MANNERS, MOBILITY, AND CLASS CONNECTION

- **Friendship**: In Regency England and in Emma, the term friendship describes a power relationship where one higher party can do favours for the lower party while the term “claim intimacy” is a relationship of equals.
  - “Her ignorance is hourly flattery.” Emma is not a necessary or helpful influence on Harriet as neither gain what she truly needs – Emma; a mediator of her ego, and Harriet; a sage, selfless guidance
- **Nouveau Riche**: Mrs. Elton is only a first-generation gentry, as her father bought the land that she grew up on with money he had raised in trade. Her snobbery is that of a nouveau riche, desperately insecure of her status.
- Association of manners with the upper class
  - False manners hold no merit in society – seen through characterisation of Mr. Elton
  - Anomalies: Mr Martin (lower class + kind) v. Mr. Knightley (upper class + kind)
  - “interested in every body’s happiness” The Bates represent the downfall of old money: title with no cashflow, charity case within the upper class. Miss Bates’ fixation with the upper class and everyone’s affairs demonstrates her psychological desperation to be absorbed in the upper-class.
- “the child was given up to the care and wealth of the Churchills, and he had only his own comfort to seek and his own situation to improve as he could.” Mr. Weston’s first marriage was unable to support a child despite the average age of marriage in Regency England being in the mid-to-late 20s for the need to support a family. As a child was an accessory to marriage, following his wife’s death, Mr. Weston chooses to leave his child to another marriage in order to better his circumstances.
- “A degree or two lower and a creditable appearance might interest me; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other”. Emma’s practice of **performative activism** [activism done to increase one’s social capital rather than because of one’s devotion to a cause] is done only below a certain degree of poverty as those very low benefit her image while communing with the Martins diminish her upper-class image
- “Poverty certainly has not contracted her mind.” Even if it were true that the poor have a mental capability lower than that of the upper-class, it would be because the poor are barred from the educational opportunities reserved for the upper-class
- “It is a great deal more natural than one could wish, that a young man, brought up by those who are proud, luxurious, and selfish, should be proud, luxurious, and selfish too.” Subtle criticism of Emma.
- “By rights, Jane Fairfax is the closet heroine of Emma: handsome and clever, but poor, she proves the limits of female power far more effectively than Emma herself.” – Moffat
- “She would have given a great deal, or endured a great deal, to have had the Martins in a higher rank of life. They were so deserving, that a little higher should have been enough.” Tone emphasises the foolishness of classism to perpetuate a vain system
- “She restrained herself, however, from any of the reproofs she could have given, and only thanked Mrs. Elton coolly.” Emma’s use of icy politeness shows she considers Mrs. Elton very vulgar indeed and desires to keep her at arm’s length to put Mrs. Elton in her “place”

  - Rules and Etiquette in Regency Society from Georgette Heyer’s Regency World:
  - Overt displays of emotion were generally considered ill-bred.
  - A well-bred person behaved with courteous dignity to acquaintance and stranger alike but kept at arm’s length any who presumed too great a familiarity. Icy politeness was a well-bred man or woman’s best weapon in putting ‘vulgar mushrooms’ in their place.
  - Vulgarity was unacceptable in any form and was to be continually guarded against.
"You have every body dearest to you and always at hand...till I have outlived my affections, a post-office must always have power to draw me out," Jane’s criticism of upper-class privileges.

- Similar to the difference between Mr. Knightley and Mr. Martin as businessmen, the upper-class come from ancient families with a wealth of connections tied to their name and house, whereas the middle and lower classes have to build and maintain connections themselves.

"The intimacy between her and Emma must sink; their friendship must change into a calmer sort of goodwill" Although throughout the novel some of Austen’s characters have defied class prejudice in pursuit of friendship and love, the novel ends to satisfy societal standards as Emma accepts that her only friendship must end due to their social standings.

- This observation could be part of the narration from the world of Highbury, which being a fixed place in Regency England, is naturally expected to follow social traditions upheld for generations.

- Only Frank and Jane defy social class prejudice, and Frank is expected to bear criticism and possibly be shunned for marrying “beneath” himself. Perhaps this is part of Austen’s message; that those who defy social structure are undeserving of true happiness

**EMMA’S CHARACTERISATION AND PSYCHOLOGY**

- Emma is unlike the usual Regency heroine; she cannot be pitied, is active and assertive, and undergoes emotional growth rather than proactive growth

- Austen wants her audience to dislike Emma in the beginning of the novel as it encourages them to dislike her values, e.g. class

- “Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others” Emma’s characterisation is dependent on others’ pragmatism: how others choose to see her or how she lets them see her. Her father, being of the leisured class and a hypochondriac, does not leave the house so he can only perceive what Emma relays to him, which will of course be skewed by her own prejudices and delusions.

- “I can never remember Emma’s omitting to do anything I wished.” KEY to Emma’s psyche – Miss Taylor has been the only prominent woman figure in Emma’s life, so perhaps Emma truly believes it is a woman’s nature to direct, influence, and manipulate others. Emma has learned a hierarchical, mastery-based version of “friendship” which in turn weakens her own ability to form and maintain genuine relationships

- “amusing herself in the consideration of the blunders which often arise from a partial knowledge of circumstances, of mistakes which people of high pretensions to judgement are for ever falling into.” Emma projects her own qualities onto John Knightley. Meta-irony as Austen warns readers into self-reflection, challenging the reader to question if they too are of high pretensions and judgement before judging Emma as they only have a partial knowledge of the novel’s events through Emma’s pov.

- “Mrs. Elton is an extreme caricature of the worst aspects of Emma’s own.” – Nardin, “Charity” in Emma

- 1973 book, The Colours of Love, psychologist John Lee compared styles of love to the colour wheel. Just as there are three primary colours, Lee suggested there are three primary styles of love: Eros (loving an ideal person), Ludos (love as a game), and Storge (love as friendship). In addition, the secondary styles of love include; Mania (obsessive love), Pragma (practical love), and Agape (selfless love).

  - “It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!” Emma’s imagination no longer substitutes for her emotional survival but becomes an instrument of her emotions – her love style has progressed from Ludus to Eros. The use of an exclamation is evocative of the passionate intensity within this realisation
“She thought it was time to make up.” “it was time to forget that they had ever quarrelled” Emma’s poor communication skills are indicative of upper-class attitudes and values to uphold superficial connections rather than building deeper mutual understanding in the relationship.

**MARRIAGE AND THE PATRIARCHY**

- Emma mocks the patriarchal idea of marriage and exposes it when telling Mr. Knightley that Harriet could be the perfect wife as she is beautiful, submissive, of inferior intellect, seeks to please, willing to be shaped/changed
  - Irony/satirical commentary as Austen challenges/critiques the values of society where women are valued for almost childlike traits
- “An unmarried daughter such as Emma, too mature to have a governess but too young to fear being labelled an “old maid”, is left in a liminal space lacking both intimacy and guidance until her future husband appears. At a time when she needs a friend the most, she becomes most isolated” – Thomason, The Dilemma of Friendship in Austen’s Emma.
- “It is always incomprehensible to a man that a woman should ever refuse an offer of marriage. A man always imagines a woman to be ready for anybody who asks her.” Emma is very aware of patriarchal values and subverts it to her advantage to draw attention away from Harriet’s being a victim of Emma's selfishness.
- “I have never been in love; it is not my way or my nature; and I do not ever think I shall.” “Is Emma’s declaration that she is not the marrying kind true self-description or is it another manifestation of self-delusion?.” – Goodheart, Jane Austen’s Errant Heroine. Does Austen stoop to the values of traditional patriarchal society by ending with Emma’s marriage despite Emma’s protests for it? Especially by claiming “perfect happiness”, Austen asserts that a woman’s fulfillment is by marriage to a man and not the assertive reclamation of her independence as a woman.
- “A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid!...But a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable.” A woman’s relationship with money determines her relationship with men.
- “she heard the words “my son” and “Frank,” and “my son,” repeated several times over”. Repetition convinces himself that Frank still belongs to him, deep longing for a father-son relationship that he had neglected early on.
- “What were nine miles to a young man? – An hour’s ride. He would always be coming over.” Opposite to Emma’s emotional aversion to the “half a mile” between herself and Mrs. Weston
  - Marriage of woman if different to that of a man as a woman’s social status and title is altered (Miss -> Mrs) while a man’s title is not changed nor are his relationships. I.e. he keeps his freedom and comforts, while a wife becomes restrained by the house
- “No – Mrs. Knightley; - and, till she is in being, I will manage such matters myself.” Like Emma, Mr. Knightley values his autonomy and views marriage as an infringement upon independence
- “in quitting Donwell, he must be sacrificing a great deal of independence of hours and habits…and in no house of his own,” This exchange seems like Austen’s attempt at gender equality amidst patriarchal marriage traditions. Normally, the bride’s attachments are amassed to the groom’s household and so too does her independence become his property.
GENDER AND FEMINISM

- Reversing the genders in Emma allowed Austen to disturb paradigms and examine the different expectations society had of men and women; the elements she chose to include in Emma and how she chose to revise them yield a powerful but ultimately conventional commentary on the status of women.
- The female characters have a disproportionate number of scenes in the drawing rooms of Highbury while the male characters often have scenes outdoors.
  - Jane Fairfax cannot walk to the post office in the rain to pick up the mail without becoming the object of town gossip while Mr. Knightley can ride all the way to London without attracting any gossip.
- “no man can be a good judge of the comfort a woman feels in the society of one of her own sex.” The bonds between women are vital to their intellectual and emotional survival as they are empowered in a space where they can be mutually respected or possess the potential to materially change, whereas in a space dominated by men, a woman is likely to be belittled because of her gender which cannot be changed.
  - Because Emma has no genuine bonds with women anymore, she must feel no true comfort in life, lives insecurely, and emotionally detached.
- “The ladies here probably exchanged looks which meant, “Men never know when things are dirty or not;” and the gentlemen perhaps thought each to himself, “Women will have their little nonsenses and needless cares.”” The thoughts of men are expected to be exclusive and reserved while women are stereotyped to be open communicators which actually shows much healthier emotional bonds between women than men.
- “there was an air of foppery and nonsense in it which she could not approve.” The unbecoming and vain extravagance that Frank travels 16 miles begins to disturb and disentangle Emma’s fantasy of Frank with the reality.

GOSSIP AND PRAGMATISM

- “She was quite convinced of Mr. Elton’s being in the fairest way of falling in love, if not in love already.” Pragmatic truth as Emma is misguidedly correct. Mr. Elton is more likely feigning the airs of a lover as Mr. Knightley has said that he only seeks a wealthy bride.
- “but you must not be expecting a very fine young man; you have only had my account you know” Acknowledgement of pragmatism/presumptions of Frank are expected to be skewed as she has only heard an idealised version of Frank
- “He looked as if he fully understood and honoured such a sentiment.” From the reader’s perspective, this is part of Frank’s performance and he has Emma convinced that he is of similar character as her: petty and pretentious.
- “While he was so dull, it was no wonder that Harriet should be dull likewise, and they were both insufferable.” Emma is clever at using inductive reasoning [moves from specific observations to broad generalisations] to make dangerous assumptions of romance between her friends.