

Emma book review by Kayden

After being forced to watch *Bridgerton* by an older sister, I decided that entertaining myself with Victorian casts and settings would not be too bad of an idea. I would expect most plots not to be as dark as most others like some of Hardy's dark or Thackeray's gruesome societies; fortunately, little to no death can be found in the romance novel *Emma* by Jane Austen. However, that does not take away from the complexity of Austen's cast, whom many agree to be the most deep of all her books. The main character, Emma Woodhouse, takes fancy in matchmaking the (esteemed and wealthy) men and women of Highbury, their village; however, the web of this cast (and romantic matchups) eventually crosses into Emma's life. As she navigates her way through the drama, suitors, and Victorian life, Emma lets her personal flaws get in the way of seeing reality. The trait of flaws in Emma, along with the chemistry of the characters, are to credit for this book's greatness.

Any proper book review would give the positives first, and the cons last. Fortunately, this paragraph will be longer than the latter. Two things stand out here: the complexity of and the commentary made through these characters. There are characters like Emma (whose unreliability as a matchmaker forces her own romance), Jane Fairfax (whose initially ingenuine disposition merely hides a secret), or Mr. Knightley (whose friendships and love interests have more layers than people believe) that make *Emma* such an endearing page-turner. Seeing as how I could read the entirety of 600 pages in a week following a previous routine of 10 pages per month, I am sure that this cast will rope any reader in today as much as it had a century ago. Not to mention, the dialogue of these characters is on another level. For my book report, I had to write an alternative ending to this book, and it took me two hours just to analyze how Jane Austen wrote all these different personalities and remarks. Another two hours were analyzing how ChatGPT (and then I) could recreate these lines to an alternative ending with full marks. From Emma making fun of other venerable nobles to different men confessing their love in a way accommodating the receiver's personality, Austen masterfully weaved the storyline with charisma. At some point, I was thinking of how to recreate this charismatic dialogue in my life but that never worked out as well as I hoped. Finally, the commentary made through both dynamic and static characters had me looking at every detail and chapter summary I could find (in book and online). For instance, Augusta (first name only as to not spoil some of the plot) could be seen as a representation of phoniness and naivety in the high-class, making the world of Austen's masterpiece all the more intriguing.

This may seem as a positive for some and a catastrophic trait to others. You may have noticed that the incredible amount of characters within this summary alone. Let me warn you now - there might be ten times the amount mentioned in the book itself. Myself, I kept an online image of a web of characters next to me at all times just to keep up with the scenes. If you are interested in well

developed tangles of casting, *Emma* could not be the more perfect book to pass the time. Otherwise, avoid at all costs.

Overall, this book really had me entertained, even under all the stress of having to read and the write a report on it in one week. Whether you also need to write a report on a long book or just need a page turner to pass the time, Austen's *Emma* is, personally, one of the greatest recommendations around. Good luck!