***Emma***

***Chapter 51***

***Vol3Chapter15***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* In fact, Emma remains so convinced by Frank’s letter that she shows it to Mr. Knightley.
* He’s about as excited to hear about Frank as he ever was – but he tolerates it for Emma’s sake.
* After Mr. Knightley finishes the letter, he brings up some more important business: how can they get married without making Emma’s father miserable?
* Emma already has a plan. It’s about as good as most of her plans have been.
* If they wait to get married until after Mr. Woodhouse dies, Emma argues, then he’ll never be unhappy.
* We told you it was a crappy plan.
* Luckily, Mr. Knightley agrees with our opinion. He’s got an alternate solution.
* Instead of Emma moving to Donwell Abbey, Mr. Knightley proposes that he should move into Hartfield.
* That way, Mr. Woodhouse never has to leave his own home.
* Astonished at Mr. Knightley’s liberality, Emma immediately agrees to think it over.
* In fact, she pretty much agrees to agree.
* Harriet remains the only sticky point in Emma’s life now.
* And, as Emma reflects, it’s probably too much to expect that Harriet could love *three* men in one year.

***Brief Summary:***

Mr. Knightley returns and Emma asks him to read the letter she received from Mrs. Weston. He would rather take it home with him, but after some persuasion he does, while remarking on his thoughts of Mr. Churchill. He has not changed his mind on the character of Mr. Churchill, but Emma thinks more highly of him after reading his explanation.

After finishing the letter, Mr. Knightley begins to frankly discuss their situation and the plans that they need to make. Emma reveals that she cannot marry while her father is still alive, so they discuss the problems of moving him to Donwell Abbey, which will not do.

Mr. Knightley decides that instead of moving them, he will move in with them and they will all reside at Hartfield. Emma mentions that William Larkin will certainly not approve of this arrangement, but what else could they possibly do?

Emma's thought return to Harriet and she decides that Harriet must be kept away. Since she had such affection towards Mr. Knightley, it would not do to have her as "dead weight" in a family gathering.

***Brief Analysis:***

Mr. Knightley, as always, remains the same and does not change his opinion of Mr. Churchill. Mr. Knightley seems to be the one character throughout the novel that stays the same and is not subject to whims or fancies.

Emma however, seems to be rather cold towards her former friend and does not seem to be bothered by the prospect of losing this friendship. She finally admits to herself that her reason for wishing Mr. Knightley to remain single so her nephew could inherit Donwell Abbey was a silly ploy and that she has loved him all along. This shows a great deal of growth of character on one hand and a startling change of character on the other hand regarding Harriet.

***Detailed Analysis(Ch 49-51):***

Emma, in her own happiness, cannot help but forgive Frank. When Knightley comes to her, she shares the letter with him. He reads the letter, telling Emma his impressions as he goes along, and he is less softened than she but willing to admit that Frank has some good qualities. He and Emma discuss her father, and he agrees that Emma cannot leave Hartfield and that Mr. Woodhouse cannot be expected to move to Donwell Abbey. He suggests that he move to Hartfield, and Emma is moved by his sacrifice. She promises to think it over, and soon likes the plan—her only sadness is that this engagement and relocation will estrange her and Harriet further.

Nearly every sentence that passes between Emma and Knightley in Chapter 49 is misinterpreted, reinforcing the picture the novel has given us of the difficulty of correctly interpreting social exchanges. Emma is reserved because she fears that Knightley will confide his attachment to Harriet, but Knightley mistakes Emma’s reserve for grief at the loss of Frank. He also mistakes Emma’s flush, when he says that he knows already about Frank and Jane, for suppressed unhappiness, when in truth Emma is worried that Knightley’s knowledge of the situation comes from Harriet. When Emma congratulates Knightley on his insight into their relationship and sighs, “I seem to have been doomed to blindness,” Knightley believes Emma is expressing her regret for having been attached to Frank, while Emma actually refers to her blindness with regard to Knightley himself.

The emotional release of Chapter 49 owes to both Knightley and Emma removing the restraints of verbal carefulness and propriety. Emma’s forthright statement about her lack of feelings for Frank encourages Knightley, though he expects opposition and doubts whether his words are appropriate, to confess his feelings for Emma.

Mr. Knightley’s declaration of his love to Emma contrasts starkly with Mr. Elton’s elaborate compliments and with Frank’s light, playful flirtations. Knightley says, “I cannot make speeches, Emma. . . . If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am. You hear nothing but truth from me.… Yes, you see, you understand my feelings.” One of the novel’s messages is that such sincere, direct expressions are more valuable than ornate speech. The narrator’s indirect description of Emma’s response to Knightley—“She spoke then, on being so entreated. What did she say? Just what she ought, of course”—embodies the idea that often the truest feelings are best expressed through simple speech. Just as Knightley declares that the absence of speech can express love as strongly as its presence, perhaps we are to imagine that Emma’s emotion is proportional to the degree to which we actually hear her speak. Social codes often thwart perfect sincerity in speech, but sincere feelings are a remedy to this problem.

***Critical Study(Ch50-51):***

Emma is in "an exquisite flutter of happiness" as they sit down to tea Mr. Woodhouse contentedly unaware of "the impending evil" of the engagement. The night is sleepless for her as she considers what must be done about her father and Harriet and decides that, while her father lives, she and George can be only engaged. In determining how least to be Harriet's "enemy," she decides to communicate with her only by letter and to get her an invitation to visit the John Knightleys in London. After she sadly writes the letter early the next morning, George comes for breakfast and has hardly left when a thick letter arrives from Randalls, containing a long explanatory letter from Frank to Mrs. Weston. It is a good and believable letter which, in Emma's present state of mind and heart, mostly exonerates Frank for his past actions in Highbury. Among other explanations, he says that he felt that Emma had guessed the truth about him and Jane and that at the end of his first visit he had almost confessed the truth to her. He also discloses that it was he who sent Jane the pianoforte. He has nothing but good words for Emma. For himself he expresses both justification and regret.

Because of the letter, Emma's former regard for the writer returns and she desires George to read the letter also. As he does, he occasionally makes a comment and concludes by feeling better about Frank. Then he turns to the problem of Mr. Woodhouse. The only way he can see to ask her to marry him without "attacking the happiness of her father" is for himself to come and live at Hartfield. She promises to think it over, and the proposition becomes more and more reasonable as she dwells upon it. But there is still the problem of Harriet, who is hardly likely to find in time that George is less worthy of worship than Mr. Elton was found to be. And it is really "too much to hope even of Harriet, that she could be in love with more than three men in one year."

The emphasis in these chapters is upon clearing up matters in regard to Frank, and this is done primarily through his letter and the reaction to it by Emma and George. One sidelight to George's reading the letter is the forecast of what the domestic situation will be for him and Emma: It will obviously be comfortable and lively, a true meeting of minds and hearts with just enough difference thrown in for interesting variety. While an answer is found to the problem of Mr. Woodhouse as an obstacle to marriage, Emma's private problem of Harriet, of whose affection for him George knows nothing, continues. Superb novelist as she is, Miss Austen keeps a suspenseful facet of the plot developing to help support the leisureliness of her exploratory denouement. At the end of Chapter XV there is a faint and almost nostalgic echo of Emma's original willful desire to maneuver someone into marriage when she thinks it is too much to hope Harriet could love three men in one year.

***Critical Analysis:***

Mr. Knightley and Emma discuss Frank Churchill's letter come to the same conclusion: Frank Churchill did not behave well, but he was partially justified, especially since there has been no final harm. They also onsider the various options to deal with Emma’s father. Mr. Knightley suggests moving him to Donwell Abbey with Emma, but Emma is concerned that it will cause the old man great discomfort. Finally they decide that Mr. Knightley will move to Hartfield instead.

**Analysis:** This chapter makes very clear that [Mr. Woodhouse](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#mr-woodhouse) is more than just a harmless curmudgeon who takes pleasure in his complaints. He is an intractable obstacle for Emma, too concerned with his own comfort to allow his own daughter to marry. In this manner he parallels Mrs. Churchill: both characters use appearances of frailty and ill health to demand obedience from children they raised.

Austen also returns to the theme that [Emma Woodhouse](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#emma-woodhouse) has the societal power of a man, rather than a single young woman. In this way, the relationship between Emma and Mr. Knightley reverses traditional gender roles. Mr. Knightley is the one who makes sacrifices and must modify his customs and behavior. It is he who must give up his home to move elsewhere upon marriage.

The considerations that the two of them make about their marriage reinforce the social dynamic in Highbury. A marriage between Mr. Knightley and Emma affects more than just those two. It affects Mr. Woodhouse, who might lose the daughter who cares for him. It affects Isabella's son, Henry, who now might lose his place as the inheritor of Donwell Abbey if Emma and Mr. Knightley produce an heir. This particular situation also affects Harriet Smith, who once again must bear the pain of rejection from a man who is too socially superior for her to rightfully consider.

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

***Summary part 1:***

Happily in love as she is, [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) finds herself sympathetic to [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill)’s own blunder-filled love story. The [letter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/symbols/letters) leaves her with a much-improved impression of him, and she shares it with [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley).

***Analysis part 1:***

As someone who has made and been forgiven many blunders herself by her happy situation, Emma finds herself cheerfully extending such generosity to Frank’s wrongs against her.

***Summary part 2:***

[Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley), too, softens upon reading [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill)’s [letter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/symbols/letters), though he still feels Frank’s flaws and his unworthiness in comparison to [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax). Mr. Knightley then proposes to move into Hartfield, in order to avoid disturbing [Mr. Woodhouse](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-woodhouse) with his daughter’s marriage. [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) is moved by such a sacrifice on his part, and she approves the plan. Her only regret is for [Harriet](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), whom she feels has undeservedly suffered.

***Analysis part 2***

Mr. Knightley’s happy situation in love and new knowledge of Emma’s indifference to Frank also renders him more forgiving towards Frank. His plan to move into Hartfield demonstrates his thoughtfulness in considering Mr. Woodhouse’s feelings, who now won't have to "lose" another daughter.