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Emma

18 Chapters

Day 1-18

W31-W36

Read the story. Then think about each question.

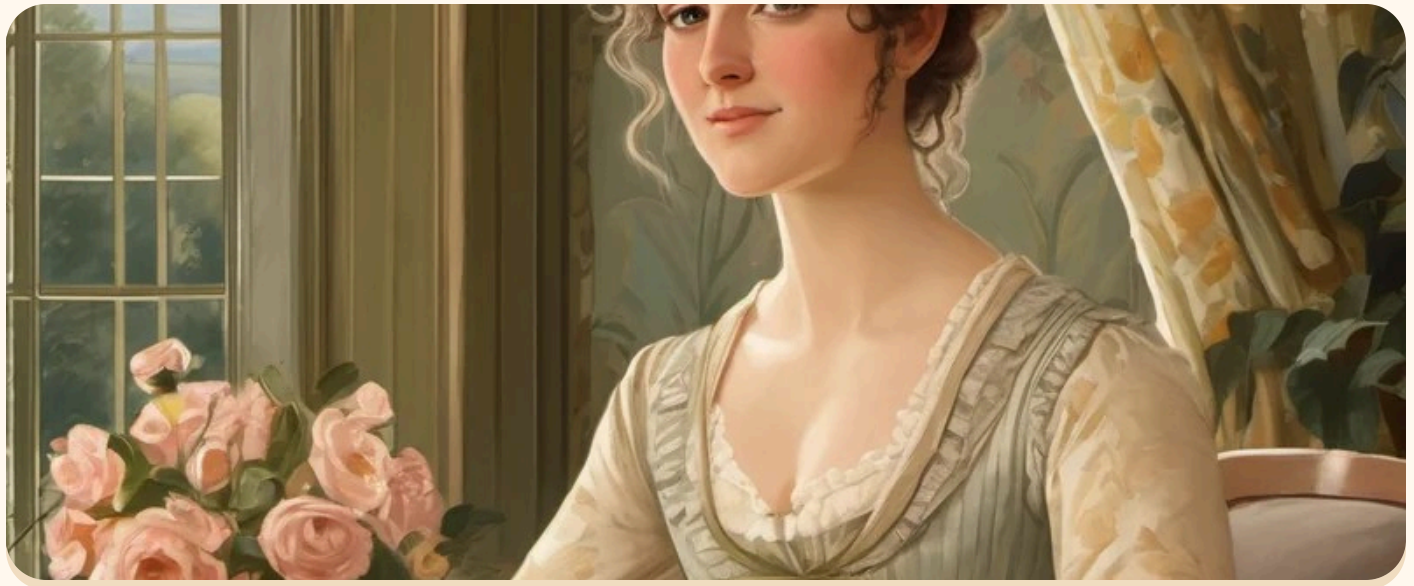


Chapter 1: Handsome, Clever, and Rich

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. She lived at Hartfield, a comfortable house in the village of Highbury, with her gentle, nervous father, who feared drafts and late suppers. Her mother had died long ago, and her older sister had married and moved to London. For years, her governess, Miss Taylor, had been her closest friend. That autumn, Miss Taylor married a kind neighbor, Mr. Weston, and moved to a house half a mile away. Emma felt a little lonely, but she was also proud, because she believed that she had made the match herself. She had spoken of Mr. Weston to Miss Taylor, had encouraged them to meet, and now she had been proved right. From her perspective, she had a gift for understanding people. The consequence of this single success was a dangerous confidence. She decided that she would make more matches in the village, because she thought it would be a fine amusement. It was essential, she believed, to put her talent to use. She did not see how much luck had helped her. Emma thought she understood everything, and she felt there was nothing she could not manage. Everyone in Highbury admired her, and her father thought she could do no wrong. She enjoyed arranging things for the people she loved, and she believed that she had a special gift for knowing what would make them happy. Nobody had ever told her otherwise. ★ Emma thought she understood everything.

THINK Where did Emma live?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 2: Mr. Knightley's Doubt

Soon after the wedding, Mr. Knightley, the owner of the neighboring estate of Donwell Abbey, called at Hartfield. He was a sensible man of seven or eight and thirty, a family friend and the brother of Emma's brother-in-law. He had known Emma since she was a child, and he was the only person who ever dared to find fault with her. When the talk turned to the match, Emma proudly said that she had arranged it. Mr. Knightley smiled and said that she had merely made a lucky guess. Emma was a little annoyed but laughed, and she insisted she was always right about such things. She then told him she planned to find a suitable wife for Mr. Elton, the young and handsome vicar of Highbury. Mr. Knightley shook his head and warned her not to meddle. Emma believed her judgment was better than everyone else's. She said she would soon prove it. From her perspective, an older bachelor could not understand young people's hearts. It was essential, she thought, to trust her instincts. The consequence of ignoring his advice would be a mistake. She did not see that his wise counsel was a gift, and she set out to establish herself as the village matchmaker. He was a frank, sensible man who had known her since she was small, and he was the only one who ever disagreed with her aloud. He thought her too sure of herself. Emma only laughed and said that she was never wrong, and he shook his head and smiled sadly.

★ **Emma believed her judgment was better than everyone else's.**

THINK Who was Mr. Knightley?

Read the story. Then think about each question.

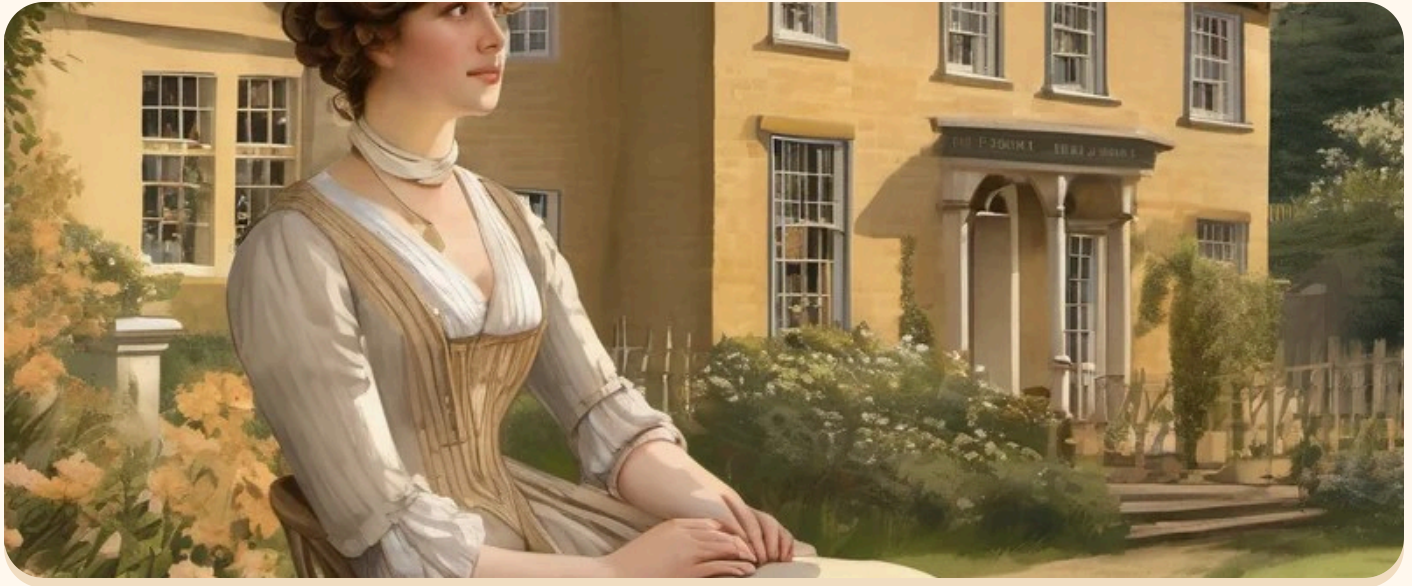


Chapter 3: A Confidence Never Tested

Emma needed a friend, for with Miss Taylor gone, Hartfield was quiet. She found one in Harriet Smith, a pretty, simple, seventeen-year-old girl who lived at Mrs. Goddard's boarding school. Harriet's parents were unknown, and she was a little shy. Emma decided at once to take her under her wing. She imagined that Harriet must be the daughter of a gentleman, and so she introduced her to her friends and invited her often to Hartfield. Harriet admired Emma deeply and followed her opinions in everything. Emma felt very pleased with her new project. She believed that her judgment about people and relationships was more reliable than anyone else's, a confidence that had never been seriously tested and would soon prove dangerously mistaken. Emma had always been the first lady of the neighborhood, and no one had ever corrected her. From her perspective, there was no reason to doubt. The consequence of her pride was that she failed to notice the feelings of those around her. It was essential to be humble, but she had not yet learned that. Mr. Knightley told her gravely that Harriet was a sweet girl but that no good would come of filling her head with grand ideas. Emma only laughed. Mr. Knightley had warned her that such matches seldom succeed when the people involved are not truly suited, but Emma had not listened. She had simply decided that she knew better, and she went forward with her plan, delighted by her own cleverness. ★ Emma believed her judgment about people and relationships was more reliable than anyone else's, a confidence that had never been seriously tested and would soon prove dangerously mistaken.

THINK Who was Harriet Smith?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 4: Harriet's Suitor

Emma decided that Harriet should marry Mr. Elton. She spent many evenings praising him to Harriet, and she drew a portrait of Harriet to give him a reason to visit. Meanwhile Harriet had another admirer: Robert Martin, a young farmer who rented land near her school. He was sensible, hard-working, and kind, and he had written Harriet an honest letter, asking her to marry him. Harriet showed the letter to Emma, who read it with some surprise. It was a good letter, written with feeling and in plain language. But Emma thought the match unworthy of Harriet. In her eyes, a farmer was far below the lady she had imagined her friend to be. Emma tried to control Harriet's love life, and she did so with great skill. She asked Harriet: "Do you wish to accept him?" and when Harriet hesitated, she said she was certain a wise girl would refuse. From Emma's perspective, she was protecting her friend. She did not see that Harriet really cared for Robert. Emma sat down with her and dictated the answer, a polite refusal. Harriet copied the words with sorrow, trusting her adviser, and Emma felt triumphant. Harriet was sweet, gentle and easily led, and she trusted Emma completely. Emma, who had no sister to look after, felt that guiding Harriet was a kind of duty and a great pleasure, and she did not stop to ask whether Harriet truly wished it. ★ Emma tried to control Harriet's love life.

THINK Who was Robert Martin?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 5: A Good Man Rejected

When Mr. Knightley learned that Harriet had refused Robert Martin, he was surprised and angry. He told Emma bluntly that Robert Martin was a respectable, intelligent man, the sort of husband any sensible girl would be lucky to have. He added that Emma had done Harriet a great wrong by raising her hopes so high. A girl of Harriet's uncertain birth could not hope to marry a man much richer than a farmer, and Emma had encouraged vanity instead of good sense. Emma was stung and answered pertly, claiming that he knew nothing about women. They parted coldly. Emma was certain she had done the right thing. She thought Mr. Elton, with his handsome looks and gentlemanly manners, was the right match. Emma convinced Harriet to reject a good man, and the consequence was that Harriet lost a chance for a happy home. From Emma's perspective, Harriet deserved better. It was an easy matter, she believed, to establish this arrangement. She did not realize that Harriet's heart had been unsettled. Emma had acted from a mistaken belief that she could shape another person's life. Mr. Knightley's reproach, though painful, was the first real warning she ever received. Mr. Knightley, who knew Mr. Martin well, told Emma that he was a sensible, honest young man with a good farm, and that Harriet could not do better. Emma refused to believe it, and her friend's sad face afterward should have warned her. ★ **Emma convinced Harriet to reject a good man.**

THINK *Who was angry about the refusal?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 6: Emma's Fantasies

Emma's plan for Harriet and Mr. Elton continued, but it went badly wrong. One evening, as they drove home from a party, Mr. Elton, who was sitting beside Emma in the carriage, suddenly took her hand and declared his passion. Emma was astonished and horrified. She had never imagined that he could be in love with her; she had taken it for granted that his gallant attentions were for Harriet. She refused him at once, and he, offended, said that he had always meant Emma and that he hardly looked at Harriet. Soon afterward he left Highbury to marry a rich, vulgar young woman from Bath. Emma was mortified. She had been so sure of her judgment that she had never looked at the facts. Emma convinced Harriet to reject a kind and honest farmer who genuinely loved her, substituting her own romantic fantasies about Harriet's future for Harriet's actual feelings and real happiness. From her perspective, the plan had been generous, and she could only feel regret. The consequence was that Harriet was heartbroken, and Emma felt guilty. It was essential to repair what she could, and she had to establish a more honest view of herself. She wept that night and, for the first time, questioned her own gift. The days that followed were difficult. Harriet cried often, and Emma tried to comfort her with cheerful words and walks in the garden, but she felt how empty those words were. Mr. Knightley said very little, though his look was serious. ★ Emma convinced Harriet to reject a kind and honest farmer who genuinely loved her, substituting her own romantic fantasies about Harriet's future for Harriet's actual feelings and real happiness.

THINK Whom did Mr. Elton declare his love for?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 7: The Box Hill Picnic

The summer of that year brought a party to Box Hill, a beautiful hill not far from Highbury. Mr. Knightley, Mr. Weston, Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates and many others drove up together to enjoy a picnic on the grass. Frank Churchill, who was lively and charming, was meant to be the soul of the gathering, but the company did not mix well, and the long afternoon grew dull. Emma, bored and a little restless, felt that the party needed to be amused. From her perspective, a clever remark or two would be a harmless way to contribute to the fun. Frank declared that Miss Woodhouse commanded every person to say something very clever, or two things moderately clever, or three things very dull indeed. It was an essential rule of the game, he said, and everyone laughed. Miss Bates, who was kind, talkative and poor, laughed too, for she was sure that she could manage the three dull things. Emma, who had not stopped to think, answered with a sharp joke at her expense. The silence that followed was significant. Miss Bates's cheerful face fell, although she tried hard to smile. The consequence was that a quiet unease settled over the party, and Emma, who had meant nothing by it, did not yet understand what she had done. In one careless moment she had established a distance between herself and a woman who had never done her any harm. ★ Emma was cruel to a kind woman at a picnic.

THINK Where did the party picnic?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 8: The Joke at Miss Bates's Expense

The joke that Emma made at Box Hill was a small one, but it fell in the worst possible place. When Frank Churchill repeated that Miss Woodhouse wished to hear something clever, Miss Bates cried out that she was sure to manage three dull things at once, since she was always saying dull things. Emma could not resist. She replied that the difficulty would be in limiting the number, since Miss Bates would find it hard to keep to only three. Everyone heard it, and a few of the guests looked away in embarrassment. Miss Bates understood at once. Her face colored, and she said, with a small, hurt smile, that she supposed she was a very tiresome person. Emma felt a flicker of discomfort, but the party moved on, and she let it pass. She did not consider the consequence of what she had said, or the perspective of a woman who lived on very little and who loved Emma sincerely. It is essential to remember that Miss Bates had been kind to Emma since the day she was a child. Her friendly chatter, which had amused or annoyed Emma so often, was a significant part of Highbury's life. To mock her in front of her niece Jane and the whole company would establish a wound that Emma could not easily heal. Nobody spoke, and soon the party broke up and began the drive home. ★ **Emma publicly mocked Miss Bates at the Box Hill picnic.** The day that had begun in sunshine ended in an uncomfortable quiet, and Emma's best friend in the world, though she did not know it yet, was about to contribute the hardest lesson of her life.

THINK What did Miss Bates say she supposed she was?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 9: Mr. Knightley's Quiet Rebuke

As the guests were leaving Box Hill, Mr. Knightley took Emma aside and spoke to her in a low, grave voice. He did not shout and he did not lecture; he simply asked how she could have been so unfeeling to Miss Bates. He reminded her that Miss Bates was poor, that she had once known better days, and that she was getting older. He said that Emma had laughed at her in front of her own niece and before people who would follow Emma's example. This was the first time anyone had told Emma such a thing, and every word was true. Emma wanted to defend herself, but she could not. She felt the blood rush to her face, and she turned away so that no one would see her tears. In the carriage, she wept all the way home, and her heart was full of shame. She had never before felt so ashamed of herself, and the consequence was a painful but significant change in her perspective. It was essential, she now saw, to treat others with care, especially those who could not answer back. She also understood that Mr. Knightley, by speaking so honestly, had given her something precious. Few people would take the trouble to establish the truth when it might cost them her good opinion. He had decided that she was worth the risk, and he had said it kindly. Her tears were a first small contribution toward becoming a better woman. ★ Emma publicly mocked the poor and harmless Miss Bates at the Box Hill picnic, and Mr. Knightley's quiet rebuke afterward was the first time she had genuinely felt ashamed of herself.

THINK How did Mr. Knightley speak to Emma?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 10: Only One Honest Friend

When Emma reached home, she thought about everyone who loved her, and she saw with a new clarity how little any of them had ever corrected her. Her father, Mr. Woodhouse, was gentle and anxious, and he thought his daughter perfect in every way. Her old governess, now Mrs. Weston, had loved her too well to find fault. Harriet admired her so greatly that she would not have dreamed of disagreeing. Even the neighbors praised her cleverness, her beauty and her kindness. Only Mr. Knightley, who was sixteen years older and who had known her since childhood, had always dared to tell her when she was wrong. It was not a pleasant habit, and it had often made her angry. From her perspective, he had seemed severe, even tiresome. Now she saw it differently. A person who agrees with everything we say cannot help us grow, but one who tells us the truth, even at the risk of losing our favor, is giving us an essential gift. Honest feedback is a significant act of friendship, and its consequence, if we are wise enough to accept it, is a better self. Emma decided that she would establish a new rule: she would listen to Mr. Knightley more humbly in future. The next morning she heard that he had gone to London to visit his brother, and she was disappointed to realize that she had not said a word of thanks. She wished that she had been able to contribute even one honest sentence of her own before he left. ★ Only

Knightley told Emma uncomfortable truths.

THINK *Who thought his daughter perfect?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 11: Making Amends

Emma did not wait long to put things right. Early the next morning she walked to the little house where Miss Bates lived with her old mother, and she asked to see her. The kind woman received her with her usual warmth, but Emma could see that her feelings were still sore. She said she was truly sorry for her words at Box Hill, and that she had been thoughtless and unkind. Miss Bates's eyes filled with tears, and she answered that Miss Woodhouse had always been good to them, and that she had not meant to hold it against her. Emma had hoped to see Jane Fairfax too, but Jane, who had been unwell, would not come to the door. The visit was a humbling one, and Emma learned something from it. A few weeks earlier she would have said that Miss Bates was too silly to be offended. Now she knew the consequence of such pride. She also saw that her friendship with Mr. Knightley was the only honest one she had, and she began to value it as essential. Though he had been away, she knew that in her father's house he had been the voice of reason and fairness. The perspective that her own comfort had given her was narrow, while his, built on years of observation, was wide. She decided to establish a habit of asking herself how a kind and fair person would act. It was the most significant resolution of her life. ★ **Mr. Knightley was the only honest voice in Emma's life.**

THINK Where did Emma go early the next morning?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 12: Honesty as Respect

Soon afterward a great piece of news reached Highbury. Frank Churchill, who had flirted so cheerfully with Emma, had been secretly engaged to Jane Fairfax for months. Mr. Knightley hurried back from London, afraid that Emma would be heartbroken. He found her instead calm and even a little amused at her own mistake. She told him honestly that she had never loved Frank, and that she was sorry only for having been so blind. He listened with obvious relief and then said, with great warmth, that she was not to blame for being deceived. She answered that she deserved much blame in other matters, and she asked him to continue to tell her the truth. Both of them were moved. Emma now understood that he had never been unkind when he scolded her; each reproach had been a way of saying that he believed she could be better. It is a significant kind of respect to tell someone a hard truth, and the person who gives it expects nothing in return. She thought of her old friends who praised her without thought, and she knew they could not contribute as he did. From her new perspective, honesty was the foundation on which she could establish the best friendship of her life. They walked together in the garden for a long while, and for the first time they spoke as equals. ★ **Mr. Knightley was the only person in Emma's comfortable world who consistently told her uncomfortable truths, and Emma gradually realized that this honesty was the deepest form of respect he could show her.**

THINK Whom had Frank Churchill secretly been engaged to?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 13: Harriet's Secret

One afternoon Harriet came to Hartfield looking shy and happy, and she asked to speak in private. She confessed that she had at last found someone she admired more than anyone else, and that it was not Mr. Elton, nor was it the farmer. Emma smiled and guessed that it was Frank Churchill, who had once rescued Harriet from a group of rough strangers. Harriet shook her head. It was a much greater gentleman, she said, who had asked her to dance when no one else would, and who had spoken so kindly to her afterward. Emma felt a cold shock as Harriet named Mr. Knightley. For a moment she could neither speak nor move. Harriet, who had seen kindness where Emma had once seen only her own plans, now believed that he might return her feeling. In that dreadful moment Emma realized the truth. She had always been an excellent observer of other people's hearts, and the consequence was that she had never examined her own. From her perspective, the very idea of Mr. Knightley belonging to someone else was unbearable. He must marry no one but herself, she thought. The sudden clarity was both terrible and wonderful, and it was essential to understand it before she said another word. She managed to smile at Harriet, and she asked a few gentle questions. She needed time to establish her own feelings, and she knew that she must not hurt her friend again. ★ Emma realized she loved Knightley.

THINK Whom did Harriet name?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 14: In Love All Along

That night Emma sat alone in her room and thought about the past. She remembered the many times Mr. Knightley had helped her father, danced with her at a ball, and quietly looked after the poor of the village. She remembered how happy she had been in his company and how angry she had been when he disagreed with her. She remembered, too, how sad she had felt whenever he had talked about leaving. Piece by piece she saw that her feeling was not new at all. From her perspective, he had been the one person whose opinion truly mattered to her, and she had never known why. It was essential, she thought, to be honest with herself at last. She had been in love all along. She felt also a deep shame, for it was her own meddling that had set Harriet's heart on a man so far above her expectations. It was Emma who had told Harriet that she might raise her thoughts to a gentleman, and the consequence was a hope that could cause a great deal of pain. To establish the truth, she would have to speak to Mr. Knightley himself. She feared that he might love Harriet, and the fear made her eyes fill with tears. The whole night she asked herself whether she deserved any happiness at all. At dawn she decided that she would face whatever came with courage. ★ Emma

discovered she had been in love all along.

THINK *Where did Emma sit alone that night?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 15: A Proposal in the Garden

A few days later Mr. Knightley came to Hartfield and found Emma walking in the garden. She greeted him as warmly as she could, but her heart was beating fast. He asked her to walk with him, and he began to speak in a serious voice. Emma, believing that he was about to tell her of his love for Harriet, begged him not to say it. She said she could not bear to hear it, although she did not explain why. He was surprised and a little hurt, and he said that he would stay silent if she wished. Then, seeing her face, he asked whether she was sorry that he should speak. Emma, more humble than she had ever been, answered gently that she would listen. He then told her that he loved her, that he had loved her for a very long time, and that he hoped she might love him in return. She was overwhelmed. Her interference in everyone else's romances, which she had once thought a gift, had nearly cost her the one relationship that truly mattered. From her perspective, this was almost too much happiness. In a trembling voice she said that she loved him too. Mr. Knightley took her hand, and they stood a long time under the old trees. It was a significant moment, and neither of them needed to say anything more. ★ Emma discovered with shock and clarity that she had been in love with Mr. Knightley all along, and that her interference in everyone else's romantic lives had nearly destroyed the one relationship that truly mattered to her.

THINK Where did Emma walk when Mr. Knightley came?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 16: A Wiser Emma

Emma's happiness was great, but it was quieter than before. She no longer wished to arrange other people's lives, and she asked herself many times what she had learned. The day after the proposal she wrote to Harriet, who had gone to London to stay with Mr. Knightley's sister-in-law. She told Harriet plainly and kindly what had happened, and she asked her to forgive the pain she might cause. She did not make excuses. Emma saw how easily her own cleverness had led her astray. She had been confident, and the consequence of that confidence was a series of mistakes. From her perspective now, wisdom came not from always being right, but from admitting error and trying to do better. It was essential to look at oneself with the same clear eye that she had so often turned upon others. Mr. Knightley, who understood her feelings, never reminded her of her faults; he only smiled when she was gentler than usual. There remained one great difficulty: her father. Mr. Woodhouse had never wished her to leave Hartfield, and the news of a marriage would trouble him greatly. She knew she must be patient. To establish her new life she needed to be loyal both to him and to the man she loved. She read the letter over twice before she sent it, changing a word here and there so that it would sound kind and true. It was hard to ask forgiveness from someone she had treated so lightly, but she knew it was the only honest course. ★ Emma finally became self-aware.

THINK To whom did Emma write?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 17: Harriet and the Farmer

Soon good news arrived from London. Harriet, who had been comforted by her friends there, had met Mr. Robert Martin once more, the honest farmer she had once refused. He had never forgotten her, and when he asked her again she accepted him with a glad heart. Emma was delighted, and she felt a great weight lift from her mind. She now saw that Harriet's real happiness had been waiting for her all along, and that her own mistaken plans had only delayed it. The couple were soon married, and Emma wished them joy with all her heart. Then there was Mr. Woodhouse. He was frightened of change and did not want to lose his daughter. Emma did not hurry him. Then, one night, thieves broke into a neighbor's poultry house and carried off several of the birds, and the old man began to feel afraid. Mr. Knightley, who was strong and kind, offered to come and live at Hartfield, so that Emma need not leave her father. Mr. Woodhouse, grateful to have such a protector, agreed at last. Emma saw that she had grown from confident ignorance to a humble understanding of how people truly are. It was an essential lesson, and from this perspective she could finally enjoy her good fortune without any shame. Everyone in Highbury rejoiced when they heard. Even Miss Bates, who had every reason to remember Box Hill, came with a basket of apples and a warm embrace, and Emma was so touched that she could not find words to thank her. ★ Emma grew into a wiser and more humble person.

THINK Whom did Harriet marry?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 18: Wisdom Earned

The wedding of Emma and Mr. Knightley was small and quiet, as they both wished. Only the nearest friends came, and Mr. Woodhouse sat close beside his daughter and wept a little, as he did at every wedding. Mrs. Weston and the Westons' little girl were there, and so were Harriet and her husband. When the ceremony was over, Emma stood in the sunshine and thought about all that had happened since the day she first thought herself so clever. She had begun as a young woman who was handsome, rich and quite certain that she knew what was best for others. She had ended as one who understood that this certainty had been a mistake. The path from confidence to humility had been long and sometimes painful, but she did not wish it undone. Jane Austen shows us in this story that self-knowledge is not a gift. It must be earned, often through the painful experience of being seriously wrong. A significant mistake, honestly faced, can shatter false confidence and bring a person closer to the truth. For Emma, the lesson came at Box Hill, and it changed the way she saw herself and others for good. Her new perspective was essential to her happiness. She and Mr. Knightley lived on at Hartfield for many years, and she remained, in all the best ways, the kind and clever Emma that Highbury loved. ★

Emma's journey from confident self-deception to genuine humility represents Austen's deepest conviction that self-knowledge is not given to us but must be earned through the painful experience of being seriously wrong.

THINK *Where did Emma's lesson come?*