

EMMA: PLOT: INTERIOR ACTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUTER ACTION

'Emma' contains two plots — outer and inner. The inner plot, a close analysis of the text reveals, is much more important than the outer plot. 'What is happening' and what Emma thinks is happening' diverge and converge at different points of the story. The reader's awareness of both these lines in the plot, his recognition that his own suspicions and not Emma's fancy, were right, contribute to his enjoyment of novel. First of all Emma thinks that Mr Elton and Harriet are in love with each other. Emma is always extremely confident of her being right, though in fact she is almost always embarrassingly wrong. Spoilt, strong-willed, with "a disposition to think too well of herself". she conceives it her duty to set the world

to rights. She persuades Harriet Smith, amiable but rather stupid girl of ambiguous parentage that her former friend is too far beneath her in social hierarchy to be acceptable and induces her to set her sights on the vicar — only to make the indignant discovery that Mr. Elton now aspires to herself. From this it is quite clear that all that Emma thinks is different from all that takes place. The reader gradually begins to suspect that 'what is happening' is that Mr. Elton is interested in Emma. The 'revelation' of Mr. Elton's proposal in the carriage resolves differences and confirms the impression that the reader is right.

From Chapter XVIII to XXX

Emma thinks that she and Frank Churchill are in love. On no real evidence at all,

she concludes that Jane Fairfax is having an affair with a married man — a suspicion she immediately communicates to Frank. Emma confides to Frank her suspicions that the gift of piano Fairfax has received is from Mr. Dixon, who she thinks, is in love with Jane Fairfax. She uses the fact that Mr. Dixon saved Miss Fairfax from drowning to confirm her theory and is surprised to find that Frank Churchill was there when the accident happened. She thinks she has convinced him. She thinks that she is Frank Churchill's 'object and everybody must perceive it'. On further consideration however, she decides that 'she could still do without Frank Churchill and that he must learn to do without her.'