***Emma***

***Chapter 23***

***Vol2Chapter5***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

Much to Emma's surprise and concealed delight, Mr. Churchill arrives the next day at Hartfield, this time with Mrs. Weston. The three of them take a leisurely walk to Highbury and Mr. Churchill discusses his love of dancing.

Emma enquires on whether Mr. Churchill has already visited Miss Fairfax. After much delicate conversation on the issue, they realize they both agree about her general disposition and character. It seems that Mr. Churchill also questions the relationship between Mr. Dixon and Miss Fairfax.

Emma and Mr. Churchill seem to be in perfect agreement on everything.

Frank Churchill and Mrs. Weston visit Hartfield the next day, and Emma is pleased by Frank’s warmth toward his stepmother. He seems genuinely interested in everything about Highbury as the three walk about the village, especially in the sites that are meaningful to his father. Encountering an unused ballroom, he suggests that they should organize a dance, and he dismisses Emma’s protestations about the village’s lack of worthy families.

Emma inquires about Frank’s visit with the Bateses, and the two share impressions of Jane. Frank says that he finds her unattractive and reserved. He thinks, however, that she is a talented musician and affirms that they saw a good deal of each other in Weymouth. Emma shares her theory about Jane and Mr. Dixon, which Frank seems to resist, but then he gives in to Emma’s greater knowledge of Jane. On the whole, Emma finds Frank even more to her liking than she expected, possessing his father’s warmth and sociability and lacking the proud airs one might acquire from the Churchills.

***Analysis:***

It is interesting to watch Mr. Churchill and Emma try to be polite about their opinions on Miss Fairfax. Since they are both extremely well bred and polite, it takes much discussion before they find out they agree completely about her.

Emma's affection towards Mr. Churchill seems to grow much stronger after she finds out that they have so much in common.

***Detailed Summary:***

Frank Churchill and Mrs. Weston visit Emma, who decides that Mr. Knightley must have been wrong about him. When visiting the Crown Inn and seeing its ballroom, Frank suggests to Emma that she, with her resources, should hold dances there. Surprisingly, Frank disparages Jane Fairfax to Emma, who defends her. While they shop for gloves at Ford's, Frank tells Emma more about Jane Fairfax and how she is destined to be a teacher. He even mentions Mr. Dixon. Emma finds Frank to be more moderate and warmer than she expected, and less a spoiled child of fortune. When Emma sees Frank and Mrs. Weston together the next day, she is happy to notice his friendliness and affection toward his new stepmother. This pleases Emma, and she thinks that [Mr. Knightley](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Emma/character-analysis/#Mr._Knightley) "certainly had not done him justice." When the three of them go out walking, they stop at the Crown Inn, where Frank spies a ballroom. Seeing an opportunity for some fun, he asks, "Why had not Miss Woodhouse revived the former good old days of the room?" Emma thinks Frank has all of the spirit and sociability of his father with none of the "pride or reserve of Enscombe" (Enscombe is the home of the Churchills). As Emma grows comfortable with Frank, she asks him about Jane, and he remains evasive, although he volunteers that he doesn't approve of her complexion. He does admit they saw a lot of each other at Weymouth. Emma then shares with Frank her fantasy about Jane and Mr. Dixon, which Frank initially dismisses and then allows as a possibility.

***Detailed analysis22-24:***

Though our position with respect to Emma is privileged—the narrator often provides details that allow us to know more about Emma than she knows about herself—the subjectivity of other characters is barely highlighted at all, making it difficult for us to understand their true dispositions and motives any more than Emma does. With hindsight (the novel must be reread to fully appreciate Austen’s subtleties), all of Frank Churchill’s comments and actions become transparent, but without it, we, like Emma, have to be taught how to reach the correct interpretations. From this point in the novel forward, we can no longer witness Emma’s education with detachment; Austen structures her book so that we must share it.

As Emma had predicted in her argument with Mr. Knightley, Frank has a talent for guessing which line of conversation and compliment will please each person, and Frank tailors his behavior accordingly. Remembering Mr. Knightley’s initial distaste for Frank’s demeanor, we wonder if Frank’s talent at compliments is altogether as admirable as it seems. Though Emma may be skeptical of Frank’s remarks, she gives him the benefit of the doubt because she believes he has a kind nature and is impressed by his speech. She recognizes that Frank’s compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Weston are exaggerated, but Emma believes they express genuine gratitude and affection and forgives his exaggeration because it stems from his honorable desire to please. When Frank claims that he has always longed to come to Highbury, Emma wonders why he has not come sooner, but she dismisses her skepticism by concluding, “[I]f it were a falsehood, it was a pleasant one, and pleasantly handled.”

Emma exhibits a healthy detachment during her first meeting with Frank. Where another young woman might manifest admiration for Frank, knowing that others think he may be a proper suitor for her, she expresses reserve: “She must see more of him to understand his ways; at present she only felt they were agreeable.” Whether Emma has affectionate interest for Frank at this point is irrelevant—it would be inappropriate for a reputable woman of her position to display too much interest in a man this early.

Frank’s inconsistent attitude toward Jane Fairfax is the most confusing part of his behavior. An alert reader will suspect that something unusual has passed between Frank and Jane, but it is only on a second reading that we recognize Frank’s behavior as a complicated mixture of honesty and outright deception, vulnerability and manipulation. At this point, he is a good enough liar to fool Emma. At first Frank seems in a rush to visit Jane, but then he is surprisingly willing to postpone the visit. He is unexpectedly firm in refusing the assistance of Mr. Woodhouse’s servant in finding her house, and his insistence on Jane’s unattractiveness is uncharacteristically rude. He attempts to avoid Emma’s question about his relationship to Jane by ducking into a store, but then he himself returns to the subject. The first time we see Frank at a loss for words is when Emma shares her suspicion that Jane has had a relationship with Mr. Dixon. However, Frank recovers his composure enough to assess how well Emma actually knows Jane by asking her more questions.

Frank Churchill reveals himself to be more complicated than Emma originally imagined in this chapter, more interested in his family and Highbury society and also more intelligent and engaging. This seems to confirm suspicions that Frank Churchill was kept from Highbury through his aunt's influence. Yet one must take into account perspective: these positive shadings to his character are taken from Emma's eyes and not those of a more objective or authoritative source such as Mr. Knightley. Emma seems to take every detail of Frank’s personality to be a credit to him; even when he makes a catty comment, it is about the one person with whom Emma competes. This seems to echo Mr. Elton's earlier manipulation of Emma. Frank Churchill flatters her vanity, but in a more subtle way, by disparaging the one person for whom Emma holds any jealousy.

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

***Summary part 1:***

[Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) and [Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) visit Hartfield again the next day, and [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) is pleased to observe his cordiality and attention to his stepmother. She also approves of his desire to become acquainted with all his father’s favorite neighborhood haunts, and when she later sees [Mr. Knightley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/mr-george-knightley) she informs him with a sense of triumph that Frank’s prior delays could not have been voluntary.

***Analysis part 1:***

Emma carefully observes Frank, and the importance she places on his treatment of his stepmother and her friend reveals both her loyalty and good sense.

***Summary part 2:***

[Mrs. Weston](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters) and [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) introduce Frank to the town. When they arrive at the Crown Inn, Frank comes up with the idea that they should host a ball there. Emma protests against the mixing of families from such various ranks, but the lively Frank insists that such a gathering will be delightful. Emma notes with some surprise his lack of pride despite his privileged upbringing with the Churchills.

***Analysis part 2***

Frank exhibits less of the snobbery that we witness in Emma, as he has none of her qualms regarding the mixing of the classes in the merriment of a ball. On the other hand, his disregard for rank in this case may also be interpreted as the priority he places in pleasure over principle.

***Summary part 3***:

[Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) discusses his visit with the Bateses, where he encountered the inescapably chatty [Miss Bates](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters). When Emma asks about his impression of [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax), Frank expresses distaste for her pale complexion. Emma learns that Frank saw much of Jane in Weymouth, as the two traveled in the same social set. When Emma shares her admiration of Jane’s musical talent, Frank acknowledges that their general company at Weymouth—including [Mr. Dixon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)—also thought highly of her musical abilities.

***Analysis part 3:***

Frank’s open, humorous report of Miss Bates’s chattiness parallels Emma’s own light-hearted remarks about the gossipy spinster. His ready distaste for Jane’s complexion, however, is borderline rude, as even he acknowledges one cannot politely label a lady “ill-looking.” He appears to share Emma’s mixture of indifference and dislike towards Jane.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) laughingly probes into [Mrs. Dixon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s feelings about her husband’s musical preference, hinting that [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax) herself must have felt such favor to be inappropriate from a man engaged to be married. [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) at first resists Emma’s insinuations, but then accedes to her greater knowledge of Jane.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Despite his impression that there is nothing indecorous between Jane and Mr. Dixon, he seems reluctant to contradict and eager to humor Emma, whose superior judgment he submits to.

***Summary Part 5:***

Emma admits that she has never been close to [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/jane-fairfax) because of the latter’s reserve; she has no reason to think poorly of Jane, but she has never been motivated to persevere over Jane’s reserve and establish intimacy. [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) agreeably affirms the unattractiveness of reserved persons.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Emma’s manner of talking about Jane reveals pride and privilege in her wealth of social acquaintances that she has never had to “persevere” to attain.

***Summary Part 6:***

In spite of the brevity of their acquaintance, [Emma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/emma-woodhouse) feels that she knows [Frank](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters/frank-churchill) very well and that they think alike. In addition, Frank surpasses her expectations by being less spoiled and snobbish than Emma imagined a child of fortune would be. Frank expresses contentment at [Mr. Elton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/emma/characters)’s moderately sized house, which he believes could be comfortably shared by any man if it were with the woman he loved.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Frank’s lively and agreeable manner—which is much like Emma’s own disposition—combined with his general affirmation of her various opinions lead her to feel an intimacy and understanding of him disproportionate to the time they have spent together. Emma still tends to approve most of those people who agree with her.