weston is very concerned that Emma is in love with Mr. Churchill, since they seemed to be each other's objects since February. Emma assures her that this is not the case, and puts her very much at ease.

Mr. Weston peeks in and is relieved to hear that all is well and that Emma is not upset.

***Brief Analysis:***

At last, all of the hinting and misleading of the narrator has led to the secret engagement of Miss Fairfax and Mr. Churchill. In this time period, this news would be have been completely shocking, especially since Mr. Churchill had spent so much time with Emma.

The twists and turns gave the reader some clue that there was something going on between Miss Fairfax and Mr. Churchill, but nevertheless it is still quite a surprise when it is completely revealed.

***Detailed Summary:***

Mr. Weston arrives to escort Emma to see Mrs. Weston—clearly something is amiss. Assured that Mrs. Weston is well, Emma’s first concern is for Isabella’s family and for Mr. Knightley in London, but Mr. Weston assures her that the news does not involve them. At Randalls, Emma is greeted by Mrs. Weston, who explains that Frank has just revealed that he and Jane have been secretly engaged. Emma is shocked, embarrassed by the things she has said to Frank about Jane, and concerned for Harriet’s feelings.

Emma quickly relieves Mrs. Weston by assuring her that she has no feelings for Frank. She is angry, however, about his behavior toward her and Jane. Mrs. Weston defends her stepson, telling Emma that there were misunderstandings between him and Jane and that he will be writing her a letter detailing the extenuating circumstances. Mr. Churchill has given his consent to the match, though he has requested that it remain secret until more time has passed after his wife’s death. Mr. Weston enters the room, and Emma assures him that the news of Frank’s engagement has not caused her any pain.

***Critical Study:***

One morning ten days after Mrs. Churchill's death, Mr. Weston comes with an urgent request for Emma to come see Mrs. Weston for news about a "most unaccountable business." Emma becomes more and more inquisitive and upset on the way, but for once Mr. Weston will not divulge anything prematurely.

Left alone with an ill-looking Mrs. Weston, Emma learns that Frank has come over to see them that very morning and to break the news that he and Jane Fairfax have been long and secretly engaged — since they were together at Weymouth in October, in fact. Emma is first agitated about her former conversations with Frank about Jane and then in regard to "poor Harriet." She now has to reassure Mrs. Weston that, though briefly it was otherwise, she is not in love with Frank. While Mrs. Weston shows her relief "with tears of joy," Emma states that Frank is greatly to blame for deceiving everyone. After her friend defends him, she speaks out for "upright integrity" and cries out at the indelicacy of letting Jane be "on the point of going as governess." But Frank has known nothing of this until yesterday, after which time he immediately headed for Highbury to see Jane. Mr. Churchill has given his consent to the engagement, and Emma thinks regretfully that he would have done the same for Harriet. When she thinks of Mr. Dixon, she blushes; but in spite of all the upsetting news, she musters her reserves to set Mr. Weston at ease when he re-enters. She does so well, in fact, that on the way home with her Mr. Weston begins to think that the engagement is the best step that Frank could have taken.

The major portion of this chapter serves to clarify plot elements, but through the surprise and the regrets, Emma is coming to terms more and more with herself and the world she inhabits. She copes admirably with the situation, particularly in regard to Mr. and Mrs. Weston; and the revelation about Frank and Jane is bound to go beyond her criticism of Frank and the secret engagement to some consideration of deception and scheming in general. She seems hardly aware, however, of one major development on her part. Miss Austen has very subtly been enlarging Emma's relationship to George, and at this point in the story Emma criticizes Frank by describing what she sees as perfection in a man — and does it apparently without realizing that she is describing George Knightley, who has earlier indicated what he considers as perfection in a wife. Basically Emma fits his description too.

Satire is still at work in this chapter. One should note, for instance, what Miss Austen presents about Highbury's reaction to the death of Mrs. Churchill. Individual satire resides in Emma's still unresolved relationship with Harriet, a relationship that is very soon to offer its revelations and comeuppance.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Mr. Weston](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#mr-weston) urgently requests Emma's presence at Randalls, for Mrs. Weston has important news. When Emma arrives, Mrs. Weston looks quite disturbed. She has news that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax have been secretly engaged. Emma tells Mrs. Weston honestly that she was once interested in Frank, but that interest subsided. Still, she criticizes Frank for pretending to show affection for her when he was engaged to Jane, particularly when Jane was present.

Whether or not Frank Churchill was wrong in devoting his attention to Emma and hiding his engagement to Jane Fairfax is up for debate. As Emma points out, he came to Highbury with professions of openness and simplicity but instead duped everyone. Still, it was evident from his first introduction that Frank harbored some secret and was deliberately deceptive. And although he gave the appearance that he had an interest in Emma, she realized almost immediately that this was not the case and that his interest was more out of vanity and their shared sociability. Also, Mrs. Churchill made it impossible for him to make his romance public without retribution.

The one unqualified positive circumstance of the engagement is that Jane Fairfax will no longer have to become a governess. While Frank does have his faults, he will certainly improve Jane Fairfax's situation, while her impeccable manners will improve his sometimes disreputable behavior. The parallels between Frank Churchill and his father are striking. Both men were constrained in their actions by the Churchill family, and both found happiness with an educated and respectable governess whose status they improve.

***Significance(Ch45-46):***

Mrs. Weston sends her husband to Hartfield to fetch Emma, and she is very much in the dark until she gets to Randalls. Mrs. Weston tells her that Jane and Frank have secretly been engaged for some time. Frank's uncle has agreed to the marriage, although he wants to keep it secret for a while because they are in a period of mourning. Mrs. Weston is concerned for her friend's feelings, but Emma reassures her that any feelings she had for Frank have dissipated. She is angry about his bad behavior, however, and also thinks with mortification of what she has said to him about Jane. She also begins to worry about Harriet. Mrs. Weston makes excuses for her stepson and says he will be sending a letter that explains everything.

[Mr. Knightley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Knightley) leaves abruptly, perhaps because the feelings he has for Emma are proving too strong for him. He believes that she is attached in some way to [Frank Churchill](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Frank_Churchill), so it makes sense for him to put himself out of the way for the time being. Frank's relationship with Jane has clearly come to a crisis. She would not have accepted a position as a governess unless she were breaking off her engagement with Frank. No doubt, Frank's flirtation at Box Hill put her beyond endurance. A sincere and upright woman, she has been carrying a heavy secret for months.

When Emma tries to make amends with Jane by visiting, sending food, and offering Jane an airing in the carriage, she is rejected. Jane will take nothing from Emma, and who can blame her? Emma is grieved and mortified that is "given so little credit for proper feeling, or esteemed so little worthy as a friend." It is good that Emma has changed her attitude toward Jane, but she is getting what she deserves.

No doubt Frank was hiding his engagement because he knew his aunt would not approve of his liaison with Jane. He is the heir of the Churchill estate, but that property doesn't come without strings. Frank has had to obey his aunt in all things; Jane's birth is too lowly for Mrs. Churchill, and the girl has no money. However, once Jane pushes the situation to a crisis, Frank finally tells his uncle of his engagement. His aunt's death is fortuitous. Mrs. Weston says, "While poor Mrs. Churchill lived, I suppose there could not have been a hope, a chance, a possibility;—but scarcely are her remains at rest in the family vault than her husband is persuaded to act exactly opposite to what she would have required."

Mrs. Weston is relieved to hear that Emma is not in love with Frank, but there still remains the issue of his very bad behavior in flirting with Emma while he was engaged to Jane.

Emma faults Jane's secrecy as well, as she gives voice to the following: "Here have we been, the whole winter and spring, completely duped, fancying ourselves all on an equal footing of truth and honor, with two people in the midst of us who may have been carrying round, comparing and sitting in judgment on sentiments and words that were never meant for both to hear."

Mrs. Weston's willingness to make excuses for the couple, especially her stepson, who is most at fault, is indicative of her character. She is not a bad person, and neither is her husband, but their morality is more conventional than deep. Frank is their son, and they'd like to see him off the hook, as it were, whether he deserves to be or not. They would rather not squarely face the gravity of his offenses.

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

***Summary part 1:***

About a week after [Mrs. Churchill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s death, [Mr. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) arrives at Hartfield with an urgent request to take [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) to see [Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters). At Randalls, an agitated Mrs. Weston informs Emma that [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) and [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax) have been secretly engaged since Weymouth. Emma is astonished, torn between mortification at her unflattering conversations with Frank about Jane and her concern for [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s feelings for Frank.

***Analysis part 1:***

The answer to all of the riddles regarding Jane and Frank’s behavior finally comes out: their secret engagement. Emma is again completely surprised by the revelation of who is really in love with whom, though her only fault in the affair is her indiscretions regarding Jane.

***Summary part 2:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) observes [Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s concern for her, and she reassures her that she has had no feelings for [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) for some time. However, Emma strongly disapproves of Frank’s behavior. She is angry with him for deceiving and courting her; she also believes he has behaved poorly towards Jane in many regards.

***Analysis part 2***

Emma slowly comes over to Mr. Knightley’s opinion of Frank as a duplicitous cad, especially as she begins to appreciate the damage he might have done to her and Jane.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) begs her to postpone judgment until [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) can explain everything by [letter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/symbols/letters). She insists that Frank, too, has suffered from misunderstandings between him and [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax). Upon learning that Jane has accepted a governess position, Frank went frantically to his uncle to plead their case. [Mr. Churchill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), without the snobbish [Mrs. Churchill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s influence, consented to give them his blessing, though insisting they postpone the public engagement until more time has passed. [Mr. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) enters the room cautiously, but is soon comforted by Emma’s warm congratulations regarding his son’s engagement.

***Analysis Part 3:***

As Emma is confronted again with the shortcomings of her perception, she is persuaded to postpone judgment on Frank. It is a lesson of humility that she has been learning throughout the novel, as she reflects on the disastrous consequences of her own vanity-inflated mistakes in judgment on the one hand, and experiences others’ generosity towards herself on the other.