



University of Tikrit  
College of Education for Women  
English Department

Subject

**Jane Austen *Emma***

Fourth Stage

Prepared by

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	<b>Jane Austen</b> (1775–1817) born in England	
	Emma (1815)	
	<b>Type</b> : Novel	<b>Genre</b> : Adventure, Romance
	<b>(Jane Austen's literary style of writing)</b>	
<b>1</b>	Austen's style relies on a combination of parody and irony in a comic effect and to criticize the portrayal of women in 18th-century sentimental and Gothic novels. She creates an ironic tone to highlight the social hypocrisy through irony.	
<b>2</b>	Throughout the <b>method of narration</b> , Emma is narrated in a third-person omniscient narrator. Austen's use of the free indirect discourse allows the narrator to access the the activities and back stories to reflect the character's consciousness, thoughts, feelings, and judgments.	
<b>3-</b>	In Emma, Austen portrays <b>the characters</b> with a psychological depth and thoughts to inform their views regarding her realism throughout the free indirect speech narrative technique. Sometimes, Austen describes the individual sides and on "the everyday life of the characters, to reflect the tradition of realism.	
<b>4-</b>	In her novels, Austen sheds the light on the following <b>topics</b> : - "the country house novels" , "comedies of manners" , and fairy tale elements are highlighted in Austen's novels - Education in which Austen's heroines come to see themselves and their conduct as moral people (moral and social manners)(religious seriousness) - Feminists Reading: Intellectual and moral development are reflected in Austen's novels to show how the female characters take charge of their own worlds, while others are confined, physically and spiritually	
<b>5-</b>	- Social and economic issues (the late 18th century)- in her novels, Austen explores the following aspects: - the precarious economic situation of woman - the politically conservative and progressive situation of woman - the social structure -supporting her heroines dedication to duty and sacrifice of their personal desires. - political issues surrounding the gentry (issues of money and property)	

**(Discuss: Jane Austen's Emma treatment of social satire)**

**(How can you consider Emma as an ironic novel?)**

The novel tackles with limits of upper-middle-class society and within the limited strict feminine point of view. On the surface, the novel deals with the subject of young ladies finding proper husbands. But, in deep, it focuses on the exceptional behavior of people when Miss Austen is fervently preoccupied with the way people behave from moralist perspectives. Beneath Austen's satiric comedy is a moralistic realism. By picturing the real incongruities of social matters, she implies what may be right. The purpose of satire is to point a humorous finger at what is wrong, thereby indicating by implication what is right. Irony, as a method of achieving satire, makes use of contradictory, and sometimes ambiguous, opposites. Throughout Emma a deeper theme than that of woman finding the appropriate man for herself pervades the action: Emma Woodhouse's story is a progression in self-deception.

(a good example) In fact, among her associates she feels confident to manage everyone except Mr. Knightley. In her long-term attempt to preside over the marriage-ability of Harriet Smith, the natural daughter of hitherto unknown persons. (another example) Emma pits herself against something in which she fundamentally believes, the eighteenth century belief in class status whereby one simply should stay in the class into which he is born. (She is also incidentally pitting herself against the process of natural selection of a mate.) She deludes herself that Harriet's parents may have been of importance and hence tries to marry her off to people above her station in life. With absolutely no foundation in fact, this delusion stems solely from Emma's willful imagination.

**Emma** novel by Jane Austen

**Emma**, fourth [novel](#) by [Jane Austen](#), published in three volumes in 1815.

Set in Highbury, England, in the early 19th century,

the novel centres on [Emma Woodhouse](#), a [precocious](#) young woman whose misplaced confidence in her matchmaking abilities occasions several [romantic](#) misadventures

### **Plot summary**

*Emma's* introduction of the character Emma Woodhouse is among the most famous in the history of fiction. According to the narrator:

*Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy [disposition](#), seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.*

The force of the verb *seemed* is pointed. Emma is indeed beautiful, wealthy, and smart. However, she is also spoiled, meddlesome, and self-deluded. Although she is convinced she will never marry, Emma believes she is an excellent matchmaker. As she tells her father and her dear friend Mr. Knightley, she practically arranged the recent [marriage](#) between her former governess, Miss Taylor, and the [widower](#) Mr. Weston. (She did, after all, introduce them.) After such a clear “success,” Emma is determined to make another match. This time, she has set her sights on the village [vicar](#), Mr. Elton. Both Emma’s father and [Mr. Knightley](#) caution her against interfering, but they ultimately fail to dissuade her.

Shortly thereafter, Emma befriends Harriet Smith, a 17-year-old student at a local boarding school. Harriet’s parentage is unknown; she is “the natural daughter of somebody” who many years ago placed her in the care of the school’s headmistress, Mrs. Goddard. Despite the obscurity of her birth and her perceived inferior [social status](#), Emma decides that Harriet is a perfect match for Mr. Elton. Emma sets about improving her friend, first, by discouraging her interest in Robert Martin, a young farmer whose family is renting land from

Mr. Knightley. Harriet clearly has feelings for Robert (and Robert for her). Emma convinces her otherwise; she tells Harriet that Robert is beneath her. When Robert writes a letter asking for her hand in marriage, Harriet, with Emma's [counsel](#), refuses him

When Mr. Knightley visits Emma, he excitedly tells her about Robert's intent to marry Harriet. After Emma informs him that Harriet has already rejected Robert's proposal (with her help), Mr. Knightley is furious. He criticizes Emma for interfering, claiming Robert is a respectable man and a good match for Harriet. Mr. Knightley storms out. He does not visit Emma again for some time. In his absence, Emma continues to push Harriet and Mr. Elton together. With Robert out of the way, and Harriet and Mr. Elton spending more and more time together, Emma begins to celebrate the success of her endeavour. All seems to be going well until Christmas Eve, when Mr. Elton reveals to Emma that he is in love with her, not Harriet, and has been spending time with Harriet only to please her. [Humiliated](#) by her attempt to pair him with Harriet, Mr. Elton resolves to retire to [Bath](#). Emma is forced to tell Harriet about Mr. Elton and spends the next several days consoling her.

Meanwhile, two new visitors arrive in Highbury: Jane Fairfax, the beautiful orphaned niece of Emma's neighbour Miss Bates, and Frank Churchill, the dashing young son of Mr. Weston. Initially, Emma dislikes Jane. She condemns her for being too "cold" and too "cautious." (The narrator suggests that Emma is in fact jealous of Jane, because Jane had previously met Frank, whom Emma has taken a liking to.) Mr. Knightley defends Jane, reminding Emma that, whereas she is privileged, Jane has no fortune and must soon leave to work as a governess. Mrs. Weston suspects that Mr. Knightley harbours some romantic feelings for Jane. Emma adamantly denies this.

Emma's initial interest in Frank does not last. After a while, she begins to imagine him as a potential match for Harriet, and, when Harriet confesses her love for a man of a higher social status, Emma assumes she means Frank. As it turns out, Harriet is in love with Mr. Knightley, who, at a recent village ball, saved her from the embarrassment of being snubbed by Mr. Elton and his new wife. Suddenly, Emma realizes that she, too, loves Mr. Knightley.

She realizes that if she had let Harriet marry Robert, she might have avoided this whole mess. And thus the [denouement](#) begins.

Not long after Harriet's confession, Frank makes a hasty departure from Highbury. As he later explains in a letter to Emma, he and Jane have secretly been engaged all along. His flirtation with Emma was just a ruse—a way to buy time until his relatives agreed to his marriage with Jane. Emma and Mr. Knightley discuss this surprise turn of events. To Mr. Knightley's surprise, Emma confesses that she never loved Frank. Mr. Knightley, in response, professes his love for Emma. She is overjoyed, and they implicitly agree to be married.

Emma briefly worries about Harriet and how she will receive the news of their engagement. Emma is pleased to learn that Harriet has decided to marry Robert after all. The novel thus concludes with three marriages: Jane and Frank, Harriet and Robert, and Emma and Mr. Knightley.

## Analysis and interpretation [Jane Austen](#)

**Marriage and social status** are the two foci of *Emma*. Most of the drama in Austen's novel revolves around who loves whom and what that means, given their social station. Social status in 19th-century England was determined by a [confluence](#) of factors, including, but not limited to, [family name](#), sex, birthright, reputation, and wealth, and it dictated much about the course of a person's life. Members of the higher social classes were not expected to intermarry, let alone interact, with members of a lower class. In fact, in some cases, such marriages were considered inappropriate.

Through *Emma*, Austen subtly satirizes her society's [obsession](#) with social distinctions. At the beginning of the novel, Austen's heroine is confident she knows who "the chosen and the best" are in Highbury and who [constitutes](#) the "second set." Keeping with her social code, Emma discourages Harriet from pursuing a relationship with Robert. As Emma explains, Robert is not a "gentleman." He is therefore destined to become "a completely gross, vulgar farmer, totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss." Emma is similarly appalled when Mrs. Elton presumes to call Mr. Elton and Mr. Knightley "Mr. E" and "Knightley."

Mr. Knightley challenges Emma's notions of [class distinction](#), pushing her to contemplate whether such distinctions truly matter. When Emma criticizes Robert for his ungentlemanly demeanour, Mr. Knightley impassionedly defends Robert, claiming that he "has more true gentility than Harriet Smith could ever understand." After all her attempts to make suitable matches fail, Emma finally begins to realize that social distinction does not equate to a [constitutional](#) difference in character. By the end of the novel, Emma has learned her lesson, and she decides that "[i]t would be a great pleasure to know Robert Martin."

*Emma* was one of the first novels—if not the first novel—to employ sustained free indirect discourse. As such, some critics locate it among novels such as [James Joyce's](#) *[Ulysses](#)* (1922) and [Virginia Woolf's](#) *[Mrs. Dalloway](#)* (1925) as one of the great experimental novels of the 19th and 20th centuries.

