***Emma***

***Chapter 54***

***Vol3Chapter18***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Mr. Knightley comes in one day with news: Harriet is engaged.
* To Robert Martin.
* Emma’s surprised – but not nearly as unhappy as Mr. Knightley expected.
* Apparently she’s learned some lessons.
* Mr. Knightley acknowledges that he’s learned, too.
* He doesn’t think Harriet a fool anymore.
* In fact, Robert’s upcoming marriage actually makes him pretty happy.
* Overjoyed, Emma travels to the Westons’ to share the news.
* Mrs. Weston sits with her new baby –and Frank and Jane are walking outside.
* Emma’s still a bit awkward about meeting Frank.
* They sit in silence for awhile, and Emma grows convinced that they’ll never be friends again.
* Soon, however, the ice breaks.
* Emma and Frank laugh over the mistakes of the past months.

***Brief Summary:***

The visit of the John Knightleys is drawing close and Emma is dreading meeting Harriet when one morning George comes in with the news that Harriet is going to marry Robert Martin. Emma is amazed and hides her delight with difficulty. Robert has been to London, where, in seeing the Knightleys, he has also seen Harriet and proposed again, this time successfully. George feels that Emma will be against the marriage, but she finally convinces him that she is not, that she now agrees with him about the rightness of a union between Robert and Harriet.

On one of their now daily visits to Randalls, Emma and her father arrive to find Jane and Frank there. Frank asks and receives her pardon for his past actions. He is still a lively person, and Emma suggests that he must have gotten some pleasure out of deceiving everyone formerly. When he denies it, she says, ". . . to tell you the truth, I think it might have been some amusement to myself in the same situation. I think there is a little likeness between us." Frank jokes about some of the past events, and Jane is forced to smile even as she admonishes him. On the way home, Emma is pleased with seeing Frank, but in comparing him and George she happily finds more worth in the latter.

Analysis

Emma's final problem is resolved without her assistance: Harriet's natural propensity for being in love rectifies the situation, and in the proper direction. The meeting with Frank at the Westons gets him gracefully off the scene and off Emma's conscience. In leading her to compare the only two men toward whom she has been inclined, the meeting serves to confirm her and the reader in her choice. Miss Austen has succeeded in pairing off each eligible person, including Mr. Elton, with the proper mate.

***Brief Analysis:***

Mr. Knightley has news for Emma: Harriet is to marry Robert Martin. Knightley had sent Mr. Martin to London with a package for his brother while Harriet was there, and Mr. Martin began to spend time with the family. Knightley worries that Emma is upset, but in fact she is thrilled, amazed, and amused at Harriet’s rapid recovery. Emma is thankful that she has not done Harriet greater injury, and she is glad that soon she will no longer need to conceal Harriet’s emotional state from Knightley.

Emma and Mr. Knightley go to visit Randalls and find Frank and Jane there. At first, Emma’s meeting with Frank is awkward, but soon they are back on easy terms, joking about all that has passed. Frank’s ability to speak lightly of all he and Jane have suffered is not entirely approved by his fiancée, and Emma feels Knightley’s superiority to Frank.

***Detailed Summary:***

**Chapter Fifty-four:** Harriet Smith is to be married to [Robert Martin](https://www.gradesaver.com/emma/study-guide/character-list#robert-martin). Emma is somewhat disappointed by Harriet’s decision, as Mr. Knightley suspects, but he reminds her that Harriet will be happy and secure. When Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax visit Highbury, Emma realizes that Mr. Knightley was the most suitable choice for her.

**Analysis:** This chapter concludes Harriet Smith's romantic pursuits, as she agrees to marry the man whom she was originally meant to marry. She has given up the pretensions that Emma instilled in her and finally accepted her devoted suitor. This emphasizes the negative effect that Emma had on the young woman. If not for Emma's interventions, Harriet would have married Robert Martin sooner and been immediately content. By taking Harriet under her wing and giving her a sense of vanity, Emma postponed Harriet’s happiness with a succession of heartbreaks.

It is important to note how Emma has changed in this chapter. She is a bit disappointed by Harriet’s engagement, for she still harbors some wish that Harriet could find a more highborn husband, but comes to realize that Harriet's connections are worse than Robert Martin's and that Harriet can only benefit from the match. Emma has come to agree with Mr. Knightley's earlier view that Harriet’s marriage to Robert Martin is the most sensible choice.

The similarity between Emma Woodhouse and Frank Churchill becomes more evident in this chapter. Both require spouses who will bring out their best qualities while subduing their worst. Frank Churchill and Emma indulge each other's vanity and immaturity, but with the influence of Jane Fairfax and Mr. Knightley, respectively, Frank and Emma become more sensible and decent persons. It becomes clear that they would ultimately have been unsuitable for one another.

In the novel, the relationships that work best are those in which the spouses complement each other but do not necessarily resemble one another ­ Mr. and Mrs. Elton share a vulgar attention to social status and an utter lack of consideration for others' feelings. But Jane Fairfax counters Frank's insubstantial character with a reserved demeanor, Robert Martin is sensible where Harriet Smith is foolish and gullible, and Mr. Knightley is perceptive where Emma misjudges situations.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[**Mr. Knightley**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley) arrives with news that [**Harriet**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) is to marry [**Mr. Martin**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters). [**Emma**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) is greatly surprised, given her own knowledge of Harriet’s previous feelings, but she is delighted for her friend. Freed from her concern for Harriet’s happiness and the need for secrecy with Mr. Knightley, Emma feels that her only wish now is to learn from her previous mistakes and grow more worthy of Mr. Knightley, “whose intentions and judgment had been ever so superior to her own.”

***Analysis part 1:***

Harriet’s decision to finally accept Mr. Martin without consulting Emma shows that Harriet has also grown during the course of the novel. She has learned to heal and seek her own happiness independent of Emma’s advice. Emma, aware of her wrongs to Harriet, is left with the hope that she too will continue to grow from her errors.

***Summary Part 2:***

At Randalls, [**Emma**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) and Frank finally get the opportunity to talk over the recent events. After some initial awkwardness, they congratulate each other and re-establish their former warmth and good will. They both feel they have been luckier than they deserved in their respective matches. When Frank is lively and flippant about the painful past, Jane amusedly rebukes him, and Emma reflects on [**Mr. Knightley**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley)’s superiority to Frank.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Frank’s lively and light manner may be explained by his happiness in love, but it cannot be completely approved of by Jane or Emma. Emma shares similar flaws with Frank, but her sympathies lie with Jane regarding Frank’s behavior. Frank is a bit too unserious, a bit too flippant, a bit too willing to joke away serious matters, to ever truly be an equal to someone like Mr. Knightley.