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21L.001 Foundations of Western Culture: Homer to Dante
Fall 2008

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Constructing Introductions

An introduction is perhaps the hardest part of an essay to write, since it must concisely express not just your argument, but also some structural map for your reader of how you intend to make that argument. Of course for this very reason, it is also among the most important.

As written: *Emma* by Jane Austen opens a window on a group of young and social men and women. While enjoying life and each other's friendship they endure hardships, disappointment, and much controversy. Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley, the two main characters of the novel, grow from their experiences both together and independently. Ironically, however, their development forces them to lose their individualism as it induces changes that cause their once unique and coveted characters to transform into nothing more than a clone of society.

[intervening body paragraph on the admirable traits of Emma and Knightley]

Conversely, other characters in *Emma* are innately flawed, lacking some combination of traits portrayed by Emma and Knightley. Characters like Harriet, Mr. Elton, and Jane Fairfax (among others) are overeager, emotional, malleable, and embody a number of undesirable character traits throughout the novel.

[intervening body paragraphs on Harriet, Elton, and Jane]

In the final analysis, not even our heroine or Knightley is able to ward off such imperfections. Gradually, changes in Emma and Knightley's character become evident in the latter portion of volume two and entirely in volume three. Their actions and conversations begin to project unfavorable characteristics in the same ways other characters in the novel perform as mentioned above.

[intervening body paragraphs on how Emma and Knightley become less themselves, more like each other and the less admirable characters]

Therefore by drawing this connection between those less desirable traits and marriage, it is possible to deduce that Austen views marriage negatively. [rest of conclusion follows] *This is a different and broader argument than that expressed in the introduction.*

One Possible Rewrite: The two protagonists of Jane Austen's *Emma*, the eponymous heroine and Mr. Knightley, grow from their experiences both together and independently. Ironically, however, their development robs them of their individualism, reducing them to mere clones of society. From their initial status as undisputed champions of their sex within Highbury, Emma and Knightley gradually come to resemble less admirable characters like Harriet Smith, Mr. Elton, and Jane Fairfax in their speech patterns and actions. They also lose the independence that characterized them earlier, eventually adopting the same view of the chief characters about whom they once disagreed, Frank Churchill and Harriet. While establishing the requisite happy ending, this dual transformation casts serious doubt on Austen's belief in marriage as a social ideal by correlating Emma and Knightley's matrimonial tendencies and their subtle yet unmistakable personal degradation.

Comment [r1]: drawn from original introduction

Comment [r2]: main arguments of body paragraphs help the intro serve as a road map for the essay

Comment [r3]: drawn from original conclusion