Howards End

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF E.M. FORSTER

E. M. Forster was born into a middle-class family in London. As a child, he inherited a large sum of money from his great-aunt and was able to live off of this and focus on writing. Forster attended King's College at Cambridge, and then became a peripheral member of the "Bloomsbury Group," a group of intellectuals and writers that included Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey. After university he visited Egypt, Germany, and India, and then was a conscientious objector during World War I. He returned to India in the early 1920s and worked as the private secretary of Tukojirao III, the Maharajah of Dewas. His novel *A Passage to India* was his most successful work, but Forster is also well-known for his novels *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*. He also became a leading broadcaster for BBC Radio and wrote influential literary criticism. Forster was gay (open only to his close friends) and never married. He died of a stroke at age 91.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Edwardian Period that came to a close with the outbreak of WWI in 1914 is considered to be the height of the British empire. This time period was later viewed with nostalgia and romanticized as a "golden age" in England, when the horrors of WWI were still unimagined. The fight for women's suffrage was escalating in England during the period from 1908-1910 when Forster was writing *Howards End*, and his characters debate whether suffrage is just or not. Suffragettes protested for their cause in marches and hunger strikes, facing violence, arrest, and force-feedings. Women would not get the vote in England until after WWI, in 1918.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Contemporaries of Forster in the Edwardian Period, named for King Edward VII and spanning from Queen Victoria's death in 1901 to the outbreak of WWI in 1914, included George Bernard Shaw (*Pygmalion*), Rudyard Kipling (*The Jungle Book*), and P. G. Wodehouse ("Keeping it from Harold," "Best Seller"). These writers reflected and commented on England's social conditions at the height of the British Empire, when the material luxuries enjoyed by the rich contrasted strikingly with the squalid conditions experienced by four-fifths of the English population. Forster's career as a novelist also spanned the wider period of Modernism, but he avoided the experimental technical styles of famous Modernists like Virginia Woolf (*Mrs. Dalloway*) and T.S. Eliot (*The Wasteland*). Like other Modernists, however, he was interested in the dramatic cultural shifts of the early 20th century, but he focused on portraying the chaos of the modern world through his situations and imagery rather than stylistic innovation. Forster's works were influenced by writers and thinkers like Thomas Hardy (*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*), D. H. Lawrence ("The Rocking-Horse Winner," "Odour of Chrysanthemums"), and Samuel Butler. The contemporary British novelist Zadie Smith cites Forster as a significant literary influence and even based her novel *On Beauty* (2005) on *Howards End*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Howards End
- **When Written:** 1908-1910
- **Where Written:** Surrey, England
- **When Published:** October 18, 1910
- **Literary Period:** Modernism, Edwardian Literature
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** England
- **Climax:** Charles Wilcox assaults and kills Leonard Bast
- **Antagonist:** The materialistic Wilcox family
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

On Beauty: In 2005, British novelist Zadie Smith published *On Beauty*, a modern retelling of Forster's *Howards End*. Set in America, the novel begins when the son of the liberal Belsey family (based on Forster's Schlegel family) quickly makes and breaks an engagement with the daughter of the conservative Kipps family (based on the Wilcox family). Mrs. Kipps leaves a valuable piece of artwork to Kiki Belsey (instead of a house like Howards End).

Rooks Nest House: Forster's childhood home was a house in Hertfordshire called "Rooks Nest." The house had once belonged to a family named Howard and was called "Howards" when Forster lived there. Forster later claimed to have forgotten this fact, and said that he must have unconsciously recalled this childhood knowledge while writing *Howards End*.

PLOT SUMMARY

Margaret Schlegel reads a series of letters from her sister, Helen, who is visiting the Wilcox family at their home, an old farmhouse called **Howards End**. Helen writes that she has fallen in love with Paul Wilcox, despite the great differences

between their families—the Schlegels are liberal intellectuals, while the Wilcoxes are generally materialistic, narrow-minded, and unprogressive. When Margaret's aunt, Juley Munt, hears about Helen's attachment to Paul, she decides to go down to the Wilcox house and meet them. After she leaves, Margaret receives a telegram from Helen saying that the infatuation is over. Juley bungles her first encounter with the Wilcoxes and Helen is badly embarrassed, but Ruth Wilcox steps in and skillfully settles the crisis.

The Schlegels visit the symphony with Juley and their cousin Frieda Mosebach. Helen leaves early and accidentally takes an umbrella that belongs to Leonard Bast, a poor man who couldn't afford to replace it. Margaret invites Leonard to retrieve his umbrella from their house after the symphony, and he accompanies her home. He envies her superior grasp of art and culture, which he studies in his limited free time. Margaret and Helen pity his hardship. Leonard refuses tea with the Schlegels and returns home to his cramped basement apartment, where he lives with Jacky, a fallen woman whom he has promised to support and marry.

The Schlegels discover that the Wilcoxes have moved to London after the wedding of Charles and Dolly Wilcox. Margaret gradually befriends Ruth, despite their different ages and ideas about life. Ruth suddenly passes away and leaves a handwritten note willing Howards End to Margaret. Ruth's husband, Henry, and their children disregard her note and say nothing to Margaret about her inheritance.

Two years later, the Schlegels are forced to look for a new house in London. Leonard reenters their lives when he impulsively stays out all night walking and Jacky calls on the Schlegels to look for him. Margaret and Helen are impressed by Leonard's journey into nature and wish they could do more for him. The next time they run into Henry Wilcox, he tells them that the insurance company where Leonard works may go out of business. The Schlegels invite Leonard over and tell him the news, encouraging him to move companies before he loses his job. Leonard is embarrassed by their concern for his circumstances and reacts poorly, but ultimately takes their advice.

Henry offers to help Margaret find a new house. Spending more time together, they develop romantic feelings and become engaged. Helen objects to the engagement, doubting that it's a good match, as does Henry's son Charles, suspecting Margaret of plotting to obtain Howards End. When Henry takes Margaret to see Howards End for the first time, she admires its simplicity and proximity to nature, but Henry considers the house too small and doesn't intend to move back. He buys a country manor in Oniton, far west of London, where his daughter, Evie, will soon have her wedding.

Margaret travels with the wedding party to Oniton and chafes at the group's traditional expectations of her in her new role as Henry's fiancée. Evie's wedding runs like clockwork until Helen arrives with Leonard and Jacky, intending to confront Henry over his bad advice that caused Leonard to leave his job for nothing. Margaret is upset at her sister for crashing the wedding but agrees to ask Henry to give Leonard a job in his company. Henry, however, recognizes Jacky as his former mistress and refuses to help the Basts. In shock, Margaret tells Helen that she must forget about saving the Basts. Distraught, Helen sleeps with Leonard at the hotel. Later she visits her brother, Tibby, at Oxford and asks him to send money to the Basts for her. She leaves England to avoid her sister. Margaret marries Henry and begins to worry when her sister doesn't return to England after many months. She shares her fears with Henry, who plots to lure Helen to Howards End, where Ruth's old friend Miss Avery has somehow unpacked all the Schlegels' belongings. When Margaret confronts her sister at Howards End, she realizes that Helen has been hiding the fact that she's pregnant with Leonard's baby.

Helen plans to return to Germany and raise the baby there. She spends one last night in Howards End with Margaret, much to Henry's displeasure. The Wilcoxes are scandalized by Helen's unmarried pregnancy, and Henry refuses to recognize the double standard by which he justifies his own affair but denounces Helen's. Charles shows up at Howards End the next morning to confront Helen. Leonard also shows up to apologize to Margaret for his conduct with Helen. Charles attacks Leonard on sight to avenge his family's scandal, and Leonard goes into fatal cardiac arrest. Charles is consequently convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to three years in prison. Henry is crushed by his son's downfall, and Margaret steps in to rebuild the family. Henry, Margaret, Helen, and her baby move into Howards End. Henry finally gives Margaret ownership of Howards End, like Ruth always wanted, and Margaret plans to leave the house to her nephew when she dies. Leonard may be dead, but his son will inherit Howards End.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Margaret Schlegel – Margaret is twenty-nine years old and unmarried at the beginning of *Howards End*, unusual for a woman at the time. She has been watching over her younger siblings, Helen and Tibby, since the age of thirteen, when their mother died. Their mother was an English heiress who married a German intellectual. Never having been to university, Margaret is nonetheless highly educated and cultured. With an inherited fortune ensuring lifelong financial security, she enjoys unlimited leisure time to study art, literature, and philosophy, and tends to muse deeply about human nature and society. She loves deeply, as well, and her generous love for her family, her country, and her husband can compel her to overlook their worst flaws. She makes a sudden and profound connection with

Ruth Wilcox, a woman her mother's age, before Ruth's death at just fifty-one years old. Ruth leaves her old house, **Howards End**, to Margaret, but Ruth's family refuses to accept her wishes and keeps her will a secret. Margaret then gradually develops an affection for Ruth's widowed husband, Henry, despite their dramatically different temperaments, and marries him. Her relationship with Henry leads her to forgo some of her former principles. Earlier in the novel, she and Helen befriended a young man named Leonard Bast, and became troubled by his financial hardship and his difficulties achieving his modest dreams of becoming knowledgeable about art. When later she learns that Leonard's wife, Jacky, was Henry's mistress long ago, she swiftly abandons the Basts to abject poverty. She remains loyal to her sister above all, and defies Henry when he tries to stop Helen from sleeping in Howards End on Helen's final night in England. After the crisis that follows, she brings both the Wilcox and the Schlegel families together in Howards End, and reconciles them to building a new future together. Henry finally gives her Howards End, and she bequeaths it to her nephew, Helen's son.

Helen Schlegel – Helen is twenty-one at the beginning of *Howards End*, eight years younger than her sister Margaret. The two are very close, and very similar: both unmarried, highly intelligent, cultured, and liberal-thinking. However, Helen is more idealistic, emotional, and impulsive than her responsible older sister. She falls in love with Paul Wilcox immediately after meeting him, then realizes just as quickly that they aren't compatible at all. She thinks Margaret is wrong to marry Henry Wilcox, a blindly materialistic and sexist man who is older than Margaret by two decades, and she blames Henry for the bad business advice that costs their friend Leonard Bast his job. When Margaret and Henry refuse to help Leonard find a new job because of Henry's sordid history with Leonard's wife, Jacky, Helen is overcome with anger and despair and impulsively sleeps with Leonard. Afterwards, she tries to give the Basts all the money they need and then leaves England for Germany. She refuses to return until Margaret compels her to come to **Howards End** under false circumstances, and Margaret realizes she is heavily pregnant with Leonard's child. Helen plans to raise the baby in Germany to avoid scandal, but after Leonard's sudden death, Margaret arranges for her sister to live at Howards End with her and Henry. Helen becomes more sympathetic to Henry, and less emotional about Leonard. Her son will one day inherit Howards End after Margaret dies.

Henry Wilcox – Henry is in his fifties, and he has made a great fortune running the Imperial and West African Rubber Company. He opposes social reform and women's rights, and believes whole-heartedly in the righteousness of capitalism and colonialism. He looks down on the lower classes and addresses his servants rudely. He distrusts emotion and imagination, and his view of the world is consistently shallow and single-minded. He likes to flaunt his power and is very conscious of his reputation. He demands that his family, especially his wives, be always respectful and deferential to him. A blatant misogynist, he looks down on women, dismissing them as hysterical and incapable of sound judgment. In the early days of his marriage to Ruth, he used to go on business to Cyprus, where he took a mistress, Jacky, and later abandoned her there without any means to support herself. He judges men and women's sexual transgressions by a strict double standard, refusing to overlook Helen's affair while expecting his own to be condoned. He shows no true remorse for his mistakes and their disastrous consequences for people like Jacky and Leonard Bast. Only after his firstborn son, Charles, is jailed for his role in Leonard's death by manslaughter does Henry see the flaws in the narcissistic worldview he promoted and passed down to his children. He rights one of his wrongs by giving **Howards End**, the house belonging to Ruth, to his second wife, Margaret, as Ruth had always wanted. He even consents to allowing Margaret's nephew, an illegitimate child, to inherit the home next.

Leonard Bast – Leonard Bast is an idealistic young man who works as a low-paid clerk for an insurance company. He is estranged from his family because of their opposition to his relationship with Jacky, a former prostitute. He scrapes together money for books and concerts because he wishes to improve his life with a knowledge of art and culture. He meets the wealthy sisters Helen and Margaret Schlegel at a Beethoven concert, where Helen accidentally takes his umbrella. They cross paths again over time, and he impresses them with his tale of once walking the whole night long. He dreams of preserving an intellectual relationship with them, and is unhappy when they pry into his professional life. He ends up losing his job after he takes their well-intentioned advice, and loses his idealism in turn, becoming resigned to never rising above his miserable station. Feeling very guilty, Helen tries to get him a job with Henry Wilcox, Margaret's fiancé, but Henry refuses once he realizes that Leonard's wife, Jacky, is his former mistress. Helen, distraught at her failure, sleeps with Leonard before running away. Leonard, feeling great remorse, seeks Margaret at **Howards End** to ask her forgiveness for his conduct with her sister. Before he can talk to her, Henry's son Charles Wilcox attacks him for causing Helen's scandalous pregnancy, and Leonard's feeble heart stops, fatally weakened by a life of pollution and poor nutrition. He tragically dies without ever knowing that Helen was about to have his baby.

Ruth Wilcox – Born Ruth Howard before she married Henry Wilcox, she owns the farmhouse **Howards End**. Ruth is a devoted wife and mother, and she willingly accompanies her family to London when her husband buys a second home there, but she has a special connection to the idyllic Howards End. She loves the fields and gardens that surround the old farm, and is always pictured sniffing flowers or hay. She seems to possess a special wisdom and spirituality drawn from the

history and natural beauty of the farm. She befriends Margaret Schlegel despite having little in common with Margaret's interests in culture and philosophy, and she decides to leave Margaret Howards End when she dies. She suspects she is ill when the Wilcoxes move to London, but doesn't tell anyone, and she dies suddenly.

Tibby Schlegel – Tibby is sixteen years old at the beginning of *Howards End*. Like his sisters, Margaret and Helen, he has a great deal of intelligence and a taste for beautiful art, especially music. However, he lacks his sisters' compassion and good nature. He isn't sociable and is happiest when he's absorbed by his studies. He has no concrete ambition or ideology and is content to live comfortably off of his inherited fortune without ever pursuing a profession. He believes in his own superiority, and he turns away from the ugly side of life. He can't be bothered with most inconveniences.

Charles Wilcox – Charles is the eldest child in the Wilcox family, and the most like his father, Henry. He represses emotion, disdains women, and feels entitled to wealth and modern material luxuries. He indulges his temper and his ego and attacks Leonard Bast for causing a scandal with Helen Schlegel, his sister-in-law, embarrassing the family. Charles's assault causes Leonard to go into fatal cardiac arrest, and he is sentenced to three years in jail for manslaughter.

Paul Wilcox – The youngest child in the Wilcox family, Paul has a brief, failed romance with Helen Schlegel when she stays at **Howards End**. He goes to Nigeria to make his fortune off of England's colony there. When Charles goes to jail, he comes back to England to run the family business in African rubber. He resents giving ownership of Howards End to Margaret Schlegel and treats her rudely.

Evie Wilcox – The only daughter in the Wilcox family, Evie loves sports and breeding dogs. She marries Percy Cahill in a perfectly choreographed wedding. She shares the Wilcox family insensitivity and causes great offense to an old friend of her mother's, Miss Avery, when she returns the expensive wedding gift given to her.

Jacky Bast – Jacky was Henry Wilcox's mistress in Cyprus. When he left her, she had no means to support herself far from home and she became a prostitute. She later met Leonard Bast, who began to provide for her and promised to marry her when he was of age. After Leonard dies at the end of the book, her fate is never mentioned, but presumably she would have no choice but to return to the streets.

Juley Munt – Juley Munt, the quintessential Englishwoman, is the maternal aunt of the Schlegel children. She wants to help her orphaned nieces and nephew, but the Schlegels take pride in being self-sufficient, and her well-meaning attempts to intervene always go awry. She embarrasses Helen and causes a large scene when she rushes down to **Howards End** after hearing that Helen is engaged to Paul Wilcox.

Frieda Mosebach – Frieda Mosebach, or Fraulein Mosebach, a young German woman, is a cousin of the Schlegels on their father's side. The Schlegels' English aunt, Juley Munt, mildly disapproves of Frieda's free spirit. She visits them in England with her fiancé, Bruno Liesecke, or Herr Liesecke. After she marries, she becomes Frau Liesecke.

Miss Avery – An elderly spinster, Miss Avery lives next to **Howards End** and was an old friend of Ruth Wilcox. Like Ruth, she has a mystical, all-knowing air about her that is connected to Howards End. She is slightly nuttier than Ruth, and she frequently goes over to Howards End when the house is empty. When Margaret Schlegel, the new Mrs. Wilcox, temporarily stores her furniture in the empty house, Miss Avery unpacks it all. She believes that Margaret is Ruth's heir in spirit rather than Ruth's daughter, Evie, who offended her by returning the valuable necklace Miss Avery gave her for her wedding.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Dolly Wilcox – Dolly Wilcox was Dolly Cahill before she married Charles Wilcox. The Wilcox family generally looks down on her as be silly and hysterical. Her uncle, Percy Cahill, marries Evie Wilcox.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

CLASS AND PRIVILEGE

Howards End, set in England in the early 1900s, follows three seemingly incompatible families, the Schlegels, the Basts, and the Wilcoxes, as they pursue intellectual and material advancement in a nation that is theoretically becoming more democratic. Author E. M. Forster illustrates the stark contrasts between the lives of those born into wealth, like the Schlegels, and those born into poverty, like the Basts. In revealing England's impoverished underbelly—a tragic, unsavory reality that most people of means would rather forget—Forster criticizes the upper crust for neglecting and exploiting those entrenched in poverty.

Forster depicts the notable differences between the means and mindsets of the Schlegels and the Basts in the context of the concert where Margaret and Helen Schlegel first encounter Leonard Bast. The concert at which they meet, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, is said to be "the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man." To experience a performance of such superb music "is cheap at two shillings," the Schlegels believe. They don't mean that the symphony is

literally cheap or low quality, but that its beauty makes it so valuable that two shillings is an extremely small price to pay. It is also worth the price of putting up with what the Schlegels deem poor accommodations in order to witness this performance: "It is cheap, even if you hear it in the Queen's Hall, dreariest music-room in London [...] and even if you sit on the extreme left of that hall, so that the brass bumps at you before the rest of the orchestra arrives, it is still cheap." They remark that the symphony transcends the second-rate conditions in which they find themselves listening to it.

Forster later shows that the Schlegels' opinion of the tickets as cheap and the theater as inferior is, in fact, highly relative. Leonard holds the exact opposite attitude, worrying anxiously about the cost of the ticket: "Ought he to have paid as much as two shillings?" He almost didn't allow himself the luxury of going to the theater at all, let alone look down on its condition: "Earlier still he had wondered, 'Shall I try to do without a programme?' There had always been something to worry him ever since he could remember, always something that distracted him in the pursuit of beauty." Forster illustrates for his readers—presumably the same privileged folk who have the leisure time to consume novels—that a shortage of means, not will, separates Leonard from the Schlegels.

The Schlegels become conscious of this unequal access to art and beauty in an example of the critical self-reflection that Forster would like to instill in his readership. When Margaret's friends assert that the lower classes wouldn't pursue fine art and philosophy as eagerly the upper classes do if simply given the same means, Margaret contends, "[S]o few of us think clearly about our own private incomes, and admit that independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means. Money: give Mr. Bast money, and don't bother about his ideals. He'll pick up those for himself." Conceptual freedom and fulfillment may be the least of priorities the truly poor require money for—the impoverished are more concerned about survival than high-minded "ideals"—but their deficiency prompts the Schlegels to consider what else Leonard cannot take for granted like they do.

The scarcity of Leonard's resources is apparent in his great concern over the disappearance of his umbrella, which he cannot afford to replace. Faced with the all-too-real possibility of braving the world without even the flimsiest of shelters, the Schlegels get a glimpse of the hazards that Leonard might be left exposed to that they have always been sheltered from. His anxiety about retrieving his missing umbrella from Helen forces them to see "that beneath these superstructures of wealth and art there wanders an ill-fed boy, who has recovered his umbrella indeed, but who has left no address behind him, and no name." Through the Schlegels' newfound consciousness of the hardships the lower classes face, Forster stresses the necessity of demonstrating awareness, sensitivity, and empathy toward impoverished people.

Laying bare these differences is important, the novel implies, in order to challenge the ignorance, intentional or not, of the elite who turn a blind eye to the harmful consequences of their neglect or exploitation of the lower classes. Criticizing her interference in Leonard's life, Henry Wilcox tells Margaret, "We live and let live, and assume that things are jogging on fairly well elsewhere, and that the ordinary plain man may be trusted to look after his own affairs." Representative of upper class ignorance, Henry refuses to acknowledge the desperate situation of the precarious masses.

Even the sympathetic Schlegels must be reminded of the truly perilous position many of their countrymen are left in. After meeting Leonard, Margaret observes, "I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. It's only when we see some one near us tottering that we realise all that an independent income means [...] the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin." All too quickly, Margaret herself loses sight of the "abyss" of poverty after she becomes engaged to Henry. Her fiancé cares little for the poor, and cares even less for Leonard Bast, whose wife Jacky was once Henry's mistress. For the sake of securing his love, she abandons the Basts to their destitution.

Howards End makes sharp socioeconomic observations about class and privilege in early twentieth-century England. By contrasting the well-to-do Schlegels with the poverty-stricken Basts, Forster challenges his upper-class readership to confront head-on the unsightly reality of poverty. Beyond mere awareness, Forster calls for sensitivity and grace, pushing readers to demonstrate kindness and empathy towards those firmly in poverty's grasp.

CAPITALISM

As a novel set in turn-of-the-century England, a time of ongoing industrialization and urbanization, *Howards End* criticizes the capitalist forces behind England's prosperity. A society solely driven by the free market, purely intent on maximizing profit and opposed to any kind of intervention, promotes cold self-interest and the consolidation of power while producing extreme suffering in the masses. Through the unfortunate fates of Leonard and Jacky Bast, Forster demonstrates how difficult it is for those born into disadvantaged circumstances to attain a better quality of life in an unregulated system where influence and information are hoarded.

Earnest and idealistic Leonard Bast exemplifies the model working-class Londoner striving to secure a modestly comfortable life for himself and his wife. However, without a more sophisticated education, he is unable to advance beyond menial desk work, and left ignorant of the higher forces that control the market and exploit unwitting consumers and workers alike. Leonard's vulnerability to the greedy heads of

business is symbolized by his poor understanding of his own company, the Porphyrion. When Margaret and Helen Schlegel try to help him by passing on Henry's report that the company may go bankrupt, Leonard cannot judge for himself if the company is truly in danger. Forster writes, "Leonard had no idea […] To him, as to the British public, the Porphyrion was the Porphyrion of the advertisement—a giant." The majority of people know as little about how the company operates as they do about a mythical being. Forster continues, "A giant was of an impulsive morality—one knew that much […] But his true fighting weight, his antecedents, his amours with other members of the commercial Pantheon—all these were as uncertain to ordinary mortals as were the escapades of Zeus." The Porphyrion prefers to keep the public in the dark about its affairs as much as possible, in order to profit off of consumers' ignorance. Better to be seen as abstract and "impulsive" rather than cold and calculating; consumers can't object to companies' private interests if they're not conscious of them.

As an all-too-replaceable worker who has no job security and no social protections to fall back on, Leonard is utterly dependent on the discretion of men of greater means. After various failed attempts to assert control over his own life and change its course—actively switching to a supposedly secure job, and privately studying **books** to grasp their lessons and values for humanity—Leonard realizes that his volition is ultimately meaningless in the face of the tyrannical authority of those who hold all the money and power. Leonard concludes that developing his own philosophical ideas about life is useless when he has no power to exert his own influence, and instead is entirely subject to the will of others: "Talk as one would, Mr. Wilcox was king of this world, the superman, with his own morality, whose head remained in the clouds."

Indeed, Henry would rather keep his head in the clouds than acknowledge the terrible suffering of his fellow human beings—or his own part in it. Through willful shortsightedness, he observes only the present instant, declining to identify the source of a problem or to anticipate what may result of his actions: "As Man is to the Universe, so was the mind of Mr. Wilcox to the minds of some men—a concentrated light upon a tiny spot […] He lived for the five minutes that have past, and the five to come; he had the business mind." The business mind, according to this example, is generally careless, rash, and remorseless. Compared to minds which could encompass "the Universe," his view is narrowed to his immediate interests.

Henry tellingly exhibits this selective awareness with regards to the foul-smelling mews, or horse stables, that neighbor his London residence. When he is in a position to make a profit by renting his house, he conveniently forgets to mention the mews to a potential renter, but later complains about them freely. Forster writes, "[I]f any one had remarked that the mews must be either there or not, he would have felt annoyed, and afterwards have found some opportunity of stigmatising the speaker as academic. So does my grocer stigmatise me when I complain of the quality of his sultanas […] It is a flaw inherent in the business mind, and Margaret may do well to be tender to it, considering all that the business mind has done for England." While Forster would appear to conclude that England is greatly indebted to this shrewd "business mind," likening Henry to a penny-pinching grocer subtly undercuts any impression of his glory. The business-minded are merely hypocrites, deceitful and unconscienced.

Forster shows Henry to be a man who, if he has a conscience at all, easily silences it by attributing the great hardship caused by the country's ongoing "civilisation" to impersonal, abstract forces rather than the active participation and collusion of private individuals. After Henry gives the Schlegels catastrophically bad advice to share with Leonard, he insists that he is in no way obliged to make amends for the severe disadvantage in which Leonard now finds himself. He declares, "The poor are poor, and one's sorry for them, but there it is. As civilisation moves forward, the shoe is bound to pinch in places, and it's absurd to pretend that any one is responsible personally." The dire perils of homelessness and starvation are hardly equivalent to the "pinch" from a new shoe, as Forster illustrates in Leonard and Jacky's tragic fates. Ascribing the suffering of the poor to impersonal "civilisation" denies Henry's complicity in choosing to profit from rather than reform a system of modern industrial capitalism that badly exploits people like Leonard. In a world without true giants and mortals, one can only stay giant by keeping others powerless.

COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM

The Edwardian era (approximately 1901–1910) during which Forster wrote *Howards End* is widely considered to be the last period of English global supremacy, before the country would be devastated by two world wars and would reluctantly relinquish her authority over her vast overseas colonies. Forster subtly critiques the subjugation of foreign territories and populations that granted England her supposed preeminence, describing the temptation of and justification for imperialism as well as illustrating its inherent flaws.

Margaret, Helen, and Tibby's father forcefully denounces the zeal for imperialism and colonialism that afflicts the European powers of the day, from his native Germany to his adopted England. "It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile, and that a million square miles are almost the same as heaven," he declares to them as children. Instead of continuing the mad rush to conquer distant territories, he suggests, Germany and England should seek to rekindle the intellectual mastery that once enlightened the world.

The Wilcoxes' staunchly colonialist ideology could not be more

dissimilar. Henry and his sons run the Imperial and West African Rubber Company, an enterprise that Margaret finds impressive despite her father's beliefs. She greatly admires Paul Wilcox for traveling all the way to Nigeria to work for the sake of the British colony there. She voices her admiration to Tibby: "He doesn't want the money, it is work he wants, though it is beastly work—dull country, dishonest natives, an eternal fidget over fresh water and food [...] A nation that can produce men of that sort may well be proud. No wonder England has become an Empire."

Margaret has evidently not embraced her father's convictions to the letter, and lines like this from the heroine of *Howards End* may startle readers who assume that Forster is voicing his own opinion through his protagonist. However, looking at the book's overall treatment of imperialism—and of Margaret—makes it clear that Forster characterizes British colonialism as fundamentally unethical and untenable, and Margaret is actually an example of the flawed prevailing mindset that struggles to renounce the belief that British superiority entitles England to hold other people in subjection. Forster writes later, "Imperialism always had been one of [Margaret's] difficulties." Her characterization of the colonies as "beastly," "dull," and "dishonest" exposes her extremely narrow, racially-prejudiced conception of Africa.

Forster criticizes this racism and objectification on the part of the British towards native populations that justify the profitable system of colonial exploitation. He describes a map hanging on the wall in Henry's company office "on which the whole continent appeared, looking like a whale marked out for a blubber." Evoking the bloody slaughter of whales and the foul labor of harvesting their blubber suggests that the work of the British in their African colonies is similarly monstrous. Likening the continent to a dead whale also suggests how the British coldly view Africa and its people as merely another commodity to be mined.

Forster further illustrates how the Wilcoxes and their like conduct their predatory and exploitative colonialism largely outside of the public eye, the better to prevent objections from an informed domestic populace. As Margaret notes, "Henry had implied his business rather than described it, and the formlessness and vagueness that one associates with Africa itself had hitherto brooded over the main sources of his wealth." While the means by which Henry extracts his enormous fortune from Africa are never spelled out in great detail, he apparently specializes in the trade of rubber, a substance which was known to be harvested by coerced African laborers under extremely brutal conditions. Cultivating an aura of "formlessness and vagueness" rather than acknowledging the cruel conditions under which he reaps his riches allows him to operate free from scrutiny. At the same time, Margaret's apparent disinterest in piercing the fog surrounding his operations, an indifference that is highly uncharacteristic of a woman so intelligent, perceptive, and reflective, is an indication that she indeed suspects the dark truth but does not want to hear it confirmed. She is unwilling to consider the idea that England's glory rests upon suffering.

The last word that Forster offers on imperialism prefaces Charles's fatal assault on Leonard. As the latter walks from the train to **Howards End**, Charles passes him on the road, **driving** the short distance to the house from his home nearby. Forster writes, "In [the vehicle] was another type, whom Nature favours—the Imperial. Healthy, ever in motion, it hopes to inherit the earth. It breeds as quickly as the yeoman, and as soundly; strong is the temptation to acclaim it as a super-yeoman, who carries his country's virtue overseas. But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer." Forster unfavorably contrasts "the Imperialist"—Charles—with "the yeoman," or the self-sufficient farmer Leonard could have possibly become if he had been born in the country instead of the city. Forster idealizes the yeomen of England's pre-industrial past, those who were firmly connected to the natural world and were content to simply provide for their families. He envisions the original occupants of Howards End to be this type of humble landowner, and he wishes for England to remember this modest spirit and renounce her destructive imperial ambitions. The nation's colonies enrich a handful of people like the Wilcoxes, at too great a cost to the soul of all who support British imperialism.

GENDER

Forster's wide-reaching social commentary in *Howards End* includes a sharp critique of sexism as artificial and groundless, but powerfully persistent nonetheless. He shows his female characters to be more than equal to many men in intelligence, bravery, and conviction, contrary to popular belief in women's inferiority to men. Treating them differently is thus absurd and wrong. Nevertheless, society's irrational sexism can be extremely difficult to effectively recognize, resist, or reason with. Margaret loves her husband, for instance, but she is unable to change his sexist worldview, and she ultimately accommodates herself to his expectations rather than risk losing him.

Once Margaret becomes engaged to Henry Wilcox, she feels pressured to conform with her fiancé's ideals of femininity. The occasion of Evie Wilcox's grand wedding exemplifies this traditionally gendered paradigm that the Wilcoxes and their type live by: "Male and female created He them." Forster first explains how the Wilcoxes claim this biblical justification for their belief in fundamental differences between men and women, then abruptly pivots to illustrate how secular human society enforces an artificial gender-based differentiation: "[T]he journey to Shrewsbury confirmed this questionable statement, and the long glass saloon, that moved so easily and felt so comfortable, became a forcing-house for the idea of sex."

A popular religious claim becomes "a questionable statement," one that is manufactured in contemporary social settings like the first-class train car the wedding party travels in. Forster likens this car to "a forcing-house," or a type of greenhouse where plants are forced to grow unnaturally, for gendered ideology.

The men of the wedding party behave in a paternalistic and patronizing manner to Margaret and the rest of the women throughout the journey: "They raised windows for some ladies, and lowered them for others, they rang the bell for the servant, they identified the colleges as the train slipped past Oxford [...] Margaret bowed to a charm of which she did not wholly approve, and said nothing when the Oxford colleges were identified wrongly." The men's paternalism initially manifests itself as excessive gallantry, annoying but harmless. Later, however, their patronizing view of women as helpless, foolish, and hysterical creatures causes great insult and injury to Margaret: "'I want to go back, though, I say!' repeated Margaret, getting angry. Charles took no notice [...] 'The men are there,' chorused the others. 'They will see to it.' [...] 'Stopping's no good,' drawled Charles. 'Isn't it?' said Margaret, and jumped straight out of the **car**." When Charles flatly refuses to take Margaret seriously, she tries to go back herself.

Despite the powerfully rebellious spirit Margaret displays, her extended exposure to the Wilcoxes' sexist ideology begins to wear down her resistance, as Forster suggests how difficult it can be to stand one's ground against a powerfully dominant culture. When Margaret must negotiate with Henry on Leonard's behalf, she finds herself conforming to his ideals of demure womanhood: "She was ashamed of her own diplomacy. In dealing with a Wilcox, how tempting it was to lapse from comradeship, and to give him the kind of woman that he desired!" When the revelation that Henry had an affair while married to Ruth Wilcox jeopardizes Margaret and Henry's upcoming marriage, Margaret resorts to adopting an attitude of meekness and subservience to soothe Henry's humiliation. She censors herself: "Henry would resent so strong a grasp of the situation. She must not comment; comment is unfeminine." By indulging Henry's preference for a deferential wife, Margaret succeeds in preserving their marriage.

Yet she sacrifices her former principles and values when she gradually converts to this wifely identity. As soon as the Basts place her marriage at risk, she abandons them to the desperate situation she is directly responsible for: "Her conscience pricked her a little about the Basts; she was not sorry to have lost sight of them. No doubt Leonard was worth helping, but being Henry's wife, she preferred to help some one else." Forster illustrates how the fallout from Margaret's self-serving dismissal of the Basts leads to their impoverishment and deaths.

Margaret finally becomes infuriated enough to confront Henry about his harmful double standards for men and women when he crosses a critical line: he begins to insult and injure her sister. She exclaims, "You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress—I forgave you. My sister has a lover—you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel—oh, contemptible!" Henry stubbornly denies that his transgression is anything like Helen's, and he refuses to forgive Helen or allow her to stay in **Howards End**, implying that her affair and pregnancy have left her tarnished and unworthy.

Margaret fiercely objects to her husband's misogyny and plans to leave him. However, after Charles is sentenced to prison for manslaughter, thoroughly devastating Henry, she relents, giving in to her innate sympathy for Henry and to his desperate need of her. In the end, Margaret does not go off to help raise her nephew in an autonomous female household, but brings Helen and the baby back under Henry's domain in Howards End, where she forgives him everything. She even forgives Henry's paternalistic disregard of Ruth's final wish to leave Howards End to her, assuring him, "Nothing has been done wrong." She doesn't sympathize as much with Leonard, the actual dead man, telling Helen to "Forget him." Readers who are rightfully upset about these wrongs that Margaret easily pardons will object to her apparent readiness to conform to Henry's chauvinistic ideal of how a woman should disagree with him: "They would argue so jollily, and once or twice she had him in quite a tight corner, but as soon as he grew really serious, she gave in."

Forster illustrates how Margaret settles for an unenlightened marriage that stifles and trivializes her on the empty grounds of gender. Henry's preconceived notions of female inferiority may simply blind him to Margaret's truly exceptional nature, but he likely also finds it to his advantage to treat Margaret as inferior, because he need never feel insecure or weak in front of her. Forster may show his readership all the exceptional women in the world, but he's also evidently aware of the fact that men frequently fall back on self-serving denial, hampering social progress.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

HOWARDS END

Howards End, for which the novel is named, is the Wilcox family home. It originally belonged to Ruth Wilcox, whose maiden name was Howard, and represents Forster's values of empathy, modesty, dignity, and harmony. When Ruth was born there, Howards End was a small farm, but farming ceased to be sustainable over time. Henry Wilcox modernized the property to save it, selling off the animals and

acreage and building a garage and a small addition onto the house. But Howards End is still surrounded by farms, and it maintains a certain connection to the agricultural tradition, as does Ruth herself. She is frequently portrayed as carrying freshly cut hay and breathing in its scent, while the rest of her family is shut away indoors, miserable with hay fever.

Henry, Charles, and Evie do not appreciate Howards End and its connection to nature, unlike Ruth and the Schlegel sisters. When Helen and Margaret Schlegel visit the house, they marvel over the fertile gardens and the ancient, noble wych-elm that embodies the mystical spirit of the property. In centuries past, people believed that sticking teeth into the tree and chewing the bark could cure toothaches. Forster imagines that Howards End could be such a cure for the problems ailing England—poverty and inequality, greed and exploitation. "In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect—connect without bitterness until all men are brothers," Forster writes. "Only connect!" and "To see life steadily and to see it whole" are two key ideas that recur throughout the novel, expressing Forster's vision for how people should approach the world with an open and judicious mind.

By casting Howards End as the site where people may intuit these values, Forster argues for the continued relevance of agriculture and traditional ways of life at a time when England is rapidly becoming more urban and cosmopolitan. The novel arguably romanticizes farming—a grueling and unprofitable labor in reality—and doesn't identify concrete reforms that could improve the quality of life for the majority of English citizens who will likely never own their own land. But his emphasis on revaluing the land that makes up England, rather than searching ceaselessly for new resources and populations to exploit, is a clear critique of the rampant imperialism that would provoke tensions among the European nations and ultimately set off the first World War just four years after *Howards End* was published. Howards End reminds Margaret that "ten square miles are not ten times as wonderful as one square mile, that a thousand square miles are not practically the same as heaven."

CARS AND WALKS

In *Howards End*, Forster contrasts traveling by automobile with traveling by foot. The Wilcoxes love to drive, no matter how short the distance. Only Ruth Wilcox lacks the zeal for motoring, as Forster explains when he first introduces her at **Howards End**: "She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it." Both Ruth and Margaret, the past and the future "Mrs. Wilcox," prefer walking to driving whenever possible. Miss Avery claims to have mistaken Margaret for Ruth when she saw her pacing around Howards End: "You had her way of walking." When Margaret asks Henry Wilcox if they can walk to the church for Evie's wedding, Henry responds, "One can't have ladies walking through the Market Square. The Fussells wouldn't like it; they were awfully particular at Charles's wedding. My—she—our party was anxious to walk, and certainly the church was just round the corner, and I shouldn't have minded; but the Colonel made a great point of it." He can't speak the name of Ruth, his deceased wife, but evidently she agreed with Margaret. Patriarchal tradition insists that walking is unladylike, however. When Margaret chastises Henry—"Are you aware that Helen and I have walked alone over the Apennines, with our luggage on our backs?"—he retorts, "I wasn't aware, and, if I can manage it, you will never do such a thing again."

Like Margaret and Ruth, Leonard Bast valiantly treads the earth instead of riding in a car or train: "You are the man who tried to walk by the Pole Star," Margaret declares. As Leonard approaches Howards End on foot, Charles Wilcox overtakes him by car, but Forster shows this to be a hollow victory: the power to move ever faster only promotes the mistake of acting ever rasher. "He is a destroyer," Forster writes of Charles and his type, and Charles soon proves this point by impulsively pummeling Leonard and causing his weakened heart to stop. Charles shows no remorse for his rash actions, much the same as how the Wilcoxes' driver lacked any remorse for negligently running over a cat while not watching the road in the sparsely trafficked countryside. Disgusted with the needless haste of the drivers, Margaret condemned the travelling party she was a part of: "They had no part with the earth and its emotions. They were dust, and a stink, and cosmopolitan chatter, and the girl whose cat had been killed had lived more deeply than they." Forster associates motors with heedlessness and destructiveness. He thus hints at Henry's reformation late in the book when Henry rejects Charles's offer to drive him half a mile: "You young fellows' one idea is to get into a motor. I tell you, I want to walk; I'm very fond of walking."

BOOKS

The symbolism of books in *Howards End* is far from straightforward. On one hand, the deeply-read Schlegel sisters, Margaret and Helen, demonstrate greater empathy and more profoundly critical thinking than most of their counterparts. The Wilcoxes, for example, are fond of sporting and little else, and lack imagination and compassion. On the other hand, Forster suggests that books can only teach one so much about the world—they often speak to a narrow experience, and fail to substantially engage with the issues and conditions faced by the masses. Leonard Bast glorifies great literature and art, and regards high culture as essential to improving his bleak life. Yet Forster critiques these "great" writers for writing in a highly romantic mode that neglects to

address life's ugly realities. Leonard turns to an author he considers to be "the greatest master of English Prose" for insight, but struggles to connect with the text: "And the voice in the gondola rolled on, piping melodiously of Effort and Self-Sacrifice, full of high purpose, full of beauty, full even of sympathy and the love of men, yet somehow eluding all that was actual and insistent in Leonard's life. For it was the voice of one who had never been dirty or hungry, and had not guessed successfully what dirt and hunger are."

Literature that is fundamentally estranged from real life serves less of a purpose than literature that engages with the true human condition. Likewise, reading by itself does not automatically cause one's worldview or judgment to evolve—one must also acquire the confidence and the expertise to fully understand the text and actively consider how it applies to one's own life. Leonard impresses the Schlegels not with his ability to repeat ideas that he has read in books, but with his spontaneous effort to think for himself and spend a night out **walking** the streets and roaming the woods instead of keeping to the safety of his bed: "[T]hrough the mists of his culture came a hard fact, hard as a pebble. 'I walked all the Saturday night,' said Leonard. 'I walked.' A thrill of approval ran through the sisters." The Schlegels try to cultivate this independent streak in Leonard, but insecure as he is about his lack of higher education and worldly experience, he fails to grasp that his original thoughts could be of any real value. In the end, books cannot save Leonard from his tragic fate—he clutches at a bookshelf as he staggers under Charles Wilcox's blows, but it topples over and flattens him, instead. His heart stops amidst an avalanche of his beloved books.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Thrift Editions edition of *Howards End* published in 2002.

Chapter 3 Quotes

They were all silent. It was Mrs. Wilcox.

She approached just as Helen's letter had described her, trailing noiselessly over the lawn, and there was actually a wisp of hay in her hands. She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it. One knew that she worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her.

Related Characters: Ruth Wilcox

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 14-15

Explanation and Analysis

The scene of Ruth Wilcox's grand entrance into the novel is loaded with symbolic imagery, as Ruth herself practically becomes a symbol over the course of the story. She is associated with tranquility and steadiness, drawing poise and insight from her connection to the earth and her respect for the long history of human nature. She reveres the natural world from each young piece of hay to the ancient, giant wych-elm tree that towers over the house. She values the past and does not hasten to embrace every new innovation, unlike her husband and children. For her, comfort is not convenience, but contentment in leading a life full of warmth, harmony, and meaning, if possible. She assumes the silent, invisible authority of nature itself, righting imbalance and reminding people of what truly matters beneath the strife and contrivances of society and modern life. She spurns the inhuman automobile so prized by her family, and cherishes her house, a stable, warm home raised on solid and enduring foundations.

Chapter 4 Quotes

"When I saw all the others so placid, and Paul mad with terror in case I said the wrong thing, I felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs, and that if it fell I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness."

Related Characters: Helen Schlegel (speaker), Paul Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

"Panic and emptiness" becomes Helen's refrain for the great emotional void that characterizes the Wilcox family. She believes that they have failed to learn how to confront or master their emotions, and so they hide their wild fears, grief, and insecurities behind material objects and distractions like newspapers, cars, and golf clubs. They pursue diversions that keep them at a remove from the

world, like news that is reported impersonally and dispassionately, trips to see nature briefly and from a safe distance, and games that operate by artificial rules in artificial environments. When they are forced to face up to emotional crises, they have no foundations from which to form a mature response. Their confidence and expertise in life is fraudulent, being ignorant of the powerful emotions that comprise human nature.

"The truth is that there is a great outer life that you and I have never touched—a life in which telegrams and anger count. Personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there. There love means marriage settlements, death, death duties. So far I'm clear. But here my difficulty. This outer life, though obviously horrid; often seems the real one—there's grit in it. It does breed character. Do personal relations lead to sloppiness in the end?"

"Oh, Meg—, that's what I felt, only not so clearly, when the Wilcoxes were so competent, and seemed to have their hands on all the ropes."

Related Characters: Helen Schlegel, Margaret Schlegel (speaker), Paul Wilcox

Related Themes:

Page Number: 18

Explanation and Analysis

Margaret observes that the Wilcoxes care about the proper protocol and the economic costs involved in the affairs of life more than they care about the emotions and relationships involved. When Helen and Paul suddenly decided to get engaged, the Wilcoxes made a terrible fuss over the matter, which was nothing but a harmless youthful mistake in the end. Margaret and Helen disapprove of the Wilcoxes' tendency to resort to "telegrams and anger" in order to get their way. The Schlegels believe that understanding and respecting "personal relations" is necessary to live a good life. Nonetheless, the sisters cannot help but admire the Wilcoxes' business-like approach to matters. The Wilcoxes' concern with maintaining order can be efficient and impressive, while human relationships can be extremely messy. The Wilcoxes' confident ideas about anything and everything give the impression that they "have their hands on all the ropes" as puppeteers of men.

"It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile, and that a million square miles are almost the same as heaven."

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 20

Explanation and Analysis

The father of the Schlegel children, a German intellectual, says this quote while arguing with his nephew about Germany's embrace of materialism and imperialism. He believes that the country's hunger for ever-greater territory and riches will not lead to happiness, but to ruin. A bigger nation is not always a greater nation—greatness is found within, not merely without. Margaret will echo this idea when she first visits Howards End and is so enchanted by its comfortable, modest size. A bigger house, like the manor Henry buys for them in Oniton, would make her no happier, but only increase her worries about managing the estate and keeping up appearances. For the country as a whole, when building an enormous empire requires oppressing millions of other people, bigger is not more wonderful or heavenly, but the opposite.

Chapter 5 Quotes

It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man…you are bound to admit that such a noise is cheap at two shillings. It is cheap, even if you hear it in the Queen's Hall, dreariest music-room in London, though not as dreary as the Free Trade Hall, Manchester; and even if you sit on the extreme left of that hall, so that the brass bumps at you before the rest of the orchestra arrives, it is still cheap.

Related Characters: Leonard Bast, Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator of *Howards End* appears to speak on the Schlegels' behalf when he asserts that "you are bound to admit that such a noise is cheap at two shillings." To

Margaret, Helen, and Tibby Schlegel, whose family fortune enables them to spend all their time and money on leisure, spending a few hours and a few shillings on a work of musical genius costs little indeed. They can even afford to be snobs about the site of the music, looking down on the concert halls that appear too "dreary" and the undesirable seating where one must put up with too much brass. They are not too snobbish to avoid such concert halls or such seating arrangements all together, but they are snobbish enough to call their seats that afternoon "cheap" three times in a row. To Leonard Bast, who must spend most of his time working for money and can afford very little leisure, the concert is not so "cheap."

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ And the voice in the gondola rolled on, piping melodiously of Effort and Self-Sacrifice, full of high purpose, full of beauty, full even of sympathy and the love of men, yet somehow eluding all that was actual and insistent in Leonard's life. For it was the voice of one who had never been dirty or hungry, and had not guessed successfully what dirt and hunger are.

Related Characters: Leonard Bast

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 34-35

Explanation and Analysis

Leonard is reading a book by John Ruskin, the author whom he considers to be "the greatest master of English prose." Ruskin was a Victorian writer who often wrote in a very elaborate style, as in the passage Leonard reads. The book takes place in a beautiful Venetian setting, and discusses beautiful ideals like self-sacrifice and love of fellow man. Nonetheless, Leonard cannot connect to this sympathetic, melodious book. The writer sounds as if he has never been in Leonard's place, and he seems like he would be unable to even imagine what it would be like to be poor. Leonard's world is completely remote from Ruskin's, so his messages don't speak to Leonard. Leonard blames himself for not being able to learn from Ruskin, but Ruskin has not made an effort to write anything relevant to people like Leonard. In seeking a deeper understanding of the world he lives in, Leonard would do better to turn away from Ruskin and think critically about his own experiences and what he can learn from them.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ "You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. It's only when we see some one near us tottering that we realise all that an independent income means. Last night, when we were talking up here round the fire, I began to think that the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin."

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel (speaker), Juley Munt

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

From a curious, questioning child, Margaret has grown into a wise, reflective adult who doesn't take ideas or beliefs at face value. She seeks to understand human nature, and she can see through convenient or simple reductions of complicated reality. While she once believed that "the lowest abyss" of human life was "the absence of love," she now adjusts her thinking to go beyond her own experiences and consider the idea that that a penniless existence could well be worse than a loveless one. Unlike characters like Henry Wilcox, Margaret is capable of thinking broadly about the world and about people different from herself. She acknowledges that her fortune alone protects her from the terrible struggle that others face just to stay afloat. While she has long believed that people's shared feelings—the "unseen" essential human emotions that connect us—should overcome all superficial differences, by recognizing that "the very soul of the world is economic," she now understands that her old belief fails to take into account crucial financial realities.

Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ They did not make the mistake of handling human affairs in the bulk, but disposed of them item by item, sharply…It is the best—perhaps the only—way of dodging emotion. They were the average human article, and had they considered the note as a whole it would have driven them miserable or mad. Considered item by item, the emotional content was minimised, and all went forward smoothly.

Related Characters: Charles Wilcox, Henry Wilcox

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

Henry and Charles Wilcox dare not think too broadly or too deeply about emotional matters like human affairs. Rather, the father and son strictly compartmentalize their thoughts. By treating matters "item by item," like following a boardroom agenda, they maintain a businesslike manner and avoid any emotions. Forster calls the two men "average," unable to fathom the extraordinary kind of insight possessed by Ruth Wilcox, the family matriarch. Henry and Charles simply could have trusted her judgment and fulfilled her written wish to leave her house, Howards End, to Margaret, but they could not accept the fact that she would want to leave the property to someone other than them, her family. Acknowledging Ruth's preference for Margaret over them would be too hurtful, so their denial of Ruth's note is arguably a fundamentally emotional decision disguised as a rational one.

Chapter 13 Quotes

To speak against London is no longer fashionable. The Earth as an artistic cult has had its day, and the literature of the near future will probably ignore the country and seek inspiration from the town. One can understand the reaction…Certainly London fascinates. One visualises it as a tract of quivering grey, intelligent without purpose, and excitable without love; as a spirit that has altered before it can be chronicled; as a heart that certainly beats, but with no pulsation of humanity. It lies beyond everything.

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 76-77

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator of *Howards End* muses on the cultural ascendency of London. The city has replaced the countryside as the setting for most works of contemporary literature, to public and artistic detriment. The narrator feels that the fluctuating essence and anonymous masses of the modern city lead to alienation and dehumanization. Unprecedented industrialization has created a place beyond our understanding—"beyond everything." It is the miserable color grey that Margaret Schlegel wishes to escape with her efforts to make meaningful connections beyond herself. While London's endless novelty and perpetual movement fascinates, its pounding heart lacks "humanity." Forster believes that the quieter life in the countryside, the people who inhabit modest homes like Howards End, still have more to offer England than the nation's growing urban centers can provide.

Chapter 14 Quotes

…[Leonard's] outburst ended in a swamp of books. No disrespect to these great names. The fault is ours, not theirs. They mean us to use them for sign-posts, and are not to blame if, in our weakness, we mistake the sign-post for the destination. And Leonard had reached the destination. He had visited the county of Surrey when darkness covered its amenities, and its cosy villas had re-entered ancient night. Every twelve hours this miracle happens, but he had troubled to go and see for himself. Within his cramped little mind dwelt something that was greater than Jefferies' books—the spirit that led Jefferies to write them.

Related Characters: Helen Schlegel, Margaret Schlegel, Leonard Bast

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 85-86

Explanation and Analysis

Leonard ascribes his inspiration for his overnight walking expedition to his study of authors like Richard Jefferies, an acclaimed English nature writer. Forster's narrator, as well as the Schlegel sisters, disapprove of Leonard's tendency to simply list off authors without recognizing how he developed his own original ideas. Great writers are "signposts," meant to educate and guide readers towards reaching their own conclusions. They are not in themselves a "destination" to stop at. Leonard had sought out his own spiritual destination by making the effort to witness the "miracle" of nightfall in a remote setting. Even someone with as limited education as Leonard has had, left with only a "cramped little mind," can possess or develop a spiritual genius as great as that of any groundbreaking author. Books alone cannot create an intrepid mind—just look at Tibby, who feeds his intellect on library after library while declining to venture out into the world and explore for himself. His haughty wit will never take the leap that Leonard's eagerness did.

Chapter 15 Quotes

❝ "It is so slurred over and hushed up, there is so little clear thinking…so few of us think clearly about our own private incomes, and admit that independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means. Money: give Mr. Bast money, and don't bother about his ideals. He'll pick up those for himself."

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel (speaker), Leonard Bast

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

Arguing with her discussion group about how one can best use charitable funds to help members of the working poor like Leonard Bast, Margaret asserts that distributing money directly to people in need is the most effective way of helping them raise themselves up. Her friends object, insisting that the money should be used to sponsor specific enrichment activities, like a free library or a free trip, or to subsidize a necessity, like the cost of food or rent. They believe that simply handing out cash would lead to laziness and moral degradation. Margaret disagrees, arguing that any money given to Leonard would be no different from the private incomes which the group members themselves receive. They may not like to admit it, but they haven't earned their own fortunes, either, and Leonard would be just as likely to use his windfall for education and self-improvement as they themselves have done. The upper-class ladies would prefer to think of themselves as uniquely virtuous and enlightened, exclusively fit to decide what's best for the less civilized classes, but Margaret points out that their enlightenment only arose from the money given to them to start with.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ [Leonard] understood his own corner of the machine, but nothing beyond it…To him, as to the British public, the Porphyrion was the Porphyrion of the advertisement—a giant, in the classical style, but draped sufficiently, who held in one hand a burning torch, and pointed with the other to St. Paul's and Windsor Castle. A large sum of money was inscribed below, and you drew your own conclusions…A giant was of an impulsive morality—one knew that much. He would pay for Mrs. Munt's hearthrug with ostentatious haste, a large claim he would repudiate quietly, and fight court by court. But his true fighting weight, his antecedents, his amours with other members of the commercial Pantheon—all these were as uncertain to ordinary mortals as were the escapades of Zeus.

Related Characters: Leonard Bast

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator of *Howards End* uses Leonard's cluelessness about his employer to indict the corruption and lack of transparency at the heart of private corporations and business interests. The Porphyrion, an insurance company, thrives by misdirecting its customers. The insurer advertises itself as a mighty company that can handle anything, but it isn't upfront about its claims policies. It's to the advantage of the business to allow its customers to draw their own mistaken conclusions, rather than reveal all of its profitable tactics. The suggestion of a human-like "impulsive morality" is less objectionable to the public than the truth: their insurer calculatingly decides which claims to cover based on their strategic self-interest. The Porphyrion doesn't disclose to customers its "true fighting weight" and its "amours with other members of the commercial Pantheon"—in other words, the degree to which its collective (and confederate) power outweighs that of the individual claimant. Leonard's lack of conclusive facts about his employer leaves him at the mercy of secondhand reports and fatal misinformation.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ "I don't intend him, or any man or any woman, to be all my life—good heavens, no! There are heaps of things in me that he doesn't, and shall never, understand."

Thus she spoke before the wedding ceremony and the physical union, before the astonishing glass shade had fallen that interposes between married couples and the world. She was to keep her independence more than do most women as yet…Yet he did alter her character—a little. There was an unforeseen surprise, a cessation of the winds and odours of life, a social pressure that would have her think conjugally.

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 125

Explanation and Analysis

When Margaret agrees to marry Henry, she declares that she won't yield her personal agency and values to her husband's will. She is a supporter of gender equality and women's rights and doesn't intend to become a traditional docile wife. She considers herself to be more thoughtful and principled than her husband—certainly not inferior to him. Nonetheless, the narrator of *Howards End* foretells that Margaret speaks prematurely: she will in fact surrender some of her old self to the pressures of marriage. The narrator attributes this change of character to the unprecedented seclusion of married life, where a couple becomes cut off from the public "winds" and currents of the world that used to shape their personalities. The spouses' new privacy and intimacy creates a new world with slightly different rules. Even when they reenter the wider world, they are expected to meet society as a union, not as two separate individuals. Margaret, already prepared to accommodate Henry privately, does not prove fully immune to society's expectations of her behavior as Henry's wife.

Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ It was the first [Margaret] had heard of the mews behind Ducie Street. When she was a possible tenant it had suppressed itself, not consciously, but automatically. The breezy Wilcox manner, though genuine, lacked the clearness of vision that is imperative for truth. When Henry lived in Ducie Street he remembered the mews; when he tried to let he forgot it; and if any one had remarked that the mews must be either there or not, he would have felt annoyed, and afterwards have found some opportunity of stigmatising the speaker as academic. So does my grocer stigmatise me when I complain of the quality of his sultanas, and he answers in one breath that they are the best sultanas, and how can I expect the best sultanas at that price? It is a flaw inherent in the business mind, and Margaret may do well to be tender to it, considering all that the business mind has done for England.

Related Characters: Henry Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

Henry kept the fact of his street's smelly horse mews (or stables) to himself when he was trying to rent his house to Margaret, but now that they are considering living there together, he complains about them freely. She realizes that he wasn't being honest earlier because he was trying to get more money for his property. The narrator of *Howards End* claims that Henry censored himself "not consciously, but automatically," and simply "forgot" about the mews when he was talking to renters. Denying that Henry *meant* to cheat his tenants is pretty generous, but the narrator quickly turns critical. He points out the proper reaction to Henry's misrepresentation —"the mews must be either there or not"—and describes Henry's weak retort dismissing the objection as "academic." Moreover, likening Henry to a penny-pinching grocer undermines his status as a prominent and successful dealer on the imperial stage, poking holes in his authority as a national asset. When the narrator then concludes that "Margaret may do well to be tender to" Henry's habitual dishonesty "considering all that the business mind has done for England," the audience thus understands that the narrator is likely speaking sarcastically.

Chapter 22 Quotes

❝ Whether as boy, husband, or widower, [Henry] had always the sneaking belief that bodily passion is bad…Religion had confirmed him. The words that were read aloud on Sunday to him and to other respectable men were the words that had once kindled the souls of St. Catherine and St. Francis into a white-hot hatred of the carnal. He could not be as the saints and love the Infinite with a seraphic ardour, but he could be a little ashamed of loving a wife. Amabat, amare timebat. And it was here that Margaret hoped to help him.

…Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height.

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel, Henry Wilcox

Related Themes:

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

The Victorian Era officially concluded with Queen Victoria's death in 1901, just nine years before *Howards End* was published. Thus Henry would have lived most of his life in the Victorian Era, when morality, sexuality, and gender roles were strictly dictated by traditional religious and societal norms. Having sexual desire was shameful, and women's supposed inferiority to men made wholeheartedly loving women shameful to men, as well. Henry's views have not evolved with the progressive leanings of the Edwardian Era. Thus, he firmly represses his feelings of passion, love, and affection. Margaret would like to preach a new philosophy to Henry, one that would help him to see that both the non-passionate duties of marriage—making a happy family and home together, supporting each other in public—and the private, amorous elements—exchanging words of affection, being intimate with one another—are equally essential and natural. Both the "prose and the passion," or the "outer life" and the "inner life," are crucial for humanity. "Only connect!" was the epigraph to *Howards End*, and the novel's mantra.

Chapter 23 Quotes

❝ [Margaret] was glad to go there, for Henry had implied his business rather than described it, and the formlessness and vagueness that one associates with Africa itself had hitherto brooded over the main sources of his wealth. Not that a visit to the office cleared things up…even when she penetrated to the inner depths, she found only the ordinary table and Turkey carpet, and though the map over the fireplace did depict a helping of West Africa, it was a very ordinary map. Another map hung opposite, on which the whole continent appeared, looking like a whale marked out for blubber.

Related Characters: Henry Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

Margaret stops by Henry's office, the Imperial and West Africa Rubber Company. She is interested in the chance to observe exactly what he does for a living, since he's hardly explained it to her. She wants to shed light on "the formlessness and vagueness" that shrouds the continent and his business there. Yet the office itself doesn't reveal the answers she's looking for—it looks the same as any other office, with mundane furnishings and only a few maps of Africa on the walls. On the surface, Henry's work is simply routine and harmless. The reality of colonialism takes place thousands of miles away, out of sight from the typical English citizen. But the narrator of *Howards End* hints at the ugly truth when he describes the continent of Africa "looking like a whale marked out for blubber." Killing and carving whales for blubber is one of the most repulsive labors imaginable. Moreover, comparing a whole continent and its people to a species freely slaughtered for trade suggests the brutality against, and dehumanization of, native African populations. Margaret knows Henry's business is rubber, one of the most brutal colonial industries. However, she only sees what she wants to see.

Chapter 25 Quotes

❝ Nothing could have exceeded the kindness of the two men. They raised windows for some ladies, and lowered them for others, they rang the bell for the servant, they identified the colleges as the train slipped past Oxford, they caught books or bag-purses in the act of tumbling on to the floor.... Margaret bowed to a charm of which she did not wholly approve, and said nothing when the Oxford colleges were identified wrongly. "Male and female created He them"; the journey to Shrewsbury confirmed this questionable statement, and the long glass saloon, that moved so easily and felt so comfortable, became a forcing-house for the idea of sex.

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator of *Howards End* characterizes the behavior of the men in Henry's wedding party on the way to the wedding. The men appear to be very attentive and considerate towards the women in the group, doing everything they can on the women's behalf. But Margaret objects to this etiquette nonetheless, understanding that their extreme courtesy is actually demeaning towards women. The gentlemen are so proactive on the ladies' behalf because they believe that women couldn't possibly handle the same ordinary strains of travel that men do. They never imagine that Margaret might be more knowledgeable about Oxford than they are, and Margaret chooses to remain silent rather than upset their assumptions. Thus the group's conduct on the train ride faithfully follows traditional gender differences, no matter how "questionable" the fundamental differences between men and woman may be. The pressure to conform to gender roles can be as silent and forceful as the smooth movement of the speeding train.

❝ [Charles] described what he believed to have happened. Albert had flattened out a cat, and Miss Schlegel had lost her nerve, as any woman might. She had been got safely into the other car, but when it was in motion had leapt out again, in spite of all that they could say. After walking a little on the road, she had calmed down and had said that she was sorry. His father accepted this explanation, and neither knew that Margaret had artfully prepared the way for it. It fitted in too well with their view of feminine nature.

Related Characters: Henry Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel, Charles Wilcox

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 153-154

Explanation and Analysis

Charles gives his account of the incident on the road, colored by his view of female fragility. In his portrayal, Margaret disobeyed him because she had badly lost her nerve. In fact, she had rallied her nerve to oppose his tyranny. But it's safer for Margaret to make the men think that she lost her nerve over nothing that for them to realize that she was intentionally protesting Charles's patriarchal attitude. It's also in Charles's best interest not to tell his father how his careless disregard for Margaret's repeated appeals provoked her to leap out of his vehicle, so he chooses to forget that part of the story. The men never doubt that Margaret would be hysterical enough over the death of a cat to jump out of a moving car, but they never imagine that she would take such drastic measures to assert her own will in the face of their infuriating condescension towards her.

Chapter 26 Quotes

❝ "I shall never get work now. If rich people fail at one profession, they can try another. Not I. I had my groove, and I've got out of it. I could do one particular branch of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that's all. Poetry's nothing, Miss Schlegel. One's thoughts about this and that are nothing. Your money, too, is nothing, if you'll understand me. I mean if a man over twenty once loses his own particular job, it's all over with him. I have seen it happen to others. Their friends gave them money for a little, but in the end they fall over the edge. It's no good. It's the whole world pulling. There always will be rich and poor."

Related Characters: Leonard Bast (speaker), Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

Leonard speaks with a newly cynical perspective after losing his latest job. Before, he always tried his best to work hard and secure a steady income to provide for his family. He didn't complain about how hard it was to scrape by, only sought to enrich his life with art and culture in his spare time. He did everything anyone could have expected him to do to make a decent living in his place in the system. Yet he failed because of circumstances entirely out of his control. He realizes that philosophy, intellectual theories, and aesthetics are irrelevant in a such coldly competitive world. All the conversations and books in the world mean nothing when one can find no money for food or shelter. He echoes the very same phrase previously uttered by Henry Wilcox to discourage Helen from concerning herself with Leonard's hardship: "There always will be rich and poor." He has become fatalistic and hopeless about the value of things like literature and human relations, neither of which can make any difference to his desperate situation in the long run. He describes the same inevitable inequality that Henry does, the major difference being that Henry possesses the social and financial capital to influence the system and Leonard does not. Henry actually controls the "inevitable" fate of England's classes, while Leonard can do nothing.

Chapter 29 Quotes

❝ Now and then [Henry] asked [Margaret] whether she could possibly forgive him, and she answered, "I have already forgiven you, Henry." She chose her words carefully, and so saved him from panic. She played the girl, until he could rebuild his fortress and hide his soul from the world. When the butler came to clear away, Henry was in a very different mood—asked the fellow what he was in such a hurry for, complained of the noise last night in the servants' hall. Margaret looked intently at the butler. He, as a handsome young man, was faintly attractive to her as a woman—an attraction so faint as scarcely to be perceptible, yet the skies would have fallen if she had mentioned it to Henry.

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel (speaker), Henry Wilcox

Related Themes:

Page Number:

Explanation and Analysis

Margaret reassures Henry that he does not need to ask for her forgiveness—he already has it. By framing her forgiveness as an automatic token of her loyalty to him, rather than a privilege she may grant him, she spares his pride from having to humble himself and take judgment from his future wife. Henry readily accepts this pretense of deference and resumes his typical superior manner. He harasses the butler a bit in order to reassert his authority, and he never enters into the kind of self-reflection that could lead to a change in character. Margaret still believes that her love will somehow help him to become a better man, but all her love seems to be doing so far is allowing him to continue his bad habits without challenging him on them. She knows Henry is terribly hypocritical when it comes to gender and sexuality—he would never forgive her for admitting attraction to another man, let alone a man beneath her station, yet he was able to justify his own affair with a common woman: "Cut off from decent society and family ties, what do you suppose happens to thousands of young fellows overseas?" However, she resists calling Henry out on his double standards, aware at some undeniable level that she could never hope to reform him, despite her illusions: "the skies would have fallen" if she dared broach the conversation.

❝ As is Man to the Universe, so was the mind of Mr. Wilcox to the minds of some men—a concentrated light upon a tiny spot, a little Ten Minutes moving self-contained through its appointed years. No Pagan he, who lives for the Now, and may be wiser than all philosophers. He lived for the five minutes that have past, and the five to come; he had the business mind.

Related Characters: Henry Wilcox

Related Themes:

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator of *Howards End* declares that Henry's mind is as small and narrow compared to other people's minds, just as a human being is small compared to the entire universe. His thought process is as short-lived and shallow as a human lifespan compared to the eternity of the universe. He can only think about ten minutes at a time. Far from being a "Pagan" who respects the enduring power of nature and the earth, Henry cares for little beyond the immediate moment. Yet he "may be wiser than all philosophers," for "he had the business mind." The narrator is almost certainly being ironic once again—recall that he last invoked Henry's great "business mind" when describing Henry's petty dishonesty regarding the stench of stables behind his London house. People like Margaret are impressed by

Henry's reputation for efficiency and productivity, and thinking quickly may be wiser in certain situations than thinking too deeply. But you risk losing the universe if you never raise your eyes from the immediate past, present, and future.

Chapter 33 Quotes

"All was not sadness. The sun was shining without. The thrush sang his two syllables on the budding guelder-rose. Some children were playing uproariously in heaps of golden straw. It was the presence of sadness at all that surprised Margaret, and ended by giving her a feeling of completeness. In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect—connect without bitterness until all men are brothers.

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 192

Explanation and Analysis

To "see life steadily and see it whole" is one of the most important motifs in *Howards End*. Margaret is said to see the world "whole," while Henry sees it "steadily." Learning to see both ways at once, like learning to "connect the prose and the passion," is the ideal human achievement in the eyes of the book's narrator. *Howards End* is greatly concerned with the clarity of vision of its characters. Henry is repeatedly criticized for his "obtuseness" and his limited attention span, failing to notice anything that doesn't serve his self-interest or that falls outside of his existing preconceptions. By contrast, Ruth seems to miss nothing. It is fitting, then, that the narrator deems Ruth's home, Howards End, the place where one might finally see the world both ways, as intended. Margaret is able to perceive both the idyllic happiness of fields "budding" and "golden," and the sadness of inevitable death, the other point in the natural life cycle. In that moment, she can see completely.

Chapter 38 Quotes

"You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress—I forgave you. My sister has a lover—you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel—oh, contemptible!—a man who insults his wife when she's alive and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for his pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men. And gives bad financial advice, and then says he is not responsible. These men are you. You can't recognise them, because you cannot connect… Only say to yourself, 'What Helen has done, I've done.'"

Related Characters: Margaret Schlegel (speaker), Leonard Bast, Jacky Bast, Ruth Wilcox, Helen Schlegel, Henry Wilcox

Related Themes:

Page Number: 221

Explanation and Analysis

Margaret erupts in anger at Henry for his blind inability to recognize his own flaws while severely criticizing the shortcomings of other people. She agreed to marry him because she believed she could help him connect his personal experiences with his public ethics, and encourage reform. But he refuses to acknowledge the wrong he has done and only condemns it in others instead. She thought that his denial would gradually break down under her influence, yet it is stronger than ever. His condemnation of his sister-in-law's affair is the clearest instance so far of his double standard for his own actions and others', since he himself has had an extramarital affair. Instead of ineffectively hinting at his insincere character, Margaret resorts to fiercely berating her husband and demanding that he account for his many wrongdoings. This tactic is equally unsuccessful, as Henry has such a righteous and superior view of himself that he continues to disregard all of her accusations.

Chapter 41 Quotes

"Here men had been up since dawn. Their hours were ruled, not by a London office, but by the movements of the crops and the sun…They are England's hope…

At the chalk pit a motor passed [Leonard]. In it was another type, whom Nature favours—the Imperial. Healthy, ever in motion, it hopes to inherit the earth. It breeds as quickly as the yeoman, and as soundly; strong is the temptation to acclaim it as a super-yeoman, who carries his country's virtue overseas. But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer.

Related Characters: Charles Wilcox, Leonard Bast

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 232

Explanation and Analysis

Leonard walks from the Hilton train station to Howards End, as Margaret enjoyed doing not long ago. They both observed in passing the fields and farms, the locals who represented England's past, as well as her potential hopeful future. The local farmers, or yeomen, have resisted the tide of the modern city and the business of empire. They remain concerned with their own land and their own goods, not the land and the goods of other countries. They walk and observe, rather than rushing to and fro in cars. Nature may reward with great wealth the man of empire who seeks a large fortune and triumphs over the men of other countries, but such a man is actually a "destroyer." Thinking himself a hero or genius, he is nothing of the kind. The narrator of *Howards End* deems Charles this type of hollow destroyer, foreshadowing his senseless destruction of Leonard.

Chapter 42 Quotes

"You go on as if I didn't know my own mind," said Mr. Wilcox fretfully. Charles hardened his mouth. "You young fellows' one idea is to get into a motor. I tell you, I want to walk; I'm very fond of walking."

...Charles did not like it; he was uneasy about his father, who did not seem himself this morning. There was a petulant touch about him—more like a woman. Could it be that he was growing old? The Wilcoxes were not lacking in affection; they had it royally, but they did not know how to use it.

Related Characters: Henry Wilcox (speaker), Charles Wilcox

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 236

Explanation and Analysis

Henry used to be as keen to drive as anybody, but now he begins to suspect how his passion for ever-greater acceleration—along with reduced caution—has created a terrible model for his children. His son Charles rashly attacked Leonard Bast with a sword, prompting a fatal heart attack in the boy. Charles didn't envision the drastic consequences of his violence before he acted, and he still doesn't seem to understand that he's in danger of being convicted of Leonard's murder. Henry wants to walk down to the police station to see what's going to happen to his son now that it's too late to have taught him any differently. Charles interprets his father's newfound desire to walk as unmanly, suspecting that he's becoming emasculated as he ages. Father and son have great affection for one another, but they never learned how to show it. Embracing emotions and a slower pace of life would have helped them to develop a better relationship, but they were too preoccupied with appearing hypermasculine and stoic, and the time has come to pay the price.

Margaret was silent. Something shook her life in its inmost recesses, and she shivered.

"I didn't do wrong, did I?" [Henry] asked, bending down.

"You didn't, darling. Nothing has been done wrong."

From the garden came laughter. "Here they are at last!" exclaimed Henry, disengaging himself with a smile. Helen rushed into the gloom, holding Tom by one hand and carrying her baby on the other. There were shouts of infectious joy.

"The field's cut!" Helen cried excitedly—"the big meadow! We've seen to the very end, and it'll be such a crop of hay as never!"

Related Characters: Helen Schlegel, Margaret Schlegel, Henry Wilcox (speaker), Ruth Wilcox

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 246

Explanation and Analysis

After finally hearing how Ruth had wanted to give Margaret Howards End when she died several years ago, Margaret is shocked at how well the first Mrs. Wilcox predicted the future. She is also shocked at how callously Henry disregarded his first wife's dying wishes. Nonetheless, she assures him that he did nothing wrong. Perhaps she means what she says; perhaps she just knows that nothing she could say now would change what has been done, or even change Henry's mind. While he appears to have become slightly more self-aware today than he had been in the past,

embracing Helen and her illegitimate son instead of shunning them, he is an old man, and habitually opposed to self-evaluation and change. Yet the final images and motifs of the novel are largely optimistic—"laughter," "smile," "infectious joy," excited cries, and new hay. *Howards End* concludes on a hopeful vision of the future, the agricultural utopia at work. But there remains a lingering "gloom," and the novel ends on the foreboding word "never!" The lower-class Basts are missing from this happy picture, with Leonard Bast's son to be raised in the lap of privilege, severed from his father's past. The Schlegels may have forgotten about Leonard's sacrifice, but Forster wants the reader to remember.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Helen Schlegel writes three letters to her older sister "Meg," or Margaret. Helen is staying at **Howards End**, an "old and little" house in the English countryside. In the first letter, she describes the charming house and the family who lives there, the Wilcoxes. Because the wealthy Wilcoxes seemed quite haughty when the sisters first met them, Margaret and Helen had imagined that their house would be much grander—more like a manor rather than an old farmhouse. Margaret was also invited to visit, but she stayed in London to care for their brother, Tibby, who is suffering from hay fever. Helen writes that the Wilcox children—Charles, Evie, and Paul—and their father, Henry, all suffer from hay fever as well, but are more stoic about it than Tibby. Only Ruth Wilcox, Henry's wife, is immune, and she loves the hay and the flowers.

Forster chooses to open the novel with letters written by Helen rather than with the perspective of the omniscient narrator who comments on human behavior throughout the rest of the novel. Delaying the narrative commentary allows readers to experience indirectly the surface charm of the Wilcoxes and understand its raw appeal before the family's charisma is criticized and explained. Readers are also put into the place of Helen's sister, Margaret, by reading the messages addressed to her. Before Forster introduces Margaret to his audience in the next chapter, he gives them a chance to imagine how they would think in her shoes, as the recipient of Helen's letters.

In Helen's next letter, she reports that she is "having a glorious time" with the Wilcoxes. She admires Ruth for being so sweet, steady, and unselfish. Henry convincingly talks Helen out of all of her beliefs learned from **books**—women's suffrage, universal equality—and she laments, "Meg, shall we ever learn to talk less?" She enjoys joining the family on **drives** around the country and laughs at their hay fever. In Helen's last, brief letter, she tells her sister that she has fallen in love with Paul.

Helen establishes the characterization of Ruth Wilcox as calm and selfless, and Henry Wilcox as smooth and anti-intellectual. The Wilcoxes are associated with motor cars and mechanical modern life, their allergies emphasizing their alienation from nature and its rhythms. Helen's abrupt declaration of her love for Paul also seems outside of the natural rhythm of things—it appears out of nowhere, fully formed, with no organic growth or evolution.

CHAPTER 2

Margaret shares Helen's news with her aunt, Juley Munt, who is staying at the Schlegels' home in Wickham Place to keep Margaret company while she cares for Tibby. Margaret is sympathetic to the idea of love at first sight, while Mrs. Munt considers it hasty and impractical. Margaret plans to take the train down to **Howards End** to talk to Helen in person, but Tibby pleads with her to stay and read to him, so she sends Mrs. Munt down in her place. Margaret drives her aunt to the train station and tells her not to mention anything to the Wilcoxes until she speaks to Helen. When Margaret returns home, she finds a telegram from Helen saying her fling with Paul is all over, but it's too late to stop Mrs. Munt.

Margaret appears to be more rational than her sister, though she is highly sympathetic to Helen's feelings and not critical of her judgment. The two clearly have a very close relationship, and share a romantic temperament, as opposed to the typical pragmatic attitude of the English. Their maternal aunt views them as rather unorthodox, influenced by their father's German ancestry. Forster foreshadows the fact that Juley will thus fail to grasp the complex emotions that Margaret has sensed at play.

CHAPTER 3

On the train, Mrs. Munt recalls when her sister Emily died after giving birth to Tibby. Margaret was only thirteen at the time, but she insisted that she didn't need Juley to come and help raise Tibby and five-year-old Helen. When the children's father died five years later, Margaret again refused her aunt's offer to move in. But Mrs. Munt feels bound to intervene now and then, often giving bad advice. She mistrusts the tendency of her unmarried nieces to invite all types of people over—she is especially suspicious of foreigners, even the Schlegels' German cousins on their father's side—and is pleased to be on hand to help prevent one potential scandal.

Juley Munt gives the conventional English perspective on the Schlegel family. Forster portrays her as rather ridiculous and overbearing, if well-intentioned. She advises bad investments in the country's railways based on blind faith in national institutions, and has a narrow view of acceptable social company. She disapproves of her nieces' mixed acquaintances, looking down on the Wilcoxes as inferior social climbers. Meanwhile, Margaret appears quite competent and capable.

Mrs. Munt gets off the train, and Charles Wilcox happens to be there when she asks for **Howards End**. He offers to **drive** her back with him. Unfortunately, she mistakes him for Paul and begins to talk to him about Helen's news. He is shocked to hear that Paul and Helen are in love and heatedly opposes the match. Although Mrs. Munt certainly agrees, she is offended for Helen's sake, and the two quarrel until they arrive at Howards End. Helen runs out of the house to explain everything to her aunt, while Charles shouts at Paul. Ruth appears, carrying a wisp of hay, and calmly breaks up the scene. She reassures Charles that the engagement is over—"They do not love any longer."

Charles Wilcox and Juley Munt share a common zeal for the status quo, but each accuses the other of disrupting it. Their misunderstanding and heated dispute is associated with the disorienting, headlong movement of trains and cars. Only when they arrive at the tranquil grounds of Howards End can harmonious understanding be restored, at the skillful hands of wise Ruth Wilcox.

CHAPTER 4

Helen and Mrs. Munt return to Wickham Place, and Helen reflects on her infatuation with **Howards End** and the whole Wilcox family. She had been captivated by their energetic demeanors and their robust, sensible arguments against all her idealistic beliefs. She fell in love with Paul simply because he embodied the charisma of his family and his home, and he was momentarily swept up in her affection. She tells Margaret how she and Paul shared a magical kiss and exchanged promises on Sunday evening, but on Monday morning, Paul was pathetically overcome with panic and regret, and they immediately broke it off. Helen and Margaret agree that Ruth Wilcox seems the most—if not the only—sincere one in the family. She seemed to know what had happened between Helen and Paul without ever being told.

Helen and Margaret dissect the raw appeal of the Wilcoxes. Their sheer confidence and energy is strongly compelling, and their residence in the charming Howards End goes a long way towards disguising their critical emotional flaws. Only Ruth Wilcox can recognize and respect the emotional nuances that influence people. Her husband and children deny their own emotions, and thus are swayed by them without understanding or controlling them.

Helen and Margaret despair that such a simple, natural thing as human relations, however messy, should cause such horrible "telegrams and anger" in the hands of people like Charles and Paul Wilcox. They question whether this life, "a life in which telegrams and anger count," is "the real one" compared to their life, in which personal relations are supreme. They suggest that the Wilcoxes' way of life "breed[s] character," and instills impressive competence. Nonetheless, Helen concludes from her experiences that "personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever."

The Schlegel sisters believe that problems in human relations can be readily resolved with empathy and honest communication. The Wilcoxes, on the other hand, are only equipped to respond to personal issues with shame or anger. Rather than endure shame, they would rather channel anger or no emotion at all. They thus tend to address their problems with impersonal, pragmatic language, like telegrams. Their stoic composure allows them to take decisive action without being overly delayed by many doubts or concerns, but this attitude has its costs, and a horrified Helen wholeheartedly rejects it.

Margaret and Helen resume the life of "personal relations," hosting many agreeable people and promoting temperance, tolerance, and sexual equality. The narrator reflects on their origin: their father was a German intellectual who fought in the Franco-Prussian War but opposed German imperialism. He moved to England and married an English girl, Emily. Margaret grew up listening to his intellectual discussions. He criticized imperialists, saying, "It is the vice of a vulgar mind to … think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile, and that a million square miles are almost the same as heaven." Margaret also listened to various relatives on different sides of her family each claim that their homeland, Germany or England, had been appointed by God to govern the world. When the German and the English sides of the family finally meet, she asks them all which country God truly prefers. They cannot answer her, so Margaret concludes that the "unseen" natural commonalities that all humans share are more important in life than any contrived association.

Margaret and Helen reject the allure of the conservative Wilcoxes and return to their liberal fundamentals. They believe in equality and welcome a more diverse company of guests than the Wilcoxes would ever entertain. The Schlegel sisters' heterogeneous, half-German background supposedly gives them different views than the strictly homogenous English. Their father taught them to be independent thinkers rather than blind supporters of popular beliefs, and their willingness to entertain the Wilcoxes' ideas and question their own opinions speaks to their genuine intellectual engagement. Both England and Germany practice imperialism, which the Schlegels' father denounces as vulgar. Margaret decides that labels like "English" and "German" shouldn't matter as much as the invisible essence of all human relationships.

Helen mostly agrees with Margaret about the importance of the "unseen," although her character is less steady and responsible than her sister's. She is also prettier than Margaret and tends to enjoy more attention from the people they encounter. At sixteen, their brother, Tibby, is an intelligent but unsociable young man.

Helen is younger and more careless than Margaret, never having had to bear the same responsibilities as her sister. She also pursues more fun and flirtation. The youngest Schlegel, Tibby, is more self-absorbed and uninterested in company than his sisters.

CHAPTER 5

Margaret, Helen, Tibby, and Mrs. Munt attend a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, joined by the Schlegels' cousin Frieda Mosebach and her fiancé Bruno Liesecke. The Schlegels believe that the price of listening to such sublime music is quite cheap at two shillings, even if they must go to a dingier concert hall and listen from subpar seating.

Attending concerts is evidently a regular pastime for the cultured Schlegels, as they compare their experience at this inferior concert hall to past experiences in better places. They can afford to spend more money on leisure than they're spending today.

Helen vividly interprets the dramatic music, conjuring an image of goblins "walking quietly over the universe, from end to end." She is so distraught by these specters of "Panic and emptiness!" that she leaves the concert early. The unfamiliar young man sitting next to Margaret notices that Helen accidentally grabbed his umbrella in her hasty exit. Margaret asks Tibby to please run after her, but he selfishly protests that he will miss the next piece of music if he leaves. Margaret asks the owner of the umbrella for his home address so they can return his umbrella to him after the show, but he declines to tell her.

Helen is very sensitive and fanciful. As she listens to Beethoven's music, she imagines that it tells the story of goblins menacing the world, and recalls the horror that she felt when faced with the hollow beliefs of the Wilcoxes. She flees the concert, but she is so self-absorbed that she mistakenly takes an umbrella belonging to someone else. Her brother is so self-absorbed in turn that he refuses to retrieve the umbrella from her in case he misses any music. Margaret tries to right things with the owner of the umbrella, but he doesn't believe she actually wants to help him.

Margaret is offended that the boy seems to think that they intentionally stole his umbrella and may steal from his house if given his address. However, she recognizes that to "trust people is a luxury in which only the wealthy can indulge; the poor cannot afford it." She gives him her address, instead, so that he can call for his umbrella. After Helen exits, Frieda and her fiancé decide to leave the concert early, as well. Unlike Tibby, the boy is happy to jump up and help by catching the couple at the door and giving them the purse that Frieda forgot behind her seat. Margaret offers to bring him to their house after the concert, and they head back to Wickham Place with her brother and aunt.

Unlike her siblings, Margaret shows enough self-awareness and thoughtfulness to temper her own emotions in response to how the poor young man might be feeling. She is conscious of her wealth and privilege relative to the boy's disadvantaged station and can imagine how their different situations result in different outlooks. The boy proves himself more considerate and generous than Tibby when he helps Frieda and her fiancé. Wealth does not determine character, and Margaret recognizes this when she invites him to her house, as few others in her position would do.

Margaret talks about art at length as they walk, and the boy wishes he could keep up with her. He has always tried to pursue beauty, but he has very little free time to read **books** and contemplate the arts, and his many financial anxieties distract him from his self-education. Anxiety about the cost of replacing his missing umbrella also distracts him from fully engaging with Margaret. When they arrive at Wickham Place, Margaret invites him to tea, but the boy is intimidated by Helen's high-spirited, overly familiar manner—"I do nothing but steal umbrellas. I am so very sorry!"—and embarrassed at the shabby state of his possessions—"It's an appalling umbrella. It must be mine," Helen remarks thoughtlessly. He declines tea, hurrying away without giving his name.

Margaret casually demonstrates her deep command of art and culture, which her companion envies. He wants to know as much about the beautiful things in life as she does, but he has had less education than her and must work all day instead of reading or attending museums and performances. His financial insecurity consumes him even when he has the opportunity to experience high culture. He is ashamed of his inferior knowledge, manners, and means, and he leaves before the Schlegels can make him feel worse.

Margaret chastises Helen for rudely frightening the boy away: "You oughtn't to talk about stealing or holes in an umbrella." Helen feels bad and tries to call after the boy, but Aunt Juley says that his departure was probably for the best, since they didn't know anything about him and he could have taken something valuable from their drawing room if he had stayed for tea. Margaret and Helen protest, saying that the risk of losing a few spoons is not worth more than the cost of losing one's faith in the world. Their father always trusted strangers, believing "It's better to be fooled than to be suspicious." Aunt Juley thinks to herself that it was fortunate that such a naïve man married into so much money.

Helen didn't mean to be rude to the poor young man, and she regrets making him feel unwelcome. While self-absorbed, she is not unkind. But Aunt Juley, the type of simple-minded English bourgeois who believes in associating only with one's own class, casts doubts on the boy's character. Helen and Margaret declare that they would rather lose material objects than lose their good faith in people, as their father believed. Aunt Juley privately observes that this principle of generosity could ruin one if one isn't very rich.

Helen scolds Tibby for disappearing when they returned home instead of cordially helping to make their new friend feel welcome: "You ought to have taken his hat and coaxed him into stopping, instead of letting him be swamped by screaming women." She and Margaret are shaken by this fleeting encounter, a brush with poverty resounding like "a goblin footfall" to remind them of the harsh world outside their life of privilege.

Tibby and Helen are both sheltered by their money and self-absorbed, but Tibby cares much less than Helen does about other people. He isn't interested in taking on the role of the man of the house, not wishing to be responsible for others. His sisters are more troubled by the suffering that befalls those outside their wealthy circle. The women in the novel, like Margaret, Helen, and Ruth, tend to show more concern for others.

CHAPTER 6

The poor boy is named Leonard Bast. He has long been underfed, physically and mentally, and he regrets letting his suspicions and wounded pride get the best of him by turning down the tea. He **walks** two miles home, unable to spare money for the tram. He reenters the tiny basement apartment that he shares with a woman named Jacky. When he takes off his boots, he accidentally knocks her portrait off a little table and breaks the glass. The picture shows Jacky smiling with her mouth gaping open, baring all her dazzling white teeth. Her eyes, however, appear anxious and hungry. Leonard cuts himself trying to pick up the glass and bleeds onto the photo.

After showing the Schlegels' perspective of Leonard, Forster shows Leonard's perspective. While he is Helen's age, he has grown up in very different circumstances than the Schlegels. Leonard is hungry not just for the luxury of culture that the Schlegels enjoy, but for the basic necessity of food. Unlike Helen and Margaret, who lead proudly independent lives, he is trapped in a relationship. His fiancée is evidently a desperate woman whose dependence pains Leonard.

Leonard has a meager tea and then sits down with a **book**. He dedicates his free time to reading and attending concerts, hoping to become more cultured and gain a richer understanding of the world. However, the artists whom he so admires do not concern themselves with the actual world—like the Schlegels, they are absorbed in a romantic and unrealistic existence. The voice in the book he turns to "was the voice of one who had never been dirty or hungry, and had not guessed successfully what dirt and hunger are."

Leonard is trying to reach a greater knowledge of the world, but he struggles to relate to the works of art and literature that he studies. The works that intellectuals consider to be great are not relevant to Leonard and others like him, because they don't concern any problems that are realistic for the lower classes.

Leonard's **reading** is interrupted when Jacky comes home. She is thirty-three years old, a former prostitute whom he has promised to marry when he turns twenty-one. Her looks are past their prime—she currently has fewer, duller teeth than the younger face in the photograph. She once could have relied on her figure and her smile to attract men, and she has no real talent for wit or lively conversation. She frequently asks Leonard to repeat his promise to marry her, to his irritation. They share an unappetizing dinner and Leonard eventually retires to bed, unsatisfied.

Jacky is thirteen years senior to Leonard, a less than ideal match. Forster implies that she seduced Leonard when he was younger, and he nobly promised to provide for her. Unlike Helen and Paul, who quickly broke off their engagement and painlessly separated, Leonard feels that he cannot abandon Jacky when she cannot support herself. While he has begun to realize that they are not well-suited to each other, his conscience leaves him no choice but to stay with her in this meager lifestyle.

CHAPTER 7

The Schlegels discover that the Wilcoxes have moved into the house next door. Aunt Juley is anxious that a proximity to Paul may rekindle Helen's disastrous infatuation, but Margaret declares that there can be no great risk of real disaster as long as one has money. She tells her aunt, "You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence." With their wealth, they can escape from messes like foolish engagements, or laugh at those who worry about losing an umbrella to theft—but they rarely recognize or acknowledge their privileged position. Margaret reminds Helen, "There's no reason we should be near people who displease us or whom we displease, thanks to our money." Helen assures her sister that she will never again fall for Paul, but she is going to visit Germany with Frieda, anyway.

After their encounter with Leonard, Margaret has reflected on what separates her life from his. She compares the wealth that her family enjoys to isolated "islands" in the turbulent sea of everyday life. Their solid islands insulate them from life's hardship so completely that they risk forgetting that such hardship exists. They also risk forgetting that they are spared such hardship because of the unequal advantages that are the foundations of their islands. She sees no point in denying that their privilege exists, but neither is she keen on losing any part of it, given how much it simplifies difficult situations like Helen and Paul's.

CHAPTER 8

Ruth Wilcox calls upon the Schlegels just before Helen leaves for Germany, going against English custom that the newcomer should wait to be called upon. Rather than call upon her in turn, Margaret writes her a letter to say that it would be best if the two families ended their acquaintance after all the trouble that occurred last summer. She apologizes for the discourtesy, claiming only that Helen and Paul should not meet again.

Ruth demonstrates that she isn't afraid to be unorthodox and defy convention. Margaret admires her, but is wary of the Wilcox charm that may again seduce Helen into a foolish infatuation. Helen has sworn she will never renew her old feelings for Paul Wilcox, but Margaret believes she knows best.

Mrs. Wilcox replies that Margaret should not have written such a letter, because she had called to say that Paul has left for Nigeria. Margaret feels terrible for having forgotten that Paul would be leaving to work abroad that fall, and for having been so rude. She rushes over to apologize to Mrs. Wilcox in person, and they share a companionable conversation. Mrs. Wilcox is lying in bed, tired out from the recent wedding of Charles and Dolly. She sounds liveliest when she talks about **Howards End**, which was her childhood home.

Ruth Wilcox calls out Margaret for her rudeness, refusing to take the snub quietly. Margaret sincerely feels sorry, and readily admits her mistake. The honesty between the two women thereafter lays the foundation for a close friendship. Ruth's evident passion for telling Margaret about Howards End signals that the house will be very meaningful to their friendship.

CHAPTER 9

Margaret hosts a luncheon-party to introduce Mrs. Wilcox to some of her friends, but they have little in common with one another. Margaret and her friends enjoy clever cultural and intellectual debate, while Mrs. Wilcox, twice their age, has little to talk about besides her family. She feels intimated by the quick talk the young people exchange. She cares little for the issues they argue over, and at one point she even admits, "I sometimes think that it is wiser to leave action and discussion to men." Nonetheless, Margaret senses in the older woman "a personality that transcended their own and dwarfed their activities." She apologizes to Mrs. Wilcox for the commotion: "We lead the lives of gibbering monkeys." Mrs. Wilcox assures her that she doesn't mind: "[W]e are all in the same boat, old and young."

Margaret tries to introduce Ruth Wilcox into her world of diverse company and stimulating discussion about life, but Ruth's interests are mostly limited to her role as wife and mother. She has put all of her faith into the simple principle that loving and caring for others is a force for good in the world. To that end, she isn't much interested in forming or expressing her own ideas about contemporary issues. Margaret feels somewhat similarly at heart, that human relations are the most important matters of all, but she is still concerned with how society might be improved and life might be made better for strangers. Whether the conversations held over such luncheons can ever truly improve the world, or whether they are just "gibbering" is never clear. If Margaret could actually vote, perhaps her ideas would come to pass.

CHAPTER 10

Mrs. Wilcox asks Margaret to join her in shopping for Christmas presents one morning. Margaret is a great help to Mrs. Wilcox, who struggles to navigate the crowded stores and decide on gifts. Margaret mentions that in the future the Schlegels will have to celebrate Christmas in a new home, once their lease on Wickham Place expires. Mrs. Wilcox is very upset to hear that they will be forced to leave their childhood home. It makes her think of her beloved **Howards End**, and she invites Margaret to visit there that very day. Margaret observes that the weather looks poor and Mrs. Wilcox looks tired, and politely declines the sudden proposal. Mrs. Wilcox seems offended by her rejection, and they part at odds with one another.

Margaret takes charge for Ruth Wilcox, who evidently lacks her husband's cold efficiency. Margaret organizes their errand like she organizes her household, experienced from taking care of things for her less responsible siblings. She prepares to efficiently locate a new home for them, without the powerful melancholy that Mrs. Wilcox indulges. When Mrs. Wilcox impulsively invites her to visit Howards End, her practical instinct leads her to turn down the offer. Mrs. Wilcox fails to understand Margaret's sensible logic, expecting her friend to be more flexible.

Over lunch, Margaret changes her mind, having understood that "Mrs. Wilcox, though a loving wife and mother, had only one passion in life—her house—and that the moment was solemn when she invited a friend to share this passion with her." She surprises Mrs. Wilcox at the train station, but they are surprised in turn by the unexpected appearance of Henry and Evie, who have returned early from their motor trip to Yorkshire after Henry crashed the **car**. The trip to **Howards End** is forgotten.

Mrs. Wilcox was not entirely wrong—Margaret does eventually understand the depth of her feeling for her home, and is willing to spontaneously join her on a visit there, after all. Unfortunately, Ruth's familial duties come first yet again, and she abandons her trip home to rejoin her husband and daughter. She hates London, and never would have left Howards End to begin with, but she loves her husband and agrees to move to the city for his sake. Oblivious Henry, in turn, fails to see how much his wife misses her home.

CHAPTER 11

A woodcutter at work in a churchyard observes a funeral, where the town passionately mourns the sudden death of a kind woman: Mrs. Wilcox. Leaving the graveyard afterwards, he observes that an unconventional bouquet of colorful flowers has been left on the grave and he takes one. The next morning, the grieving Wilcoxes—Henry, Charles, Dolly, and Evie—are having breakfast at **Howards End**. Henry reflects on Ruth's unfailing goodness and innocence. He recalls that she didn't disclose her illness to her family until she was near death, not wanting to trouble them.

Life goes on despite the death of Mrs. Wilcox—trees are still being trimmed, her family is still eating breakfast at Howards End. Margaret's brightly-colored, non-funereal flowers represent Mrs. Wilcox's wish that her death not grieve her loved ones too much, but that they should honor her memory by moving on with their lives without her. She didn't even want them to worry while she was still alive, waiting alone to die.

The mail arrives, and Henry finds a letter from his wife's nursing home, enclosing a message left by Mrs. Wilcox. The note states that she wishes **Howards End** to be left to Margaret Schlegel. The Wilcoxes declare that such a note, handwritten in pencil by an invalid, could not possibly be legal. They tear it up and toss it into the fire, feeling betrayed by this "cruel" final dispatch from the deceased Mrs. Wilcox.

After her husband moved the family to London and later moved her into a nursing home instead of bringing her back to Howards End, Mrs. Wilcox won't leave him her beloved house. She doesn't explain this, but simply writes that the house should be left to Margaret, with whom she had formed a strong spiritual connection when she was falling ill. The Wilcoxes cannot begin to understand this shocking statement from the loving woman they thought they knew, and so they dismiss it.

Charles frets that Margaret could have colluded with his mother to acquire **Howards End** and may come down at any moment to collect it, but Henry defends her and says that she was as ignorant as any of them to Mrs. Wilcox's failing health and final wishes. Evie objects to Margaret having sent the distastefully bright-colored chrysanthemums from earlier, but Henry again gives her the benefit of the doubt. Thus the impersonal Wilcox family manages to safely "voyage for a little past the emotions."

Charles suspects Margaret of scheming with Ruth Wilcox to get the house—he has been suspicious of the Schlegels ever since Helen's disastrous stay. The house is supposed to go to him after his father dies, but he doesn't truly want it—he's just blindly possessive. Evie is also suspicious of Margaret after this revelation, but Henry believes that she is innocent of any ill-will. Having decided to ignore Mrs. Wilcox's bewildering wishes, they resume their typical avoidance of emotion.

CHAPTER 12

As Henry predicted, Margaret was indeed unaware of Mrs. Wilcox's wish for her to inherit **Howards End**. She wouldn't learn of it until years later, the narrator notes. Had she heard of it sooner, she, too, would have dismissed the will as the fancy of an ill woman. She reflects on the time she spent with the surviving Wilcoxes in the final week of Mrs. Wilcox's life, and she concludes that while they tend to be "suspicious and stupid," they nonetheless "had grit … and she valued grit enormously." She believes that their life of "telegrams and anger" cultivates "such virtues as neatness, decision, and obedience," virtues from which civilization as well as character are formed.

The idea that Margaret would also have rejected Ruth Wilcox's desire for her to have Howards End speaks to the undeniable peculiarity of Ruth's last-minute message. It was a request that could not be understood according to any logic of the "outer life" of order and reason, but could only make sense in terms of the "inner life" of unrestrained emotion and unspoken spiritual communication. Margaret still gives credit to the "outer life" that the rest of the Wilcoxes represent, and so she fails to grasp the significance of Ruth's message.

Helen returns from her marvelous trip to Germany, pleased to have received another flattering marriage proposal while she was there, despite having no interest in the man. Tibby is pleased by his recent visit and interview at Oxford. It has been barely six months since Helen and Paul's ill-fated engagement.

The Wilcox family and the Schlegel family have crossed paths a great many times in the past half year, but they are set to retreat into their own lives once more. Helen has had a new proposal to finally forget Paul's.

CHAPTER 13

Two years pass, and the Schlegels must move out of Wickham Place in nine months. The city of London is a site of "continual flux," surging with endless construction and demolition and expanding ever farther into the countryside. This urbanization comes at a cost: "month by month the roads smelt more strongly of petrol and were more difficult to cross, and human beings heard each other speak with greater difficulty, breathed less of the air, and saw less of the sky."

Forster associates London with destructive flux and impermanence. The modern city has no regard for the past, and its inhabitants discard nature as they rush heedlessly forward into a noisy, smelly, industrialized future. The Schlegel children must leave the home where they've lived since they were born, due to an opportunistic landlord seeking to capitalize on the city's profitable transformation.

Tibby returns from Oxford for Easter, and Margaret urges him to choose a profession to pursue. Tibby is reluctant to take up any profession, but Margaret defends the virtues of regular, honest work. "I hope that for women, too, 'not to work' will soon become as shocking as 'not to be married' was a hundred years ago," she declares. She expresses admiration for Paul Wilcox, who has worked so industriously in Nigeria. Tibby scoffs.

Tibby doesn't need to earn an income to provide for himself or his sisters, so he has no desire to work. Margaret approves of work for its own sake, and believes that progress for women should include full participation in the work forces. She champions Paul Wilcox's work in Nigeria as an example of her industrious philosophy, praising his efforts to build up the British Empire. Evidently, she does not share her father's strong distaste for empires.

Helen interrupts Tibby and Margaret to exclaim that a poor woman has just visited the house, asking for her missing husband, "Lan or Len." Helen thinks the visit from "Mrs. Lanoline" a riot, while Margaret worries about what "horrible volcano smoking" this latest foreboding "goblin footfall" may portend.

Helen is thrilled to think that the family might be involved in the mysterious scandal of strangers. Margaret, more realistically, dreads what miseries of the poor they may become entangled with.

CHAPTER 14

The mystery is explained when Mr. Leonard Bast visits Wickham Place the next day. The Schlegels don't recognize him, but he reminds them that Margaret gave him her card after Helen took his umbrella years ago. His wife, Jacky, later found the card, and when he was out on a call, she looked for him at Wickham Place, he explains. Helen presses him on this story, and he objects to their insinuation that he lied to his wife to go see a mistress. Instead, he confides that he spent the night out **walking**.

Leonard knows who the Schlegels are, but they don't recognize him. He has held onto Margaret's card for all these years, while she and Helen don't even remember meeting him. They made a much greater impact upon him than he did on them. Despite being unfamiliar with him, Helen boldly casts doubt on his excuse for why he wasn't at home. But instead of escaping to the bed of another woman, he seeks to escape his unhappy existence by walking into nature.

Helen and Margaret are thrilled by Leonard's departure from mundane life. Though it was just a haphazard march through the lonely roads and woods outside London, they think it even better than the adventures in great **novels** that first inspired him. He tries to refer back to other writers, but the Schlegels only want to hear about his experience. They reassure him that his impulsive **walking** expedition was not foolish, and he is grateful that they understand his urge to witness the world outside the relentless daily routine.

Leonard tries to explain how his expedition was inspired by the works of literature he had been reading, wishing to show off his familiarity with great writers, but Margaret and Helen don't care about what he's read—they care about what he's done. The idea that books are not everything surprises Leonard, but he still enjoys the praise of his efforts by a pair of intellectuals. Margaret and Helen recognize Leonard's kindred desire to find something more meaningful than the grey grind of daily life.

Helen and Margaret invite Leonard to call again, but he refuses, claiming that the connection they shared today could never be recreated, so better not to spoil the memory with a poor shadow. They protest to no avail, and Leonard parts from them. It is important to him that the elevated world of culture and "Romance" which he associates with the Schlegels remains separate from his dull existence as a common clerk married to the coarse Jacky.

Leonard lacks the Schlegels' faith that people from different backgrounds can happily associate with one another, and he feels insecure about his ability to keep up with their intellectual talk. He would rather end on a memory of triumph than risk failing. He dreads having his common life intrude on the extraordinary world he has briefly seized for himself.

CHAPTER 15

Helen and Margaret go to a dinner party after their stimulating meeting with Leonard. After dinner, they debate with their friends the hypothetical question of how a millionaire should best put her money to use. Margaret argues that the millionaire could do the most all-around good for the less fortunate (such as Leonard) simply by giving them money—not by subsidizing cultural experiences or by supporting food banks, but by giving them cash by which they can shed their financial burden and create meaningful lives naturally, rather than being plied with meaning through a few specialized philanthropic efforts that please the wealthy elite. Her friends object to such indiscriminate distribution of money, defending the institution of patronage.

The plight of poverty is so abstract to the Schlegels and their well-off peers that they can debate the problem for sport. Their intentions are supposedly good, as they seek to identify the best method of helping the poor, but their deliberation on the matter is ultimately meaningless without taking action themselves. Margaret is willing to take her own ego out of the equation by simply giving money to those who need it, but the rest of her educated friends are patronizingly convinced that they know better than the working poor how such money should be spent on their behalf.

After the dinner party, the Schlegels run into Mr. Wilcox. He feels quite satisfied with himself, having doubled his income over the past two years to make himself nearly a millionaire. He speaks patronizingly to the sisters, which Helen resents but Margaret forgives in a man of his age. When they tell him about their recent debate and the sad case of their friend the clerk, he tells them that the insurance company where Leonard works is sure to go under before long, and he should look for a new job now before he is let go. Margaret and Helen are dismayed and resolve to pass this advice on to Leonard. Henry also informs them that he has recently rented out **Howards End**, and intends to live in the city with a second home in Oniton, Shropshire. Margaret laments that the Schlegels, too, will be moving soon.

Henry Wilcox is practically a millionaire now, but he shows no generosity towards the less fortunate. He only takes the opportunity to show off his insider business knowledge. His blindly sexist and condescending attitude towards the intelligent and sharply observant sisters is quite objectionable, but Margaret is secure enough in her own intellect to easily dismiss his sadly common prejudice. Helen is less willing to forgive Henry his absurdly paternalistic demeanor. His abandonment of Howards End speaks to his carelessness towards Ruth Wilcox's legacy.

CHAPTER 16

Margaret and Helen have Leonard over to discuss his company. He doesn't like talking to them about his work, intent on preserving the boundaries between "Romance" and his menial profession. He doesn't know how to answer their questions about the state of the company, knowing little about the firm's true financial standing at his lowly level. When they tell him their news from Henry, he claims that the company is fine, but lacks conviction. He resents their insistence on talking about insurance when he longs to discuss art.

While Margaret and Helen only want to help Leonard, they fail once again to understand the unequal dynamics of their relationship with Leonard and how they make him feel uncomfortable and insecure about his mundane life. He is embarrassed by his position as a common clerk, and further embarrassed by his lack of any high-level knowledge about the company. The capitalist system discourages transparency in a company so that they can get away with manipulating the public.

Henry and Evie drop in, and Leonard excuses himself. Helen tells him to come back soon, and again he refuses. She accuses him of being rude when they only meant to help him, and he replies that it was rude of them to start "picking [his] brains for official information." Margaret insists that she and Helen only sought to befriend him because of their mutual ambition to "struggle against life's daily greyness," but Leonard fails to understand her and leaves feeling sorely humiliated.

Leonard leaves when a true man of business arrives, angry and self-conscious about his inability to measure up. To relieve his hurt feelings and make himself feel important once more, he accuses Margaret and Helen of trying to take advantage of his insider information. Margaret tries to explain that they meant to do no such thing, but Leonard is too upset to understand or believe her highly philosophical explanation.

Henry smugly warns Margaret against trying to befriend such people who "aren't our sort." Margaret repeats that she and Helen like Leonard because he is interested in pursuing adventure and endeavoring "to relieve life's daily grey." Henry, missing the point, warns her not to assume that Leonard's life is necessarily "grey." He declares, "You know nothing about him … live and let live, and assume that things are jogging on fairly well elsewhere, and that the ordinary plain man may be trusted to look after his own affairs." Margaret finds it difficult indeed to argue against the unknowability of most people, but privately she maintains her faith in Leonard.

Henry looks down on members of the lower classes like Leonard, but Margaret believes that individuals of any class are equally capable of comprehending meaningful concepts like the bleakness and tedium of life, and equally capable of the creativity to make one's days brighter. Uncomprehending, Henry defends his position of willful ignorance concerning the private affairs of strangers. His belief that people are best left alone to deal with their own affairs ignores that fact that the decisions of some greatly affect others' state of affairs.

CHAPTER 17

Margaret is fretting about their move when Evie invites her to lunch with her and her fiancé. Margaret is happy to see that Henry is also joining them. They dine at Simpson's in the Strand, one of London's oldest traditional English restaurants, where Margaret overhears endless conversations about the British Empire. She tells Henry that he must dine with her in turn at Mr. Eustace Miles's, a vegetarian restaurant popular with suffragists. They are quickly developing a mutual intimacy, despite possessing such different tastes. Henry patronizingly ignores Margaret's food requests and chooses her courses for her, which she silently tolerates. He observes that she looks tired, and she laments again her failure to find a suitable new home for the family.

The Wilcoxes prefer old and highly conventional restaurants, filled with the same types of businessmen and imperialists. Margaret prefers the new scene of progressive ideals about ethical consumption and a more just society. The two have very little in common besides their shared history of family entanglements, but they seem to enjoy rising to debate each other. They also seem to enjoy one another's temperaments, as Margaret admires Henry's self-confidence and decisiveness and Henry approves of Margaret's (purposeful) submissiveness.

Henry observes that Margaret talks to him the same way he heard her speaking to Leonard Bast, and she says that she tries to address everyone in the same manner rather than talk down to anybody in a lower class. However, he feels triumphant for merely getting her to admit that class distinctions exist, which she argues she never denied to begin with. Not long afterwards, the Schlegels leave London to visit their Aunt Juley with the question of their new house still unresolved.

Henry doesn't understand what Margaret means when she says she tries not to treat different classes any differently. He tells her she's claiming that she doesn't believe in classes, which isn't true. Margaret notes his lack of understanding, but isn't too disheartened by it.

CHAPTER 18

While staying with Aunt Juley, Margaret receives a letter from Henry saying that he plans to rent out his house in London now that Evie is getting married. He invites her to come back up to the city for a day and see if she would like to rent the house on Ducie Street for her family. Margaret is eager to get the matter settled so she can finally relax in her time away from London, but is wary that Henry may be manufacturing an opportunity to propose to her. She does go up to London, and notices immediately that Henry is much less businesslike than usual. He mentions how lonely he is now that his daughter spends most of her time out with her fiancé, and Margaret admits that she, too, has felt lonely.

Margaret is highly observant and perceptive of others' motives and emotions. She successfully predicts Henry's intent to propose to her, and agrees to his invitation with the knowledge that she is agreeing to hear and consider his proposal. Henry's confession of loneliness is perhaps a sign of desperation rather than genuine love for her, but she does not object to it.

Once they begin touring the house, Henry proposes to her quite unromantically. Margaret kindly pretends to be surprised, and she averts her eyes to avoid embarrassing him as he struggles to express his affection. She thinks to herself, "He must never be bothered with emotional talk [...] He was an elderly man now, and it would be futile and impudent to correct him." She tells him that she needs a day to think about the sudden proposal and will write to him with her answer.

Margaret is extremely considerate of Henry's feelings and views his poor handling of emotion with a great deal of leniency. She freely forgives him for his traditional masculine sensibilities instead of pushing him to be honest with her and with himself about his feelings. She doesn't consider that enabling his stunted emotional development may lead to future marital problems.

CHAPTER 19

Margaret returns to Aunt Juley's house with her news. Helen bursts into tears when she realizes Margaret intends to accept Henry's proposal. She heatedly objects to the marriage, having been so disturbed by the flaws in the Wilcox mentality that became painfully apparent in the terrible debacle with Paul: "'Panic and emptiness,' sobbed Helen. 'Don't!'" Margaret admits that she does not love Henry but believes she will in time. She maintains that she is well aware of the Wilcoxes' weaknesses by now and has made a fully informed decision: "I know all Mr. Wilcox's faults. He's afraid of emotion. He cares too much about success, too little about the past." She denies that marrying him will change her, but the narrator warns that this will not be strictly true. Margaret will bow before "a social pressure that would have her think conjugally," or start to think of life in terms of her marriage. As Helen insists, "One would lose something."

Helen is shocked that Margaret plans to marry Henry, having never imagined that her sister could love a Wilcox. Margaret believes that she can reckon with the Wilcox flaws and even help Henry to become a better man through her loving influence. Moreover, she doesn't feel as strongly opposed to the "outer life" as Helen does. She feels that the country owes its prosperity and security to men with such "public qualities" as Henry embodies. She believes that without types like the Wilcoxes, England would descend into "savagery." She doesn't consider that unchecked self-interest could be equally damaging to the public good.

CHAPTER 20

Margaret and Henry discuss their future. Henry mentions that he owns some shares in a currant-farm near Calamata, Greece, and Margaret asks if they might go there for their honeymoon. Henry responds that "it's not the kind of place one could possibly go to with a lady," having no hotels. Margaret reminds him that she and Helen "have **walked** alone over the Apennines, with our luggage on our backs," and he replies that she will never do such a thing again if he can help it. They settle that Henry's money must go to his children, Charles, Evie, and Paul, foremost, while Margaret continues to live off of her own generous means. "We've none too much, I assure you; you're marrying a poor man," Henry says absurdly. They agree to have their wedding immediately after Evie's.

Henry expresses a strongly paternalistic opinion of what accommodations and activities are suitable for women. He denounces the idea of ladies traveling alone or on foot, which Margaret and Helen have always been keen on. Margaret raises no serious objections to his preposterous orders, evidently willing to give up her old ways of traveling—and more—for the sake of a happy marriage. Henry downplays his wealth despite privately calling himself a millionaire a few weeks earlier. It's not quite clear if he reflexively hides his worth to avoid general scrutiny, or if he wants to protect his children's inheritance from his fiancée.

Next Henry and Margaret talk about where to live—**Howards End** has been rented out to a tenant, Oniton is too far from the city to be their primary home, and the house on Ducie Street has a foul-smelling stables behind it. Margaret notices that this is the first time Henry has mentioned the disagreeable mews to her—he didn't allude to it at all when he was showing her the house to rent. The narrator calls this self-interested dishonesty "a flaw inherent in the business mind," which Margaret would do well to forgive, given how much "the business mind has done for England."

Margaret would be happy to live in Howards End, but Henry has already signed his wife's home away for the next few years, preferring a grander home. Sadly, he has poor taste in properties himself, having chosen a building next to a horse stables and a manor home inconvenient to get to. Margaret catches him in a blatant deception regarding Ducie Street, but she indulgently laughs it off instead of calling him out.

Henry walks Margaret back to her aunt's house and kisses her abruptly, without saying a word before or after. His behavior leaves her uneasy: "he had hurried away as if ashamed, and for an instant she was reminded of Helen and Paul."

Margaret and Henry's first kiss does not set the tone she would have wished for their marriage—he cannot own his emotions or passions.

CHAPTER 21

Charles objects to the news of his father's engagement to Margaret. He rebukes his wife, Dolly, blaming her for setting up his sister, Evie, with her uncle. Now that Evie is going to be married, she is no longer taking care of their father, and this neglect has prompted him to take a new wife. Charles's fit of temper takes place in his garden at Hilton, surrounded by his wife, his growing brood of children, and his prized **car**. The young children represent a third generation of obnoxious Wilcoxes, set to "inherit the earth."

Charles is still suspicious of Margaret's designs on his mother's house, and now his father's fortune is also at risk. He blames the women in his life for sabotaging his happiness (his inheritance). His petty anger is associated with his modern automobile and his three young progeny, the likely future of England.

CHAPTER 22

The next day, Margaret greets Henry with tenderness. She is eager to help him see how, in their marriage, they might share their lives practically as well as share intimacy. Henry the traditionalist has always cherished a wife who can run their household, raise their children, and entertain their friends.

Margaret wants to enlighten Henry regarding the happy "inner life" of a marriage, as well as the practical "outer life" that he is familiar with.

The one thing Henry is reluctant to embrace in his marriage is intimacy. Because "he had always the sneaking belief that bodily passion is bad," Henry is "ashamed" to admit he loves his wife. "Amabat, amare timebat," Margaret thinks, or "he loved, and feared loving." She wants him to overcome his fear and connect—"Only connect!"—his happy feelings of love and affection with his feelings of passion, and thus realize that love, affection, and passion are all perfectly natural feelings to experience and express. Unfortunately, Margaret is no match for Henry's "obtuseness"—his fatal obliviousness to all of life's nuance, and all viewpoints other than his own. He never notices Helen's hostility towards him, and certainly doesn't notice Margaret's subtle attempts to open his mind.

Henry is not a progressive thinker, and he believes in traditional religious and societal mandates about the dangers of sexuality. Margaret fails to change his fearful perspective on love and make him recognize the blessing of natural, healthy unions because Henry clings to his convictions blindly, filtering the world through the lens of his preconceptions. Thus he remains ignorant of whatever he does not wish to see.

Helen joins Margaret and Henry for a **walk**. Margaret tells Henry that Helen received a letter from Leonard Bast. Thanks to Henry's advice, Leonard has left his company. However, Henry now says the company is doing fine. Margaret is shocked to hear this, but Henry doesn't notice—he starts talking about his tenant who wants to sublet **Howards End**. She interrupts him, and he reassures her that Leonard's new job at a bank is even safer than his old job, despite its lower salary.

Despite the failure of Leonard's last visit with the Schlegels, he still trusted them enough—or didn't trust himself enough—to leave his job on their recommendation. The Schlegels, in turn, had trusted Henry enough to pass his advice onto Leonard. However, they begin to fear that they may have been wrong to trust Henry's judgment now that he has abruptly changed his tune and doesn't appear to care about the consequences.

Henry then asks Margaret to go up to **Howards End** with him next week, which she says she would rather not do, since her Aunt Juley has planned on hosting them for longer than that. He tells her that she "can give that up now," and she protests that her aunt would be greatly hurt if she were to leave in the middle of this rare visit to her home. He insists that he will talk to her aunt for her.

Henry expects his wife to behave like his subordinate, deferring to his wishes and his judgment absolutely. He completely ignores Margaret's feelings and the feelings of her aunt, believing that women's emotions and desires are less important than men's.

Before Henry can talk to Juley, Helen confronts him about his poor advice that prompted Leonard to leave his job for a lower-paying one for no reason. "Don't take up that sentimental attitude over the poor," Henry admonishes her in return, adding self-righteously, "it's absurd to pretend that any one is responsible personally … our civilisation is moulded by great impersonal forces."

Helen is willing to boldly challenge Henry when her sister is not. She points out the fact that his judgment was entirely wrong and has caused people to suffer. Henry insists that it's no use talking about the individual case, since no one can possibly accept personal responsibility for the societal institution of poverty.

Alone with Margaret, Helen denounces such men who "talk of the survival of the fittest, and cut down the salaries of their clerks, and stunt the independence of all who may menace their comfort," having convinced themselves that their greed serves the public good. Margaret realizes that her sister's outrage is stronger than her civility, and she must be separated from Henry before she explodes at him. Thus Margaret braves Aunt Juley's disappointment and leaves early with him.

Helen attacks Henry's hypocrisy and dishonesty. Blaming objective "impersonal forces" for unequal wealth when he actively cuts his employees' wages for his own gain is simply hypocritical and false, as is purposefully denying rights to those without power in society and claiming it's the natural order. Instead of responding to Helen's fierce allegations, Margaret focuses on saving the peace and diverting a confrontation that could ruin her relationship with Henry.

CHAPTER 23

Margaret and Helen reconcile before Margaret leaves for **Howards End**, and Helen agrees to be civil to Henry in company, at least. Margaret meets Henry at his offices for the Imperial and West Africa Rubber Company. He has given her only the vaguest impression of his work, and seeing the office doesn't enlighten much. To her displeasure, they travel to Hilton by **car**. She worries about how close they come to hitting chickens and children in the road. Henry tells her not to fear, and to look at the scenery if she doesn't want to look at the road. But to her, the scenery "heaved and merged like porridge." They lunch at Dolly's house, then drive the short distance to Howards End.

All that matters to Margaret is that Helen agrees not to fight with her fiancé anymore. She is set on marrying Henry, no matter his flaws. Her opinion of his character is like her opinion of England's empire: overly trusting and idealistic. Her instincts regarding Henry and his colonial business may be dubious, but she distrusts his dangerous driving, conscious on at least some level of the perils in his passion for rapid advancement at the expense of safety and moderation.

After Henry drops her off and **drives** over to get the key from the neighboring farmhouse, Margaret discovers that the house is unlocked, and she enters alone. The empty house is still dirty from the tenant's hasty exit, but she loves it. She finds the cozy, sturdy rooms to be an antidote to the nauseating motor trip, and recalls her father's anti-Imperial philosophy: "ten square miles are not ten times as wonderful as one square mile … a thousand square miles are not practically the same as heaven." She hears another sound from within the house, and discovers an old woman coming down from the second floor, who claims to have mistaken her for Ruth Wilcox.

Margaret is fated to enter Howards End on her own terms, and form her own impression of the place. She is quickly enchanted by the modest, durable home and its long history. Ruth's old farm-house is the material opposite of Henry's expensive, new-fangled car. It reawakens in Margaret an awareness of life's simpler blessings and virtues that are neglected by imperial ambition. When she is mistaken for Ruth Wilcox, it is because she has arrived to claim Ruth's spiritual legacy at last.

CHAPTER 24

The old woman who startled Margaret at **Howards End** was Miss Avery, a former friend of Ruth's who lives on the farm next door and keeps the keys to the house for the Wilcoxes. Henry dismisses her prowling around the house as the harmless stupidity of the uneducated. He shows Margaret around Howards End and explains that the days of small farms have ended. To save some of the value of his wife's property, he had to sell off the animals, thin out the trees, and build an addition onto the house. Margaret loves him for saving it. She's enchanted by the English-ness of the house and the great wych-elm bending over it. In the ancient tree, she finds the old pigs' teeth that Ruth once told her were planted to cure toothache.

While Ruth Wilcox was alive, she was friends with Miss Avery, but the rest of her family looks down on the old spinster and farmwoman. Henry looks down on the work of farming, and only took the trouble to save Howards End for his wife's sake. Saving the property meant getting rid of much of its farming legacy, but enough of its ancient heritage has survived to please Margaret.

CHAPTER 25

Like Charles, Evie was unhappy at the news that her father was engaged to Margaret Schlegel, viewing it as an insult to their mother's memory. But the onset of her wedding restores her good mood. Henry expects Margaret to play a prominent role in the wedding, which is to take place at Oniton. Margaret goes down on the train with the rest of the wedding party, comprised of friends of Henry's who are less progressive than her own circle. The men are chivalrous but patronizing towards the women, especially once the group changes from train to **car** for the final leg of the journey. The men are engrossed with pointing out landmarks to the women, and eventually the distracted driver is forced to slam on his brakes after paying more attention to the scenery than to the road. The women are ushered into a different car and driven away as a girl runs screaming out of a roadside cottage: they have run over her cat.

Margaret faces her first public occasion as Henry's fiancée and learns the behavior required of her. Henry's friends expect his new fiancée to conform with their narrow ideas of genteel femininity: a woman who is less intelligent and worldly than a man, more helpless than a man, less sensible and more sentimental than a man. Upper-class ladies require constant careful attention, lest they collapse in the event of any inconvenience. The closed environments, train and car, that the party travels in create a claustrophobic pressure to comply with expectations, until the accident critically raises the stakes.

Margaret is distraught that only men have been left behind to manage the accident, and she asks Charles repeatedly to turn the **car** around. Charles dismisses her wishes, confident that "The men are there … They will see to it." Infuriated, Margaret jumps out of the moving car and cuts her hand. Charles is shocked. The other gentleman who stayed behind comes down the hill, having left the chauffeurs to deal with the girl. Margaret is disgusted at the cowardice of them all, but aware that she has disgraced herself in front of Henry's friends. She decides to play up her feminine hysteria as a pretense for acting so dramatically: she "had lost her nerve, as any woman might." Better to pretend to be the foolish kind of woman they patronize rather than the brazen kind of woman they suspect.

Margaret realizes that the men who remained at the scene of the accident to handle the girl will show her no genuine compassion and treat her as silly and hysterical. She feels this isn't right, and wants to go back to defend the girl from their misogynistic attitudes. Charles confirms her fear when he refuses to listen to her and utterly fails to empathize with the girl's loss. She fiercely defies his expectations by fearlessly jumping from the car. But it is too late for her to intervene, and now she risks alienating Henry and his friends.

When they arrive at Oniton, Charles tells Henry what happened. They agree all too easily that Margaret was simply overcome by nerves and lost her senses. Nonetheless, Charles remains suspicious of the woman who is to be his new stepmother. He disapproves of her tongue and feels certain that she will bring his father disgrace. He stands outside and thinks about how his father's money is being split up among more and more people now that both Evie and Margaret may have their own children. Having failed so far to build his own fortune, Charles worries about how he will continue to support his children and begrudges the rest of his family their share of Henry's money. Paranoid about losing his inheritance, he suspects the Schlegels of conspiring against his father for his wealth.

Charles reports on Margaret's antics to his father, and they readily swallow her excuse that she became unnerved and hysterical. Hysterics fit nicely into the men's preconceptions of female behavior, while rebellion and boldness do not. Charles is not entirely won over by this example of Margaret's feminine weakness. He still suspects her of plotting to seize his father's fortune. His misogyny becomes convoluted, as he thinks she might by manipulating his father but refuses to believe that she could be clever enough to fool a man.

While Charles speculates, he sees Margaret wander outside and happily behold her new home. She exclaims to herself, "I love this place … I hate London," and declares, "what a comfort to have arrived!" Little does she know, unfortunately, that this is to be her first and last time there. The house in Oniton is nothing but another "one of her innumerable false starts."

Margaret has grown jaded with the constant flux and grind of urban London, and she wishes to stake her roots in a place made to last, where she can find peace and see life plainly. But she is subject to Henry's whims, and he finds Oniton boring. He rents the property out after the wedding.

CHAPTER 26

Margaret makes an effort to get to know the house and the town before the wedding. She likes the undisturbed serenity of the land and the unhurried sensibility of the country people. The morning of the wedding, she observes Charles and the other men of the house going to swim in the river. She thinks that they look ridiculously helpless, relying on servants to carry their bathing suits for them, find the missing key to the bathing shed, and set up a springboard. She plans to run things differently when the house is hers.

Margaret enjoys the simplicity of her imagined life in Oniton, compared to the pretentiousness and rigidity of most people in upper-class society. She dreams of running a household where the inhabitants are more self-sufficient and less dependent on servants for everything. Ironically, hopelessly dependent is how men like Charles imagine women like her to be.

At breakfast, Margaret observes Henry going about the day's business with his customary stoicism, even on the occasion of his only daughter's wedding: "Henry treated a marriage like a funeral, item by item, never raising his eyes to the whole." But she is not overly troubled by her fiancé's insensitivity, for she has faith that her affection can one day reform him: "Love is the best, and the more she let herself love him, the more chance was there that he would set his soul in order."

Margaret laments Henry's lack of emotion at this meaningful moment in his life as a father. Just as he did when his wife died, he manages affairs "item by item," reducing them to tasks on an agenda. Margaret still believes that Henry can change such ways under the influence of her love.

Henry complains about a turn in the road to the church that will be difficult to manage by **car**, and Margaret asks if they can simply walk the short distance instead. He insists that "One can't have ladies walking through the Market Square," and says they had the same problem at Charles's wedding when Ruth Wilcox planned to walk to the chapel but was firmly deterred by Dolly's family. Margaret remarks, "You men shouldn't be so chivalrous."

The old roads of Oniton weren't designed for automobiles, which suits Margaret. She doesn't see why they can't just proceed to the church on foot, but Henry insists that it wouldn't be proper for the women in their party to walk through town. His in-laws agreed with him when Ruth wanted to do the same thing. Margaret finally voices some of her irritation with this demeaning treatment.

Margaret and Henry look for the butler among the large crew of new servants to show them to the wine cellar, a massive room full of bottles. She feels intimidated by the size of the home she is to manage. Nonetheless, she is determined both to fulfill her hostess duties for Henry's sake, and to make the place her home. She observes the wedding preparations with detachment, not sharing in the overall enthusiasm, but considering how she might plan her own successful wedding with Henry—it is to be an even bigger affair than Evie's.

Henry possesses an incredible amount of wine, a symbol of gratuitous luxury and gluttony. The grand manor house in general represents Henry's taste for extravagance. Margaret doesn't share his taste for conspicuous luxury, but she is eager to please him.

The wedding goes off without a hitch until Helen arrives at the after party with Leonard and Jacky Bast in tow. She claims that the Basts are starving now that Leonard has lost his short-lived position at the bank—"We upper classes have ruined him." After hearing that Leonard lost the ability to pay his bills, Helen paid for their late rent, their furniture lease, and their meals before taking them up to Oniton. She has brought them to see Henry before he leaves for Scotland the next day, convinced that he owes the Basts for having started the whole crisis with his bad business advice. While furious at Helen for acting so rashly and making such a scene, Margaret is sympathetic to Leonard's plight, and she promises her sister that she will ask Henry about helping him if Helen will immediately take the Basts away to a hotel.

Helen has rebelled against Henry's latest advice, become even more invested in the Basts and even more convinced that Henry is to blame for Leonard's misfortune. She is likely feeling incredibly guilty herself for putting Leonard in this sad position by following Henry's word to begin with. Blaming Henry is more convenient than accepting responsibility herself, and this gives her a purpose instead of simply feeling miserable and helpless. Invading Evie's weeding may be somewhat inappropriate, but the Basts do need help rather desperately. Helen's forceful response speaks to her compassionate character—more so if she's acting for the right reasons, and not merely trying to get back at Henry.

Margaret sits down with Henry and asks him if he could possibly offer her friend Leonard a new job in his company. He agrees to do her this favor out of gratitude for all her careful tact and devotion throughout the wedding (Margaret recalls how she "had made a special point of kotowing to the men"). Margaret is satisfied that her pragmatic, unsentimental fiancé "would save the Basts as he had saved **Howards End**, while Helen and her friends were discussing the ethics of salvation." She is also satisfied with herself for this wifely triumph and realizes "why some women prefer influence to rights."

Margaret is still compassionate towards the Basts and their plight, but her main concern is Henry's happiness. She doesn't want to hassle him or ask too much of him. Her mindful consideration of Henry's feelings thus far pays off when he agrees to help Leonard for her sake. She is duly rewarded for playing the role of his dutiful, submissive fiancée. In a more equal partnership, perhaps Henry would simply have trusted her not to make any trivial request of him and would have agreed to help without any incentive. However, Margaret is satisfied with how their current relationship seems to be working out.

However, Margaret's happiness is diminished when she and Henry find Jacky still in the garden, having a bit of cake and champagne and recovering from being roped into an unexpected expedition to a stranger's wedding. Henry approaches and asks Jacky to rejoin Leonard at the hotel at once. To Margaret's surprise, a drunken Jacky recognizes her "Hen": "Hen, don't go. You do love me, dear, don't you?" Henry asks Margaret, "Are you now satisfied?" and Margaret, in horror, begins to put two and two together: Jacky was once Henry's mistress. Henry believes that Margaret knew all along and planned the whole visit from the Basts to confront him. He tells her that the affair took place ten years ago, when he was married to Ruth, and he releases her from her engagement.

Margaret is displeased at the continuing disruption of Henry's perfectly-orchestrated wedding. She feels upset for Henry's sake that such a common woman is there to disturb his peace. However, she quickly realizes that he has not always been so respectable as he tries to appear. He had an affair with Jacky while he was married to his first wife, Ruth. He accuses Margaret and her sister of staging the whole encounter, and declares that Margaret must not marry a man proven to be so morally unfit.

CHAPTER 27

Back at the hotel, Leonard has put Jacky to bed. Helen begins to second-guess her whole enterprise but believes that no harm has been done. Leonard thanks her for working everything out with Margaret and Henry. Helen wants to discuss theories of personal responsibility, but Leonard has become jaded and weary of intellectual talk that is no help to him.

Helen starts to suspect that she might not have acted in the Basts' best interest by seizing the opportunity to confront Henry. Leonard is grateful for her help, both of them still happily unaware that there's little chance Henry will help Leonard anymore, knowing he's married to Henry's old mistress. Even believing that things will work out, Leonard has lost all his former enthusiasm for intellectual discussion, knowing it's pointless to his survival.

Nonetheless, Leonard tries his best to accommodate "his benefactress." Helen asks him about Jacky, and why his marriage is unhappy. He admits, "I needn't have married her, but as I have I must stick to her and keep her." He says that his family cut him off when he married her, and leaves Helen to guess why. She understands, and says, "I blame not your wife for these things, but men." He tells her how badly he just wants "work—something regular to do," and then he can be content with his lot. Helen is upset to hear that he has lost interest in **books** and adventure, but his grim financial collapse has made him cynical, and he observes, "one must have money … the real thing's money." Helen denies this, bringing up "Death"—something she believes reveals "the emptiness of Money." Leonard, preoccupied with his employment anxieties, cannot follow her theory.

Leonard demonstrates his loyalty and personal integrity by refusing to abandon Jacky. Henry rarely feels personal responsibility for anything, and shows no remorse for exploiting Jacky and leaving her in a desperate situation. However, Leonard feels a keen sense of personal responsibility towards a vulnerable woman whom he never wronged to begin with. Leonard has sacrificed his family relationships and his chance at greater self-fulfillment in order to take care of Jacky. Now he is as desperate as she once was, and cannot be bothered with any principles. Ironically, his poverty has brought him far closer to death than Helen has ever been, and his experience proves her wrong.

CHAPTER 28

Back at Oniton, Margaret sits paralyzed for a time, then begins to compose a letter. She writes to Henry, "this is not to part us … I mean it to be nothing." She censors herself to avoid expressing "so strong a grasp of the situation" and sounding disagreeably "unfeminine." Then she tears up the letter and writes to Leonard Bast instead, telling him that Henry unfortunately has no vacancy. She encloses this letter inside a note to Helen, telling her about Jacky getting herself drunk and writing, "The Basts are not at all the type we should trouble about." While she still wants to help Leonard and wouldn't wish for either of the Basts to starve, she believes that the only "practical" thing to do is to get them away from Helen and Oniton before Henry's scandal can get out: "Something might be arranged for the Basts later on, but they must be silenced for the moment." If she and her sister become responsible for betraying Henry's embarrassing secret to the world, even accidentally, he would never forgive her.

Margaret begins to process the news of Henry's past affair, and quickly decides that the fact does not change her intention to marry him. Rather than realize how little Henry thinks of women and conclude that she deserves better, Margaret becomes even more determined to act like the submissive woman he wishes her to be. She is willing to do whatever must be done to save their engagement. She is determined to prevent Helen or anybody else from learning about Henry's sordid history with Jacky, so she stops trying to help the Basts and focuses on getting rid of them, instead.

Despite everything, Margaret still faithfully believes that "Henry must have it as he liked, for she loved him, and some day she would use her love to make him a better man." Although she is upset at his betrayal of Ruth, she doesn't want to expose him; she can't even bear for Helen to learn the truth if she can help it, for both Henry's sake and her own. She is ashamed of him and of herself for staying with him despite his vice. Margaret delivers her messages for Helen and Leonard to the hotel without seeing them in person and goes to bed.

A few months earlier, Margaret told Helen that she did not love Henry yet. Now she says that she does love him, and that's why she accommodates him so much. To an intelligent, thoughtful, and compassionate woman like Margaret, the narcissistic and deeply patronizing behavior Henry has displayed since their engagement arguably should have been more off-putting than endearing, but her loyalty towards Henry and the type of Englishman he represents has proven absolute. She still believes she can change him, despite all his resistance so far.

CHAPTER 29

The next morning, Margaret greets Henry at breakfast and tells him what she had meant to write the previous night: his former affair "will make no difference" to her. Initially he refuses to talk about it, insisting that it is only right that the engagement be called off in light of his broken honor and his unworthiness to marry her. He declares that his transgression was inexcusable and refuses to believe that she could forgive him. Yet she persists until he, too, becomes hopeful that they can move past this. He backpedals and begins to explain himself, trying to win her sympathy: "If you knew all, you would excuse me. I was far from good influences—far even from England."

Margaret reiterates her absolute commitment to Henry, who is absurdly a bit irked that his ex-fiancée has taken it upon herself to pronounce her own judgment upon him instead of deferring to his say in the matter. He even tries to convince her that she's wrong, and he can't become her husband under the moral code of society. He wants to preempt his own rejection in order to spare himself the humiliation of Margaret's rebuke. Yet eventually he accepts her forgiveness as her ultimate submission to him, upholding her future husband above all else.

Margaret is not moved by Henry's shallow emotional appeals and wishes he would plainly acknowledge the real wrong he did to Ruth. But she nonetheless reassures him, "I have already forgiven you, Henry," and peace is restored. When she casually refers back to these events later, however, he declares the issue has been closed and makes her promise never to mention Leonard, Jacky, or the affair again. Margaret still feels responsible for the Basts' plight, not wishing them to starve, but she is absorbed in her own crisis. She and Henry **drive** away from Oniton, never to return.

Margaret does not buy Henry's self-indictment, nor his later justifications. She understands that he is simply trying to avoid having to acknowledge the real wrong that he did to his first wife. To finally silence him, she declares, "I have already forgiven you." If she was still hoping to help him learn from his past mistakes, she was surely disappointed when he later refused to ever talk about the matter again.

CHAPTER 30

At Oxford, Tibby is finishing his final year. Unlike his sisters, Tibby is coldly cerebral, "untroubled by passions" and "not concerned with much." He has neither the greed of the Wilcoxes, nor the social conscience of the rest of his family. He pursues his own studies in comfortable isolation.

Tibby may not be as materialistic and superficial as the Wilcoxes, but he is an example of a different type of privileged mindset that is just as detrimental to society: the callous, self-absorbed academic who cares only for knowledge and aesthetics, and nothing for human suffering.

One day Tibby is interrupted from his **reading** by a visit from Helen, who has come from Oniton. She says she is not going back to Wickham Place, but is leaving for Germany. She asks him to give Margaret her love and tell her that she wishes to be alone. She seems quite distraught, and Tibby is stunned when she bursts into tears. She tells him about what happened at the wedding, and what she learned about Jacky and Henry. He is shocked when she asks him to transfer five thousand pounds of her money to Leonard and Jacky for them to live off of from now on. He does as she asks, but the Basts refuse the money. When Helen tells him to give it to them in person, he finds that they have been evicted from their apartment and have disappeared. Helen has no choice but to reinvest her money, and she becomes even richer.

Greatly upset by Henry's unwillingness to help Leonard find work after all, Helen appears to be heading to Germany to escape the Wilcoxes just like she did when Paul first moved in next door. She doesn't even want to see Margaret before she leaves, although she does send her sister her love. After hearing from Leonard what must have happened between Henry and Jacky, Helen feels torn between telling Margaret what she learned and letting her continue to live in blissful ignorance—she doesn't realize that Margaret already knows. She thinks only Henry is to blame for Leonard's dismissal from Oniton. Henry only realized who Leonard's wife was when Helen dragged the Basts up to the wedding to begin with, so she likely feels at fault, too. She tries to make up for losing Leonard his chance at a job by providing him with her own money, but he refuses to become dependent on her. Ironically, she ends up with more money than ever, while he and his wife become homeless.

CHAPTER 31

The house at Wickham Place is torn down, and the Schlegels' furniture is stored at **Howards End**, which remains empty after the former renter left. Miss Avery will continue to look after the property. Margaret and Henry are married quietly at Margaret's insistence, without the grand celebration that was once envisioned. On their honeymoon trip to Austria, Margaret hopes to see Helen, who has been vacationing in Europe for the past two months, but Helen claims her traveling plans are too uncertain. Margaret assumes that her sister is making excuses to avoid seeing Henry and is disappointed in Helen for failing to forgive in him what Margaret herself has already forgiven.

Margaret's belongings now reside in Howards End, even if she does not. She finally puts her foot down on the matter of another extravagant wedding, refusing to play the perfect bride in front of all of Henry's friends once again. Helen misses both her sister's wedding and her honeymoon trip, and Margaret thinks her grudge against Henry is childish and petty. The new Mrs. Wilcox doesn't think much about how Henry has cost their friend Leonard, but imagines Helen is mostly upset about Henry's infidelity, as she herself is.

Henry is happy to avoid confronting Helen and the reminder of his narrowly avoided scandal and ruin. He is glad to have married Margaret after all—pleased with a wife whose interest in **poetry** or social issues distinguishes her from other men's wives, but who will always drop her book when he calls and yield to him agreeably in a debate. He believes that Margaret, like all women, has no true "muscle" with which to make a stand, but only "nerves," which cause her to overreact and do things like jump out of a moving **car**. He calls it "nerves" when she becomes upset after hearing that he has rented out the house at Oniton without bothering to consult her. He protests that the house is damp, located too far from London, and lacking in impressive scenery. She asks why he bought it to begin with, and he claims untruthfully that Evie had wanted him to buy it before she became engaged.

Henry disapproves of Helen's audacity and combativeness. He much prefers Margaret's quiet passion for art and less militant concern with social causes. He disapproves of women who refuse to defer to his judgment in a dispute. He doesn't believe that women are entitled to equal input and authority as men in deciding a course of action, because they lack the necessary faculties of reason and conviction. Thus he doesn't bother to ask Margaret's opinion on what to do with the house at Oniton, even though his own faulty judgment led him to buy an unsuitable house in the first place. He can't admit this blunder to Margaret or himself, so he blames his bad purchase, ever predictably, on a woman.

Margaret is unhappy to be yet again without a permanent home. They spend the winter in the house on Ducie Street, where Margaret tends to Henry and the household, preparing to take over a large new home in the future. She stops going out as frequently, preferring to re-read **books** and be alone with her thoughts rather than keep up with all the latest movements and ideas by going out to the theater and discussion societies. Her conscience still pains her somewhat about Leonard and Jacky Bast, but she ultimately feels that "being Henry's wife, she preferred to help some one else."

Margaret remains frustrated at her inability to settle into a lasting home. Given that the home was the foremost domain where a woman could exercise her own private and public authority at the time, Margaret surely longs for an outlet where she could put her intelligent capabilities to work. She wants a house she can shape to her own vision instead of temporarily putting up with someone else's ideas. Houses are important to Margaret, like they were to Ruth; she may not keep all of her principles when she marries Henry, but she sure hangs on to her furniture.

CHAPTER 32

Dolly pays Margaret a visit, and Margaret shows her the plans for the big house she and Henry are planning to build in Sussex. Dolly is now pregnant with her fourth child, and her husband struggles to provide for his growing family. Margaret pities her and has been asking Henry to help his son's family more. Henry believes Charles must fend for himself, financially, but Charles is not the businessman his father was. He may even have to sell his beloved **car**.

Henry still shows no desire to move back into Howards End, even though the property is empty and Margaret's belongings are already there. He must have a new, extravagant, house, even as he neglects the needs of his children and grandchildren. Perhaps sacrificing the car is not such a great loss for Charles, but it suggests how troubled he must be for money.

Dolly tells Margaret that Miss Avery has unpacked some of the Schlegels' belongings being stored at **Howards End**. Margaret is particularly disturbed to hear that their **books** may have been unboxed and strewn about.

Margaret is worried by this potential threat to the welfare of her possessions. While not a materialistic woman, she cares for the legacy and sentimental value of her family's furniture and books.

Dolly says that "old maids" like Miss Avery can be slightly crazy. Miss Avery gave Evie a very nice necklace as a wedding present, but everyone believed it was too expensive a gift to accept from a farm woman, and Evie returned it. Miss Avery was extremely insulted and threw the necklace into her duck pond. Margaret agrees that returning the necklace was rude of Evie, given that it was probably presented in honor of Ruth Wilcox, but Dolly says Evie's father, brother, fiancé, and in-laws all told her to do it.

Dolly echoes the misogynistic prejudices of her husband and father-in-law. Henry and Charles believe they know what's in an elderly farmwoman's best interest better than the old woman herself. Infuriated by their rude and patronizing behavior, Miss Avery demonstrates her own formidable force of will by shockingly throwing the returned necklace into the pond, just like Margaret threw herself out of Charles's moving car.

CHAPTER 33

Margaret goes down to the town of Hilton to see what has become of her stored belongings at **Howards End**. She **walks** from the train to the Averys' farm to retrieve the keys to Howards End from Miss Avery. She admires the timeless, undisturbed countryside she observes along the way, and is rather disappointed to find that Miss Avery's niece, running the family farm with her husband, has learned to be highly conscious of refined manners rather than naturally frank. The fields, with their cycles of planting and harvesting, life and death, give Margaret the impression of melancholy and cheerfulness simultaneously. She feels that "In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole … connect without bitterness until all men are brothers."

Margaret goes to see for herself what's going on with her belongings. She exercises her own will instead of her husband's by forgoing a car and walking by herself, which Henry always disapproved of. She enjoys the escape from Henry's frustratingly conventional preferences and their fast-paced urban lifestyle. Inspired by her natural surroundings, she longs for more genuine and less formal relationships. The fertile fields and pastures that Forster portrays are part of his romanticized vision of agricultural England, where there is enough for everyone and people live in harmony with the most fundamental rhythms of life.

Miss Avery's niece, Madge, takes Margaret to meet Miss Avery at **Howards End**, telling Margaret how her aunt has become more eccentric lately and now spends quite a lot of time there, in the house that once belonged to her old friend. Inside the house, Margaret discovers what Miss Avery has been doing with all her free time: she has unpacked and carefully laid out all the furniture being kept there, as if the Schlegels were living there. Margaret insists that she and Henry are not moving into Howards End, but into a much larger house in Sussex, where they can host the big parties that they are "oblige[d]" to give. However, Miss Avery doesn't seem to believe her.

The Wilcoxes' provocation of Miss Avery has made her miss her old friend Ruth more than ever, and she believes that Margaret will be another Ruth, resistant to the Wilcox mindset. She represents Ruth's will to give Howards End to Margaret to live in, which Henry still hasn't told Margaret about. Margaret argues that Howards End cannot fulfill her and Henry's needs, referring to the social demands on them to host extravagant parties. One could say that the outer life of "invitations and menus" has overtaken Margaret's inner emotional life.

Margaret politely tours **Howards End** with Miss Avery, and notes that her furniture and possessions suit the house nicely. She admires the meadow behind the house, and Miss Avery laughs at the Wilcoxes' hay fever. Miss Avery predicts that the house will be inhabited again in a matter of weeks, but Margaret repeats firmly that they are not coming. She takes the keys from Miss Avery and makes plans to move everything into a real storage facility.

Margaret can't help but notice how well her belongings fit Howards End. Miss Avery takes satisfaction from how ill-suited the Wilcoxes are to country life, with their highly symbolic allergies to the fertile outdoors. Margaret is still not won over to the idea of moving into Howards End, and she shuts Miss Avery out of the house.

CHAPTER 34

After having been sick with minor colds and coughs all winter, Aunt Juley comes down with acute pneumonia. Margaret and Tibby go down to be at her bedside, and Helen plans to come back from Germany. Thankfully, Juley battles her illness until the doctor declares she is no longer in danger from it. After Helen arrives in London, she writes for an update on Juley's condition. If her aunt is much better, she may not come down to see her before returning to Germany, she says.

Aunt Juley pulls through her illness like how Forster imagines England could pull through the ills afflicting its homeland and empire. Margaret and Tibby go to pay their respects at her bedside while she is most sick, but Helen is strangely reluctant to join them. She will go to see Juley only if her aunt is dying, not if she is already dead or recovered.

Margaret is greatly concerned by Helen's continued absence. She has not seen her sister in eight months. But she cannot lie to Helen, so she tells her that Juley is indeed recovering. Helen replies that she will return to Germany as soon as she picks up a few **books** from storage and asks where they are being kept. Margaret asks her sister to meet her in person, but Helen doesn't come.

Helen does not want to see Margaret, only to take her beloved books back to her German escape with her. It's unclear what is behind her odd behavior: continuing antipathy towards Henry, a new personal philosophy or ideology of some sort, a secret lover in Germany, etc.

Margaret can't believe that her sister continues to go to such lengths to avoid seeing her. Troubled by the depth of Helen's hatred for Henry, Margaret worries whether her sister has become unduly fixated on the Wilcoxes ever since the whole crisis with Paul four years ago. Tibby also finds Helen's refusal to see them highly unusual and suggests she might be mentally ill. Margaret shares her fears with Henry, who is slow to realize her concern. Eventually he declares that Helen must be taken to a doctor by any means necessary if she is truly acting madly.

Margaret fears that Helen's passionate feelings about the Wilcoxes, from the heights of infatuation to the depths of resentment, may have poisoned her mind against them and herself by extension. At a loss over what to do, she and Tibby go to Henry for help, even though Helen trusts him least of all.

Henry believes the sick have no rights—when Ruth was sick years ago, he promised to care for her at **Howards End**, but brought her to a nursing home instead. He tells Margaret she should write to Helen, pretending to be highly offended and informing her that her **books** are at Howards End and a neighbor will let her in while Margaret supposedly stays in London. When Helen comes to Howards End, Margaret can confront her there with a doctor waiting in the **car** if necessary. Margaret hates the dishonesty of Henry's plan but allows herself to be talked into it out of fear for Helen's wellbeing.

Helen may be right not to trust Henry—when his first wife trusted him to take care of her as promised "in sickness and in health," he lied to her and placed her in a nursing home. Here he devises another lie to bring Helen under Margaret's control, and therefore under his control. Accustomed to giving Henry his way, and badly worried about Helen, Margaret agrees to accept help from the person Helen hates most.

CHAPTER 35

Margaret and Henry lunch with Dolly before heading over to **Howards End** to ambush Helen. Margaret seems quite agitated before they leave, and Henry decides to try to go without her. His plan is foiled when Dolly's young son unwittingly sits down in the middle of the driveway and sets off a commotion when Henry tries to back out. Margaret makes it into the **car**, after all, and thinks that now she knows how Helen will feel to be deceived and betrayed.

Henry feels no remorse over his deceptions whatsoever. He arrogantly does whatever he believes to be in his own or someone else's best interest, without ever considering that he could be wrong. His wife and his sister-in-law's gender only gives him more imagined license to deceive them at will. Being the subject of Henry's patronizing schemes herself gives Margaret an understanding of just how upset Helen will be.

Henry picks up a doctor, and Margaret becomes more and more convinced that the men's attitudes about Helen are all clinical and misconceived. She feels that she made a terrible mistake in betraying her sister's trust. She remembers how suspiciously unimaginative people like Henry view independent-minded people like Helen and Margaret herself at heart. She thinks that she and her sister "would be mad together if the world chose to consider them so." When they arrive at **Howards End** and see Helen sitting on the porch, Margaret jumps out of the **car** ahead of the men to reach Helen first. She realizes that her sister has merely been pregnant all this time, not mad. She hurries Helen inside the house and confronts the men outside.

Margaret comes to believe that conventional male wisdom will likely hurt rather than help Helen, and she wishes she had never involved her husband or the doctor. She finally admits to herself that Henry cannot see as she does—he can understand only the prose, not the passion. Her loyalty to him has been unwavering since their engagement, but now she vows to herself to take Helen's side absolutely and be seen as mad along with her by the world—meaning, by incurably conventional minds like Henry's—if she must. Once again, she leaps out of a car with a Wilcox behind the wheel in loyalty to her principles and to her besieged gender.

CHAPTER 36

Margaret cannot speak to the men at first. Henry orders her to give them the keys and allow them to go inside and see Helen, but she refuses. The doctor asks Helen's cab driver what happened and learns about the pregnancy. He tells Henry. Margaret is suddenly filled with fierce loyalty towards her own sex and feels like "she was fighting for women against men." She tells her husband and the doctor firmly that they no longer have any need to diagnose Helen and no grounds on which to force any treatment on her, since her sister is still weeks away from giving birth.

Margaret knows that the men will now judge Helen even more harshly, perhaps, than if she were mad. Having a child out of wedlock is severely looked down upon, especially among the upper classes who are supposed to maintain exemplary virtue and propriety. Women are subject to greater condemnation than men, and Margaret wants to spare her sister the men's self-righteous reproach as much as possible. The social stigma of her unwed pregnancy is why Helen has avoided seeing her family.

The doctor weakly suggests that Helen could be suffering from a nervous breakdown, but Margaret disagrees defiantly. She says that her sister's situation requires great affection, which neither man has for Helen. She stands her ground outside the door until he and Henry **drive** away, and then she joins Helen inside.

Margaret has complete faith in her sister once again, and refuses to submit to the men's alleged authority. She knows there is no health crisis at hand, only a supposed moral crisis, and she has no intention of letting them interrogate or lecture her sister, imagining the contempt Helen has already faced.

CHAPTER 37

Margaret apologizes to her sister for her grave betrayal of her trust. Helen explains that she plans to live in Munich and raise her child with a friend of hers, a feminist woman named Monica. She says she cannot live in England and bear the scandal. Their conversation is awkward and they have little to say to one another. Helen prepares to leave but lingers over all their old furniture. They exclaim over where it has been placed in **Howards End** and what fond memories it all recalls. Their sisterly love and intimacy is restored. Margaret calls Miss Avery "extraordinary" for pulling it all off and says that the old woman must have loved Ruth Wilcox enough that she could not bear to see Ruth's house bare and unfurnished. Miss Avery's young grandnephew, Tom, brings over some fresh milk and eggs for the house.

Margaret's lie to her sister and Helen's shocking pregnancy have made their interaction uncomfortable, but they are eventually able to regain their old intimacy thanks to the magic of their childhood furniture and Howards End. Miss Avery and Ruth Wilcox both demonstrate remarkable instincts for people and places, intuition tied to their land and the "steady" and "whole" vision it enables. It is a vision with an entirely different reward than Henry Wilcox's "business mind."

Helen asks Margaret if they may spend one last night together in the house, fully furnished with all their belongings. Margaret doubts that Henry and Charles will agree to such a thing, but she also wants to spend a night with her sister. She leaves to ask Henry's permission to stay overnight at **Howards End**, conscious that she is fulfilling Miss Avery's recent prediction that she would soon inhabit the house again.

Helen becomes obsessed with idea of spending the night at Howards End, among the serenity of nature and the comfort of all their old furniture. Margaret is won over by the chance to spend a final magical night together, before Helen's life changes forever. However, she imagines that Henry and Charles might be difficult to convince, now that Helen has become a social outcast in their eyes.

CHAPTER 38

Margaret talks with Henry at Charles's house. Henry says he told Charles about Helen and Charles has gone to talk to Tibby. He asks Margaret if Helen was wearing a wedding ring, and she says no. He then asks if Helen told her the name of her "seducer," and Margaret says she did not even ask Helen such a thing. She asks Henry if he intends to make Helen's lover marry her, and he says yes. She asks him what he would do if Helen's lover turned out to be married, and he says he would make the fellow "pay heavily." Margaret had meant for Henry to realize his hypocrisy in being so scandalized by Helen's affair when he himself had an affair when he was married to Ruth Wilcox, but he didn't realize she was baiting him.

Predictably, Henry has determined that the men of the two families must get to the bottom of Helen's mysterious pregnancy and settle the matter. Margaret, meanwhile, respected her sister's privacy absolutely and did not ask how she became pregnant. Henry does not recognize the hypocrisy of betraying Helen's privacy after he himself had an affair with an unmarried woman which Margaret and Helen treated with discretion. He rails against the man who could have slept with Helen without doing the right thing and marrying her and he can't see the irony.

Margaret asks Henry if Helen may stay the night at **Howards End**. He refuses, saying he does not understand why Helen wants to stay there, and he fears that if she stays one night, she may feel entitled to stay for longer. He also feels that harboring a woman pregnant out of wedlock will damage his reputation. As Margaret's husband, he would naturally like to help Helen; nonetheless, he says, "I cannot treat her as if nothing has happened." Margaret asks her husband to forgive Helen as he has been forgiven. He ignores her meaning and insists that he has "the memory of my dear wife to consider" in regards to the sanctity of Howards End. Margaret cannot bear his hypocrisy, and demands, "Only say to yourself, 'What Helen has done, I've done.'" He still refuses to recognize what she means and declares that she and Helen do not have his permission to sleep over at Howards End.

As Margaret feared, Henry cannot look past his limited, self-interested mindset to grant Helen any small kindness before she begins her hard life as an ostracized unwed mother. He refuses to see that he is treating Helen by an outrageous double standard when he committed the same transgression—he arguably behaved worse, since he was married to Ruth at the time of his affair. He is so oblivious that he dares to claim that granting Helen the right to stay at Howards End would sully Ruth's memory, when he already committed the ultimate insult against her.

CHAPTER 39

Charles meets Tibby at Henry's house in Ducie Street. Charles is badly prejudiced against Helen, stemming from her disastrous entanglement with Paul. He suspects that she and Margaret are trying to get **Howards End**, and he feels very possessive of the house, despite disliking it. Tibby has little in common with Charles, as his habit of taking his enormous inheritance for granted puts him at odds with Charles's economic-minded perspective. Charles interrogates him about who Helen's lover may be, asking whether she mentioned anybody the last time they spoke. Tibby admits that she mentioned Leonard and Jacky Bast, and Charles draws his own conclusions.

Charles has always been suspicious of Margaret and Helen for being bold, opinionated women. In his misogynistic view, women who don't accept their "natural" inferiority are not to be trusted. Tibby can't identify with Charles's financial insecurity and obsession with reputation, since his family fortune protects him from most problems. Charles relies on his respectability to signal his class standing, while Tibby does not.

CHAPTER 40

Margaret and Helen talk at **Howards End**, each repenting for their part in the disastrous confrontation at Evie's wedding. Helen admits the danger of "isolat[ing]" to extremes, acknowledging, "I isolated Mr. Wilcox from the other forces that were pulling Leonard downhill." Margaret apologizes for rashly writing such dismissive letters that night, and concedes that it was wrong of her to have dismissed the Basts.

Margaret and Helen defy Henry's will and stay at Howards End, but Helen has lost her principled outrage against the Wilcoxes. She says that she was wrong to blame Henry alone for Leonard's misfortune. In turn, Margaret says that she was wrong to send the Basts away when they needed help. Unlike people like Henry, they are able to recognize and sincerely apologize for their mistakes.

Helen replies that it was not wrong: "It is right to save the man whom one loves. I am less enthusiastic about justice now." She describes how overwrought she was by the time she got Margaret's letters, and how dismayed she was to learn of Leonard's dual humiliation at Henry's hands. She explains that she does not love Leonard, however; on the contrary, she says, "I want never to see him again, though it sounds appalling. I wanted to give him money and feel finished." She invites Margaret to leave for Germany with her, and Margaret considers it.

Helen unexpectedly takes Margaret's side, saying that Margaret was right to abandon the Basts and rescue her marriage. Perhaps now that she has lost her respectability, she is more conscious of it. Or, perhaps now that sleeping with Leonard has cost her that respectability, she is less sympathetic to him. Either way, her apparent loss of compassion for him is chilling. Now that the Schlegels are embarrassed by their friendship with Leonard—which they repeatedly encouraged despite his wariness—they no longer care about him.

CHAPTER 41

After sleeping with Helen at Oniton, Leonard was overcome with remorse. He felt himself profoundly undeserving of her, and blamed her for nothing, even though he was ruined by the expedition that had been entirely her idea. When she fled the hotel the next morning, she left the bill unpaid and took the Basts' train tickets with her. The Basts sold everything they had to get back to London. Helen later tried to give him five thousand pounds, but "such a sum meant nothing to him," and he refused it. He turns to his family for money, and by depending on them he will never fatally starve. He now feels more tenderly towards Jacky, having led his own affair, and he tries harder to beg for money for her sake.

Leonard blamed himself for everything that happened with Helen, even though most of it was her idea. Her self-absorbed panic the morning after sleeping with him left him more desperate than ever. Just like Margaret, Helen ceased to care about what happened to the Basts as soon as she had her own concerns on her mind. Even though Leonard was the one who realized that "money's the real thing" and Helen insisted he was wrong, she now resorts to using her money to make things right between them and he refuses to accept it. He still honors his promise to provide for Jacky, and resorts to begging for help from his family.

Leonard briefly sees Margaret in St. Paul's Cathedral one day and feels compelled to confess his mistake to her. He looks for her at Wickham Place, but the house where she used to live is gone. He tracks her down by talking to Henry's servants, and leaves London early one morning for **Howards End**. He **walks** from the Hilton train station to the house, and Charles Wilcox passes him in his car. Leonard enters the house and makes his confession to Margaret: "I have done wrong." Charles assaults him with a sword displayed on the wall, and **books** shower down upon Leonard as his heart pains him. Charles orders him brought outside and revived with water, but Leonard is dead. Miss Avery walks out of the house carrying the sword and calls it murder.

Leonard wants to relieve some of his guilt by asking Margaret's forgiveness for sleeping with Helen. Like the night of his walking expedition, he bravely follows a path others would not. Putting all the blame on himself for a freely consensual affair is arguably patronizing towards Helen and her autonomy, but Leonard's determination to do the right thing and apologize is admirable. Charles, meanwhile, takes patriarchal thinking to the next level, brutally attacking Leonard to defend Helen's honor. Leonard perishes under the very books he once believed would improve his life,

CHAPTER 42

After visiting Tibby in London, Charles returns to his house in Hilton, where Henry tells him what happened with Helen and Margaret earlier. Henry entrusts his son with escorting Helen and Margaret from **Howards End** first thing in the morning. On his instructions, Charles goes to Howards End and is talking with the sisters when Leonard Bast arrives. Charles grabs a sword off the wall and strikes Leonard with the flat of the blade. Leonard grabs the **bookcase** in the hall as he collapses, and it falls down on top of him. Charles carries him into the garden and realizes that the boy is dead.

Charles was at Howards End when Leonard arrived to see Margaret because he was sent by his father to gently but firmly "evict" Margaret and Helen from the house. Leonard provides Charles with an excuse to vent his anger and powerlessness and prove himself the type of bold man his father could be proud of. Like Henry, reputation-conscious Charles believes it honorable to make Helen's married lover "pay heavily." But while Henry was all talk, Charles fulfills his "duty" literally.

Margaret explains that Leonard had been in the final stages of heart disease. Charles is so confident that he is not to blame for Leonard's death that he goes to the police station and tells them what happened. The police say that there will still be an inquest, but Charles is sure that the cause of death will be heart disease. Henry is not so sure after he hears that Charles used a sword upon the boy. He decides to **walk** over to the police station, declining Charles' offer to drive him.

Leonard apparently had a fatal heart attack after Charles began to hit him, which Charles takes to mean he is not at fault for Leonard's death. No one seems to think it strange that a young man in his early twenties, who regularly walked long distances, suddenly perished from heart disease. Only Henry seems to understand that Charles could be held accountable for his rash actions. He begins to realize the dangerous consequences of the thoughtless aggression he has encouraged in his children.

CHAPTER 43

Back at **Howards End**, Miss Avery laments that Leonard died without even knowing that he was going to be a father. The doctor comes to the house, and he agrees that Leonard died of heart disease. The police also arrive and question Margaret about Leonard and Charles. She doesn't feel Charles to be responsible for Leonard's heart attack in any way: "No doubt Mr. Wilcox may have induced death [...] but if it wasn't one thing it would have been another as you know," she tells the police.

Leonard made it to Howards End, the place where it could finally be possible to "connect without bitterness until all men are brothers," but there was no fraternal compassion between him and Charles. Tragically, Charles killed him before he could learn that Helen was going to have his child, but Helen never wanted to tell him to begin with, so that's not solely Charles's fault. Nor is Leonard's death solely Charles's fault, Margaret believes, perhaps feeling responsible for her role in the circumstances that brought Helen, Leonard, and Charles together in a fatal confrontation.

Helen stays one night longer at the Averys' farm, over the initial objections of Miss Avery's socially-conscious niece. After the police inquest, Helen plans to leave for Germany, where she can live without as much social stigma. Margaret plans to accompany her sister and help her raise her child. She is unable to forgive Henry after his outrageous hypocrisy and refusal to empathize with Helen. In turn, she certainly isn't going to ask his forgiveness for the blunt speech she gave him. She considers that her forceful words were addressed "not only to her husband, but to thousands of men like him—a protest against the inner darkness in high places that comes with a commercial age."

Modern times have made even the people who live on English farms conscious of societal norms. Germany is apparently more progressive, or at least Helen can live in anonymity there. Margaret, long tolerant of Henry's rampant sexism, has finally lost her patience with men's oppressive double standards for themselves and their women. She connects her husband's delusions about gender with his general willful ignorance about the world, encouraged by his commercial perspective.

Henry summons Margaret to Charles's house, where she returns the keys to **Howards End** and tells him she is leaving him after the inquest. He tells her that Charles will surely be found guilty of manslaughter, and says, "I don't know what to do—what to do. I'm broken—I'm ended." Indeed, Charles is sentenced to three years in jail. "It was against all reason that he should be punished," the narrator states. Henry breaks down and asks Margaret to help him rebuild his life. She takes him back to Howards End.

Henry is so utterly devastated by the idea of his son being charged and locked away that he is able to humble himself to ask Margaret for her help. The verdict is shocking to everyone, perhaps because they share Charles's confidence that his assault wasn't to blame for Leonard's existing fatal heart condition. Leonard's premature heart disease is a symptom of his poverty—lifelong poor nutrition, periods of starvation, extended exposure to pollution—which is the fault of everyone complicit in such a system. Charles is just the first person to finally be held accountable for it.

CHAPTER 44

Fourteen months later, Miss Avery's grandnephew Tom takes Helen's young son to play with the hay Tom's father is harvesting. Helen and Margaret are sitting on the lawn at the edge of the field while the Wilcoxes talk inside **Howards End**. Helen tells her sister that she likes Henry when she didn't before. She muses about how she no longer believes in romantic love, and how she is forgetting Leonard even though she feels she ought to remember him as her lover. Margaret says that she does not love children as she "ought" to and tells Helen not to bother forcing personal feelings onto things: "Forget him." Helen asks what Leonard has gotten out of life, then, and Margaret says that perhaps he got an adventure, which would have been enough for him if not for them.

The two little boys play together in the field of hay that is their backyard. One is the son of farmers, the other the son of two very different classes. Their friendship could represent the harmonious mingling of origins in the future. Helen, who has been raising her son alongside Margaret and Henry, seems to have exchanged all of her old ideals for the more conservative ideas of her sister and her brother-in-law. She and Margaret accept that Leonard's brief "adventure" was good enough for him, even though he never experienced the joys and comforts that they did.

Helen thanks Margaret for heroically settling them all down at **Howards End**, instead of leaving Helen to raise her baby abroad with only a friend's help and leaving Henry to be passed back and forth between Dolly and Evie. Margaret modestly demurs, saying she simply brought them all to a ready-furnished house to recover from the trauma of Leonard's death. From their lawn, they can see London expanding towards them, and they lament the plague of urbanization: "Life's going to be melted down, all over the world."

Margaret brought the two people stricken by Leonard's death together in one place, where she could easily take care of them both. She doesn't do anything for the person most ruined by Leonard's death—his poor wife, Jacky. Jacky is left to survive on the scant mercy of Leonard's family, or else return to the cold streets. The novel never mentions what becomes of her, but it is likely unfortunate. Margaret and Helen denounce the scourge of London spreading farther into the old countryside, but they haven't done much in their power to help the people suffering in the city.

Paul calls Margaret into the house, where Henry, Evie, Dolly and he are sitting in an airless room, trying to keep out the hay. Henry asks everyone to confirm their agreement with his decision to leave **Howards End** to Margaret. Paul is disgruntled, but he reluctantly agrees that he does not need the house if he's going to live in London and run his father's company. Dolly says that Charles no longer wants the house for himself or his sons, because they must move away after the scandal. In return, Henry will give all the money he would have left to Margaret to his children, instead, and Margaret will also give them a good portion of her money. After Margaret dies, the house is to go to her nephew, Helen's son. Dolly blurts out that it's curious how Margaret should finally get Howards End after Ruth left it to her.

With his brother in jail, Paul has become the new Charles—behaving rudely to Margaret, resisting giving her the house, working in London for the family colonial business. The youngest Wilcox is no different from the eldest. Neither of them would have been rightful owners of Howards End. Margaret imagines that her nephew, the next boy to be raised in this house, could become a new type of modern man. Descending from mixed origins, born outside of convention, raised in a house home to both the passionate Schlegels and the prosaic Wilcoxes—Helen's son could represent England's hope for the future. Margaret has set all this progress in place, as Ruth might have imagined she would.

When everyone else has left, Margaret asks Henry what Dolly meant, and he explains what happened after his wife's death years ago. "I didn't do wrong, did I?" he asks her, and she reassures him, "Nothing has been done wrong." The novel ends with Helen rushing into the house with Tom and her baby, bringing the news that the field of hay has been cut and a great crop is promised.

After all the time they've been living together in Howards End, Henry never told Margaret about Ruth's wish for her to inherit the house. Even so, everything ended up how it was meant to be all along, which means that Ruth was right to begin with—and that Henry wasn't dreadfully wrong to let the matter work itself out on its own, either. It's not clear that events would have played out much differently if Margaret had inherited the house when Ruth first intended, but perhaps Margaret could have found the place where she was meant to be without having to marry Henry first. The novel ends with a hopeful image, leaving the question ambiguous.

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