***Emma***

***Chapter 53***

***Vol3Chapter17***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Mrs. Weston has a baby girl (Anna).
* Emma’s delighted.
* As she tells Mr. Knightley, Mrs. Weston will have a chance to try again with a new girl.
* Of course, Mr. Knightley has to say some things about how loveable Emma is now.
* Even he admits, though, that she was a pretty spoiled kid.
* By now, we’re sure that many of you are starting to think that Mr. Knightley sounds a lot like Mr. Big. (For those of you who don’t watch *Sex in the City*, Big is a man with no apparent real name.) Don’t worry, we’ve got you covered here. Big’s first name is John. Knightley’s first name is George.
* As Emma declares, however, she’ll never call him anything but Mr. Knightley.
* (We’re not really sure why. George is a perfectly nice name.)
* Mr. Knightley receives a letter from his brother congratulating him about the engagement.
* It’s clear that Mr. John Knightley thinks that Mr. Knightley is getting the short end of the stick.
* Surprisingly, Emma agrees. She’s lucky to have Mr. Knightley.
* There’s one last problem: how should Emma tell her father?
* She plans to enlist the Westons’ help, but finally she manages to gather up enough courage to tell Mr. Woodhouse on her own.
* He’s devastated, naturally.
* But he *does* like Mr. Knightley more than anyone (except Emma, of course).

***Brief Summary:***

Mrs. Weston is now the proud mother of a little girl, named Anna. Mr. Knightley and Emma discuss this new arrival and he worries that Mrs. Weston will spoil this little girl just as she did Emma. However, since Emma turned out just fine, he has high hopes for her.

Mr. Knightley has informed his brother of their engagement, and Mr. John Knightley replies that Emma has done well, but he is not so sure for his brother. Emma laughs off this response as typical from Mr. John Knightley.

Mr. Woodhouse is informed of the engagement and is not at all happy with the news. Emma resolves to keep reminding of him of it and hopes that he will soon come to accept it.

Emma tells Mr. And Mrs. Weston of the engagement and it soon becomes public knowledge. Everyone is informed that the couple will be living at Hartfield, which Mrs. Elton finds absolutely appalling.

***Brief Analysis:***

The reaction of Mrs. Elton is to be expected, as her character remains true to form. Mr. John Knightley's character does not waver either, as he continues to judge Emma as he always has done.

Mr. Woodhouse's reaction is also expected, but it is hinted that he will soon accept the impending marriage after some inducement.

All seems to be going well for Emma at this point, leaving only the question of how to break the news to Harriet.

***Detailed Summary:***

Mrs. Weston safely delivers a baby girl, much to Emma’s delight. Mr. Knightley reminisces about how headstrong Emma was when she was a child. She expresses gratitude that he so often corrected her mistakes, and he asserts that she would have done just as well without him. Emma is grieved that she cannot speak more openly with him about Harriet. Mr. John Knightley congratulates Mr. Knightley and Emma on their engagement, and shocks the couple by saying that he is not surprised by their news.

Emma works up the courage to give her father the news. Mr. Woodhouse is shocked, but he gradually begins to resign himself to it. Mrs. Weston helps persuade him that his happiness will be increased rather than diminished. She is surprised and overwhelmingly pleased by the match. Mr. Weston shares the news with Jane and Miss Bates, and soon Emma and Knightley’s engagement is the talk of Highbury. Only the Eltons are displeased that Emma has made such a good match.

***Critical Study:***

Mrs. Weston becomes the mother of a little girl, just what Emma had wished for her. George and Emma hardly ever mention Harriet, and Emma is grieved that she cannot be fully open with him about her pretty friend, who is now to remain with the John Knightleys until they all come down in August. Meanwhile Emma finds a time to tell her father of her engagement. Shocked, he tries to dissuade her from it, but she softens him a little by the time George, as planned, arrives to add his persuasive powers. Finally, after Isabella through letters and Mrs. Weston in person join the others to persuade him, Mr. Woodhouse begins to think "that some time or other — in another year or two, perhaps — it might not be so very bad if the marriage did take place."

When the news spreads over Highbury, everyone is surprised, but in general the match is very well approved by everybody except Augusta Elton, who pities "poor Knightley."

Working out further the denouement of her plot, Miss Austen makes good satire of Mr. Woodhouse, the man of gentle selfishness whose only real strength seems to lie in the regard that others have for him. The number of forces needed to persuade him is truly comic and represents the degree of regard for a harmless, whimsical old man who has long outgrown any usefulness. Community satire is registered in the town's reaction to the engagement and is pinpointed in Mr. Weston's inability to keep a secret.

***Critical Analysis:***

Mrs. Weston gives birth to a little girl, Anna, and begins discussing the possibility of marrying her to one of Isabella’s sons. Emma and Mr. Knightley publicly share the news of their engagement. Mr. Woodhouse dislikes the idea of Emma marrying Mr. Knightley because it would force him to change his habits. Still, he inevitably assents to the marriage, and Emma hopes that time and reassurance will inevitably soften the old man. Emma tells Mr. Knightley that she cannot call him by his first name but promises to call him George after they are married.

Austen explores the dynamics of marriage and courtship in this chapter with the reminder that elite parents immediately plan for their child's marriage. Just barely after she has been delivered, Anna Weston already seems a possible match for Henry Knightley. Also, the birth of Anna Weston gives additional light on the role of the governess. Emma notes that Miss Weston will be performing essentially the same job for her daughter that she did when she taught Emma at Hartfield.

Other details of the formality of courtship emerge. To Emma, her fiancé will be Mr. Knightley until they marry, and only then will she call him George. She still considers it improper to use his first name, even though they are engaged. Also, there is proper etiquette for revealing news of the marriage that Emma and Mr. Knightley must follow. Mr. Woodhouse, the most difficult case, must know almost immediately, and it is also proper form to tell the Westons. However, there are few members of Highbury society who can be ignored; it would even be impolite not to tell Jane Fairfax and [Miss Bates](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#miss-bates) the news.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) gives birth to a daughter, which [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) has been hoping for. She and [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley) discuss Emma’s own childhood and Mrs. Weston’s and Mr. Knightley’s roles in raising Emma. Emma reflects that Mr. Knightley’s correction countered Mrs. Weston’s spoiling, though Mr. Knightley insists she would have done as well without him. However, he considers his devotion to her improvement an early sign of his love for her.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma and Mr. Knightley’s discussion about her childhood allow the novel to conclude with a reflection on Emma’s development. She has come a long way from the spoiled, snobbish mistress of Hartfield. Her marriage to Knightley, a paternal figure, represents her newly developed humility—though whether this enhances her strength as a female heroine is controversial.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Mr. John Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) congratulates the couple by [letter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/symbols/letters); he anticipated [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley)’s engagement from his behavior in London. Emma anxiously breaks the news of their engagement to her father. Though initially distressed, [Mr. Woodhouse](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-woodhouse) eventually accepts it as a settled and even good affair with the help of Mr. Knightley and [Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s persuasion.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Mr. Woodhouse’s considerable influence over Emma’s life is somewhat disturbing at the close. Though her consideration of his feelings reveals her compassion as a daughter, the restrictions imposed by her father’s nerves seem excessively limiting.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) is delighted by the news, as she regards it to be an equal and mutually meritorious “union of the highest promise of felicity in itself.” Word quickly spreads through Highbury, and the engagement is greeted with surprise and general approval by all but the [Eltons](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters), who sneer over the fate of “poor Mr. Knightley.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

Emma and Mr. Knightley’s engagement is applauded as a good match, because they are equals. The importance of their mutual fortune, good lineage and connections in addition to their love for each other results in an ultimately conservative conclusion—an affirmation of class- and character-based affinity as the foundation of a good marriage.