***Emma***

***Chapter 47***

***Vol3Chapter11***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Immediately concerned about Harriet – who’s about to be snubbed for the second time – Emma hurries home.
* As she walks, she thinks about all the things that she could have done differently had she known about the engagement.
* For one thing, she might have liked Jane much more.
* And she wouldn’t have made fun of her with Frank.
* It now occurs to her that all of her attempts to befriend Jane when she was ill were probably arrows into Jane’s heart.
* Just think about how badly Frank ignored her at Box Hill – and how much he flirted with Emma!
* Emma regrets that Mr. Weston swore her to secrecy about the engagement.
* Surprisingly, Emma meets Harriet at the gate of Hartfield – and Harriet has already heard all about the engagement.
* She met Mr. Weston on the road.
* Apparently Mr. Weston has a pretty broad definition of the word "secret."
* Harriet relates the news to Emma with apparent joy. She’s not even a little bit upset.
* Emma’s totally confused.
* Wasn’t Harriet madly in love with Frank? How can she be so calm about the utter failure of her plans – again?
* Emma asks Harriet why she’s not upset.
* Harriet is confused (big surprise).
* She explains to Emma that the man she loves – the man she agreed never to name – is so totally completely better than Frank that she never even *thought* about Frank.
* Not for a second.
* Emma feels the ground drop from under her.
* Could Harriet mean Mr. Knightley?
* Yup. As it turns out, Harriet loves Mr. Knightley.
* And, to make matters worse, she thinks that Emma supports her love.
* What about the fact that Frank rescued Harriet from the gypsies?
* We’re so glad you asked. In fact, Emma asks the same question.
* As it turns out, the "rescue" Harriet was thinking about was when Mr. Knightley asked her to dance.
* Mortal terror versus social awkwardness?
* It’s an easy call. It’s ALWAYS worse to be left alone at a dance!
* Emma suddenly can’t hear Harriet talking – her mind is moving too fast.
* In a flash, Emma realizes that Harriet can’t love Mr. Knightley.
* SHE loves him!
* There are a few moments of dramatic self-revelation. It’s pretty amazing, actually.
* Emma slowly realizes that there’s another problem: what if Mr. Knightley loves Harriet?
* Harriet explains why she thinks Mr. Knightley might like her.
* As Emma listens, her heart sinks.
* Maybe Mr. Knightley *does* like Harriet.
* Emma shudders at the thought. Harriet totally doesn’t deserve him.
* Then again, it wouldn’t be the first time that an amazing man married a stupid woman.
* Confused, Emma tells Harriet to leave.
* Left alone with her thoughts, Emma realizes that she’s always loved Mr. Knightley.
* She finally recognizes that it was pretty vain to assume that she could understand everyone else’s loves – when, really, she had no idea what her own feelings were!

***Brief Summary:***

Emma, upon leaving, immediately thinks of poor Harriet. She has managed to disappoint the girl once again by selecting a match for her that was not going to work out. Emma wonders how she will break the news when Harriet arrives, mentioning what she has just heard.

Emma is surprised that Harriet does not seem to be bothered by the announcement. Emma thought that Harriet was attached to Mr. Churchill since the incident with the gypsies. Emma also reminds Harriet of her comment of not being worthy enough for someone, which Emma assumed was Mr. Churchill.

Harriet now drops a bombshell of her own. Her love interest is not Mr. Churchill but rather Mr. Knightley himself. Emma is absolutely aghast at this announcement and does not know what to do.

***Brief Analysis:***

At this point, Emma realizes that she has made a horrible mistake with Harriet. Instead of leaving her a humble girl, she has turned her into a vain creature. In Emma's estimation, Harriet is far beneath Mr. Knightley and should never even think of such a match. However, with Emma's constant attention, Harriet believes that this match is possible.

This chapter highlights the differences in class that were very prevalent in Europe at this time. The differences between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax's engagement are displayed against Mr. Knightley and Harriet. While neither girl is of a high social stature, they have both found men that are far above them in society. This was normally frowned upon, and Emma is no exception to this rule.

We are also left to wonder if Emma doesn't have a secret of her own that she has been waiting to reveal, even to herself.

***Detailed Summary:***

Emma is filled with concern for Harriet. She is angrier at herself than she is at Frank, because she believes that she should have discouraged Harriet’s attachment to him. Jane’s behavior since her arrival in Highbury is also put into perspective. Emma realizes that Jane has been avoiding her because she has seen her as a rival. Emma dreads telling Harriet the news, but when Harriet arrives at Hartfield she has already heard the story from Mr. Weston. Emma is surprised at Harriet’s composure, and it turns out that Harriet never cared for Frank; she has been harboring feelings for Mr. Knightley. Harriet knows that Mr. Knightley is of higher rank than she, but she affirms that Emma has given her hope that she may raise herself enough to be acceptable to him.

Emma makes a startling discovery—she herself is in love with Mr. Knightley! She conceals her emotion from Harriet, asking Harriet whether she has reason to believe that Knightley returns her feelings. Harriet recounts a number of instances in which Knightley has shown her special attention, many of which Emma’s memory corroborates. When Harriet departs, Emma is left to reflect that she has been wrong about everything, including her own heart. Now Knightley may debase himself by marrying Harriet, and she has made it all possible.

***Critical Study:***

Still highly concerned about Harriet, Emma decides that "it was not so much his behavior as her own" that makes her angry with Frank. She should have discouraged Harriet's growing attachment and would have, she concludes, if she had had more common sense. In regard to Jane, she feels relief and wishes her only happiness.

Harriet arrives and, to Emma's surprise, has learned the news from Mr. Weston and is quite calm about it. Nonetheless, trying to cushion what she thinks is a blow, Emma consoles her only to learn that Harriet's attachment has been, not for Frank, but for George Knightley. Emma is utterly astounded — so much so that she finally realizes that "Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" Harriet recounts her reasons for thinking that her feelings are reciprocated, and Emma, though she agrees that there may be truth in this, feels bitter, especially after Harriet says, "But now I seem to feel that I may deserve him . . ." Mr. Woodhouse enters and thus stops the discussion.

After Harriet is gone, Emma is beside herself: "Oh God! that I had never seen her!" She tries to comprehend the situation by first examining her heart, wondering how long George has been so dear to her. She faces up to her own delusions and to ignorance of her own heart. This knowledge of herself reveals her vanity and how "with unpardonable arrogance [she has] proposed to arrange everybody's destiny." Why had she not let Harriet marry Robert Martin? But her pretty friend's "presumption to raise her thoughts to Mr. Knightley" lies at Emma's own door: "Who had been at pains to give Harriet notions of self-consequence but herself?"

This is the crucial turning point for Emma. She has to acknowledge and try to come to terms with what she has done to Harriet and with the fact that she herself loves George. The situational irony is very strong indeed: Harriet, taught by Emma to look above herself, has looked to the very man who is exactly right for Emma. One could hardly be more fully caught in her own web of scheming. It is never easy to admit that one is wrong, but Emma does it admirably under the circumstances, for her emotions are very strong and are pulled in different directions.

The situation forces Emma to admit that her own imagination was wrong to go against the order of social stratification. Like the other characters, she has believed in it in general; but now the inequality of just one aberration from that order is forcefully impressed upon her. She sees that aberration — her own doing — as wrong and disruptive. She must deal with two misplaced prides — her own and Harriet's newly developed one. Basically what faces her is the necessity of helping or letting the social order reassert itself — if that can be.

***Critical Analysis:***

Emma realizes that Harriet might be upset by the turn of events, for this is the second time that Emma has suggested that someone might be interested in the poor woman. Emma is angry with Frank Churchill for the deception but is at least relieved that Jane will not sink into an insignificant life. When Emma sees Harriet, Mr. Weston has already told her about Frank Churchill. Harriet denies that she ever had an interest in Frank Churchill, instead, Harriet has been fixated on Mr. Knightley. (When she earlier spoke to Emma about her feelings, she mentioned that the man in question saved her. While Emma assumed she meant Frank's actions with the gypsies, in fact she meant Mr. Knightley's kind behavior at the Crown Inn ball after she had been slighted). Emma finally realizes that nobody should marry Mr. Knightley but Emma herself, and that she has lead Harriet to believe that Mr. Knightley could be in love with her. Emma realizes that she has made Harriet believe that her claims are greater than they actually are; she has made the humble Harriet now vain.

Mr. Knightley's words to Emma, "you have been no friend to Harriet Smith," prove prophetic in this chapter, as Emma herself realizes. She believes that she has yet again misled Harriet Smith into expecting the wrong romantic attachment. Nevertheless, Mr. Knightley's warning was not prophetic in the manner that Emma imagines. Emma did not damage Harriet Smith by setting her up for another heartbreak. Rather, Emma's great fault is that she made Harriet believe that she could aspire to an unreasonable social status. Emma realizes that part of her vanity is the belief that she knows the secrets of everybody else's feelings. She has been proven consistently wrong on this account because she views the world as she would like it to be. She assumed that Mr. Elton loved Harriet because she wanted it to be so. As her own feelings for Frank Churchill grew, she was convinced that he loved her; as they waned, she believed that his did as well.

Jealousy once again motivates romance in this novel: it takes Frank Churchill to make Mr. Knightley show greater affection toward Emma, and now it is Harriet Smith who makes Emma realize that she loves Mr. Knightley. The great horror of the possible match between Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith is that, from his actions, Emma believes it to be possible. But, the match must be prevented, for it would cause Mr. Knightley constant difficulties and expose him to intense mockery.

Class once again enters into discussions of marriage. Even if Mr. Knightley does love Harriet Smith, Emma cannot imagine the marriage taking place. Whatever love the two of them have would be fraught with such difficulties that there is virtually no possibility of success.

***Significance:***

Emma suffers pangs of remorse as she thinks about how she led her friend Harriet astray for a second time. She remembers [Mr. Knightley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Knightley)'s accusation that she is no friend to [Harriet Smith](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Harriet_Smith). Emma is more angry with herself than she is at Frank. She also realizes that Jane's avoidance of her over the past several months was because of jealousy, but at least she can put her mind to rest about Jane's troubles, which seem to be coming to an end.

With trepidation, Emma approaches Harriet to tell her about the engagement, but her friend has already heard. Harriet reveals that she is in love not with Frank but with Mr. Knightley, who rescued her on the dance floor. Emma has a sudden epiphany that "Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" She realizes that she alone is responsible for Harriet's having "the presumption to raise her thoughts to Mr. Knightley!" Emma does not reveal her feelings to Harriet but instead asks her if she has any reason to hope. Harriet claims that Mr. Knightley has been paying more attention to her, and Emma has to concede that she is not wrong. She only hopes that Harriet has not captured Mr. Knightley's heart.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse)’s concern for [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) fuels her anger with [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) and herself. She regrets having again mistakenly encouraged Harriet’s affections for a man. She also now understands [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax)’s recent coldness towards her as motivated by jealousy. Emma is happy for Jane, and generously reflects that Jane will finally attain much deserved social and financial security with marriage.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma quickly puts the pieces together, and we see just how much she has grown in her selfless concern towards Harriet and regard for Jane. Despite her anger at the secret engagement, she acknowledges Jane’s merits and is happy for her future rise in fortune.

***Summary part 2:***

When Harriet arrives at Hartfield, however, it turns out she already knows about the engagement from [Mr. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) and is entirely unperturbed. [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse), surprised, soon discovers that Harriet’s interest has been in [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley), not [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill), all along. Harriet informs Emma that but for her seeming encouragement, she would never have presumed to raise her eyes to Mr. Knightley. However, now she acknowledges hope of his reciprocal affection.

***Analysis part 2***

Harriet’s remarkable composure as she relates the true nature of her feelings shows how much she, too, has grown. She is no longer the agitated girl dependent on Emma’s opinion to make her own; she perceives Mr. Knightley’s merits and believes in her own. She does not ask Emma’s permission for the match.

***Summary Part 3:***

Emma is upset. And from this distress, [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) realizes that she herself is love with [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley). Out of a sense of justice to [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), she represses her feelings and inquires into the unfolding of Harriet’s. Harriet relates several moments in which Mr. Knightley displayed particular affection towards her—including the walk at Donwell—and Emma recalls similarly noting Mr. Knightley’s improved opinion of Harriet. Emma can only respond that Mr. Knightley would never intend to lead a woman on.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Emma’s forbearance and determination to be fair to her friend, to whom she has done so little real good, does her credit—particularly as it causes her great pain to hear Harriet recount signs of Mr. Knightley’s admiration for her. She also corroborates Harriet’s evidence with her own observations, showing a less fanciful judgment.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) is left to reflect on how very mistaken she has been about everyone: [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill), [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax), [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), and herself. She realizes that she has always loved [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley); her love for Frank was a delusion. She regrets too her “insufferable vanity” in believing she knew everybody’s heart and could orchestrate their destiny. Now, she has only herself to blame for enabling Harriet and Mr. Knightley—a match that she reflects is not impossible, as the world has been revealed to be an “unequal, inconsistent, incongruous” place.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Emma reflects with horror and wonder upon the potential match between Harriet and Mr. Knightley. It is a match that horrifies her because of their great disparity in social class and wealth, but also inevitably because she is in love with Mr. Knightley. She finds, ironically, that she has become her own worst enemy, because of her blindness and vanity.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Emma’s eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently meditating, in a fixed attitude, for a few minutes. A few minutes were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress; she touched, she admitted, she acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet’s having some hope of a return? It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!

***Explanation:***

This quotation, from Chapter 47, comes in the midst of Emma’s conversation with Harriet in which Harriet confesses her feelings for Mr. Knightley. For the majority of the novel, Emma’s suspicions and her attention have been misdirected, focusing on Harriet’s possible matches and on her speculations about Jane. Once her perceptiveness and ability to see beyond appearances are finally directed appropriately (after her realization that Frank and Jane are engaged), she makes a swift leap forward in her own self-understanding. However, Emma does not come to the realization that she loves Knightley on her own; only her jealousy of Harriet brings her there. The relationship between Emma and Knightley, though based on their private history together, takes shape only in the context of the surrounding web of social relationships.