

Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's



INTRODUCTION

the French. During Burney's lifetime, England went to war with France again when Napoleon invaded Europe.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF FANNY BURNEY

Frances Burney was born in Norfolk, England, in 1752. She and her five siblings began writing and privately acting out plays together when they were young. As a child, Burney also worked temporarily as a servant for King George III's wife, the Queen of England and Ireland. Burney was a keen writer from a young age and secretly wrote her first novel, *Evelina*, in 1778. Novel-writing was not seen as a suitable career for a woman at the time, and *Evelina* was published anonymously soon after its completion. Burney also hid her writing from her father, but after he read *Evelina*, he guessed that Burney wrote it. Eventually, Burney's name got out, and she developed a reputation in the literary world. *Evelina* sold many copies, and people were fascinated and scandalized by the idea of its female author. Burney wrote three more novels (*Cecilia*, *Camilla*, and [The Wanderer](#)) after this, which were all extremely popular. In 1793, Burney married a French nobleman who had been exiled during the French Revolution and gave birth to her son, Alexander, in 1794. The family travelled widely together but lived in France during the Napoleonic Wars. Burney and her family then relocated to Bath in England. Burney died in 1840. Several of her extensive diaries were published posthumously, and she became famous for the historical insight into 18th-century life that her personal writing gave.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Evelina was written and set in 18th-century England. Upper-class British society in this period was dominated by class, and social mobility was largely impossible. Burney satirizes this rigid social system throughout her novel and parodies the idea that nobles are inherently virtuous just because they are born upper-class. Burney also satirizes 18th-century society's preoccupation with etiquette and manners, which organized social interaction in this period. The heroine, Evelina's, natural sensibility throughout the novel also draws attention to 18th-century philosophical ideas about looking at the world with an empathetic emotional perspective, rather than a rational scientific one. This perspective was gaining momentum in this period and would later influence the 19th-century Romantic movement. *Evelina* also draws attention to misogyny in 18th-century society and the women's lack of rights, protections, and financial opportunities during this time. Additionally, 18th-century England was often at war with France, and this is referred to in Madame Duval's constant struggle with Captain Mirvan: Madame Duval has married a French nobleman, while Captain Mirvan is an English naval officer who fights against

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Evelina is an example of a sentimental novel, a genre that was extremely popular in the 18th century and usually documented the adventures of an emotionally sensitive (often referred to as sensible or sentimental) hero or heroine as they navigated fashionable society. Other examples of sentimental novels from this period include Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768), Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), and Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). *Evelina* is also an epistolary novel, or a book that is told entirely through letters that the characters write to one another. This style was popular in this period because of best-selling contemporary novels like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* or Pierre de Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons*, a French novel about court scandals. With its descriptions of urban social life and observations of class and manners, *Evelina* is also similar to the "novel of manners," like William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* or Jane Austen's collected works. Austen's novels, like [Pride and Prejudice](#) and [Sense and Sensibility](#), draw heavily upon aspects of Burney's work, such as the love triangle that Evelina finds herself embroiled in between Lord Orville and Sir Clement, and the comedic descriptions of family life. Burney's love triangle formula is also a popular element of modern young adult and romance novels, such as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series and Suzanne Collins' [The Hunger Games](#) trilogy.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Evelina*
- **When Written:** 1778
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** 1778
- **Literary Period:** Enlightenment
- **Genre:** Sentimental Novel; Epistolary Novel
- **Setting:** Kent, London, and Bristol in England
- **Climax:** *Evelina* is reunited with her estranged father, Sir John Belmont, and restored to her rightful place as his heir.
- **Antagonist:** Sir John Belmont
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Late Bloomer. Although *Evelina* is largely about a young woman's search for a husband, Burney herself married surprisingly late in life for the time period: she did not get

married until age 41.

Pride and Prejudice. The title for Jane Austen's famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, is a quote from Burney's 1782 novel, *Cecilia*. Austen was a huge fan of Burney's work and cited her as a strong literary influence on her own writing.



PLOT SUMMARY

Mr. Villars receives a letter from his friend Lady Howard that informs him that a woman named Madame Duval wants to meet his adopted daughter, Evelina. This concerns Mr. Villars, and he writes back to explain that Madame Duval is Evelina's grandmother; Mr. Villars raised Evelina's mother, Caroline, after Madame Duval abandoned her. Caroline died not long after Evelina was born. Evelina has never met her real father, a wealthy nobleman named Sir John Belmont, who denies that his marriage to Caroline ever took place. Mr. Villars is worried about Evelina's reputation, since she is widely believed to be illegitimate, and he fears that Madame Duval will be a bad influence on the young and impressionable Evelina. Mr. Villars therefore tells Lady Howard that he will not allow Madame Duval to meet Evelina, but he agrees to send Evelina to stay with Lady Howard so that Evelina can have a taste of independence.

Soon after, Evelina travels to Howard Grove to stay with Lady Howard, her daughter Mrs. Mirvan and her granddaughter Maria. Evelina and Maria get along well, and Evelina enjoys her stay with them. A few weeks into her trip, Evelina writes to Mr. Villars telling him that Mrs. Mirvan and Maria plan to go to town to meet Captain Mirvan, Mr. Mirvan's husband, who is in the navy and has just returned from sea. Evelina asks Mr. Villars if she can go with them, and Mr. Villars reluctantly says yes, although he worries that Evelina will be led astray in the big city. Evelina is delighted, and the group set off for London.

Evelina has never been to the city before and is excited to attend her first ball with Mrs. Mirvan and Maria. At the ball, an extremely fashionable young man named Mr. Lovel asks Evelina to dance. She finds his exaggerated manners silly, however, and turns him down. Not long after this, another handsome young man named Lord Orville asks her to dance, and she accepts. Evelina and Lord Orville talk for some time, and she finds him extremely engaging and polite. While they talk, however, Mr. Lovel storms over and tells Evelina that she has insulted him—she does not understand etiquette and does not realize that she must dance with the first man who asks her or not dance at all. Evelina is embarrassed and regrets her sheltered country upbringing. The next day, Evelina and the Mirvans meet Captain Mirvan, and Evelina is disappointed to find that he is an exceptionally rude and bad-tempered man. The group go to the **theater**, and while they are there, they bump into Mr. Lovel and Lord Orville again. Captain Mirvan makes fun of Mr.

Lovel for his fashionable manners, and Evelina again finds Lord Orville very charming and polite.

A few nights later, Evelina and the Mirvans attend another ball, where a young nobleman named Sir Clement Willoughby asks Evelina to dance. But Evelina does not want to dance with him (she's noticed Lord Orville at the ball and hopes to dance with him again), so she tells Sir Clement that she already has a partner even though this is not true. Sir Clement does not believe Evelina and refuses to leave her alone until she admits that she lied. Ashamed, Evelina starts to cry, and Captain Mirvan and Lord Orville approach to find out what's wrong. Captain Mirvan is unsympathetic but takes a liking to Sir Clement. Lord Orville, in contrast, is very attentive and concerned about Evelina. Captain Mirvan says that Sir Clement should come to visit them at Howard's Grove.

The following evening, Mirvans and Evelina go to the theater—and on their way home, they encounter a distraught Frenchwoman who claims that she's lost her companions. The Mirvans give her a lift home and, on the way, the woman reveals that her name is Madame Duval—she is Evelina's grandmother. Evelina is shocked as Madame Duval, who seems coarse and aggressive, insists that Evelina must visit her while they are both in London. A few days later, Madame Duval introduces Evelina to her cousins, a rowdy family called the Branghtons. They are not very refined people and do not have good manners. Madame Duval insists that Evelina must come to the theater with her and the Branghtons, and Evelina reluctantly agrees. After the performance, Evelina bumps into Sir Clement and tries to sneak away with him to find Mrs. Mirvan, who is also at the theater. In the theater lobby, Evelina and Sir Clement bump into Lord Orville, who tells Evelina that Mrs. Mirvan has already left. Sir Clement then insists that he will give Evelina a lift home and, while they are in his coach, he tries to seduce her. Evelina is horrified and begs Sir Clement to take her home, which he eventually and begrudgingly does.

When it is time for Evelina and the Mirvans to return to Howard's Grove, Mrs. Mirvan invites Madame Duval to come with them—she is worried that if they do not, Madame Duval will try to kidnap Evelina to keep her in London. Captain Mirvan torments Madame Duval relentlessly during her stay and recruits Sir Clement (who also comes to stay with them) to play a several elaborate pranks on her. One evening, Madame Duval announces that Evelina should approach her father, Sir John Belmont, and try to claim her rightful inheritance. Although Evelina is alarmed by this and afraid that Sir John will reject her, Lady Howard thinks it is a good idea and writes to Mr. Villars for permission. Mr. Villars, however, is firmly against the idea—but he realizes that he cannot decide for Evelina. He reluctantly agrees to let her return to London with Madame Duval to petition Sir John.

Madame Duval then takes Evelina back to London and, while they are there, they spend a lot of time with the Branghtons.

One afternoon, in Mr. Branghton's shop, Evelina meets the Branghton's lodger, Mr. Macartney: a poor, Scottish poet who seems very sad and downtrodden. The Branghtons are very rude to Macartney, and Evelina feels sorry for him. A few days later, Evelina is in the Branghton's room when she sees Macartney rush upstairs to his own room carrying two pistols. Realizing that Macartney intends to kill himself, Evelina races after him and knocks the weapons from his hands. Macartney is stunned and grateful for Evelina's intervention, which makes him realize that someone cares about him and shocks him out of his suicidal thoughts. Evelina also lends Macartney some money, as he is extremely poor.

Evelina goes on several outings with the Branghtons in London and bumps into Lord Orville on multiple occasions. She is ashamed to be seen with the Branghtons, who are boisterous and unrefined, and she wonders what Lord Orville must think of her. Evelina also meets Sir Clement often but is always annoyed by his presumptuous and imposing attitude. During this time, Evelina receives a letter from Macartney in which explains his circumstances to her: he was raised by his poor mother and never knew his father. On a recent trip to Paris, he fell in love with a young lady and duelled her father, who disapproved of the match. Her father was injured in the struggle, and Macartney fled France. When he returned home, however, his mother was horrified by his story and told him that the lady's father was also *his* father. Macartney then returned to London, planning to travel to Paris and be reunited with his father. He ran out of money, however, and when he wrote to his mother to ask for more, he discovered that she had died. Heartbroken and destitute, Macartney thanks Evelina because her kindness has saved him. He vows to pay her back one day.

A few days later, Evelina, Madame Duval, and the Branghtons go out to visit some gardens and get caught in a rainstorm. While they shelter, Lord Orville's coach passes by, and Madame Duval rudely demands that the coachman let them use it since Evelina knows Lord Orville well. Mortified that her name is used like this, Evelina writes an apologetic note to Lord Orville and is shocked to receive a flirtatious message in reply. Evelina's feelings are hurt, since Lord Orville has always been so kind and courteous to her. She returns, heartbroken, to **Berry Hill** and Mr. Villars.

Mr. Villars is delighted to see Evelina but distressed that she seems so wan and sad. He decides that she must go to stay in Bristol with his friend Mrs. Selwyn to recover her health. While in Bristol, Mrs. Selwyn and Evelina stay with Mrs. Selwyn's friend Mrs. Beaumont, and Evelina is amazed to find that Lord Orville is staying there too—he is related to Mrs. Beaumont. Evelina and Lord Orville spend a lot of time together, and Evelina is pleased that he never mentions the note. She assumes he must have been drunk when he wrote it. One morning, Evelina goes for a walk in the garden and runs into Mr.

Macartney, who has come to pay her back. Evelina cannot talk to him there but agrees to see him a few days later. Lord Orville, who sees them together, becomes jealous and confesses his love to Evelina. Evelina tells him that she loves him too; realizing that Macartney is not her lover, Lord Orville proposes, and Evelina accepts.

When Evelina sees Macartney again, he tells her that his lover is Miss Belmont—Sir John Belmont's only daughter with Caroline Belmont. Evelina is baffled and realizes that this also makes Macartney her brother—he, too, is Sir John's child. Macartney also tells Evelina that Sir John is in Bristol, and Mrs. Selwyn says that they must immediately go and confront him. They do so, and when Sir John sees Evelina, he is struck by her physical likeness to Caroline and realizes he has been tricked. Miss Belmont, whom Sir John has raised as his own daughter, is in fact the child of Caroline's maid, Dame Green, who swapped the children as infants. Sir John breaks down because he feels guilty about how he treated Caroline, and Evelina immediately forgives him.

Later that week, Sir Clement visits Evelina and angrily asks her if she loves Lord Orville. Evelina says that she does, and Sir Clement admits that he wrote the insulting note Evelina received in London and pretended it was from Lord Orville. Sir Clement then storms from the house, and Evelina writes to tell him that she does not want to see him again. Evelina hears from Sir John, who tells her that he plans to give her half of her inheritance and give the other half to Miss Belmont. Now that he knows Miss Belmont is not related to Macartney, the pair will get married, and Miss Belmont will take Macartney's name while Evelina claims her rightful title as Sir John's only daughter. Evelina, meanwhile, will wed Lord Orville, who says that before they move to his estate, they will spend a month at Berry Hill with Mr. Villars. Evelina is delighted and cannot wait to see Mr. Villars and begin her new life as Lord Orville's wife.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Evelina – Evelina, the novel's titular protagonist, is Sir John and Caroline Belmont's daughter and Mr. Villars's adopted child. Caroline dies soon after giving birth to Evelina, and although Sir John and Caroline were married, Sir John denies that their wedding took place and never meets Evelina as a child. As a result, Evelina is entirely estranged from her father. Instead, she's raised by Mr. Villars, who was also Caroline's guardian. Evelina's sheltered upbringing in the countryside with Mr. Villars makes her quite innocent and naïve, and she is unaware of the complex social rules that govern fashionable society. When she travels to the city with Mr. Villars's friends, the Mirvan family, she finds herself frequently challenged by the complicated etiquette that young ladies must follow. Evelina is

beautiful and attracts a great deal of male attention, but she finds herself flustered as she rebuffs the advances of lecherous men like Sir Clement. Evelina is also naturally compassionate and polite, and she tries to make people feel accepted, included, and comfortable—a quality that she also observes in Lord Orville, a young nobleman she befriends. Evelina even goes so far as to save Mr. Macartney, a stranger who turns out to be her long-lost brother, from committing suicide. Evelina eventually reunites with her estranged grandmother, Madame Duval, who persuades Evelina to finally confront her father. But although Evelina is the rightful heir to Sir John Belmont's fortune, she is not greedy or money-hungry. When she and Sir John finally meet, she modestly accepts her place in society as a noblewoman and even forgives Sir John for the way he mistreated Caroline. Evelina eventually falls in love with and marries Lord Orville, whom she admires because he is extremely thoughtful, moral, and kind.

Lord Orville – Lord Orville is a young nobleman; he's Evelina's love interest and Lady Louisa Larpent's brother. Lord Orville is charming, polite, and compassionate. He has excellent manners, treating people politely not because he wants to make himself look good, but because he genuinely cares about others. After Lord Orville meets Evelina at a ball, he becomes protective over her, especially when he realizes how innocent and sheltered she is. Rather than try to take advantage of Evelina's innocence like Sir Clement does, Lord Orville frequently checks on Evelina while she is in London and always gives her the benefit of the doubt if he sees her doing something improper. Rather than let Evelina make mistakes, Lord Orville always seeks to guide and educate her on how to behave in public. He is not overbearing, however, and does not force his opinions on Evelina—he simply offers her friendly advice whenever she needs it. Lord Orville also goes out of his way to include Evelina when others leave her out because of her lowly social status (she is estranged from her noble father, Sir John). This shows that Lord Orville treats everyone with the same courtesy, regardless of class. Lord Orville eventually falls in love with and proposes to Evelina before he knows that she is a noblewoman or that she is set to inherit Sir John's fortune. Lord Orville isn't ambitious or greedy like most of the other men Evelina meets in London—he's motivated by his loves for Evelina rather than his own material gain. Like Evelina, he is a highly moral character and always tries to do the right thing.

Sir Clement Willoughby – Sir Clement is a young nobleman; he's Evelina's other suitor who competes with Lord Orville for her attention. Sir Clement is extremely boisterous and forceful and constantly pesters Evelina while she is in London. Although Evelina does not encourage him, Sir Clement follows Evelina around and often will not let anyone else talk to her while he is present. He is jealous when she talks to other men and, on several occasions, tries to manipulate her and take advantage of her innocence and naïveté. Sir Clement is oblivious to

Evelina's feelings and does not seem to care when he frightens or upsets her with his aggressive behavior. His apologies are not sincere, and he does not learn from or try to change his behavior. Sir Clement does not respect Evelina and does not give her the benefit of the doubt when he sees her behave improperly. Instead of realizing that Evelina is young and does not understand social etiquette, Sir Clement assumes that Evelina has bad intentions and thinks that she's teasing him or leading him on. Sir Clement is also dishonest and untrustworthy, using people around him to get his own way. He pretends to like the Mirvan family so that he can spend time with Evelina, even though he secretly dislikes them. He's also curious about Evelina's family and heritage because he cares more about people's social status than their character. Sir Clement also shows that he does not care about Evelina as he tries to seduce her multiple times but has no intention of marrying her—a situation that could irreparably damage Evelina's reputation. In this sense, Sir Clement is the opposite of Lord Orville, who is polite and considerate and who tries to help rather than use people.

Madame Duval – Madame Duval is Caroline's mother and Evelina's grandmother. She's from a poor family and met Evelina's grandfather Mr. Evelyn when she was working as a barmaid. Madame Duval was beautiful but greedy and unrefined in her youth, and Mr. Evelyn died not long after marrying her. Madame Duval then moved to France and married a wealthy nobleman, abandoning Caroline and leaving Mr. Villars to raise her. After her husband dies, Madame Duval tries to get in contact with Evelina because she wants to sue Evelina's estranged father, Sir John, and force him to give Evelina her inheritance. Although Madame Duval claims to have Evelina's best interests in mind, really, she just wants part of Sir John's money for herself. Madame Duval is also related to the Branghton family, who are similarly greedy and hope for a share of Sir John's wealth through their connection to Evelina. When Mr. Villars will not let Madame Duval see Evelina, Madame Duval travels to London and tracks Evelina down herself. She's extremely forceful and emotional: she shouts at and abuses people if she does not get her own way, and she often causes a scene in public through her loud and obnoxious behavior. Madame Duval is also very flirtatious with men and still dresses like a young woman even though she is middle-aged—she has a young lover, Monsieur Du Bois, who travels with her. Though Madame Duval believes that the English are snobbish and bad-mannered, she herself often behaves improperly and is very vain and arrogant. Despite this, Madame Duval often feels that people victimize her and treat her unfairly, and she does not take responsibility for her past decisions—like abandoning Caroline.

Mr. Villars – Mr. Villars is Evelina's adoptive father. He's an elderly man who knew Evelina's grandfather Mr. Evelyn and Evelina's mother, Caroline, whom he also raised after she was

orphaned. Mr. Villars is a kind-hearted and generous man who has raised Evelina as his own. He was heartbroken when Caroline died after her husband, Sir John Belmont, denied their marriage and publicly destroyed her reputation—and he hates Sir John for this. Mr. Villars is very protective over Evelina and fears letting her go out into the world alone because of what happened to Caroline. Although Mr. Villars is reluctant to let Evelina travel to London with the Mirvan family, he knows that he must let Evelina grow up and experience the world for herself. Ultimately, Mr. Villars just wants what is best for Evelina and hopes that she will learn to protect herself and make good choices as she grows up and enters society. He encourages Evelina to be honest with him and supports her when she writes to him about her mistakes. Mr. Villars is thrilled when Evelina introduces him to her future husband, Lord Orville. And although Mr. Villars wants Evelina to receive her inheritance from Sir John—who does not believe that Evelina is his daughter and therefore does not want to leave her his fortune—he values Evelina’s happiness above her wealth or status.

Mr. Macartney – Mr. Macartney is a Scottish poet; he’s Sir John Belmont’s son, Evelina’s brother, and Miss Belmont’s fiancé. Evelina meets Mr. Macartney while he is a destitute lodger in Mr. Branghton’s shop. Macartney is in a dire situation, having fallen in love with Miss Belmont in Paris and fought and injured her father, Sir John (who is also Evelina’s father) when Sir John discovered the affair. After his fight with Sir John, Macartney returned home, where his mother revealed that Sir John is his father too—meaning that he and Miss Belmont are siblings. Macartney then fled to Paris, only to learn that his mother had died, leaving him penniless in London. When Evelina meets Macartney, he is on the brink of suicide, and she saves him from harming himself. Macartney, who’s kind and honorable, insists on paying Evelina back for the help she gave him. After she saves him, he works hard to put his pride aside and ask for financial help from his mother’s family, which saves him from ruin. Macartney eventually discovers that Sir John is his father as well, and that Miss Belmont is not Sir John’s real daughter—she and Evelina were switched at birth. Sir John raised Miss Belmont as his own, believing that she was his and his deceased wife, Caroline’s, child. Macartney marries Miss Belmont at the end of the novel, after it is revealed that she is not his sister, and he inherits his share of Sir John’s wealth.

Sir John Belmont – Sir John is Evelina and Mr. Macartney’s estranged father. In his youth, Sir John is a debauched libertine and does not care how his actions affect others. Sir John marries and impregnates Caroline Belmont, who gives birth to Evelina. However, Sir John denies his marriage to Caroline, destroying her reputation, and Caroline dies soon after this. Sir John also does the same to Mr. Macartney’s mother, who is disgraced and runs away to Scotland to raise her son. Meanwhile, Caroline’s maid, Dame Green, also gives birth to an

illegitimate child, Miss Belmont, who gives the child to Sir John and tells him that the baby is Caroline’s daughter. Sir John raises the child as his own and despises Mr. Villars (who tries to convince him that Evelina is his real daughter), as he thinks that Mr. Villars wants to trick Miss Belmont out of her fortune. At the end of the novel, Sir John learns that both Mr. Macartney and Evelina are his real children, while Miss Belmont is not. Sir John deeply regrets the way he treated Caroline and feels that Evelina must hate him; he can barely face Evelina because of his shame. Sir John’s regret is sincere, and he shows his goodwill toward Evelina by giving her a share of her inheritance. Although Sir John is cruel and thoughtless in his youth, he’s honorable in his old age and does not desert Miss Belmont when he discovers that she is not his biological daughter. Instead, he splits his inheritance between her and Evelina and allows Miss Belmont to marry Mr. Macartney, whom she loves and who is also Sir John’s son and heir.

Caroline Belmont – Caroline is Evelina’s mother, Madame Duval’s daughter, and Mr. Villars’s ward. Mr. Villars raises Caroline when Madame Duval leaves her in his care. Caroline is an extremely naïve young woman, and Sir John seduces her while she stays in London with Madame Duval, who wants her to marry another man. Caroline does not love the man Madame Duval has selected for her, so she runs away with Sir John and marries him instead. But when Caroline becomes pregnant with Evelina, Sir John denies their marriage and ruins Caroline’s reputation. Caroline dies of shame and leaves the heartbroken Mr. Villars to raise Evelina.

Mrs. Mirvan – Mrs. Mirvan is Mr. Villars’s friend, Lady Howard’s daughter, and Evelina’s guardian while she is in London. Evelina travels to London with Mrs. Mirvan, and her daughter Maria to meet Mrs. Mirvan’s husband, Captain Mirvan, a navy officer who’s just come back from sea. Mrs. Mirvan is a kind-hearted and tolerant woman who puts up with her bad-tempered husband and is welcoming and considerate toward Evelina. Mrs. Mirvan is also quite fashionable and well-known in London as she is from a prestigious family. Mrs. Mirvan is not snobbish, however, and tries to help Evelina learn about fashionable society rather than looking down on her because she has not been educated in etiquette.

Captain Mirvan – Captain Mirvan is a naval officer; he’s Mrs. Mirvan’s husband and Maria’s father. Captain Mirvan joins Evelina, Mrs. Mirvan, and Maria during their stay in London. Captain Mirvan is extremely rude and bad-tempered, constantly arguing with and insulting the fashionable people whom the group encounters in London. Captain Mirvan looks down on fashionable society as petty and stupid; he himself has coarse manners because he is used to a rough life at sea. He is also extremely prejudiced against the French and relentlessly torments Madame Duval, who was once married to a Frenchman and who joins the group in London. Captain Mirvan is disrespectful to women and is often violent toward Madame

Duval. He likes Sir Clement Willoughby because Sir Clement will go along with the Captain's cruel pranks. The two men lie to Madame Duval that her lover has been arrested and proceed to stage a fake robbery that traumatizes her. If anyone objects to Captain Mirvan's behavior, he threatens or bullies them until he gets his own way.

Lady Howard – Lady Howard is Mr. Villars's friend and Mrs. Mirvan's mother. Lady Howard is a wealthy and respectable noblewoman who has been friends with Mr. Villars for a long time. Lady Howard knew Evelina's grandfather Mr. Evelyn and her mother, Caroline. She believes that Evelina should receive her full inheritance from her father, Sir John. (Although Evelina is Sir John's child, Sir John disowned her and denied his marriage to Caroline.) Lady Howard tries to help Evelina claim her inheritance by writing to Sir John and telling him about Evelina. Lady Howard does not do this for personal gain or any self-interested motive, but simply to help Evelina and secure her financial future. Lady Howard is a loyal friend to Mr. Villars and understands his protectiveness over Evelina, though she subtly encourages him to let Evelina out into the world because she knows that this will be the best thing for them both. Lady Howard welcomes Evelina as one of her own family when Evelina comes to stay, and she appreciates Evelina's virtuous and considerate temperament.

Mr. Branghton – Mr. Branghton is a shopkeeper; he's Evelina's cousin and Tom, Miss Branghton, and Polly's father. Like Madame Duval, Mr. Branghton is from a lower-class family but has made money through his silver shop. Mr. Branghton is greedy and ambitious; he is interested in Evelina because he thinks she will inherit her father, Sir John's, money. He wants Evelina to marry Tom so that they get a share of this fortune. Mr. Branghton both envies and looks down upon the fashionable and noble characters in the novel. Yet Mr. Branghton wants to emulate and be accepted by the upper classes, though he doesn't understand the refined culture (like art or opera) that fashionable people enjoy. Mr. Branghton therefore comes off as a foolish character, and his attempts to transcend his class make him seem boorish and lacking in self-awareness. Mr. Branghton is also a neglectful father and a poor role model for his children.

Tom Branghton – Tom is Mr. Branghton's son, Miss Branghton and Polly's brother, and one of Evelina's suitors. Tom is a poorly educated young man who does not take anything seriously and has bad manners. Tom is from a middle-class family, so he's not refined or educated in upper-class etiquette. He makes vulgar jokes and constantly fights with and pulls pranks on his sisters in public—much to Evelina's embarrassment when she stays with the Branghtons during her second trip to London. Like his father, Tom is ambitious and greedy and wants to marry Evelina for her money, as this will elevate his social status. Evelina turns Tom down, horrified at the prospect of marrying him.

Miss Branghton – Miss Branghton is Mr. Branghton's eldest

daughter, Tom and Polly's sister, and Evelina's cousin. Miss Branghton has a crush on the Branghton's neighbor, Mr. Smith, and she's jealous of Evelina because Mr. Smith is smitten with her instead of Miss Branghton. Unlike Evelina, Miss Branghton is petty and melodramatic. She argues openly with her father and brother in public (which Evelina finds very embarrassing), and her bedroom is always a mess. Miss Branghton is from a middle-class family but wants to be viewed as refined and upper-class—though she lacks the etiquette to achieve this.

Polly – Polly is Mr. Branghton's youngest daughter, Tom and Miss Branghton's sister, and Evelina's cousin. Polly is a silly, uneducated girl who flirts openly with her lover, Mr. Brown, even though this was considered very improper behavior for women at the time. Polly is portrayed as more good-natured than Miss Branghton (who is moody and jealous of Evelina), but she's also ignorant and careless about her reputation. At one point, she and Miss Branghton walk off by themselves in a public garden at night and are accosted by several young men—behavior that others view as extremely scandalous.

Miss Belmont – Miss Belmont is Dame Green's (and, allegedly, Sir John's) daughter. Dame Green tricks Sir John: she tells him that Miss Belmont is Sir John's deceased wife, Caroline's, baby, when really, the baby is her own. Sir John feels guilty because, before Caroline died, he impregnated and then abandoned her. To ease his shame, he adopts Miss Belmont and sends her to be educated in a French convent. When Miss Belmont leaves the convent, she meets and falls in love with Mr. Macartney, who also turns out to be Sir John's son by another woman. Macartney's identity is discovered at the same time as Miss Belmont's, and Sir John allows Miss Belmont to marry Mr. Macartney so that he can give Evelina—his daughter by Caroline—her rightful title as his heir without damaging Miss Belmont's reputation. She will take Mr. Macartney's name, which is also Belmont.

Dame Green – Dame Green is Caroline's maid who is impregnated by a man she is not married to, around the same time that Caroline falls pregnant with Evelina. After Evelina's birth and Caroline's death, Dame Green sees that Evelina will be well cared for by Mr. Villars, but that her own daughter will inherit nothing and will have a ruined reputation because she is illegitimate. Dame Green therefore decides to take her own child to Sir John and tell him that this is Caroline's daughter. Sir John, who feels guilty because he denied his marriage to Caroline before she died, adopts the child as his own and raises her as Miss Belmont. Sir John discovers the truth at the end of the novel, when Evelina's identity as Sir John's daughter is revealed.

Monsieur Du Bois – Monsieur Du Bois is Madame Duval's French lover who escorts her to London. Monsieur Du Bois is generally polite and reserved. He does not speak much English, so his perspective is mainly lost on the other characters—only Evelina, who speaks a little French, can converse with him. The

relationship between Madame Duval and Monsieur Du Bois is ambiguous, but it is implied that Monsieur Du Bois does not really have feelings for Madame Duval and is probably with her for her money. Monsieur Du Bois ends up falling in love with Evelina and confessing his love to her—thus ending his relationship with Madame Duval. Although Evelina is annoyed by Monsieur Du Bois's conduct, he is generally an unthreatening and somewhat pathetic character.

Mr. Smith – Mr. Smith is the Branghton's neighbor and one of Evelina's suitors. He's pretentious, vain, and arrogant, and he mistakenly believes that many young women are in love with him. Mr. Smith is middle-class—and although he takes great care over his appearance and tries to impress Evelina, Polly, and Miss Branghton with his manners, he looks shabby and silly compared to a real nobleman, like Sir Clement. Mr. Smith is predatory with women and flirts with Miss Branghton—who has a crush on him—and with Evelina, even though he does not intend to marry them. Mr. Smith arrogantly believes that he is too good for marriage and that marriage would interfere with his relationships with other young women. He does not care about women's reputations, which could be irreparably damaged if he seduced them and then refused to marry them. Mr. Smith is therefore inconsiderate, as he only thinks about himself and his own pleasure. Mr. Smith is also snobbish and ambitious: he's only interested in Evelina because he suspects that she is refined and possibly has a large inheritance, not because he genuinely cares about her.

Mr. Lovel – Mr. Lovel is a fashionable but foolish nobleman whom Evelina meets at her first ball in London. Mr. Lovel asks Evelina to dance at the ball, and Evelina turns Mr. Lovel down but then accepts a dance with another man—which, unbeknownst to Evelina, violates fashionable etiquette. The proud and arrogant Mr. Lovel is deeply offended by Evelina's behavior; he does not give her the benefit of the doubt and instead, chooses to insult her. When he discovers that she is from the country and therefore has not been educated in city etiquette, he looks down on her and makes snide remarks about her upbringing. Mr. Lovel is also obsessed with his appearance and fashionable image: he only goes to the **theater** so that people will see him there—he claims that he doesn't even watch the plays. Although Mr. Lovel is well-versed in etiquette, underneath his polite veneer he is a malicious and selfish person. He snobbishly ignores Evelina when he thinks she is poor and socially unimportant (before her true identity as Sir John Belmont's daughter emerges), and, he joins in a bet with his friend Lord Merton in which he hurts an old woman.

Lord Merton – Lord Merton is Mr. Lovel's friend and Lady Louisa Larpent's fiancé. He's an arrogant nobleman who openly and rudely flirts with Evelina in front of Louisa. His manners are so bad that Evelina is amazed when she finds out he is a gentleman. Evelina later encounters Lord Merton while she stays in Bristol with Mrs. Beaumont, who is related to Louisa.

Lord Merton is extremely vulgar and bad-mannered. He drinks and gambles all day, tries to seduce Evelina repeatedly, and joins in a cruel bet with Mr. Lovel during which he hurts an old woman.

Lady Louisa Larpent – Louisa is Lord Orville's sister and Lord Merton's fiancée. She's is a cold, snobbish woman who rudely ignores Evelina while Evelina is also staying with Mrs. Beaumont (Louisa's aunt) in Bristol. Although Louisa claims to be extremely delicate and sensitive, she is totally inconsiderate of other people and makes Evelina feel extremely unwelcome during her visit. Louisa is extremely shallow and only cares about social status and what other people think of her. She is only kind to Evelina when she learns that Evelina is actually the wealthy nobleman Sir John Belmont's daughter.

Mrs. Beaumont – Mrs. Beaumont is Louisa Larpent and Lord Orville's aunt and Mrs. Selwyn's friend. Evelina goes to stay with Mrs. Beaumont while she is visiting Bristol with Mrs. Selwyn. Mrs. Beaumont is from an extremely wealthy and powerful family, and she cares deeply about people's reputations and family connections. She is a condescending person and believes that, because she is from a prestigious family line, it is her duty to be kind to people who aren't as fortunate as her. Mrs. Beaumont tolerates Mrs. Selwyn because Mrs. Selwyn is less wealthy than her, and because Mrs. Selwyn once did her a favor; Mrs. Beaumont feels that this makes her look virtuous and charitable. However, Mrs. Beaumont does not really care about other people and is a rather dull, shallow woman.

Mrs. Selwyn – Mrs. Selwyn is Mr. Villars's friend who takes Evelina to visit Bristol with her. Mrs. Selwyn is a widow, and she has an unusually witty and bold personality. Because of these traits, Mrs. Selwyn is considered "masculine" and inappropriate. However, she is genuinely intelligent and sees through and makes fun of stupid yet fashionable people, like Mr. Lovel and Lord Merton. Mrs. Selwyn is kind to Evelina, but Evelina finds Mrs. Selwyn's manner a little overwhelming—Evelina herself is gentle and more stereotypically feminine than Mrs. Selwyn.

Mr. Evelyn – Mr. Evelyn is Evelina's grandfather and Caroline's father. Mr. Evelyn falls in love with and marries a barmaid, Madame Duval, even though his friends advise him against this. Madame Duval's coarse temperament proves too much for Mr. Evelyn, and he dies soon after their daughter Caroline is born. Mr. Evelyn suspects that Madame Duval will abandon Caroline, so he leaves her in the care of his tutor, Mr. Villars, who raises Caroline as his own.

Mrs. Clinton Mrs. Clinton is one of Mr. Villars's servants. She was formerly Caroline's maid and now serves as Evelina's nurse at **Berry Hill**. Mrs. Clinton is the one who remembers that Dame Green, another one of Caroline's maids, had a baby (Miss Belmont) around the same time that Evelina was born. This revelation leads Dame Green to confess that she gave her baby

(rather than Caroline's baby, Evelina) to Sir John and lied that the baby was Sir John and Caroline's daughter.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Maria – Maria is Captain Mirvan and Mrs. Mirvan's daughter and Evelina's friend. She and Evelina have a loyal, loving, and respectful friendship.

Mr. Brown – Mr. Brown is Polly's suitor and Tom's friend.

Mr. Coverley – Mr. Coverley is Mr. Lovel and Lord Merton's friend.



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.



SENSIBILITY, ETIQUETTE, AND APPEARANCES

Frances Burney's *Evelina* reflects 18th-century English society's preoccupation with sensibility and etiquette. A person's sensibility refers to their capacity for profound emotional reactions, especially as it relates to their ability to empathize with others and react emotionally to other people's suffering. Sensible people were thus considered to be virtuous people, as those with natural sensibility were believed to care deeply about others and wanted to avoid offending people. To avoid giving offense, however, people also needed to understand etiquette, or manners. Burney suggests that although these concepts are often seen as inextricably linked, etiquette and sensibility aren't the same: sensibility relies on one's natural responses, whereas etiquette is learned. Burney further implies that many people exaggerate their sensibility to look fashionable, so although her 18th-century society claimed to prize true sensibility, people often cared more about the *appearance* of sensibility than they did about genuinely empathizing with others. In contrast, virtue comes only from genuine sensibility—that is, authentic empathy for others—and not from the pretense or appearance of it.

Throughout the novel, Evelina displays innate sensibility, meaning that her emotional reactions and empathy for other people is sincere rather than an attempt to look good in society's eyes. Evelina's adventures begin when she is sent away from home to stay with Lady Howard, a family friend. Evelina has not been educated in polite society and therefore doesn't know that sensibility is highly prized among fashionable people like the Howards. In spite of this, Lady Howard writes to Evelina's guardian, Mr. Villars, soon after Evelina's arrival and

compliments Evelina's "natural desire to oblige" those around her—in other words, Evelina is eager to please others because she genuinely cares about how they feel, which is evidence of her natural sensibility. Evelina's sensibility is also on display when she visits London and attends her first opera. Sensibility was associated with having a natural, emotional response to art, so it's significant that Evelina is deeply moved by the performance. Even more importantly, Evelina's outward response to the opera is muted, which suggests that her sensibility is a genuine, internal response, not an exaggerated performance to gratify or impress those around her. Furthermore, Evelina demonstrates genuine empathy when she saves Mr. Macartney—a Scottish poet, who turns out to be her estranged brother—from suicide. Although she does not know Macartney at the time, Evelina has a profoundly emotional reaction to Macartney's sadness and does everything she can to help him. Once again, it's clear that Evelina's sensibility is natural, and she is genuinely interested in helping Macartney for his sake—not to make herself look good.

Although 18th-century society viewed etiquette as a byproduct of sensibility, Evelina is both innately sensible *and* unaware of conventional manners, which suggests that these concepts are not interchangeable (or even necessarily compatible) as fashionable society believes. While sensibility is an innate, emotional response to the world, etiquette is learned through social convention. For example, when Evelina attends her first ball, she learns that she cannot follow her natural inclination and dance with whomever she chooses but must follow complex rules to avoid giving offense. This suggests that, in contrast to sensibility, etiquette is often based on suppressing natural urges, not expressing them. Furthermore, a great deal of social etiquette is based on deceit—something that is antithetical to sensibility, which relies on authentic emotion. For example, Sir Clement Willoughby, a fashionable nobleman who tries to seduce Evelina, fully understands etiquette and yet is a deceitful and unpleasant person. Sir Clement demonstrates this when he pretends to like Captain Mirvan, who Evelina stays with in London. While Sir Clement flatters Captain Mirvan publicly, he viciously criticizes him in private, which proves that Sir Clement's displays of etiquette are disingenuous and based in self-interest—he spends time with Captain Mirvan to get closer to Evelina—rather than based in genuine kindness. Furthermore, while society takes etiquette as evidence of virtue, the novel makes it clear that fashionable people, like Sir Clement, are often unconcerned with people's feelings. Sir Clement does not care that he bullies Evelina into spending time with him, rather than making her feel comfortable. Evelina, in contrast, is sensible but not conventionally "polite" and is always deeply aware of how her actions make others feel. This demonstrates that true virtue requires sensibility but does not necessarily require studied etiquette, which often disguises falsehood.

People often fake sensibility to make themselves look good, even though this is oppositional to true sensibility, which is about caring about others rather than only caring about oneself. Louisa Larpent, a fashionable young woman Evelina visits in Bristol, pretends to be extremely emotionally sensitive. In actuality, Louisa is insensitive and cruel, as seen when she deliberately makes Evelina feel unwelcome during her visit. Louisa does not really care about how her actions make Evelina feel, underscoring the idea that Louisa is only concerned with the fashionable appearance of sensibility rather than being kind to others for the sake of being kind. Despite her unpleasant nature, Louisa is known as a refined and sensible person among polite society. This suggests that although 18th-century society claims to admire polite behavior, it is more concerned with the *appearance* of politeness and does not really care if people genuinely feel for others, so long as they *appear* to do so. Although sensibility is fashionable in the 18th century, Burney argues that *true* sensibility—which Evelina consistently demonstrates—is rare and cannot be faked. True sensibility springs from a genuine desire to help others through a sense of kindness and real empathy, rather than a desire for personal gain or to improve one’s social status.



GENDER, REPUTATION, AND MARRIAGE

Women’s reputations are portrayed as extremely important and fragile in *Evelina*. Society prized female virginity in the 18th century, when *Evelina* is

set, and any doubt about a woman’s purity could damage her reputation. However, 18th-century British society was also misogynistic, and even if an innocent woman was accused of sexual promiscuity, she was unlikely to be believed if she tried to defend herself. Outside of the fragility of their reputations, women were generally viewed as commodities, and men often sought to marry women for their family’s wealth—which made women even more vulnerable to abuse. As a woman herself, Burney suggests that because 18th-century women have few rights, they have little choice but to look for a husband to protect and provide for them, as this is the only way for women to prosper in society.

Men have the power to ruin women’s reputations because 18th-century society views men as inherently trustworthy and women as inherently suspect. The most explicit example of this is the plight of Evelina’s mother, Caroline Belmont. As a young woman, Caroline is seduced by a libertine, Sir John Belmont, and the pair get married. Sir John then denies that the marriage ever took place and abandons Caroline, who is pregnant with Evelina. Although Caroline tries to defend herself, people believe Sir John over her, and her reputation is destroyed. Sir John, however, retains his prominent place in society. That this situation is so destructive for Caroline and not for Sir John highlights the misogyny underpinning 18th-century British society and how women were viewed as inherently less truthful

than men. Even after Caroline’s death, her reputation cannot be salvaged unless proof of her marriage surfaces. This demonstrates that women’s reputations could be easily, and lastingly, destroyed. Caroline’s reputation also affects Evelina, as Evelina worries that people will discover her illegitimate status and change their opinions of her. This supports the idea that, for a woman, a ruined reputation is a burden that can be passed down to the next generation. Evelina experiences firsthand the difficulties of maintaining one’s reputation while she is in London. When she attends an opera and loses her companions, she runs into Sir Clement Willoughby, a nobleman Evelina previously met at a ball. Sir Clement wants to escort her home, but Evelina is concerned that if she is seen alone with him, her reputation will be compromised. Despite this, Sir Clement forces her into his carriage and makes advances toward her. Evelina rightly assumes that people will judge her based on this conduct (even though she is not to blame), given the way that her society unfairly blames women for men’s behavior toward them.

Burney suggests that, in 18th-century society, a young woman’s primary goal is marriage and a bad reputation could impact a woman’s ability to attract a husband. The aim of all the young women in the novel is to find a husband, which is why Evelina’s story ends with her marriage to Lord Orville. Upper-class women, like Evelina, could not earn money, so it was necessary to find a husband to financially support them. Society also primarily judged women on their suitability for marriage, which was based on their looks and social status. This is demonstrated when an anonymous poem surfaces, ranking Evelina as the most eligible young lady in town. Although the poem intends to be flattering, it demonstrates that women must compete with each other to secure men’s affections, as they have no other way to provide for themselves. Although Evelina ultimately marries Lord Orville for love, her marriage also marks the conclusion of her own adventures and points back to Burney’s bleak suggestion that marriage is required to be a woman’s ultimate goal if she wants financial protection and to keep her reputation intact. Evelina’s marriage signals her removal from the exciting town to the countryside, where she will live quietly as Lord Orville’s wife. This ending demonstrates that women had no autonomous place in society and that a woman’s only reason for venturing into society was to find a husband to take them out of it again.

Furthermore, women in Evelina’s society lack personal rights and are viewed as commodities, which puts them at risk of abuse and increases the necessity of finding a husband to protect them. It is not just damage to her reputation that Evelina fears—she also worries about her physical safety. Historically, women generally didn’t have rights over their own bodies and were viewed as their husbands’ property. This meant that men could take advantage of unmarried women without facing consequences. Evelina experiences this when a

group of men physically accost her in the Ranelagh Gardens. Although this incident is upsetting for Evelina, the men involved face no consequences. The idea of women as commodities is also highlighted during Evelina's stay at Bristol, when two visiting noblemen, Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel, pay two old women to race each other for entertainment. The women are seriously hurt during this incident, but Mr. Lovel and Lord Merton view the women as things they have paid for and can use as they please—a callous attitude that shows how commodifying women is dehumanizing and can lead to physical abuse. Furthermore, Captain Mirvan, who is married to Evelina's chaperone, Mrs. Mirvan, sees violence against women as a joke and physically assaults Madame Duval (a widow) during a prank. This suggests that unmarried women's safety was not taken seriously, as women did not have power to defend themselves and had to rely on their husbands for protection. This supports Burney's suggestion idea that marriage was unfortunately essential to women in this period for the financial and physical protection that it afforded. However, women's lack of rights also perpetuated the idea that women were their husband's property—rather than people who should be respected in their own right—and, therefore, contributed to women's mistreatment and commodification in society.



INHERITANCE, CLASS, AND NOBILITY

In the 18th century, Britain's social and political landscape revolved around class. The upper classes, or nobility, wielded significant social and political power, while the middle and lower classes had little political representation or social clout. And while middle- and lower-class people often aspired to join the ranks of the upper crust, Burney suggests in *Evelina* that social mobility simply isn't an option for them, and those who try to force their way in with the elite appear only as petty social climbers. In other words, in this society, it is impossible to transition into the upper classes; one must be born into them, because nobility is something that is inherited, along with family money and prestigious titles, rather than something that is earned. Beyond arguing that people simply can't transcend their class, Burney also makes the case that people *shouldn't* try to catapult themselves into nobility, because being noble doesn't necessarily mean being good. Instead, middle- and lower-class people should aspire to be noble in their own way—that is, humble and virtuous—while accepting their place in the social hierarchy.

The fashionable London world that Evelina enters in the novel revolves around class and does not allow for social mobility. While in London, Evelina meets her cousins, the Branghtons, a family of middle-class shopkeepers who have grown moderately wealthy through their trade. However, although the Branghtons can afford a lifestyle similar to upper-class people, they cannot truly join or even mingle with the nobility

because they were not born into this class. When the Branghtons try to transcend their class and fit in with the nobility, they make themselves look ridiculous. Although they will never be accepted, they try to fool themselves and others into thinking this is possible. This is particularly apparent when the Branghtons take Evelina to the **theater**. Although they want to sit with the upper-class clientele, they lack the know-how to actually do so (they don't know the entry prices and go to the wrong door) and, in their confusion, they end up sitting in the gallery with the other poor and middle-class people. Like the theater—where the seating is split up according to class—certain parts of this society are inaccessible to middle-class people, even if they technically have the means to pay their way in.

Furthermore, Burney suggests that despite their enviable social status, people in the nobility are often unpleasant and immoral, which is all the more reason why lower- and middle-class people shouldn't aspire to join their ranks. One such example of this is Sir John Belmont, Evelina's father, who is from a prodigious family. Although he later regrets his behavior, Sir John is extremely cruel and thoughtless in his treatment of Evelina's mother, Caroline, underscoring the idea that wealth and status do not always align with morality. Noble characters also tend to be arrogant and vain, like Mr. Lovel, who only attends the theater to be seen in public so that people will notice and talk about him. Mr. Lovel doesn't even know which play is being performed when Evelina encounters him at a performance. Burney uses Mr. Lovel to satirize the ridiculous pretensions and vanity of the upper-classes: the British nobility, although revered, are often shallow and vapid. Furthermore, Burney suggests that the British nobility's social circle is petty and insular, using Captain Mirvan, who mercilessly mocks the fashionable people he encounters, as a mouthpiece to make this argument. Captain Mirvan is no saint himself (he's extremely unpleasant and prejudiced), but the fact that he has traveled beyond England gives him the perspective to see the pettiness and triviality of the British nobility's concerns. Once again, Burney makes the point that social ascension, although highly coveted, is, often, not worth striving for.

Burney ultimately suggests that, although birth is an indicator of class in the 18th century, it is not necessarily an indicator of goodness, which can exist in all walks of life. Although Evelina is technically of noble birth (her estranged father is a nobleman), she has been raised among the middle class. But unlike the Branghtons, who feel that their tenuous links to the nobility entitle them to transcend their status, Evelina is happy with her lot in life and does not seek to use her father's noble heritage to her own advantage. Instead, she is humble and grateful for the advantages she does have—like her loving, adopted father, Mr. Villars—and this attitude brings her love and respect in return. By casting Evelina in a favorable light, the novel implies that it is better to be humble and content with one's place than to

constantly look elsewhere for something better. Similarly, poor characters, like the Scottish poet Mr. Macartney, are honorable and virtuous despite their lowly status, adding additional weight to the idea that kindness and humility are traits that transcend class. Although Evelina eventually claims her rightful place among the nobility (her father recognizes her as his heir) at the novel's conclusion, Burney insists that it is Evelina's goodness, virtue, and kindness toward others that is truly worth emulating. Her ascent up the social ladder isn't relevant to who she is, since class is simply an arbitrary matter of birth and does not signify moral character.



INNOCENCE, GUIDANCE, AND EXPERIENCE

As a young girl in a patriarchal society, Evelina relies on the guidance of her guardian, Mr. Villars, in navigating her early life. When she leaves home for the first time, however, she finds that her judgement is often tested in new situations and she worries about making mistakes that Mr. Villars might disapprove of. But as Evelina makes mistakes and gains experience, she comes to trust herself and realizes that she no longer needs to rely solely on Mr. Villars for moral advice—she has learned to make wise decisions alone. In charting Evelina's evolution, Burney suggests that learning to trust one's own judgment is a hallmark of maturity, and that people are most able to mature into wise, moral adults if they are provided with solid guidance in early life.

At the beginning of the novel, Mr. Villars fears allowing the innocent Evelina to travel to London, but he knows that it will be beneficial for her to gain experience and to make up her own mind about things. Evelina has been brought up in the countryside—which, in the 18th century, was associated with purity and innocence, while towns were believed to be corrupt. Evelina is also uneducated about social etiquette, and city dwellers refer to her as “rustic,” implying that she comes across as naive and innocent because of her sheltered upbringing. Part of Mr. Villars's worries stem from the fact that Evelina's mother, Caroline, was led astray by city life in her youth; she naively fell in love with the reckless nobleman, Sir John, who impregnated and then abandoned her. Mr. Villars fears that because Evelina is so innocent and inexperienced, she may make a similarly grave mistake. Despite his concerns, Mr. Villars also accepts that if he tries to stop Evelina from having adult experiences, she will only yearn for them more. Mr. Villars therefore allows Evelina to make decisions for herself, which lets Evelina know that he trusts her—and given this mutual respect, she doesn't want to disappoint him. Therefore, Evelina shares her adventures with Mr. Villars through her letters and asks for his advice on many occasions. This suggests that part of being an effective moral guide is allowing people to learn for themselves.

Evelina is forced to make her own decisions while she is away from home, which the novel suggests is a natural part of gaining

maturity. For instance, while Evelina is at a ball, a boorish nobleman named Sir Clement pesters her. To get rid of him, she lies and says she already has a partner. But Sir Clement badgers Evelina until she admits her deceit, and her resulting embarrassment and realization that she navigated the situation poorly show how her naïveté in social situations can lead her into trouble. However, it is this firsthand experience that allows Evelina to learn. At another ball, she turns down all of the men who ask to dance with her, but a man named Mr. Smith won't take no for an answer. Because of her past blunder, Evelina now knows that one must either accept the first man who asks or refuse to dance altogether, so she manages to successfully—and honorably—avoid dancing with Mr. Smith. In other words, gaining maturity and wisdom like Evelina does is a process of trial and error.

Mr. Villars allows Evelina the freedom to learn from experience—and gave her the tools in early life to make smart decisions—she develops a sense of true independence and an ability to guide herself. As the novel progresses, Evelina gains confidence in her own judgment as her experience grows. When she discovers the Scottish poet, Mr. Macartney, on the verge of suicide, Evelina wishes she could obtain Mr. Villars' guidance but knows that there is not time—she must act for herself. Her quick-thinking (she follows Macartney and stops him from hurting himself) saves Macartney's life and proves to Evelina, and to Mr. Villars, that she is growing into a capable adult who knows how to make wise decisions. During another incident, Sir Clement writes an insulting letter to Evelina and pretends it's from Lord Orville, trying to make Evelina think that the man has bad intentions toward her. However, Evelina rightly trusts her own experience with Lord Orville—who has always been courteous and kind to her—rather than rashly breaking off contact with him the second she receives the note. Even before Evelina confirms that Lord Orville is indeed innocent, she's tolerant and forgiving toward him, which speaks to her maturity. Just as she has learned from her mistakes in the past, she gives others the opportunity to learn, grow, and mature.

Despite Mr. Villars' initial fear that Evelina will be led astray in the city, the moral guidance he provided while she was in his care means that Evelina is capable of making mistakes *and* learning from them—a crucial aspect of growing up. Through Evelina's ascent to maturity, Burney concludes that having strong guidance in early life gives people confidence to explore the world on their own terms, make mistakes, and learn from them. With this foundation, people can mature and strengthen their decision-making abilities and moral compass.



SYMBOLS

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



THE THEATER

The theater represents fashionable 18th-century society and the different class structures which operate within it. Like the theater, which is split up into different levels and where people from different classes sit separately, 18th-century society is divided into stratified classes (lower, middle, and upper) who do not mingle together. Evelina's various trips to the theater symbolize the idea that social mobility is impossible in 18th-century Britain. People appear out of place and draw unflattering attention to themselves if they enter try to enter the wrong part of society, just as they will if they sit in the wrong part of the theater. For instance, the middle-class Branghtons are out of place when they try to enter the theater pit—where wealthy theatergoers sit—just as Evelina, who is noble by birth, is out of place when she sits in the gallery with lower-class people.

The theater further symbolizes the artificiality of 18th-century society, such as people's preference for showy and pretentious etiquette and people's obsessions with status. Plays are artificial performances, and the theater is associated with characters who perform—likewise, the audience is full of people like Mr. Lovel who put on false personas and show off to gain social notoriety. Captain Mirvan explicitly draws attention to this connection between 18th-century Britain and the theater when he says that plays are the only things that tell the truth in fashionable society. This implies that plays are truthful because they are openly artificial, whereas fashionable society is false and corrupt because it hides its artificiality and social snobbishness behind a veneer of politeness.



WIGS AND HATS

Wigs and hats symbolize artifice and falsehood.

When Evelina first arrives in London and is still very innocent about fashionable society, she is taken for a makeover before her first trip out. During her makeover, the hairdresser gives Evelina a large, extravagant wig to wear. Evelina dislikes it and feels that the hairdressers and wigmakers are "affected" and false; they are just being polite to sell her things. Later on, Evelina also feels foolish wearing a large headdress to the **theater**. Her dislike of wigs and hats reflects her unpretentious and genuine temperament, compared with the false city-dwellers who care about what others think of them and try to trick others into seeing them as more beautiful or important than they really are. Madame Duval, for example, wears a wig, and is extremely embarrassed without one, because she tries to hide how old she is. She also wears a hat to a ball and dances with several young men—a sign that she is in denial about her age. Madame Duval is also dishonest and often hides her true motives for things, which is represented by her reliance on wigs and hats to hide her true appearance.



BERRY HILL

Berry Hill is Evelina's childhood home where she was raised by her adopted guardian, Mr. Villars.

Berry Hill represents Evelina's innocence, virtue, and purity. It's the place where Evelina's story begins (she sets out on her adventures from Berry Hill) and represents her youth, naïveté, and sheltered upbringing away from society. Evelina's journey into town puts her return to Berry Hill in jeopardy, as she may be kidnapped and married off by her grandmother, Madame Duval. This threat symbolizes the broader moral and spiritual dangers of city life, which threaten to corrupt Evelina and ruin her innocence—something she would never get back, just as she could never return to Berry Hill if she made a bad match with an unsuitable husband. Evelina learns to navigate city life without jeopardizing her innocence, and therefore, at the novel's conclusion, she returns to Berry Hill with her new husband, Lord Orville. Since Evelina resists corruption and makes an honorable marriage with a man who loves and respects her, her return to Berry Hill symbolizes the idea that she has successfully transitioned from being an innocent girl to a mature young woman without compromising her virtue.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Thrift Editions edition of *Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* published in 2015.

Volume 1, Letter 2 Quotes

☞ How often have I since regretted that I did not accompany her thither! protected and supported by me, the misery and disgrace which awaited her, might, perhaps, have been avoided.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Mr. Evelyn, Sir John Belmont, Caroline Belmont, Evelina, Lady Howard, Madame Duval

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Villars writes a letter to his friend Lady Howard, in which he regrets that he did not accompany his adopted daughter Caroline to the city with her grandmother Madame Duval.

Mr. Villars adopted Caroline after Caroline's biological father, Mr. Evelyn, died. Mr. Evelyn had married Madame Duval—who was lower-class—against Mr. Villars' wishes and

died not long after this. Madame Duval then abandoned Caroline but returned when Caroline was 18 and offered to take her to the city. Mr. Villars let her go, and while she was there, a debauched nobleman named Sir John Belmont seduced her and married her in secret. Caroline became pregnant with Evelina, but Sir John then denied their marriage and abandoned her. This ruined Caroline's reputation, because unwed mothers were looked down upon in 18th-century British society as immoral. Caroline died shortly after this, and Mr. Villars raised Caroline's daughter, Evelina, as his own.

Although Mr. Villars tries to be a good role model to his adopted children, he acknowledges that he made a mistake with Caroline when he was younger and less experienced. With this, Burney suggests that people learn through their mistakes. Although Mr. Villars made an error with Caroline, he will not make the same mistake with Evelina: he vows to keep Evelina close when Madame Duval writes to Lady Howard and asks to take Evelina away with her. Mr. Villars is right to be protective, as young women's reputations at this time were extremely fragile and highly valuable to them as potential wives. Nevertheless, young men often tried to take advantage of young inexperienced women (as Sir John did with Caroline), because people in 18th-century Britain generally regarded women as naïve and untrustworthy. Men were much more likely to be believed than women were.

☝ She flew to me for protection. With what mixed transports of joy and anguish did I again see her! By my advice she endeavored to produce proofs of her marriage;—but in vain: her credulity had been no match for his art.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Sir John Belmont, Caroline Belmont, Evelina, Lady Howard, Madame Duval

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Mr. Villars refers to his adopted daughter Caroline. When Caroline was a young woman, Mr. Villars let her go to the city without him. While she was there, a wealthy nobleman named Sir John Belmont seduced and married her—only to abandon her and deny the marriage when she became pregnant with Evelina.

Women's reputations were extremely fragile in 18th-

century Britain, and women's purity was highly valued. Premarital sex was considered sinful, and women's reputations could be ruined if anyone accused them of this—even if, like Caroline, they were innocent. Women had far fewer rights and social privileges compared to men at this time, and men were usually believed over women. Although Mr. Villars believed that Caroline was innocent, most people in their society would not have.

Women could not defend themselves in this society—they had few rights and could not earn money for themselves—so Caroline relies on Mr. Villars to defend her and salvage her good name and her noble status. Mr. Villars cannot save Caroline's reputation, however, because Sir John has destroyed the marriage certificate. While Sir John is debauched and immoral, the naïve and innocent Caroline is fooled by Sir John's noble exterior, as nobility was often (and wrongly, implies Burney) viewed as synonymous with virtue in this period.

Volume 1, Letter 3 Quotes

☝ When young people are too rigidly sequestered from it, their lively and romantic imaginations paint it to them as a paradise of which they have been beguiled; but when they are shewn it properly, and in due time, they see it such as it really is, equally shared by pain and pleasure, hope and disappointment.

Related Characters: Lady Howard (speaker), Mrs. Mirvan, Evelina, Mr. Villars

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

Lady Howard tries to persuade Mr. Villars to let Evelina travel to London for a holiday with Lady Howard's daughter, Mrs. Mirvan. Lady Howard thinks it would be good for Evelina to see the world, and that if Evelina is not allowed to do this, she will only yearn for more independence.

Evelina has been brought up in the countryside by Mr. Villars, who is her legal guardian. In 18th-century Britain, the country was associated with innocence and rustic simplicity, while the town was associated with vice, sin, and corruption. In this sense, Evelina has been “sequestered”—sheltered or kept away from life—and has no experience of fashionable London society.

Although Lady Howard knows that city life is generally mundane and unexciting, she worries that if Evelina is never allowed to go there, she will imagine that the city is far more

exciting than it really is. Therefore, Evelina may start to resent Mr. Villars—whom she will see as a strict guardian rather than a wise moral guide—and may rebel against him and do forbidden things behind his back. In contrast, if Evelina is freely allowed to explore the city with Mr. Villars's support and guidance, she will both gain experience and be corrected and supported when she inevitably makes small mistakes.

Volume 1, Letter 4 Quotes

☝☝ Destined, in all probability, to possess a very moderate fortune, I wished to contract her views to something within it. The mind is but too naturally prone to pleasure, but too easily yielded to dissipation: it has been my study to guard her against their delusions, by preparing her to expect, —and to despise them. But the time draws on for experience and observation to take place of instruction: if I have, in some measure, rendered her capable of using one with discretion, and making the other with improvement, I shall rejoice myself with the assurance of having largely contributed to her welfare.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Caroline Belmont, Sir John Belmont, Mrs. Mirvan, Evelina, Lady Howard

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

Lady Howard tries to persuade Mr. Villars to let Evelina travel to the city with Lady Howard's daughter, Mrs. Mirvan. Mr. Villars is reluctant, however, because he does not want Evelina to see lavish city lifestyles that she herself will never have.

Although Evelina is noble by birth, she will likely never inherit her rightful fortune because she is estranged from her father, the wealthy nobleman Sir John Belmont. Sir John married then abandoned Evelina's mother, Caroline, when Caroline became pregnant, thereby destroying Caroline's reputation. In 18th-century Britain, premarital sex was considered extremely sinful. Although Caroline and Sir John were married when Evelina was conceived, people believe Sir John over Caroline. Evelina is therefore considered an illegitimate child, inherently inferior and unable to inherit wealth from her father.


Eighteenth-century Britain was also strictly organized around class, and social mobility was virtually impossible. Evelina has been raised middle-class under Mr. Villars's

guardianship, and unless Sir John acknowledges her nobility, she will never transcend to the upper classes through her own effort. Therefore, she will never lead a luxurious, noble lifestyle like the ones she is sure to see in the city. But although Mr. Villars wants to shelter Evelina from this, he realizes that he cannot do this forever and must allow her some freedom to gain experience and independence without him. He hopes that his moral example, which he has given Evelina since she was a child, will be useful now—and that with it, Evelina will learn to morally guide herself.

Volume 1, Letter 6 Quotes

☝☝ You have no reason to regret the retirement in which she has lived; since that politeness which is acquired by an acquaintance with high life, is in her so well supplied by a natural desire of obliging, joined to a deportment infinitely engaging.

Related Characters: Lady Howard (speaker), Evelina, Mr. Villars

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 11

Explanation and Analysis

After Mr. Villars lets Evelina go to stay with Lady Howard, Lady Howard writes a letter to Mr. Villars praising Evelina. She tells him that even though Evelina has not been educated in 18th-century etiquette or manners, she is naturally kind and polite.

Evelina has been raised in the countryside, which was considered a relatively innocent and pure counterpart to the corruption and vice of the city. Cities like London were extremely fashionable places where the nobility congregated in the 18th century, and the social elite was strictly ordered around learned etiquette conventions. Mr. Villars worries that Evelina will stand out or will damage her reputation if she cannot follow these rules.

Lady Howard, however, suggests that Evelina is naturally sensible. Sensibility was another fashionable concept in this period and referred to a person's natural empathy, emotional sensitivity, and kindness toward others. Sensibility and etiquette were often believed to be interchangeable, and both were associated with virtue—but here, Burney implies that this is not really the case. Evelina does not understand etiquette, but she is still pleasant to be around because she cares about how other people feel and

is naturally considerate toward them, which shows genuine sensibility. Etiquette, in contrast, is an arbitrary code of manners; following it does not necessarily mean a person is pleasant. Burney therefore suggests that sensibility is more important than etiquette when determining whether or not someone is a good person.

Volume 1, Letter 11 Quotes

☝☝ The gentlemen, as they passed and repassed, looked as if they thought we were quite at their disposal, and only waiting for the honor of their commands; and they sauntered about, in a careless indolent manner, as if with a view to keep us in suspense.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Mrs. Mirvan, Mr. Villars

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis

When Evelina goes to London with Mrs. Mirvan and attends her first ball, she notices that the men are very rude and arrogant. In 18th-century Britain, men had more rights and more social power than women. Women could not earn their own money and had to rely on their familial inheritance, or their husband's wealth, to financial support them. Wealthy men would often choose to marry women for their inheritance or for their prestigious social connections, which led to women being commodified and viewed as assets to be bought and sold by men—fathers essentially sold their daughters to noblemen for social prestige, while men bought their wives for inheritance money. Therefore, men felt that they could treat women however they liked, as Evelina observes here through the young men's arrogant behavior.

Although nobility was often associated with virtue in this period, Burney suggests that the noblemen's attitudes toward women shows that they are not virtuous—rather, they are rude and entitled. Although upper-class Britons claimed to value manners and sensibility (empathy and consideration for others), the male attendees at the ball have no manners and do not care how they make the women around them feel.

Volume 1, Letter 13 Quotes

☝☝ But falsehood is not more unjustifiable than unsafe.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Mr. Villars, Sir Clement Willoughby

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 37

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and describes attending her first ball. During the ball, a rude young nobleman named Sir Clement asks her to dance, and to get rid of him, Evelina lies and says that she has a partner already. Sir Clement discovers her lie, however, and Evelina is embarrassed.

Evelina is young and inexperienced, having never been given a chance to explore the world on her own. Her guardian, Mr. Villars, allows her to go to the city so that she can gain experience and learn from her mistakes. As Evelina has been raised in the countryside, she has not been educated in etiquette (upper-class manners), which were extremely important in fashionable 18th-century society. She tells Sir Clement that she already has a partner because she cannot think of another way to bend strict etiquette rules, which state that a woman must either accept the first man who asks her to dance or not dance again that night.

With this, Burney suggests that etiquette is often arbitrary and goes against one's natural inclination, as Evelina does not want to dance with Sir Clement but must accept him or risk losing her chance to dance with anyone else. People considered etiquette breaches to be extremely shameful in upper-class circles, and Evelina feel extremely ashamed about her mistake. She now realizes that lying has social consequences—it's not only inadvisable because it is immoral, but because it is embarrassing to get caught.

Volume 1, Letter 15 Quotes

☝☝ The more forcibly you are struck with improprieties and misconduct in another, the greater should be your observance and diligence to avoid even the shadow of similar error.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Madame Duval, Evelina, Sir John Belmont

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 45

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina meets her estranged grandmother, Madame Duval, by chance in London. Mr. Villars writes to Evelina and warns her that even if Madame Duval is rude or unkind to her,


Evelina must still treat Madame Duval with respect. Madame Duval was born into the lower class, though she has since married a nobleman. Therefore, she is not educated in etiquette and manners and is often coarse, rude, and abusive toward Evelina. Evelina's father is a wealthy nobleman named Sir John Belmont, so Evelina herself is noble by birth. Given that Madame Duval is a greedy social climber, she may try to control Evelina so that she can gain social prestige from Evelina's noble status.

Mr. Villars advises Evelina to be polite to Madame Duval because he and Evelina are naturally sensible. Sensibility was an 18th-century term associated with empathy, consideration toward others, and kindness for the sake of being kind. People who are naturally sensible are not cruel to others in retaliation, but instead take the moral high ground and pity the person who abuses them because they are clearly unhappy or troubled. Furthermore, Mr. Villars suggests that sensibility is practical. If Evelina never retaliates with rudeness, even when someone is abusive, this means that no one can ever accuse her of being rude or insolent—traits that were considered extremely shameful in this period. As a young woman with few rights and very little social power, Evelina must be especially careful of her reputation.

Volume 1, Letter 18 Quotes

☝☝ The conversation of Lord Orville is really delightful. His manners are so elegant, so gentle, so unassuming, that they at once engage esteem, and diffuse complacency. Far from being indolently satisfied with his own accomplishments, as I have already observed many men here are, though without any pretensions to his merit, he is most assiduously attentive to please and to serve all who are in his company; and, though his success is invariable, he never manifests the smallest degree of consciousness.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Lord Orville

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

During her trip to the city, Evelina makes friends with Lord Orville, a young nobleman who seems extremely kind and polite. Evelina enjoys talking to Lord Orville because he is naturally sensible (an 18th-century term meaning empathetic, kind, and considerate). Lord Orville demonstrates sensibility, as he seems to genuinely care

about the people around him and go out of his way to make them comfortable. Evelina is naturally sensible, too, and therefore admires this trait in Lord Orville.


Sensibility was extremely fashionable in this period, however, and many people went out of their way to *appear* sensible even when they did not really care about other people. Evelina suggests that she has noticed a lot of rude or unpleasant people who pretend to be sensible to make themselves look good. Lord Orville is unusual in fashionable circles because he isn't like that. True sensibility, Evelina suggests, is not about making oneself look selfless and virtuous—it's about striving to consider other people's perspectives and accommodate their needs.

Volume 1, Letter 20 Quotes

☝☝ "So I did presume. Doubtless, Madame, everything must be infinitely novel to you. Our customs, our manners, and les etiquettes de nous autres, can have very little resemblance to those you have been used to. I imagine, Ma'am, your retirement is at no very small distance from the capital?"

Related Characters: Mr. Lovel (speaker), Mrs. Mirvan, Evelina

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina goes to the theater in London with her chaperon, Mrs. Mirvan. While they are there, they meet an insulting nobleman named Mr. Lovel whom Evelina once accidentally offended at a ball. Although Mr. Lovel is correct that Evelina is from the countryside, he means to insult her, suggesting that she is rustic and ignorant because she is not educated in fashionable etiquette. Mr. Lovel thinks this because Evelina accidentally broke etiquette conventions when she refused to dance with him at a ball. However, while Mr. Lovel accuses Evelina of being rude, Evelina was rude by accident—whereas Mr. Lovel deliberately goes out of his way to be offensive. This suggests that, although fashionable people in 18th-century Britain often pride themselves on their manners, etiquette is often arbitrary and is no substitute for genuine politeness.

Mr. Lovel is also extremely proud and petty, and Evelina has wounded his ego by rejecting him. It is pertinent that they meet him at the theater as this is a place that symbolizes the

exclusive and rather shallow world of the social elite, who judge others on their class and appearances rather than on their merit. Although Mr. Lovel is a noble, and nobility was often seen as synonymous with virtue in this period, Mr. Lovel proves that this is not the case.

Volume 1, Letter 23 Quotes

●● He addressed us with his usual ease, and joined us for the whole evening. I felt myself very uneasy in his presence; for I could not look at him, nor hear him speak, without recollecting the chariot adventure; but to my great amazement, I observed that he looked at me without the least apparent discomposure, though certainly he ought not to think of his behavior without blushing.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Sir Clement Willoughby

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 96

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina meets Sir Clement at a public event several nights after he trapped her in his carriage and tried to seduce her. Evelina is amazed that Sir Clement does not seem at all embarrassed about what happened. This incident suggests that in 18th-century Britain, men could often treat women however they pleased without facing consequences.



Evelina and Sir Clement's different reactions to the same event demonstrate different societal standards that men and women were expected to uphold during this period. As a woman, Evelina's reputation is extremely fragile, so any accusation of promiscuity or improper behavior (people considered premarital sex to be sinful) could ruin her good name forever. For men, premarital sex was still disapproved of, but it was far more acceptable for men to have premarital affairs than it was for women. Men could also easily redeem themselves and rebuild their reputations.

Sir Clement's attitude indicates that he feels entitled to treat Evelina this way—he does not care that he frightened and embarrassed her, or that he risked her reputation (if people found out about the incident, Evelina would be blamed). This shows that Sir Clement lacks sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration of others). Sir Clement is also a nobleman and, although nobility is associated with virtue during this period, Sir Clement's behavior proves that this is not always

true.

●● Lordship!—how extraordinary! that a nobleman, accustomed, in all probability, to the first rank of company in the kingdom, from his earliest infancy, can possibly be deficient in good manners, however faulty in morals and principles!

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Lord Merton

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

During an outing in the city, Evelina is sexually harassed by a very rude man, whom she's shocked to learn is a Lord (a nobleman). Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized around class, and people viewed the upper classes as both socially and morally superior to the middle and lower classes. People therefore tended to believe that nobles were inherently virtuous. This belief was supported by the fact that nobles were educated in etiquette (manners) from a young age, and good etiquette was also thought of as a marker of virtue. Burney, however, satirizes this attitude and suggests that noble status does not necessarily make someone virtuous or moral.

Lord Merton, for example, is extremely bad mannered. This suggests that etiquette is an arbitrary system of social conventions and does not reflect innate virtue or sensibility (an 18th-century term for empathy and consideration of others). Lord Merton is also misogynistic and does not care that he embarrasses Evelina—and potentially jeopardizes her reputation—by publicly flirting with her. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in 18th-century Britain, as society prized women's purity. Even innocent women could be accused of sexual misconduct and be socially ostracized, as people were more likely to believe a man's word over a woman's word.

Volume 1, Letter 24 Quotes

●● Alas, my child, the artlessness of your nature, and the simplicity of your education, alike unfit you for the thorny paths of the great and busy world. The supposed obscurity of your birth and situation, makes you liable to a thousand disagreeable adventures. Not only my views, but any hopes for your future life, have ever centered in the country.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Caroline Belmont, Sir John Belmont, Evelina

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Villars warns Evelina that her kind temperament, sheltered upbringing, and ambiguous class-status may make life in London difficult for her. Mr. Villars suggests that the upper-class people in fashionable 18th-century society tend to be shallow and deceitful—that they *need* to be shallow and deceitful to fit in and be successful in this environment. Evelina, in contrast, is a genuine person and is naturally sensible (an 18th-century term associated with empathy, emotional sensitivity, and kindness). Although British nobility claim to prize sensibility, they clearly don't—instead, they judge people based on shallow things, like their wealth or family connections. Evelina, who is authentic, innocent, and rather naïve, will not fit in with this crowd. The countryside was seen as a pure and innocent foil to the corruption of the city, so Mr. Villars suggests that Evelina should live in the country because her moral compass is more aligned with this environment.

Mr. Villars also suggests that urban life is corrupt when he suggests that the paths are “thorny”—in other words, people’s cruel attitudes means that it is easy to get hurt while going about life in the city. Furthermore, Evelina may be judged harshly by fashionable people because her class status is ambiguous. Evelina is technically noble: her father, Sir John is a wealthy nobleman, who married her mother, Caroline, in secret but then denied their marriage. However, people believe Sir John’s story over Caroline’s, which means that if Evelina’s identity becomes widely known, people will believe she is illegitimate. Illegitimate children were seen as inferior or unworthy in 18th-century Britain, and they were often socially ostracized. Mr. Villars thus fears that upper-class Londoners will judge Evelina on her perceived illegitimacy rather than the content of her character.

Volume 1, Letter 29 Quotes

☝☝ To follow the dictates of my own heart, I should instantly recall you to myself, and never more consent to your being separated from me; but the manners and opinion of the world demand a different conduct.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Caroline Belmont, Sir John Belmont, Evelina

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Villars (Evelina’s adoptive father) writes to Evelina and says that even though he would like to protect her from the world, he knows that she must learn and experience things for herself. Mr. Villars has guided and protected Evelina since birth, and now he’s worried about Evelina’s social status and how she will fair in society because of it. Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly ordered around class, and social mobility was largely impossible—if a person was born lower-class, they would likely always be poor and never be accepted among the upper-classes. Evelina has been raised middle-class by Mr. Villars and will potentially not be accepted in society because she is perceived as illegitimate—her father, Sir John Belmont, married then abandoned her mother, Caroline, and denied the marriage. Illegitimate children often faced social stigma, which is what Mr. Villars fears will happen to Evelina.

However, Mr. Villars is also wise enough to realize that he must let Evelina develop a sense of independence for her own good. Although he longs to shelter her and fears that the outside world may corrupt her, he understands that if he shelters her too much, she may want to do forbidden things more. Furthermore, young women of this period needed to find husbands, as they could not earn their own money and relied on their husbands for financial support—and Evelina can only do this if she enters society.

Volume 2, Letter 8 Quotes

☝☝ You will have occasion, in the course of the month you are to pass with Madame Duval, for all the circumspection and prudence you can call to your aid: she will not, I know, propose any thing to you which she thinks wrong herself; but you must learn not only to *judge* but to *act* for yourself if any schemes are started, any engagements made, which your understanding represents to you as improper, exert yourself resolutely in avoiding them, and do not, by a too passive facility, risk the censure of the world, or your own future regret.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Madame Duval, Evelina

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 156


Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Villars advises Evelina to follow her own moral compass while she stays in London with her grandmother, Madame Duval; he warns her not to let Madame Duval lead her astray. Mr. Villars worries that although Madame Duval does not see herself as is rude or improper, she does not understand polite British society and will inadvertently lead Evelina astray. Madame Duval is originally working-class and has married into nobility. However, 18th-century Britain was strictly organized around social rank and etiquette (manners). People who were not born upper-class were not educated in manners, so they could not easily blend in among the nobility. Furthermore, social errors were taken extremely seriously in noble circles, and women could forever damage their reputations if they publicly made a mistake.

Mr. Villars hopes that he has been a good moral role model to Evelina and that, despite Madame Duval's influence, she will be able to trust her own judgment and do the right thing in most situations. Evelina has been raised middle-class and does not know much about social convention. However, Evelina is naturally sensible (an 18th-century term associated with empathy or consideration of others) and always wants to make people comfortable. This means that Evelina is capable of learning manners as she goes along and of being a good person, because her aim is always to help people.

Remember, my dear Evelina, nothing is so delicate as the reputation of a woman: it is, at once, the most beautiful and most brittle of all human things.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Caroline Belmont, Sir John Belmont, Evelina

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Villars warns Evelina to maintain her reputation while she is in the city without him. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in 18th-century Britain—even a false accusation of misconduct could ruin a woman's good name for life. Society prized women's purity, and they were expected to remain virgins until they were married. Virginal women were considered "beautiful," whereas promiscuous women (or women who were merely accused of premarital sex) were socially ostracized. If a man accused an innocent



woman of sexual misconduct, people would generally believe the man because they considered women less trustworthy than men.

At this time, men could treat women however they liked with little or no consequences, which this meant that it was hard for women to keep their reputations intact as men would often try to seduce or sexually assault them. Mr. Villars fears for Evelina's safety in this regard. Evelina's father, Sir John Belmont, seduced, married, and then abandoned Evelina's mother, Caroline. Sir John then denied his marriage to Caroline, effectively destroying Caroline's good name. Having witnessed all of this Mr. Villars is afraid that a similar fate could befall Evelina, tarnishing her reputation as a respectable woman forever.

Volume 2, Letter 10 Quotes

Indeed, to me, London now seems a desert; that gay and busy appearance it so lately wore, is now succeeded by a look of gloom, fatigue, and lassitude; the air seems stagnant, the heat is intense, the dust intolerable, and the inhabitants illiterate and under-bred.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Mr. Villars

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that she is not enjoying London as much on her second visit as she did on her first. In the 18th century, European cities like London were lively and fashionable, as noble people congregated there to lead extravagant lives. The countryside, in comparison, was associated with innocence and rustic simplicity; fashionable city-dwellers looked down on country inhabitants. Evelina has been raised in the country and is, at first, delighted by the new and exciting experiences the city has to offer.

However, the longer Evelina stays in London, the more the reality of city life sets in. She comes to realize that cities are crowded and noisy and that, although there are many nobles there, they are not necessarily nice or polite just because they are upper-class. Although Mr. Villars worried that Evelina would be corrupted in the city, he sent her anyway because he felt that if she was not allowed to experience it for herself, she would imagine that it was much better than it really is. Evelina's letter proves Mr. Villars right: once she experiences city life for herself, she quickly

becomes disillusioned with it.

Volume 2, Letter 11 Quotes

☞ It is true, no man can possibly pay me greater compliments, or make more fine speeches, than Sir Clement Willoughby, yet his language, though too flowery, is always that of a gentleman, and his address and manners are so very superior to those of the inhabitants of this house, that to make any comparison between him and Mr. Smith would be extremely unjust.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Sir Clement Willoughby, Mr. Smith

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 170

Explanation and Analysis

A pretentious lower-class man named Mr. Smith tries to seduce Evelina. She finds him annoying and thinks that she even prefers Sir Clement—a nobleman who constantly tries to seduce her—to Mr. Smith. Evelina finds Sir Clement more genuine than Mr. Smith as, although Sir Clement's speeches are "flowery" and over the top, this is in keeping with Sir Clement's class. Sir Clement is a nobleman, while Mr. Smith is middle-class. Sir Clement, therefore, has been educated in etiquette and refined speech, and he's expected to speak this way. Mr. Smith, in contrast, has not been educated in these things, so Evelina takes his speech as evidence that Mr. Smith wants to transcend his class and pretend that he is a nobleman when he is not.

Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized by class, and social mobility was virtually impossible. The nobility looked down on the lower classes, and even if middle-class people earned as much money as nobles through industry or trade, they could not be accepted into the nobility because they were not born into it. Mr. Smith represents middle-class social climbers who hope to fool people into thinking they are upper-class. Evelina dislikes disingenuous people (Sir Clement is also disingenuous, which proves that nobility does not necessarily translate to virtue) because she is naturally sensible and authentic herself.

Volume 2, Letter 16 Quotes

☞ "O Sir, you're vastly polite, all of a sudden! but I know what it's all for;—it's only for what you can get!—you could treat me like nobody at Howard Grove—but now you see I've a house of my own you've a mind to wheedle yourself into it[.]"

Related Characters: Madame Duval (speaker), Captain Mirvan, Sir Clement Willoughby, Evelina

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 202-203

Explanation and Analysis

Sir Clement comes to Madame Duval's house and tries to seduce Evelina. Madame Duval shouts at Sir Clement because, when Madame Duval stayed with him and the Mirvans, Sir Clement and Captain Mirvan bullied Madame Duval. Madame Duval suggests that Sir Clement is disingenuous and only treats her politely when he wants something. Although Sir Clement is a nobleman, and nobility was associated with virtue in 18th-century Britain, his behavior suggests that he is disingenuous: he changes his behavior toward people when it suits him to do so. Sir Clement does not care about anyone but himself; he treated Madame Duval "like nothing" when he wanted to flatter Captain Mirvan, who picked on Madame Duval. Now, he tries to flatter her that so he can get close to her granddaughter, Evelina.

Madame Duval is uneducated compared to Sir Clement: he is upper-class and is therefore educated in manners and etiquette, while Madame Duval is originally lower-class but has married a noble. However, she rightly calls Sir Clement out on his bad behavior. Sir Clement also has more social power than Madame Duval because he is a man, as men had more rights and more social clout than women in this period. Therefore, although Madame Duval is generally a comic character, Burney implies that her often ridiculous behavior is not entirely her fault, as she has little power in society and is often treated badly because of her gender and class.

Volume 2, Letter 27 Quotes

☞ If, as I am very ready to acknowledge, I erred in writing to Lord Orville, was it for him to punish the error? If he was offended, could he not have been silent? If he thought my letter ill-judged, should he not have pitied my ignorance? have considered my youth, and allowed for my inexperience?

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Sir Clement Willoughby, Lord Orville

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 250

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina writes an apologetic note to Lord Orville after an embarrassing incident and receives an insulting and flirtatious note from him in return. Evelina has been raised middle-class and is inexperienced with the fashionable etiquette, or manners, that govern upper-class society. Although she correctly suspects that it is improper for an unmarried woman to write to a man she does not know well, she does not always know how to behave and is often forced to follow her natural inclination rather than follow etiquette codes. In this instance, Evelina judged that it was more important to write to Lord Orville and apologize for a social error than to be polite by saying nothing. She now worries that this was the wrong choice, and this supports the idea that gaining experience involves trial and error.

Although Evelina believes that she made a mistake and acted improperly, she is still disappointed by Lord Orville's reaction. (Though it is later revealed that Sir Clement actually wrote this note to make Lord Orville look bad). The insulting note suggests that Sir Clement does not genuinely care about Evelina, as he jeopardizes her reputation by flirting with her. Women's reputations were extremely fragile 18th-century Britain: innocent women were often blamed for men's attempts to seduce them. Evelina is also upset because she feels that Lord Orville (actually Sir Clement) has not given her the benefit of the doubt—he assumes that she breaks etiquette codes intentionally rather than because she is young and naive. Sir Clement doesn't allow Evelina the space to learn and make mistakes, instead judging her because she is not perfect in his eyes.

has been a positive role model to her since birth. Mr. Villars is naturally sensible (an 18th-century term associated with empathy, kindness, and consideration for others) and always tries to do right by others. He is also a wise guardian and understands that when people are inexperienced, they must be allowed to make mistakes because gaining experience often involves trial and error. Therefore, Mr. Villars supports Evelina rather than judging her for her mistakes or using them against her.

Evelina once believed that Lord Orville was also like this. However, the note she receives from him makes her feel that she is still too inexperienced to trust her own judgement. Eighteenth-century British society was patriarchal, meaning that women had few rights compared to men. Women could not earn their own money to financially support themselves, and people tended to believe that women could not make their own decisions without male guidance. As a result, women's fathers often decided their fate. Mr. Villars, however, is a benevolent guardian who gives Evelina a lot of respect and freedom, relative to how women were usually treated. Evelina had secretly hoped to marry Lord Orville, who would take over as her moral guide when he became her husband.

Volume 3, Letter 3 Quotes

💬 "She is an absolute Court Calendar bigot; for, chancing herself to be born of a noble and ancient family, she thinks proper to be of opinion, that birth and virtue are one and the same thing."

Related Characters: Mrs. Selwyn (speaker), Mrs. Beaumont, Evelina

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 276

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina goes to stay in Bristol with Mr. Villars' friend, Mrs. Selwyn. While they are there, Mrs. Selwyn and Evelina visit Mrs. Selwyn's acquaintance, Mrs. Beaumont. Mrs. Beaumont is a prestigious noblewoman, and the "Court Calendar" refers to the schedule of social events attended by important nobles in upper-class British society. Mrs. Selwyn suggests that Mrs. Beaumont is prejudiced because she judges people according to their rank and the class that they were born into rather than on their individual merit. Like most people in 18th-century Britain, Mrs. Beaumont believes that class is an indicator of virtue: the upper classes were associated with morality and virtue, while the lower

Volume 2, Letter 28 Quotes

💬 Once, indeed, I thought there existed another,—who, when time had wintered over his locks—would have shone forth among his fellow creatures, with the same brightness of worth which dignifies my honored Mr. Villars

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Lord Orville, Mr. Villars

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 253-254

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina laments that she once believed Lord Orville was as wise and kind as Mr. Villars. However, after she receives an insulting note from Lord Orville, she feels that she was wrong about him. Mr. Villars is Evelina's adoptive father and

classes were associated with poverty, immorality, and corruption.

Burney uses Mrs. Selwyn as a mouthpiece to criticize Mrs. Beaumont's attitude. Mrs. Selwyn suggests that class, or the rank you are born into, is based on chance and has nothing to do with virtue or deserving special treatment in society. Furthermore, the fact that many nobles (like Mrs. Beaumont herself) are so prejudiced and shallow suggests that they are not, in fact, inherently virtuous—even though they believe that they are.

Volume 3, Letter 5 Quotes

☝ Yet, when I reflected upon his peculiar situation, his poverty, his sadness, and, more than all the rest, the idea I knew he entertained of what he calls his obligations to me, I could not resolve upon a breach of promise, which might be attributed to causes of all other the most offensive to one whom misfortune has made extremely suspicious of slights and contempt.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Lord Orville, Mr. Macartney

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 292

Explanation and Analysis

While Evelina is in London, she lends money to the struggling poet Mr. Macartney. Later, he returns to pay her back—but while they are talking, Lord Orville sees them and seems offended. Evelina had planned to meet Macartney again, but she now considers skipping the meeting because she is afraid of what Lord Orville will think.



Evelina struggles to decide between what she thinks is right—meeting Macartney—and what she thinks is proper. Eighteenth-century British society had strict etiquette codes, and society viewed it as improper for unmarried women to meet with men they did not know well. Women's reputations were also extremely fragile, and Evelina is concerned that since Lord Orville has seen her with Macartney, he may judge her and believe that Macartney is her lover. If this rumor gets out (even if it is not true), Evelina's reputation could be permanently damaged.

However, Evelina also demonstrates genuine sensibility—an 18th-century term which was associated with emotional sensitivity and genuine kindness—in her empathetic response to Macartney's suffering. Although people viewed etiquette and sensibility as interchangeable in this period,

Evelina discovers that they are incompatible: her inclination to meet Macartney is kinder and more empathetic but is hampered by her desire to comply with etiquette. Evelina also displays the fact that, unlike many of the upper-class people she knows, she does not judge people because they are poor—she treats people with respect, regardless of their class.

☝ "There is no young creature, my Lord, who so greatly wants, or so earnestly wishes for, the advice and assistance of her friends, as I do; I am new to the world, and unused to acting for myself,—my intentions are never willfully blamable, yet I err perpetually—I have, hitherto, been blessed with the most affectionate of friends, and, indeed, the ablest of men, to guide and instruct me upon every occasion; but he is too distant, now, to be applied to at the moment I want his aid[.]"

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Lord Orville, Mr. Villars

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 298-299

Explanation and Analysis



Evelina complains to Lord Orville that, although she tries her best to do the right thing, she is young and inexperienced and often makes mistakes. Evelina is naturally sensible (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration of others) and genuinely wants to do what is best for people. However, 18th-century British society was strictly organized around etiquette, or manners, which the upper classes were educated in from birth. Evelina, who was raised middle-class, finds etiquette unintuitive and struggles to know what is right in society's eyes. As a young woman, it is important that she acts properly, as women's reputations were fragile at this time—the slightest mistake could cause lasting damage.

Evelina is frustrated with herself because she frequently makes mistakes. However, she has lived a sheltered life and is young and inexperienced—therefore, it is natural that gaining experience will involve some trial and error. 18th-century society was patriarchal, and people did not trust young women to judge situations for themselves. Evelina has always relied on her adoptive father, Mr. Villars guidance. However, Mr. Villars has sent Evelina away from home so that she can gain independence and learn to judge situations on herself without relying solely on his guidance.

Volume 3, Letter 12 Quotes

☹☹ My reluctance to this step, gives way to my conviction of its propriety, since the reputation of your dear and much-injured mother must now either be fully cleared from blemish, or receive its final and indelible wound.

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Caroline Belmont, Evelina, Miss Belmont, Sir John Belmont

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 329-330

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Villars agrees that Evelina must confront her estranged father, Sir John, and convince him that she is his daughter and that her mother is Caroline Belmont, whom Sir John married in secret before Evelina was born. Sir John denied his marriage to Caroline and ruined her reputation. However, Evelina has just discovered that Sir John has another daughter, Miss Belmont.

Mr. Villars is concerned that if people believe Miss Belmont is Sir John's child, then they will always believe that Evelina is illegitimate (meaning that Caroline and Sir John were not married when Evelina was conceived). In 18th-century Britain, people generally considered premarital sex to be extremely sinful. Although premarital sex was disapproved of for both men and women, a man could easily redeem his reputation after an accusation of sexual misconduct, whereas a woman never could.

This news not only affected Caroline's good name while she was alive but could also damage Evelina's future. Illegitimate children were considered inferior and unworthy during this period, and Evelina could be socially ostracized and never attain her rightful and noble status as Sir John's daughter. Furthermore, illegitimate children often did not inherit—though Evelina will not inherit Sir John's wealth anyway, unless he believes she is indeed his daughter. Without her inheritance, Evelina may struggle to attract a husband, which was considered a woman's primary goal in this era.

Volume 3, Letter 20 Quotes

☹☹ What a strange letter! How proud and how piqued does its writer appear! To what alternate meanness and rashness do the passions lead, when reason and self-denial do not oppose them! Sir Clement is conscious he has acted dishonorably, yet the same unbridled vehemence which urged him to gratify a blamable curiosity, will sooner prompt him to risk his life, than confess his misconduct.

Related Characters: Evelina (speaker), Lord Orville, Sir Clement Willoughby

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 381

Explanation and Analysis

After Evelina and Lord Orville get engaged, Sir Clement writes an angry letter to Evelina. He admits that he wrote the insulting note that Evelina received several weeks earlier, which was signed with Lord Orville's name. Sir Clement's admission proves to Evelina that he is deceitful and unkind. Rather than respect Evelina's preference for Lord Orville, Sir Clement tried to trick her and convince her that Lord Orville had bad intentions toward her. This shows that Sir Clement is insensible (sensibility was an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration of others), as he does not care that his trick hurt Evelina's feelings and put her relationship in jeopardy. Sir Clement also proves that just because someone is a noble does not mean that they are a good person. Nobility was associated with virtue in 18th-century Britain, but Sir Clement's actions show that this is not always the case.

Evelina is shocked by Sir Clement's pride and rudeness. He clearly feels entitled to insult her because she has rejected him, and doesn't feel that he's done anything wrong. Men often felt entitled to insult or abuse women during this era, reflecting British society's rather misogynistic standards: men could treat women badly without facing consequences, whereas women faced extreme consequences for relatively minor social mishaps.

Volume 3, Letter 22 Quotes

☹☹ Every wish of my soul is now fulfilled—for the felicity of my Evelina is equal to her worthiness!

Related Characters: Mr. Villars (speaker), Lord Orville, Evelina, Sir John Belmont

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 397

Explanation and Analysis

Evelina reunites with her estranged father, Sir John Belmont, and receives her rightful noble title and her inheritance. She also marries Lord Orville, whom she loves and respects. Mr. Villars is delighted and feels that this is everything he hoped for Evelina.

Mr. Villars is Evelina's adoptive father and has raised her since birth. He has always tried to be a strong moral role model for Evelina by teaching her the difference between right and wrong. Although Mr. Villars was initially afraid to send Evelina out into the world alone, he now realizes that gaining experience and independence involves trial and error—and that because of his excellent guidance, Evelina has learned to make good decisions on her own.

Evelina's maturity and good sense are represented through

her choice of Lord Orville as her husband. Lord Orville mirrors Mr. Villars, as he is kind and wise, and he wants to allow Evelina freedom to make her own decisions. In 18th-century Britain, women were generally considered to be their husband's property. But because Evelina has had a good upbringing, and because she has been taught to make good decisions for herself, she has chosen a husband wisely and married a man who will respect her autonomy.



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.

VOLUME 1, LETTER 1

In Kent, in England, Lady Howard writes to her friend Mr. Villars to tell him that she has some bad news: she has received an angry letter from a woman named Madame Duval. Madame Duval has just discovered that her late daughter, Caroline Belmont, gave birth to a daughter before she died—and that Mr. Villars has raised this child, Evelina, since her birth. Madame Duval insinuates that Mr. Villars deliberately kept the child from her and announces that she plans to return to England to meet her. Lady Howard is deeply offended by this letter and feels that Mr. Villars has actually done Madame Duval a great favor by raising Evelina.

Madame Duval says that if Mr. Villars can prove that Evelina really is her granddaughter, then he should send Evelina to France, where Madame Duval will provide for her. Lady Howard notes that Madame Duval's letter is "vulgar," and that Madame Duval is clearly uneducated. She also thinks that Madame Duval is rude because she wrote a letter to Lady Howard even though she has only met her once before.

Lady Howard feels that Mr. Villars is the only person who can decide what is best for Evelina, as he is her guardian and has raised her since childhood. Lady Howard also worries that Madame Duval is untrustworthy and would be a bad influence on Evelina. Lady Howard concludes her letter by reminding Mr. Villars that Evelina is always welcome to come and stay with her at her house, Howard Grove.

Lady Howard implies that Mr. Villars has been a steadfast influence in Evelina's life—he has raised her since birth—and is therefore an effective parental role model. Madame Duval, by contrast, has been absent from Evelina's life and neglected her own daughter, Caroline. Madame Duval admits she was not aware that Caroline was pregnant, which suggests that she was an absent mother for Caroline.



As a young woman in this period, Evelina has no say over her future—she cannot earn her own money and must attract a husband to financially support her. Madame Duval's plan to uproot Evelina without her consent demonstrates how young women's fates were decided by their families; men often choose to marry women based on their family's wealth rather than love. 18th-century British society was also governed by strict etiquette conventions, which the upper classes learned from birth. Lady Howard's comment about Madame Duval's rudeness suggests that Madame Duval is from a lower-class background, as she does not understand etiquette, which forbids people from writing to each other without a formal introduction.



In patriarchal 18th-century society, unmarried women could not decide their own fates but were considered their father's property. By this logic, Mr. Villars—Evelina's adoptive father—can decide Evelina's fate, as he is her guardian. Evelina is inexperienced and has led a sheltered life in the countryside. Lady Howard worries that Madame Duval may lead Evelina astray and encourage her to behave in ways that could damage her reputation and, consequently, ruin her chance at finding a husband.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 2

Mr. Villars writes back to Lady Howard. He hopes that Madame Duval's letter is a sign that she feels guilty for abandoning her daughter, Caroline. Mr. Villars asks Lady Howard to tell Madame Duval that he has educated her granddaughter, Evelina, as best he can, and that he feels Evelina should remain with him for the moment. Furthermore, Mr. Villars also feels that Madame Duval is an unsuitable example for Evelina, as Madame Duval is coarse, uneducated, and immoral.

Mr. Villars explains that Evelina's grandfather, Mr. Evelyn, was once his young student whom Mr. Villars took traveling. Mr. Evelyn fell in love with Madame Duval, a barmaid, during this trip. He married her even though his friends, including Mr. Villars, warned him against this. But Mr. Evelyn, infatuated by Madame Duval's beauty, didn't heed their advice. Mr. Evelyn died shortly after his ill-fated marriage to Madame Duval.

Before Mr. Evelyn died, he begged Mr. Villars to look after his daughter, Caroline, who he had with Madame Duval. Mr. Evelyn did not want Caroline to be raised by Madame Duval, as he did not think she was a suitable role model. After Mr. Evelyn's death, Madame Duval abandoned Caroline and left her with Mr. Villars, who raised her as his own.

Mr. Villars loved Caroline and took good care of her. When Caroline was 18, Madame Duval (who was now married to a French nobleman in Paris) demanded that Mr. Villars send Caroline to her. Mr. Villars laments that he did not go with Caroline; if he had been with her, he might have been able to guide her away from the scandal and heartbreak which befell her.

In contrast to Mr. Villars, who has been a reliable guardian to Evelina, Madame Duval was an absent mother and a poor role model to her own daughter, Caroline. Mr. Villars has clearly tried hard to instill good moral values in Evelina, and he is afraid that Madame Duval's bad example may undo his work and lead Evelina astray.



Mr. Evelyn's experience demonstrates the importance of having—and heeding—moral guidance, especially when the people who offer it have one's best interests in mind. Meanwhile, it's clear that Mr. Evelyn is upper-class, while Madame Duval is lower-class. The class hierarchy in 18th-century Britain was extremely rigid, and marriages between people from different classes were heavily discouraged.



Mr. Evelyn marries Madame Duval against Mr. Villars's wishes, even though Mr. Villars only wants what is best for Mr. Evelyn. Mr. Evelyn realizes too late that this is an error and does not want his daughter, Caroline, to make similar mistakes as she grows up. Mr. Evelyn leaves Caroline with Mr. Villars because, although he did not follow Mr. Villars's advice, he believes that Caroline is more likely to grow into a moral and sensible person if she is raised by a responsible role model like Mr. Villars, rather than an irresponsible one like Madame Duval.



Mr. Villars understands how important good role models are for young and impressionable people. Although he provided Caroline with a good upbringing and education, he feels that he made a mistake by sending Caroline to Madame Duval alone. Without his guidance, Caroline was not experienced enough to withstand Madame Duval's negative influence, and Madame Duval led her astray.



When Caroline arrived in France, Madame Duval tried to force her to marry one of her husband's wealthy relatives. Caroline, frightened by Madame Duval, ran away with a dashing young nobleman named Sir John Belmont and secretly married him instead. However, Sir John abandoned Caroline soon afterward, destroyed the marriage license, and denied that the wedding ever took place. Madame Duval then disowned Caroline. Although Mr. Villars believed Caroline was innocent, the strain of events was too much for Caroline, and she died shortly after the birth of her daughter, Evelina.

Madame Duval is lower-class but has married a French nobleman, seemingly so that she can join the nobility. However, although nobility was viewed as synonymous with virtue in the 18th century, Madame Duval is greedy and ambitious and does not care about Caroline, whom she tries to force into a marriage for the sake of prestige. Sir John, who is from a noble family, is also an immoral person and seduces the impressionable Caroline. This supports Burney's point that nobility isn't an inherent marker of goodness. Caroline's reputation is destroyed because women of her time were expected to remain pure until marriage—by destroying the marriage license, Sir John makes it look like Caroline became pregnant out of wedlock.



Mr. Villars took charge of Evelina, as he had cared for her grandfather Mr. Evelyn and mother, Caroline, before her. Mrs. Villars loves Evelina as his own child and hopes that he will not fail to keep her safe, as he did Mr. Evelyn and Caroline. For this reason, Mr. Villars cannot bear to send Evelina to stay with Madame Duval and, in fact, barely lets her out of his sight at all.

Mr. Villars has learned from his previous mistakes of letting Mr. Evelyn and Caroline spend time with Madame Duval alone. He refuses to repeat these mistakes with Evelina for fear of Madame Duval leading her to ruin as well. In 18th-century Britain, young unmarried women were viewed as their guardian's property, so Mr. Villars has the power to decide Evelina's fate.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 3

Lady Howard writes to Mr. Villars. Although she knows that Mr. Villars is protective of Evelina, Lady Howard begs him to send Evelina to visit her at Howard Grove. Lady Howard's daughter, Mrs. Mirvan, plans to take her own daughter, Maria, to London for the summer, and Lady Howard thinks it would be good for Evelina to go with them.

Lady Howard worries that Mr. Villars's protective attitude toward Evelina will be bad for her in the long run. Although Mr. Villars worries that Evelina is too young and innocent to enter the world alone, Lady Howard feels that Evelina must be allowed to gain experience for herself, so that she can mature and grow.



Lady Howard observes that Evelina has lived a sheltered life and that it would be good for her to venture into the world. Lady Howard says that if young people are denied opportunities like this, they will believe that the world is much more exciting than it really is and will want to explore it more. Lady Howard further explains that Evelina's estranged father, Sir John Belmont, lives abroad and therefore will not encounter her in London. Lady Howard asks for Mr. Villars's opinion of this plan and assures him she will respect his decision.

Unmarried young women in 18th-century Britain were viewed as their father's (or their guardian's) property and could not decide for themselves when or how to enter the world. Although Mr. Villars fears that the outside world may corrupt the innocent Evelina, Lady Howard worries that if he denies her the chance to gain experience for herself, Evelina may rebel against him and ignore and resent his guidance. This could lead to her becoming more vulnerable to being led astray.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 4

Mr. Villars writes back to Lady Howard: he will allow Evelina to visit Howard Grove, but he is concerned about letting her go to London. Mr. Villars feels that Evelina is emotionally sensitive and that her situation is very precarious because she is considered illegitimate (her father, Sir John Belmont, denies his marriage to Evelina's late mother, Caroline.) Evelina, therefore, will not inherit her father's fortune, and Mr. Villars does not want her to see lavish city lifestyles, which she will not have herself.

The countryside, where Evelina has been raised, was associated with innocence and purity during this period, whereas the city was associated with corruption and sin. Mr. Villars worries that the innocent Evelina may be corrupted if she goes to the city. Evelina's emotional sensitivity is a sign of her innate sensibility, or the ability to be empathetic and to have strong emotional reactions. Sensibility was extremely fashionable in the 18th century and was believed to reveal innate virtue. Premarital sex was considered sinful during this period, and illegitimate children were therefore viewed as inherently corrupt and could not inherit their parent's wealth or noble titles.



Mr. Villars says that he will send Evelina to Howard Grove with her nurse, Mrs. Clinton, and advises Lady Howard that Evelina should go by the surname "Anville." He warns Lady Howard that Evelina has been educated in the country and therefore knows nothing about sophisticated city life. He hopes that Lady Howard will still find Evelina pleasant company, however.

Evelina has a false name because her father, Sir John, falsely claims that he never married her mother, Caroline. This means that, in society's eyes, Evelina is illegitimate (her parents were not married)—and since premarital sex was considered sinful, illegitimate children were viewed as inherently corrupt. Fashionable 18th-century society was rigidly ordered around etiquette, or manners; as Evelina has been raised middle-class in the unfashionable countryside, she has not been educated in etiquette. Mr. Villars worries that this will make Evelina stand out or make people believe that she is not virtuous, since etiquette was seen as synonymous with virtue.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 5

Mr. Villars gives Evelina a letter to give to Lady Howard when Evelina arrives at Howard Grove. The note reminds Lady Howard how innocent and "artless" Evelina is and begs Lady Howard to take good care of her and to ensure that Evelina returns from her trip as pure as she was when she left Mr. Villars.

Purity was highly prized in women during the 18th century, and women were expected to remain virgins until marriage. Furthermore, the countryside was often associated with purity, while the city was associated with sin and corruption. Mr. Villars worries that when he is not there to guide Evelina, she may be corrupted and lose her innocence during her city adventure, which will be a substantial test to her fragile and underdeveloped sense of morality.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 6

Lady Howard writes to Mr. Villars to tell him how wonderful Evelina is. Evelina is both extremely beautiful and extremely innocent—something Lady Howard finds surprising, as she says that beauty is usually a sign of “falseness.” Although Evelina has not been educated in high society, she is naturally polite because she wants everyone around her to be happy and comfortable. Evelina also gets along well with Maria Mirvan, Lady Howard’s granddaughter.

Authenticity and natural emotional responses (often referred to as sensibility) were prized in the 18th century, as people believed these traits were signs of virtue. Lady Howard suggests that Evelina’s beauty is natural, not something she enhances with unnatural things like makeup or fashion. Evelina is also innocent and, therefore, does not try and use her beauty to her advantage to get her own way. In this sense, she is “artless,” or authentic. Eighteenth-century British society was also preoccupied with strict behavioral codes, like etiquette. Although Evelina does not know formal etiquette, her innate sensibility means that she cares about how other people feel, and this leads her to be naturally polite and considerate toward others.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 7

Lady Howard writes again to Mr. Villars with some unexpected news: Mrs. Mirvan’s husband, Captain Mirvan, a naval officer, has returned from sea, and Mrs. Mirvan and Maria plan to go to London to meet him. Lady Howard writes to ask if Evelina can go with them, as Lady Howard thinks that Evelina will imagine all the fun that Maria is having without her and feel left out if she stays behind.

While Lady Howard knows that Mr. Villars values Evelina’s innocence, she feels that it’s also important for Evelina to be allowed to gain experience for herself. If Mr. Villars does not allow Evelina to do this, Lady Howard worries that Evelina will be tempted to try forbidden things and will be more easily led astray. She will not have been given the chance to learn for herself in a supportive environment, with Mr. Villars guiding her from afar.



Lady Howard writes that Mr. Villars should not be worried that Evelina will accidentally bump into her grandmother, Madame Duval, in London, as Madame Duval lives abroad. Even if Madame Duval is in London, she will not know who Evelina is, because Mr. Villars has given her a fake surname (Anville) to use. Lady Howard also says that Evelina is writing to Mr. Villars herself to ask his permission.

Mr. Villars worries that Madame Duval will try to use Evelina’s innocence against her to lead her astray. He gives Evelina a fake name because her father, Sir John, denies his marriage to her mother, Caroline. Therefore, Evelina is considered illegitimate because her parents were supposedly never married. Illegitimate children were considered inherently corrupt or unworthy because premarital sex was unacceptable in this period. Mr. Villars worries that if people know Evelina’s real identity, they will treat her differently because of her apparently illegitimate status.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 8

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him how busy the Mirvans have been as they prepare for Captain Mirvan’s return. Although Evelina longs to join Mrs. Mirvan and Maria in London and attend the **theaters** and fashionable city sites with them, she will only go if Mr. Villars agrees to her trip. She knows that Mr. Villars always has a good reason for anything he censors or suggests, so she will not argue if he says no.

Evelina respects and defers to Mr. Villars’s advice because she knows that he wants what is best for her. Rather than encourage Evelina to stray, his willingness to trust her makes her grateful and respectful toward him, and more likely to seek and follow his advice.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 9

Mr. Villars writes back to Evelina and tells her that she may go to London with Mrs. Mirvan. Although Mr. Villars is afraid to let Evelina go, he knows that if he refuses, she will only want to go more, and he does not want to restrict her unnecessarily. Mr. Villars prays that Evelina will be safe in London, and that God will guide her as she makes her way out into the world.

Although Mr. Villars fears that Evelina will be corrupted by city life, he also knows that if he forbids her from going, she will only want to go more and may resent him and stray from his advice in future. Mr. Villars wisely understands that in order to grow up into a sensible, moral person, Evelina must be allowed to gain experience for herself and to make mistakes, so that she learns how to make her way in the world without him.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 10

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to tell him that she has arrived safely in London. On their first evening there, she and Maria convince Mrs. Mirvan to take them to the **theater**. Mrs. Mirvan reluctantly agrees, but as they have no time to buy fashionable clothes, she makes them sit in a hidden spot so that they will not be recognized. Evelina loves the play but does not find London as pretty as she had hoped.

Fashionable, London society is superficial and preoccupied with appearances. Mrs. Mirvan worries that without fashionable clothes, her acquaintances will judge her, and this suggests that the London nobility are shallow. Evelina's emotional response to the play showcases her innate sensibility, which was associated with strong empathy for others, emotional responses to the world, and an authentic and refined appreciation for the arts. Evelina's slightly underwhelming experience of London supports Mr. Villars belief that forbidden things are usually better in one's imagination than they are in reality.



Evelina, Maria, and Mrs. Mirvan attend the **theater** again the following evening, and Evelina is mesmerized by the actors. She feels deeply moved by the play and is swept up in the expressive performance. The next morning, they venture to St James's Park for a walk. Here, Evelina is disappointed with the muddy uneven paths but fascinated by the fashionable outfits that other ladies wear. However, Mrs. Mirvan says that there are more fashionable people in Kensington Gardens, which Evelina can hardly believe.

Evelina's emotional response to the play demonstrates her innate sensibility—a fashionable 18th-century concept that was characterized by empathy, strong emotional reactions to suffering, and an innate and refined appreciation for the arts. Evelina has never experienced fashionable society before, since she was raised in the country, and she's amazed by the noble people's carefully cultivated appearances.



Mrs. Mirvan, Evelina, and Maria are invited to a ball, so they go shopping to buy outfits. Evelina is amazed by the fawning and “affected” shop assistants, who scurry around them and try to persuade them to buy every dress they try on. When Evelina tries on makeup and a **wig**, she hardly recognizes herself in the mirror; she begins to feel nervous about the ball, as this will be her first time at such an event.

Evelina finds the shop assistants disingenuous because they are only polite to her to get her to buy things. Although 18th-century society was preoccupied with sensibility (which was associated with authenticity and natural beauty and emotion), in actuality, fashionable society prefers the illusion of natural beauty to the reality of it. This is demonstrated by the extreme makeover Evelina gets to help her fit in.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 11

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars the morning after the ball to tell him about it. She writes that when she arrived, she was shocked to find it so busy and crowded. The men, she says, swanned around and looked the ladies up and down arrogantly as they passed. Evelina found them quite rude and was dismayed when a young man approached and addressed her. He asked her to dance in an extravagantly affected manner, and Evelina turned him down and had to stifle her laughter at the way he spoke.

Evelina hurries away from the man, but soon, another man named Lord Orville asks her to dance. Evelina agrees—although she is afraid to make a fool of herself—because, she says, Lord Orville has a handsome and expressive face and is extremely polite. Evelina stumbles through one dance with him, but panics when she hears that the next dance is extremely hard and, when he is not looking, she sneaks away with Maria.

Evelina thinks she has escaped without Lord Orville noticing until Mrs. Mirvan points out that he is looking for her. Evelina tries to hide, but Lord Orville sees her and hurries over to ask her if she is alright. Evelina is mortified, but when Lord Orville politely asks her to dance again, she agrees because she feels she cannot run away a second time.

Evelina finds the dance difficult and worries that Lord Orville must be terribly embarrassed by her. However, Lord Orville seems cheerful and helps Evelina learn the steps. Although he wants to dance again, Lord Orville perceives that Evelina is tired and, knowing that she will be too polite to say anything, suggests that they sit down together.

When Evelina and Lord Orville find seats, Lord Orville asks Evelina questions on various subjects. Evelina is embarrassed because she doesn't know about anything about these topics. While they talk, the man who previously asked Evelina to dance reappears and interrupts them. Evelina cannot help laughing at his stuffy manner, but she stops when she sees that the man is deeply offended, and that Lord Orville appears shocked by her behavior.

Eighteenth-century Britain was patriarchal, meaning that men had more power than women, who were mainly viewed as commodities owned by their fathers or husbands. Upper-class men were particularly powerful and socially influential, and this explains their arrogant attitude toward the women at the ball. Evelina does not understand etiquette, or manners—which, in fashionable, 18th-century society, were extremely showy and extravagant. Instead of being impressed or flattered by the man's speech, Evelina finds it funny because she does not understand that this is how fashionable, upper-class people are expected to behave.



Lord Orville's expressive face and genuine manner are signs of his innate sensibility, a fashionable 18th-century concept which was associated with genuine kindness, empathy, and strong emotional responses. Evelina responds positively to Lord Orville's sensible manner because she, herself, is innately sensible.



Lord Orville's genuine concern for Evelina's wellbeing demonstrates his sensibility, a characteristic that he and Evelina have in common. Evelina is inexperienced in fashionable society and does not know basic etiquette, such as the rules around dancing. Therefore, she acts on her own natural inclination rather than following social norms.



Evelina is inexperienced in fashionable pursuits like dancing, and Lord Orville's willingness to help and guide her, rather than judge her, reflects his sensibility—his empathy, kindness, and consideration toward others.



Lord Orville shows his natural sensibility when he tries to accommodate Evelina and find a topic that she is happy to discuss. Evelina is inexperienced in fashionable conversation and does not know the strict etiquette rules which govern 18th-century British society. She therefore inadvertently appears rude and even immoral, as etiquette was strongly associated with virtue at this time.



The man, Mr. Lovel, angrily tells Lord Orville that Evelina refused to dance with him before dancing with Lord Orville, which goes against polite etiquette rules. Mr. Lovel storms off, and Lord Orville complains that Mr. Lovel is extremely rude. Embarrassed, Evelina asks Lord Orville if he will find Mrs. Mirvan for her, and Lord Orville obliges.

Although the inexperienced Evelina has inadvertently broken etiquette rules, Lord Orville feels that it is Mr. Lovel who is rude, not Evelina. This supports the idea that Lord Orville is naturally sensible (empathetic and emotionally intelligent) as he instinctively dislikes Mr. Lovel's bullying attitude—even though, according to etiquette, Mr. Lovel is right. This further suggests that etiquette is not synonymous with virtue or sensibility, even though people in 18th-century Britain tended to believe it was.



Evelina discreetly tells Mrs. Mirvan about her mistake, and Mrs. Mirvan is surprised that Evelina did not know dancing etiquette—she blames herself, however, as she feels that she should have instructed Evelina before the ball. Evelina is ashamed of her faux pas and feels out of place in fashionable society. Lord Orville is extremely polite, however, and stays with her for the rest of the evening.

Mrs. Mirvan does not blame Evelina for her mistake. Rather, she accepts that as Evelina's guide, it is her responsibility to help Evelina navigate polite society, which Evelina has never experienced before. Lord Orville is genuinely polite, rather than simply following arbitrary etiquette rules, because he genuinely cares about how Evelina feels and wants to make her comfortable.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 12

The next day, Maria tells Evelina that, while she was at the refreshment stand at the ball, she overheard Lord Orville talk to another man. The man says that Evelina is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. Lord Orville laughs at this, however, and says that Evelina is weak and silly. Just then, Mr. Lovel approaches Lord Orville to apologize for getting angry with Evelina, who refused to dance with him and chose Lord Orville instead. Mr. Lovel says that he was provoked by Evelina's bad manners and that he believes she must be ill-bred. Lord Orville is shocked and says that Evelina's beauty could not conceal such a horrible truth.

Lord Orville believes that Evelina is ignorant because she does not adhere to etiquette, which was considered required social knowledge in the 18th century. However, Lord Orville does not realize that Evelina does not know these rules—instead, he thinks that she flouts them on purpose, because she does not care about other people. Sensibility (empathy toward others) and etiquette were viewed as interchangeable in this period, and Lord Orville cannot believe that Evelina can be both innately sensible and unaware of etiquette, even though this is indeed the case.



That evening, Mrs. Mirvan takes Evelina to the opera and Evelina falls in love with the music. She feels as though the singing “melts” her soul and makes her feel soothed and calm. The next day, the group goes to Ranelagh Gardens, and Evelina and Maria notice Lord Orville in the crowd. Although he catches their eye and bows to Evelina, Evelina avoids him and feels ashamed because she thinks she acted foolishly when she met him at the ball. The incident puts her in a bad mood, and she refuses to go out the next day.

Evelina's response to the opera displays her innate sensibility (an 18th-century concept associated with empathy, emotional responsiveness, and a natural appreciation of the arts). However, although sensibility and etiquette were believed to be intrinsically connected in this period, Evelina is ignorant of etiquette despite her natural sensibility. Evelina is ashamed of the etiquette mistakes she makes in front of Lord Orville.



The next evening, Evelina goes to see [King Lear](#) at the theater and is deeply moved by the performance. The day after this, Captain Mirvan arrives and the family go to meet him. Evelina is disappointed with Captain Mirvan's conduct, however: he is a rough, uncouth man and is rude to Mrs. Mirvan and Maria. A few days later, the group attends the opera again and, although Evelina loves the music, Captain Mirvan annoys her because he complains all the way through.

Evelina's emotional response to the theater reflects her natural sensibility in spite of her unfamiliarity with British high society and its customs. Captain Mirvan, on the other hand, understands polite society and its obsession with etiquette—but he looks down on it as petty and trivial. Captain Mirvan has been to many other places where things operate differently, which suggests that perhaps British fashionable society is not as all-important as its members believe it to be.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 13

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that she attended a “ridotto,” or public ball, with the Mirvans the previous night. Although it was busy, Evelina noticed Lord Orville in the crowd. She felt certain that he would not want to dance with her again, after she acted foolishly at the last ball. In fact, she did not plan to dance at all, as Mrs. Mirvan said that it was not proper for an unmarried young woman to dance with a stranger in public.

Upper-class society in 18th-century Britain was rigidly structured around etiquette and manners. Evelina is embarrassed because she has not been educated in etiquette and often makes mistakes. As a young woman, Evelina must take extra care not to offend people through a lapse in etiquette. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in this period, and people judged women more harshly than they judged men.



A young nobleman named Sir Clement Willoughby approaches Evelina and asks her to dance with him. Evelina is flustered because she does not want to dance; to escape the situation, she lies and tells him that she already has a partner. Rather than leave her alone, however, Sir Clement begins to follow Evelina around and ask her numerous questions about her partner.

Sir Clement suspects that Evelina has lied (deception was considered a breach of etiquette) and wants to shame her into admitting this. However, although Sir Clement wants to show Evelina up for being rude, he's clearly being hypocritical, as his own behavior is discourteous. For all of Sir Clement's posturing about etiquette, he lacks sensibility—an 18th-century concept associated with empathy and kindness, which was believed to be synonymous with etiquette—because he does not care that he embarrasses Evelina.



When Evelina finds a seat, Sir Clement follows her and sits down beside her. He says it is a crime for a woman as beautiful as Evelina to be left without a dance partner. Sir Clement says that Evelina's absent partner must be a terrible rogue, and he compliments Evelina on her patience and fortitude. Evelina is confused because she does not know this man and finds his speech disconcerting. She begs him to leave her alone and tries to move, but again, he follows.

Sir Clement's manner reflects his awareness that sensibility was popular in fashionable 18th-century society. Sensibility was associated with a deep empathy for others and strong emotional reactions to suffering. Burney demonstrates that fashionable sensibility was often disingenuous, however, as it was about making people look good rather than genuinely empathizing with others. Sir Clement pretends to feel deeply for Evelin, even though he does not know her— and in fact, he causes her suffering by pestering her and making her uncomfortable. This is something that a truly sensible person, like Evelina herself or Lord Orville, would not do.



Evelina tries to lose Sir Clement in the crowd, but Sir Clement sticks with her and even asks Captain Mirvan and Mrs. Mirvan to persuade Evelina to dance. Captain Mirvan says that Evelina can do as she likes, and he stalks off. Mrs. Mirvan quietly warns Evelina that if she does not dance with Sir Clement, he will follow her all night, so Evelina finally agrees to dance with him. She suspects that Sir Clement knows she lied about having a partner, however, and thinks that he wants to punish her for this.

When the dance is over, Evelina tries to escape from Sir Clement, but he reminds her that etiquette dictates she must stay with him a little longer. Evelina angrily submits and Sir Clement asks her why she is annoyed. Evelina complains that Sir Clement has bullied her and imposed himself upon her, but Sir Clement tells her scornfully that she should be grateful, since her other partner abandoned her.

Just as this exchange takes place, Evelina notices Lord Orville in the crowd; and Sir Clement decides that Lord Orville must be the partner who abandoned her. Sir Clement says that Evelina must go to Lord Orville and tell him she has found someone else to dance with, but Evelina is confused and irritably asks what he means. Lord Orville is with Mrs. Mirvan, and the pair advance through the crowd and meet Sir Clement and Evelina.

Sir Clement greets Lord Orville—it is clear that the pair know each other—and asks him why he has deserted his dance partner, Evelina. Lord Orville is confused, as he has not asked Evelina to dance. Evelina is so flustered that she breaks down in tears. Sir Clement immediately rushes away to fetch Evelina some water. Lord Orville, meanwhile, is extremely kind and polite and leads Evelina to a chair. She is too upset to remain at the ball, however, and Mrs. Mirvan calls a servant to escort Evelina home.

Certain aspects of 18th-century British society were misogynistic—for instance, men felt entitled to treat women rudely because women had few rights and little social power to protect themselves. Evelina is not married and therefore does not have a husband to defend her. She cannot rely on Captain Mirvan, who is a negligent guardian; therefore, she is forced to go along with Sir Clement to avoid further hassle from him.



Although etiquette was believed to be synonymous with virtue in the 18th century, Sir Clement proves that etiquette can be used in a negative way. Just because someone abides by etiquette rules does not mean that they are truly polite, courteous, or considerate of others. This suggests that etiquette was not a sign of innate virtue but rather an arbitrary social system in this period.



Sir Clement suspects that Evelina has lied about having a partner, so he wants to shame her because she has broken etiquette conventions. His goal is to embarrass her in front of Lord Orville, who is a prestigious nobleman. Although Sir Clement has followed etiquette conventions, whereas Evelina has inadvertently broken them by lying, Sir's Clement behavior is cruel and does not give Evelina the benefit of the doubt. He assumes she is a liar, rather than recognizing that she does not understand etiquette. This proves Burney's point that etiquette does not necessarily line up with virtue.



Although Sir Clement has technically proven his point—Evelina is forced to admit that she did break etiquette conventions when she lied about having a partner—his behavior toward her is cruel and thoughtless. 18th-century society felt that studied politeness (etiquette) was also a sign of innate virtue and sensibility (empathy). However, Sir Clement's behavior suggests that etiquette does not equal empathy, as he cares more about arbitrary etiquette conventions than he does about Evelina's feelings.



The next morning, both Lord Orville and Sir Clement call at Mrs. Mirvan's lodgings to inquire after Evelina's health. Evelina refuses to see them and is horrified when she considers what Lord Orville must think of her. She is most concerned that he will believe that she behaved presumptuously and used his name to make herself appear important at the ball. Captain Mirvan plans to take them to the **theater** again for their last night in town, and Evelina confesses that she will be glad to leave London and return to **Berry Hill** and to Mr. Villars.

Lord Orville is part of the nobility, a privileged class and revered class in 18th-century British society. Because of this admiration, many lower-class people aspired to join the nobility—or at least to make it look like they had, by name-dropping or spending time with nobles. However, social mobility was almost impossible in this period, and those who tried to transcend their class were looked down upon by the nobility as deluded social climbers. Evelina does not want Lord Orville to think of her like this, because she does not aspire to join the nobility and is happy with her middle-class status.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 14

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that, because of a surprising turn of events, they are still in London. The previous evening, Evelina went to the opera with her companions, and as they waited for a coach afterwards, they came across a distraught French woman who said she had lost her friends. Mrs. Mirvan said the woman could join them in their coach, but Captain Mirvan protested because the woman was French.

In 18th-century Britain, women were generally wary of being alone in public as it could put their safety at risk. Women did not have many rights, so men could potentially harass or assault them without consequences. Captain Mirvan is a very unempathetic and insensible person (sensibility was an 18th-century term for empathy and kindness). Because of this, he doesn't feel that he has a duty to protect women whose safety is at risk. Captain Mirvan is a naval officer and dislikes the French because, during this period, England and France were often at war.



Eventually, Mrs. Mirvan convinces Captain Mirvan to let the old lady share their coach, and the group sets off for home. Captain Mirvan is extremely rude to the woman, however, and she responds by saying that she would rather go home to France than stay in England, where people have no manners. Desperate to stop their bickering, Maria complains that the coach is driving very slowly and Captain Mirvan says that they will go fast enough on their journey back to Howard Grove the next day.

Although 18th-century Britons prides themselves on etiquette, the Frenchwoman is a reminder to the reader that Britain is only one country; other countries have different social codes. This supports Burney's argument that proper etiquette is often arbitrary, and it's not necessarily a marker of moral goodness.



On hearing the name "Howard Grove," the French woman suddenly exclaims that she knows Lady Howard. Captain Mirvan rudely states that the French woman is not a refined person and, therefore, cannot know Lady Howard. The French woman angrily retorts that she is just as good as Lady Howard and is as wealthy as her, too. At this, Captain Mirvan grabs the woman's wrists and threatens to throw her from the coach. The woman cries out that if he dares to do so, she will call the magistrate. She claims that her name—Madame Duval—is well-known in London.

Madame Duval is not born into nobility but has married a French nobleman—therefore, she's been able to partially transcend her lower-class background. However, although Madame Duval may be accepted among the nobility in France, the class hierarchy in 18th-century Britain was extremely rigid, and people could not claim to be nobility simply because they were wealthy or had entered the nobility through marriage. Captain Mirvan's violent behavior demonstrates Burney's point that because women had few rights—and because 18th-century society was misogynistic—violence against women was often considered acceptable. Men tended to view themselves as superior to women and therefore felt that they could treat them as they pleased.



When Evelina hears that the French woman's name is Madame Duval, she realizes that the woman is her grandmother. Madame Duval strikes her as extremely vulgar; Evelina is so horrified that she almost faints. She wonders what she would be like if she had been raised by Madame Duval instead of Mr. Villars. Evelina's reaction means that they cannot hide the truth from Madame Duval, and Mrs. Mirvan reveals that Evelina is Madame Duval's long lost grandchild. Hearing this, Madame Duval invites Evelina to her house, but Evelina declines. Instead, she agrees to visit Madame Duval the next morning when she has recovered from her shock.

The next day, Mrs. Mirvan accompanies Evelina to visit Madame Duval. During their tea, Madame Duval explains to Evelina that she is a widow and, because her husband was very controlling, he would never let her come to England to look for Evelina. Now that she has found her, though, Madame Duval says that Evelina must come to France with her—a prospect that Evelina finds very alarming.

Madame Duval, Evelina, and Mrs. Mirvan are interrupted by Captain Mirvan, who insults Madame Duval. Embarrassed, Mrs. Mirvan suggests that Evelina and Madame Duval spend the evening together. When Madame Duval is still not appeased, Mrs. Mirvan persuades Captain Mirvan to let them stay a few days more in London, so that Evelina can spend time with her grandmother. Captain Mirvan grudgingly agrees, but Evelina is afraid of Madame Duval and wishes she could return home to **Berry Hill**.

VOLUME 1, LETTER 15

Mr. Villars is alarmed to hear that Evelina has met Madame Duval. He advises her to be polite to her grandmother, because ill-mannered people like Madame Duval are more likely to hold a grudge or take revenge if they feel they are treated rudely. Mr. Villars also says that he will not order Evelina to leave London, but eagerly anticipates her safe return. He was also amused to hear of her meeting with Sir Clement Willoughby at the ball. Mr. Villars hopes that Evelina won't see Sir Clement again, though, since he sounds untrustworthy.

Evelina is emotionally sensitive, which signals her innate sensibility, an 18th-century term associated with empathy and strong emotional reactions to other people's suffering. Evelina is ashamed to be related to Madame Duval, who seems coarse and rude. This is because in 18th-century society, people were often judged on their family connections and the rank they were born into. If Madame Duval is Evelina's grandmother, Evelina worries that people will assume that she is also vulgar and rude by association.



Women had relatively few rights in 18th-century Europe and were generally viewed as their husband's property. Madame Duval, therefore, had to obey her husband while he was alive.



Evelina does not want to be left with Madame Duval because she senses that Madame Duval will attempt to lead her astray and corrupt her, rather than guide her to behave in a moral way. Positive moral examples are extremely important to young, impressionable people like Evelina, and a bad influence can have destructive effects. Since Evelina has been raised by Mr. Villars, a positive role model, she is already able to sense that Madame Duval is trouble, even though she is innocent and inexperienced.



Mr. Villars corroborates Evelina's gut instinct that Madame Duval is a bad influence and may try to lead her astray. This suggests that Mr. Villars, who has raised Evelina since birth and tried to provide her with strong moral guidance, has done a good job. Although Evelina is young and inexperienced, she is already able to discern between good-intentioned and bad-intentioned people.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 16

The next evening, Madame Duval and her French companion, a young man named Monsieur Du Bois, join Evelina and the Mirvans after dinner. Captain Mirvan greets the visitors rudely, and Mrs. Mirvan suggests a trip to Ranelagh Gardens. Evelina and Maria rush off to get dressed for the outing, and while they are gone, Sir Clement Willoughby arrives. Sir Clement greets the Mirvans cheerfully and seems to expect a hearty welcome from them. They are confused by his arrival, however, and Evelina is embarrassed and does not want to see him again.

When Evelina finally plucks up the courage to go downstairs and greet Sir Clement, she finds him arguing with Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval over whether the English or the French have superior manners. Sir Clement, being English, sides with Captain Mirvan—which cheers the bad-tempered Captain up significantly. Captain Mirvan invites Sir Clement to accompany them all to Ranelagh Gardens, and Sir Clement agrees.

The Gardens are crowded when they arrive, but Sir Clement pushes through and finds a seat for the group where they can have tea. Mrs. Mirvan recognizes Lord Orville among the crowds and asks him to join them, to Evelina's intense mortification. She is even more embarrassed when Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval begin to argue again. Evelina dreads to think what Lord Orville must make of them and cannot understand why he stays.

Captain Mirvan, Sir Clement, and Madame Duval continue to argue, and the Captain grows more and more irate. Flustered, Mrs. Mirvan invites Evelina and Maria to walk around with her, and Lord Orville hastily joins them. Evelina wants to apologize to Lord Orville for her behavior at the ball a few nights ago, when she lied to Sir Clement about having a dance partner and Sir Clement embarrassed her, and made her cry in front of Lord Orville because of it. She believes that Lord Orville must think she is stupid. Evelina vows not to involve herself in anything scandalous or embarrassing again, and she hopes she has learned from her mistake.

In 18th-century Britain, it was generally assumed that being noble meant that a person was also virtuous and sensible (an quality associated with empathy and consideration for others). However, despite being a nobleman, Sir Clement is arrogant and inconsiderate—he barges in on the Mirvans and does not consider Evelina's feelings after he embarrassed her at the ball a few nights ago. This suggests that, although 18th-century society reveres the nobility and claims to appreciate true sensibility, those of lower status are often taken in by people's noble rank and their appearance of sensibility, rather than any actual demonstration of it.



Eighteenth-century Britons believed that the nobility (like Sir Clement) were virtuous and superior, and that they had impeccable manners. However, Sir Clement gets along well with Captain Mirvan, who has poor manners, and rudely mocks Madame Duval. This suggests that, in Sir Clement's case, nobility is not a sign of virtue or good manners. This supports Burney's argument that 18th-century society is often taken in by nobles who appear polite and virtuous but who are not really like this.



Eighteenth-century British society was preoccupied with manners, or etiquette. Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval, however, both have terrible manners, as arguing in public was considered highly unrefined and improper. Evelina worries that Lord Orville, who is very polite, will judge her because of her association with them.



At the ball, Evelina was confused by the complex rules surrounding dance partners. Now, she's concerned that her misunderstanding of etiquette will damage her reputation. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in the 18th-century Britain, and any insinuations that an unmarried woman had behaved improperly could have a lasting impact on her ability to find a husband. Evelina hopes to gain experience through her trip to London so that she will not embarrass herself in polite society. Her mishap at the ball shows that, although she tries hard not to make mistakes, the process of gaining experience often necessitates trial and error.



Captain Mirvan, Sir Clement, and Madame Duval join Evelina and the others. They continue to bicker, however, and a dismayed Mrs. Mirvan says that she wants to go home. Lord Orville leaves them, and they call their carriages. Monsieur Du Bois helps Madame Duval into her coach. When she gets in the coach, however, she screams that it is wet inside—the rain has soaked the upholstery. Captain Mirvan immediately takes the last seat in his own carriage and says that Madame Duval must find her own way home.

Evelina offers Madame Duval her seat in the Mirvan's carriage—Evelina can travel with Sir Clement—but Mrs. Mirvan says that this would be improper. Captain Mirvan says they should just leave, but Mrs. Mirvan insists they stay until Madame Duval finds a way home. Sir Clement offers to lend Madame Duval his coach, but she is angry with him because he teased her and will not accept. Finally, when no other coaches arrive, Captain Mirvan agrees to ride with Sir Clement and to let Madame Duval ride with the ladies. Madame Duval insists that Monsieur Du Bois must come too, and he squeezes into the carriage.

Evelina and the other ladies have not gotten far when the coach suddenly breaks down. The women shriek with fright, and Evelina finds herself being lifted from the carriage and carried out of the rain by Sir Clement. He helps her into a warm apartment with a fire and sends his servants to help the others. Evelina is irritated because he will not go himself, but Sir Clement draws up a chair beside her and begins to make a lengthy apology for his behavior at the ball when he embarrassed Evelina and made her cry.

Evelina is embarrassed by Sir Clement's speech and is relieved when the Mirvans enter and interrupt him. Evelina asks them where Madame Duval is, growing concerned that none of them know. Sir Clement, seeing Evelina's distress, offers to go and look for her—but just at that moment, Madame Duval bursts in, followed by Monsieur Du Bois. They are both bedraggled and covered in mud, and Madame Duval furiously reproaches the group for leaving her behind.

Captain Mirvan, Sir Clement, and Madame Duval all have extremely bad manners. They are all from slightly different stations in life: Madame Duval is lower-class but married into nobility, Sir Clement is a nobleman by birth, and Captain Mirvan is a naval officer. This supports Burney's point that social status is not a marker for how polite or virtuous a person is, and that people from all walks of life can be inconsiderate, petty, and rude.



Evelina is naturally sensible (genuinely empathic and kind) but does not understand the complicated etiquette rules that underpinned 18th-century British society. Although etiquette was also associated with virtue, this passage suggests that sensibility and etiquette are often independent of each other. Evelina's natural, sensible reaction is to help Madame Duval by traveling with Sir Clement—but she is prevented from doing this by etiquette conventions which make it improper for her to travel alone with a man. In this way, following one's natural inclination to be kind was often hampered by etiquette. This implies that although 18th-century Britons often pretended to revere sensibility, it seems that they really cared more about etiquette and appearance.



Although Sir Clement wants to appear very gallant and sensible (empathetic and emotionally intelligent) when he rescues Evelina, he's actually self-interested and inconsiderate. He only saves Evelina because he wants to impress her—he does not genuinely care about the others.



Sir Clement does not really care what happens to Madame Duval and is not a genuinely sensible person. Instead, Sir Clement wants to appear sensible to impress Evelina, as this quality was considered fashionable and gallant during this period.



Madame Duval complains that Monsieur Du Bois tried to carry her out of the rain but slipped and fell in a puddle. Captain Mirvan laughs hysterically when he hears this, further infuriating Madame Duval. Eventually, she grows so angry that she spits in Captain Mirvan's face. This enrages the Captain, and he furiously shakes Madame Duval, who bursts into tears. Evelina then suggests that she find a servant to help dry Madame Duval's clothes. Madame Duval tearfully agrees, and Evelina helps her while they wait for a new coach. Evelina plans to visit Madame Duval the next morning to check that she has not caught a cold after her ordeal.

Captain Mirvan is cruel and insensitive toward Madame Duval and treats her violently. Women were vulnerable to male violence in 18th-century Britain because they had few rights, and men could treat women however they wanted with little or no consequences. Evelina demonstrates her innate sensibility (empathy and kindness), as she is genuinely concerned about Madame Duval's well-being in spite of Madame Duval's abrasive behavior.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 17

The next morning, Evelina goes to visit Madame Duval. When she arrives, she is startled to find Monsieur Du Bois in Madame Duval's bedchamber. Embarrassed, Evelina tries to leave the room, but Madame Duval laughs at Evelina's innocence and tells her to stay. Madame Duval then launches into a diatribe against Captain Mirvan and the English in general, who, Madame Duval says, are extremely ill-mannered. Evelina listens and thinks it is ironic that Madame Duval complains about bad manners while swearing liberally.

England and France have different etiquette conventions: what is acceptable in one country may not be acceptable in the other. Monsieur Du Bois's presence in Madame Duval's bedchamber makes it clear that he is her lover. Although Madame Duval tries to make Evelina feel naïve for thinking this is improper, really, this shows that Madame Duval is a potentially bad role model for Evelina. After all, even casual sex is acceptable in France, Evelina's reputation in Britain could be ruined (much like Caroline's was) if she were to follow Madame Duval's example.



Madame Duval insists that Evelina should stay with her all day, and she promises to introduce Evelina to some of her relatives who live nearby. Evelina is dismayed to hear Madame Duval criticize Mr. Villars, whom Evelina feels Madame Duval should be grateful to because he raised Evelina in Madame Duval's absence. Soon, Evelina and Madame Duval's relatives—a family named the Branghtons—arrive, and Madame Duval introduces Evelina to them.

Madame Duval is a negligent parent and a bad moral example for Evelina. She abandoned her own daughter, Caroline, when Caroline became pregnant with Evelina. Fortunately, Evelina was raised by Mr. Villars, who provided her with good moral guidance and helped her to appreciate Mr. Villars's consistent loving presence in Madame Duval's absence.



Mr. Branghton is a middle-aged man who runs a silver shop in the city and disdains anyone who comes from outside of town. Evelina thinks that he seems like an intelligent but rather narrow-minded man. His son, Tom Branghton, is 20, and Evelina thinks he is childish and stupid. The eldest daughter, Miss Branghton, claims to despise the city even though she has never been anywhere else. Her younger sister, Polly, seems like a silly but well-meaning girl. Madame Duval introduces Evelina to the Branghtons as their cousin and tells them that Evelina's existence was kept secret from Madame Duval.

Mr. Branghton is middle-class and earns money through a trade, rather than inheriting a family fortune. Mr. Branghton seems narrow-minded because he is not cultured or educated beyond his trade—unlike nobles, who were educated in culture and etiquette from a young age. This was one of many reasons that 18th-century Britons believed middle-class people could never truly transcend their class and join the nobility, even though middle-class traders were often as rich as nobles by the 1700s.



The Branghtons begin to ask Evelina questions about herself, but they soon grow distracted and start to argue. The Branghton sisters then begin to compare their dresses with Evelina's, and they ask her rude questions about her clothes. They ask her how she enjoys the city and Mr. Branghton says that Evelina must try to find a husband so that she can live in London. The young Branghtons question Evelina about what she has seen during her stay. Evelina is irritated because she senses that the Branghton children want to distract her while Madame Duval tells Mr. Branghton about her parentage.

Miss Branghton and Polly are middle-class rather than upper-class, meaning they aren't educated in etiquette and are quite rude. Middle- and upper-class women could not earn their own money in 18th-century Britain and therefore needed to find husbands to financially support them. Unmarried young women were also not allowed out in society without a chaperon, so Evelina cannot live alone in London. Although social mobility was virtually impossible at this time, Mr. Branghton is a social climber and hopes to use his connection to Evelina and her potential nobility (her father, Sir John, is a nobleman) to improve his own social rank.



Polly suddenly says that it is very strange that Evelina never met her father, and Evelina starts to cry and rushes from the room. The Branghton sisters follow and try to comfort her and bring her back into the parlor. Madame Duval is surprised by Evelina's reaction. Evelina, meanwhile, cannot understand why Madame Duval put her in such an embarrassing situation.

Polly and Madame Duval do not display any natural sensibility (an 18th-century concept associated with empathy and consideration for others) with their insensitive behavior toward Evelina. Evelina's emotional reaction, in contrast, demonstrates her innate sensibility, which is a rare and coveted trait in the 18th century.



Mr. Branghton then asks Evelina if she has ever been to the opera, and Evelina says that she has. Mr. Branghton says that he never has and that he doesn't care if he never goes, but Miss Branghton complains that he is unrefined and wishes she had the chance to go. She suggests taking Evelina, but Evelina hurriedly reminds them that she must check with Mrs. Mirvan and uses this as an excuse to leave. She hopes she will not see more of the Branghtons while she is in London.

Sensibility was fashionable among the upper classes in the 18th century and was associated with refined emotional responses to the arts and to other people's suffering. Sensibility was also believed to be a sign of nobility and virtue. Mr. Branghton is middle-class, and although he aspires to be part of the nobility, he is ignorant about upper-class fashions. Miss Branghton, in contrast, wants to appear sensible just to look fashionable—even though this is the opposite of real sensibility, which is about authentic emotional responses rather than artificial ones.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 18

The next morning, Evelina is surprised when Lord Orville arrives at Mrs. Mirvan's house. He has heard about their coach accident two nights before and is concerned. He explains that Sir Clement told him that he was on hand to help Evelina, and Evelina is extremely indignant because, clearly, Sir Clement has exaggerated his heroism. Lord Orville seems very curious about how long Evelina will remain in London. When she tells him that she will leave very soon, he tells her that people will be disappointed to see her go.

Lord Orville demonstrates his genuine sensibility (an 18th-century concept associated with empathy and consideration for others). He is authentically concerned about Evelina and the Mirvans, going out of his way to check on them. Sir Clement, in contrast, performs good deeds—like helping Evelina—just so that he can brag about them afterward and make himself appear gallant and sensible.



Mrs. Mirvan invites Lord Orville to stay for breakfast, and he agrees. Throughout breakfast, Evelina is further impressed by Lord Orville's good manners and finds him considerate toward everyone. Evelina even imagines that one day, Lord Orville will be like her adoptive father, Mr. Villars, whom Evelina deeply respects. After Lord Orville departs, Evelina gets ready to visit Madame Duval, but Mrs. Mirvan suggests that Madame Duval join them for dinner instead. Evelina is grateful to Mrs. Mirvan for sparing her a trip to Madame Duval's, but she doesn't know why Madame Duval agrees to spend time with Captain Mirvan, who openly despises her.

Although Burney argues that etiquette and sensibility are not always compatible, Lord Orville demonstrates that when politeness is combined with genuine sensibility, the results are highly favorable. Lord Orville does not use etiquette to show off—rather, he treats people politely because he genuinely cares how they feel and dislikes making others uncomfortable.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 19

Madame Duval and Monsieur Du Bois arrive at the Mirvans' for dinner. Captain Mirvan immediately begins to tease them and mocks Monsieur De Bois for being Madame Duval's "beau," which Evelina does not understand. Madame Duval is infuriated, and the pair begin to bicker about the difference between French and English manners. In the middle of this, Sir Clement arrives; Evelina is amazed at how brazenly he makes himself at home, even though the family does not know him well.

Captain Mirvan points out that Monsieur Du Bois is clearly Madame Duval's lover, but Evelina, who is innocent about such things, does not understand. It is ironic that Madame Duval and Captain Mirvan bicker about manners, as both are extremely rude. Although Sir Clement understands etiquette, he disregards these rules when it serves his own interests. For example, he barges in on the Mirvans because he wants an excuse to spend time with Evelina and does not care that his behavior is rude. This suggests that Sir Clement does not really care about politeness but only uses it to maintain his reputation and get his own way.



Captain Mirvan greets Sir Clement heartily, and Sir Clement immediately joins the Captain in teasing Madame Duval. Sir Clement makes a joke about Monsieur Du Bois dropping Madame Duval in a puddle, and Monsieur Du Bois responds that he would never do anything to willingly hurt or offend a woman. He further explains that he dropped Madame Duval into the puddle because he was pushed himself, though he does not know who did it.

Although Sir Clement pretends to be polite, he is rude to Madame Duval because it suits his interests: he's flattering Captain Mirvan to get closer to Evelina. This suggests that Sir Clement is disingenuous and does not really care about being a good person. Monsieur Du Bois is more considerate than Captain Mirvan: he takes Madame Duval's physical safety seriously, whereas Captain Mirvan disregards it and actively tries to hurt Madame Duval. It's implied that he is the one who pushed Monsieur Du Bois. This suggests that 18th-century British society is misogynistic: men feel that they can hurt women without facing consequences.



Mrs. Mirvan quickly changes the subject and suggests that they all take a trip to Cox's Museum. Once they arrive, they walk around the exhibit, and Sir Clement asks Evelina for her opinion of it. Evelina says that it is pretty but that it seems to lack substance, and Sir Clement is impressed by her naturally refined tastes. Madame Duval, however, says that this is the finest collection she has ever seen and is delighted with the exhibition.

Here, Evelina demonstrates her natural sensibility—a fashionable 18th-century concept associated with empathy, kindness, and naturally appreciation of meaningful art. Madame Duval, in contrast, is insensible, as she is deeply impressed with the exhibition even though it is quite shallow.



Madame Duval notices a music box shaped like a pineapple and delightedly begins to sing along with the music. Captain Mirvan, however, sneaks up behind her and stuffs his snuff pouch under her nose so that she inhales it unexpectedly. Madame Duval screams in pain, causing Captain Mirvan to laugh so loudly that he causes a scene. Evelina is confused as to why, even after this, Madame Duval insists on returning home for dinner with the Mirvans.

Although this scene is treated comically, Captain Mirvan's total disregard for Madame Duval, and his willingness to physically hurt her as a joke, showcases his misogynistic disregard for women's safety. Madame Duval is a social climber and puts up with Captain Mirvan because this allows her to get close to Evelina—whose real father, Sir John, is a nobleman. Madame Duval thinks that her connection to Evelina may improve her social status, as it will give her a family connection to the prestigious Sir John.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 20

That evening, Madame Duval says she has a cold and goes home early. Evelina and the Mirvans have tickets to a play, and Sir Clement meets them at the **theater**. The group has seats in a box near the stage, and Lord Orville sees them and comes over to say hello. The first play is bawdy, however, and Evelina and Mrs. Mirvan find themselves deeply embarrassed by the rude jokes.

Evelina's reaction to the play highlights her innate sensibility, an 18th-century concept associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity. These qualities were further associated with virtue and refinement. As purity was also considered virtuous, especially among women, Evelina's natural embarrassment at the play reflects her emotional sensitivity and her natural purity, as she has an aversion to the play's sexual content. For Burney's contemporary audience, this would have characterized Evelina as a virtuous heroine.



Evelina is relieved when the first play ends. She is surprised, however, when Mr. Lovel unexpectedly enters their box and sits down with them. Mr. Lovel greets Sir Clement and Lord Orville, then turns to Evelina and makes a sly joke about her conduct at the ball, where she refused to dance with him several nights ago. Mr. Lovel then says that it is clear Evelina was raised in the country. He sarcastically surmises that city etiquette must be quite new to her.

Mr. Lovel implies that Evelina is ignorant because she was raised in the country and is therefore unfamiliar with fashionable etiquette, or manners, which were important in 18th-century London. People from the country were believed to be innocent and naïve compared to savvy and fashionable city-dwellers. Although Mr. Lovel mocks Evelina for being rude, he, too, behaves impolitely as he enters the Mirvans' box uninvited. He's only polite to Sir Clement and Lord Orville because they're noble and he wants to impress them, all the while insulting their companion Evelina. Although Mr. Lovel claims to care about manners, he himself is often rude.



Evelina blushes, embarrassed by Mr. Lovel's comments. Mr. Lovel says that he hopes the city has not affected Evelina's health, and Lord Orville retorts that anyone can see from Evelina's fair complexion that she is perfectly healthy. Mr. Lovel insinuates that Evelina wears makeup, and Mrs. Mirvan indignantly tells Mr. Lovel not to be insulting. Lord Orville says that he, for one, finds it easy to tell if a woman's complexion is real or not.

Mr. Lovel implies that Evelina has been corrupted by city life. He guesses that Evelina is from the countryside (which was associated with innocence and purity in this period) and wants to insult her by suggesting that the city has made her vain and coquettish. Wearing makeup, although common, was considered a sign of vanity in women. Mr. Lovel's comments are insulting because women's purity was highly prized in this period, and insinuations of vanity or flirtatiousness could damage their reputations.



Changing the subject, Sir Clement asks Mrs. Mirvan if she enjoyed the play, and she replies that it was a little too bawdy for her taste. Captain Mirvan scoffs at this and says it is the only truly witty play he has ever seen. Mr. Lovel casually exclaims that he doesn't even know what play was performed—he only comes to the **theater** to be seen in public. Captain Mirvan thinks this is ridiculous and mocks Mr. Lovel for paying for theater tickets every night just to ignore the play.

Captain Mirvan demonstrates no sensibility, an 18th-century term which suggested emotional sensitivity and strong reactions to suffering or to offensive things. Mrs. Mirvan, on the other hand, is sensitive to the play's bawdy material because she is sensible—whereas Captain Mirvan thinks it is funny. Captain Mirvan points out Mr. Lovel's vanity and pretentiousness, as Mr. Lovel only cares about his reputation and does not have any naturally sensible response to the plays he goes to see. He just wants to maintain the appearance of sensibility and appreciation of the arts because it is fashionable, an attitude which Burney implies was common among 18th-century Londoners.



Mr. Lovel leaves them, and Evelina thinks how silly he is to pretend that he has not watched the play when he obviously has, since he knows all the characters. On the way home in Mrs. Mirvan's carriage, Mrs. Mirvan observes that Mr. Lovel is clearly still very offended because Evelina refused to dance with him at the ball several weeks before. Evelina is worried by this, but she thinks indignantly that young people should be given a guide to manners before they are introduced to society.

Although 18th-century society was preoccupied with sensibility, Mr. Lovel demonstrates that many fashionable people are pretentious rather than genuine—they care more about keeping up appearances than they do about being authentic. Evelina inadvertently insulted Mr. Lovel because she does not understand fashionable etiquette, a strict social code which governed social interaction in this period. Using Evelina as an example, Burney makes the point that etiquette is an unnatural, learned skill and that it is unfair to expect inexperienced people to understand it.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 21

The next evening, as Evelina and Maria dress for the opera, Tom, Miss Branghton, and Polly suddenly burst in and announce that they will take Evelina to the opera. Evelina protests that she has already arranged to go with Maria. Miss Branghton says that Maria won't mind, and when Maria objects, an indignant Polly says that Maria is very rude. When Evelina points out that the Branghtons should have asked her in advance, Miss Branghton mocks her for being so formal.

Although Evelina is not educated in etiquette (strict behavioral codes which governed social interaction in 18th-century Britain), she is naturally polite and considerate because she cares about how other people feel. For example, she has agreed to go with Maria to the opera because she empathetically understands that Maria will be disappointed if she does not. These traits demonstrate Evelina's natural sensibility (empathy for others). The Branghtons, in contrast, are totally insensible and oblivious to their rude and inconsiderate behavior.



When Evelina insists that she cannot abandon Maria, Miss Branghton says that they will all go together. Evelina says they cannot, because the Branghtons are not dressed to sit in the "pit," where Evelina and the Mirvans have seats. Miss Branghton takes offense to this and tells Polly and Tom that they must leave, as they are not good enough to sit with Evelina. They storm out, and Evelina is relieved. Soon, Sir Clement arrives, and Evelina and Maria join Mrs. Mirvan and Captain Mirvan for tea downstairs. They are interrupted, however, when Madame Duval bursts in and furiously berates Evelina for refusing to attend the opera with her.

Eighteenth-century British society was strictly divided up according to class. The Mirvans are upper-class, while the Branghtons are middle-class. Miss Branghton takes offense at Evelina's comment, as she believes that Evelina is being snobbish. Evelina's statement about not being dressed for the theater pit (where upper-class people sit) reflects the fact that social mobility was impossible in this period. The Branghtons cannot easily blend in with the upper class because their clothes will make them stand out. This suggests that people were arbitrarily judged on class, not on their character.



Evelina is so shocked by Madame Duval's diatribe that she almost faints. Madame Duval storms out of the room, and Mrs. Mirvan and Sir Clement begin to comfort Evelina. Evelina says that she must go after Madame Duval and explain herself—she believes that she owes this to Madame Duval. Sir Clement is extremely curious when he hears this and wonders why Evelina should be in debt to Madame Duval, whom he says is an ill-bred and vulgar woman.

Although Madame Duval is very rude to Evelina, Evelina is naturally sensible (empathetic and considerate) and therefore wants to comfort Madame Duval—even though Madame Duval does not deserve it. Eighteenth-century Britons were preoccupied by class, and people were judged shallowly on their family connections. Sir Clement is curious about Evelina's background because he is shallow and wants to know whether Evelina's status will improve or detract from his own if spends time with her.



Evelina is too embarrassed to admit that she is related to Madame Duval. Meanwhile, Mrs. Mirvan hurries out of the room to try and appease Madame Duval. When Mrs. Mirvan returns, she says that Evelina had better go to the opera with Madame Duval—otherwise, the lady may not speak to Evelina again. Evelina agrees to go, and Sir Clement is still confused as to why Evelina must obey Madame Duval.

Evelina knows that British high society is shallow and judges people based on their family connections. She therefore knows that if people discover she is related to Madame Duval—who was born into the lower class—they will negatively judge Evelina based on this. However, Evelina does not want to jeopardize her relationship with Madame Duval, as Madame Duval is family and may help her reunite with her estranged father, Sir John. Sir Clement is curious about Evelina's connection to Madame Duval because he is shallow and obsessed with social status—he wants to know more about Evelina's rank.



Evelina gets into Madame Duval's coach with her and the pair set off for the opera. Madame Duval continues to berate Evelina as they go, and when they arrive at her house, Evelina finds the Branghton family gathered there. The group sets off to the opera, and Evelina feels out of place because she is dressed “for the pit,” while the others are not. When they arrive, Mr. Branghton does not know which entrance they need but refuses to ask Evelina even though she has been to the opera before.

Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized according to class, and social mobility between these classes was largely impossible. The theater represents this social separation, as Evelina is dressed to sit in the upper-class section (she was originally going with the upper-class Mirvans), while the Branghtons are not. The Branghtons are middle-class and have made their money through trade rather than inherited family wealth. Therefore, the Branghtons are not familiar with upper-class culture, such as the opera. Mr. Branghton does not want to admit his ignorance to Evelina, however, because he is a social climber and wants to blend in with the nobility—even though he cannot because of his middle-class status.



Mr. Branghton approaches the pit entrance and tries to pay the doorman a guinea for their tickets. The doorman is confused by their outfits and says that, surely, they want to sit in the gallery. Besides, a guinea is not enough to pay for them all. An indignant Mr. Branghton marches the group away to find another door. They reach the entrance to the gallery, but again, the tickets cost more than a guinea. Evelina, embarrassed, suggests that they give up and go home—but Mr. Branghton insists they stay, and he finally pays for gallery seats.

The Branghtons are ambitious and want to blend in with the nobility—but their outfits and their ignorance about upper-class customs immediately give them away. This suggests that just because people have money (the Branghtons have earned money through trade) does not mean they can transcend their class and join the nobility. Ultimately, the Branghtons end up in the lower-class section (the gallery) even though they tried to avoid this.



The Branghtons and Evelina climb the stairs to the gallery and enter the **theater**. They are disappointed, however, to see that their seats are extremely high up and that the gallery is crowded and shabby. Mr. Branghton claims that he feels robbed, and the group takes their seats. When the opera starts, the Branghtons complain loudly that it is not as good as English theater, much to Evelina's annoyance.

Evelina tries to drown out the chattering Branghtons and listen to the music, but they talk continuously and complain that they do not understand the words, as the opera is not sung in English. Miss Branghton and Polly notice that the women in the pit are finely dressed; this is a more entertaining spectacle for them than the show itself. Evelina notices Mrs. Mirvan seated in the pit with Lord Orville, and she's annoyed that she is not with them. She hopes that Lord Orville will not notice her but suspects that he will because of her large headdress.

When the third act of the opera begins, a beautiful song catches Evelina's attention. She tries to listen attentively but is distracted when she notices the Branghtons making fun of her. When the opera ends, Miss Branghton snidely remarks that she is not as refined as Evelina and therefore did not enjoy the music. Madame Duval remarks that she loves music but that she could not enjoy it sitting so far away.

As the final performers take the stage, Evelina notices Sir Clement looking up at her from the pit. A few moments later, he joins her in the gallery, and Miss Branghton and Polly are shocked to see a nobleman. Evelina is ashamed to be seen with the Branghtons—they are so vulgar that she would be embarrassed with them, even in the country. She decides to try to sneak away with Sir Clement to rejoin Mrs. Mirvan's party, hurrying away with him before the Branghtons can object.

Although the Branghtons hoped to get seats in the pit with the nobility, they inadvertently end up in the gallery, where lower- and middle-class people sit. This demonstrates that social mobility was impossible in this period, and that the Branghtons, who have made their money through trade rather than inherited family wealth, will never be accepted among the nobility.



Evelina displays natural sensibility—a fashionable concept in the 18th century which was associated with empathy, authentic emotional reactions, and a natural ability to appreciate art. The Branghtons, however, are totally insensible to the performance. Evelina is out of place in the gallery (where middle- and lower-class audience members sit) because she is dressed for the upper-class pit. This signifies that, although Evelina was raised middle-class, she is still a noble by birth. Social mobility is rare in 18th-century Britain: Evelina cannot blend in with the middle class, just as middle-class people like the Branghtons cannot blend in with the nobility.



Again, Evelina displays natural sensibility through her deep appreciation of art. In contrast, the Branghtons are totally insensible and see no value in the opera. Therefore, they wrongly assume that no one could truly enjoy it, and they think that Evelina only pretends to enjoy it to show off.



Although the Branghtons treat Evelina as though she is naïve about fashionable, city life, really, Evelina is more refined and cultured than the Branghtons even though she was raised in the countryside (an area that was associated with innocence and naïveté in this period). Evelina is more accepted in polite society than the Branghtons because, although she is unfamiliar with upper-class etiquette, she is naturally sensible. Sensibility in this period referred to a person's capacity for empathy and consideration for others, qualities that suggested they had naturally refined tastes.



When Sir Clement and Evelina escape the gallery, Evelina asks Sir Clement where Mrs. Mirvan is. Sir Clement, however, says that it will be impossible to find Mrs. Mirvan in the crowd, and that Evelina will have to travel home with him. Evelina says that she will try to find Mrs. Mirvan, but Sir Clement reminds her that it would be improper for her to enter the pit alone. Dismayed, Evelina agrees to accompany Sir Clement.

As Evelina and Sir Clement leave the lobby, Lord Orville notices them and calls out to Evelina. Evelina tells him that she is looking for Mrs. Mirvan, but Lord Orville replies that Mrs. Mirvan has already left. Evelina does not want to return to the gallery to find the Branghtons and is afraid that Lord Orville will think she wants to be alone with Sir Clement. Lord Orville says that she may take his carriage—he will find another way home. Sir Clement, however, interrupts and says that his coach is already at the door. Before Evelina can object, he hustles her into his carriage, away from Lord Orville.

Once inside Sir Clement's carriage, Evelina miserably considers what Lord Orville must think of her now that he has seen her enter a coach alone with Sir Clement. As the coach rattles off, Sir Clement begins to passionately confess that he loves Evelina, much to her surprise and distress. They have not gone far when Sir Clement cries out that the coach is going the wrong way and shouts new instructions to the driver. Evelina begs Sir Clement to leave her alone, but Sir Clements says that surely someone as beautiful as her could not be cruel enough to reject him.

Sir Clement announces that he is not only in love with Evelina's appearance but also with her mind. Evelina tells him sternly that he does not mean this and begins to grow concerned that the coach is still going the wrong way. Sir Clement says that if the driver makes the journey take longer, this works to his advantage, so he will not try to stop him. As Sir Clement slides toward Evelina on the seat, Evelina tries desperately to open the coach door, planning to leap out to escape. She believes that Sir Clement has told the driver to go the wrong way on purpose and fears that he plans to murder her.

Evelina is inexperienced and does not fully understand etiquette conventions, which governed 18th-century life. Because of her inexperience, she makes a mistake (going off with Sir Clement alone) and finds herself caught in a social trap: it is both improper for her to be in public alone and improper for her to be unchaperoned with a man. This is because 18th-century British society valued women's purity—if an unmarried woman was seen alone with a man, it could seriously damage her reputation and negatively impact her chances of marriage.



Evelina is worried that if people see her in public with Sir Clement, without a guardian, her reputation will be damaged. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in the 18th-century Britain, and rumors about a woman's conduct could ruin even an innocent woman's good name (as evidenced by what happened to Evelina's mother, Caroline). Lord Orville behaves politely and considers Evelina's reputation. Sir Clement, however, does not consider this and uses Evelina's naïveté to his own advantage, to get time alone with her.



Evelina rightly worried about her reputation, as women in this period were expected to maintain their purity or risk their good name. Even if a woman does not accept a man's advances—as in Evelina's case—society will still believe a man's word over a woman's word. Sir Clement uses his power over Evelina as a man in a patriarchal society to try and pressure her into loving him.



Although Sir Clement makes a seemingly emotional appeal to Evelina, Evelina knows that this is all for show and that Sir Clement does not actually care about her. Sensibility (which referred to a person's capacity for empathy) was fashionable in this period, and Sir Clement exaggerates his emotional state even though he has no genuine attachment to Evelina. Instead, he wants to seduce her. This is the opposite of authentic sensibility, as Sir Clement does not consider Evelina's feelings and inconsiderately frightens her.



Sir Clement is confused by Evelina's distress and says that he does not mean to hurt her. Evelina begs him to take her home, pointing out that Mrs. Mirvan will be worried. Sir Clement shouts to the driver again and tells Evelina that the coach has simply gone the wrong way by accident. They have not gone far when Sir Clement abruptly tells the driver to stop. Evelina is terrified because she does not know where they are. Sir Clement says that they are near Mrs. Mirvan's house but that he will not let her out until she forgives him for frightening her.

Evelina, confused and afraid, tells Sir Clement that she just wants to go home. Sir Clement throws himself on his knees and dramatically begs for Evelina's forgiveness. Embarrassed and distressed, Evelina agrees to forgive him, so Sir Clement tells the driver to drive on to Mrs. Mirvan's house. Mrs. Mirvan rushes out to meet Evelina. Lord Orville is also with her—he was deeply concerned about Evelina's well-being and came to Mrs. Mirvan to tell her that Evelina was alone with Sir Clement.

Meanwhile, Sir Clement makes a big show of shouting at his driver for going the wrong way and for making Evelina's journey home longer than necessary. Evelina is irritated with him and ashamed because Lord Orville has seen her in such a predicament. Lord Orville politely takes his leave and tells Evelina that he is pleased she got home safely. Sir Clement leaves next, and Mrs. Mirvan gently rebukes Evelina for running away from Madame Duval. Mrs. Mirvan also adds that Lord Orville was extremely worried about her.

Evelina cannot sleep that night because she is so anxious about Lord Orville knowing that she was alone with Sir Clement. She worries that Lord Orville may think that she planned to meet Sir Clement on purpose, so she could sneak off with him. At the same time, however, she is touched by Lord Orville's concern for her. Evelina and the Mirvans plan to leave London in a few days' time. Madame Duval will dine with them once more before they go.

Sir Clement uses his status as a powerful noble man to try to take advantage of Evelina, who is young and inexperienced. He demonstrates that he is extremely insensitive and does not genuinely care about Evelina's feelings, or the fact that her reputation could be destroyed if he seduces and then refuses to marry her.



Sir Clement appears extremely emotional when he realizes that he has upset Evelina. However, Sir Clement's emotional outpouring is not genuine—he only apologizes because he realizes that he is not going to get his own way with Evelina, whom he's trying to seduce. Lord Orville, in contrast, demonstrates his genuine sensibility as he is authentically concerned for Evelina's well-being. He does the responsible thing by alerting her guardian.



Sir Clement made his driver go the wrong way on purpose, so that he could try to seduce Evelina. This suggests that Sir Clement is disingenuous: he did not care about offending Evelina, a powerless young woman, yet he worries what Lord Orville thinks about him. This is because Lord Orville is a powerful nobleman and has more social clout than Evelina. Evelina worries that her reputation will be damaged if people know she was alone with Sir Clement. Eighteenth-century society valued purity in women, and most people felt that it was improper for unmarried women to go out alone with men.



Evelina worries that her reputation will be damaged if Lord Orville thinks that she planned to be alone with Sir Clement. Purity was highly valued in 18th-century Britain, so even innocent women could have their reputations destroyed if people believed that they had had premarital sex. Consequently, a damaged reputation could put suitors off and destroy a young woman's marital prospects.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 22

The next morning, Mrs. Mirvan tells Evelina that while they were at the opera, Lord Orville told her that he spoke to Mr. Lovel about Evelina. Lord Orville warned Mr. Lovel not to tell anyone about the misunderstanding between him and Evelina at the ball, when Evelina refused to dance with Mr. Lovel. Evelina is deeply moved and impressed by this, as it shows that Lord Orville is truly courageous—he spoke to Mr. Lovel in private without telling Evelina, so that she would not be worried or embarrassed by the situation.

Madame Duval comes for dinner and is extremely angry with Evelina for leaving her at the opera. Madame Duval is further annoyed when Mrs. Mirvan tells her that they—and Evelina—will soon leave London. Madame Duval says that Evelina should stay with her in the city, but Mrs. Mirvan says that this is impossible, and that Lady Howard expects to see Evelina. Madame Duval furiously says that she will involve the law, since Evelina is her granddaughter. Eventually, the group decides that Madame Duval will join the Mirvans and Evelina when they return to Howard Grove.

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to tell him she has just received one of his letters. She is grateful for his continued support and thinks that Madame Duval is a poor guardian compared very poorly to him. Her last outing in London with the Mirvans will be to the Pantheon that night; they plan to set out for Howard Grove the next day.

VOLUME 1, LETTER 23

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to tell him about her last night in London and her trip to the Pantheon. When they arrived, Evelina found the building extremely beautiful; it made her feel solemn to look at it. The first person they encounter there is Sir Clement who, to Evelina's surprise, does not seem at all embarrassed about what happened between them in his carriage a few nights ago, when Sir Clement tried to seduce Evelina. Evelina wishes that she had not forgiven him so that he wouldn't speak to her anymore.

Lord Orville demonstrates genuine sensibility, an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration for others. Rather than upset Evelina by bringing this conversation to her attention, Lord Orville approaches Mr. Lovel in private. Lord Orville also genuinely cares about Evelina's reputation. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in 18th-century British society, meaning that Evelina's name could be irreparably damaged if people think that she is rude or does not understand etiquette.



Although Madame Duval did not raise Evelina, she can legally make herself Evelina's guardian as she is a blood relative. Unmarried women had few autonomous rights in the 18th-century Britain—legally, they were their guardian's property. This attitude makes it difficult for Evelina to defend herself against Madame Duval, who can claim guardianship over Evelina if she chooses.



Mr. Villars is a good moral guide for Evelina, as he allows her to gain experience while supporting her along the way. Because he himself is a moral person who genuinely cares about others, he is a good example for Evelina to follow. Madame Duval, in contrast, is selfish: she doesn't care about others and doesn't behave in a way that Evelina thinks it is right to emulate.



Evelina's reaction to the Pantheon architecture displays her innate sensibility, a characteristic associated with empathy, strong emotional responses to the world, and a naturally refined appreciation of art and beauty. By trying to seduce Evelina, Sir Clement potentially jeopardizes her reputation. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in 18th-century Britain, and any suspicion of impropriety could seriously damage a young woman's good name and her ability to find a husband. The same rules did not apply to men, however. Sir Clement shows that he does not genuinely care about Evelina through his nonchalant attitude and his disregard for her reputation, once again proving that his politeness is just a false persona.



Evelina enjoys the concert but is irritated that, although the people around them claim to love music, they talk all the way through it. The group then go into the tearoom and sit down with Lord Orville, who is with a group of friends. Evelina is annoyed, however, because Sir Clement will not leave her alone. Even Mrs. Mirvan notices and thinks he is behaving improperly.

Evelina then notices that one of the men in Lord Orville's party is staring at her. She is annoyed and thinks he has bad manners—in fact, she is surprised to see him with Lord Orville's group, as Lord Orville is so polite. The man loudly asks Sir Clement who Evelina is, and Sir Clement replies that he does not know and addresses the man as “your Lordship.” Evelina cannot believe it: the man who's been staring at her so rudely is a noble and has therefore been educated in manners.

Sir Clement asks Mrs. Mirvan and Evelina if they like the Pantheon, and they reply that they do. Captain Mirvan, however, says that people will like anything so long as it is fashionable, regardless of how boring or stupid it is. Lord Orville says that Captain Mirvan must have noticed the beautiful building, and the other Lord (whose name is Lord Merton) announces that no one has time to look at buildings when there are so many beautiful women present.

Lord Orville replies that art and natural beauty complement each other, but Captain Mirvan scoffs and says that men only want one thing. He adds that women cost a fortune to keep. Lord Orville says that Mrs. Mirvan, Maria, and Evelina must be very gracious to forgive this talk. Captain Mirvan says that all the fashionable people come to the Pantheon just to stare at one another, even though half of them are ugly. Mr. Lovel, who is also at the table, says that the men come to admire women, and Captain Mirvan recognizes him from the **theater** as the man who said he only goes there to be seen.

Evelina's emotional response to music further demonstrates her natural sensibility. Although sensibility was fashionable in this period, most people in high society are not genuinely sensible—they have no strong emotional response to music—only pretending to be sensible to improve their social standing.



Nobility was often viewed as synonymous with virtue in the 18th-century Britain; nobles were educated in etiquette (manners), so people also widely believed that people in this class were more courteous than people in lower classes. However, Lord Merton proves Burney's point that nobility is not a sign of innate goodness. Instead, class is arbitrarily decided by birth and does not necessarily signify virtue.



Captain Mirvan is extremely bad-mannered and disrespectful toward Evelina and Mrs. Mirvan. Captain Mirvan is a naval officer and lives outside conventional society because he is often at sea. This is seemingly why he feels that fashionable society is shallow and doesn't care about manners, even though they were considered extremely important in 18th-century Britain. While it's true that many people in high society are shallow (as evidenced by characters like Sir Clement and Mr. Lovel), Captain Mirvan's insensitivity also demonstrates that he does not care how Evelina and Mrs. Mirvan feel.



Like Evelina, Lord Orville has natural sensibility, as he, too, has a deep appreciation for art and natural beauty. Women did not control their own money in 18th-century Britain, and Captain Mirvan's misogynistic and insensitive comment draws attention to the fact that men are financially responsible for women when society is organized like this. Captain Mirvan correctly believes that fashionable 18th-century society is generally shallow and that, although many fashionable people claim to be highly sensible and interested in the arts, they are really only interested in appearing sensible to make themselves look refined.



Captain Mirvan begins to mock Mr. Lovel and says that plays are the only things in fashionable society that tell the truth. Lord Orville turns to Evelina and Maria and says that he would like to know what they think about it all. Pleased to be included, the women are about to answer when Captain Mirvan cuts them off and says that there is no point in asking silly girls. Evelina and Maria fall silent, and Lord Orville quickly changes the subject.

Lord Orville begins to talk about Cox's Museum but, again, Captain Mirvan breaks in and argues that it is a silly, frivolous place. In fact, the Captain cries, all the places in town are dull, including Ranelagh Gardens. Lord Merton protests that Ranelagh Gardens are divine and begins to flirt openly with a lady he is seated beside. Lord Merton announces that he and the ladies are going to Ranelagh this evening and, turning to Evelina, he takes her hand and says that he hopes to see her there.

Evelina tells Lord Merton that she will not go to Ranelagh, so Lord Merton makes an impassioned speech begging her to go. Evelina is embarrassed, and she notices Lord Orville watching with concern and Sir Clement eyeing them miserably. Captain Mirvan insists that he will not take Evelina and Maria to Ranelagh this evening, and he rudely tells Lord Merton that he does not want the girls there anyway, as they have nothing interesting to say. The Captain goes on to say that fashionable men are like monkeys, while fashionable women are like puppets. Mr. Lovel says that the Captain is very harsh.

The party then breaks up, and Captain Mirvan says that he wants to leave. Lord Orville courteously parts with Mrs. Mirvan and Evelina and says that he is sorry that they will soon leave town. Sir Clement tries to accompany Evelina to her carriage, but Lord Merton pushes through and kisses Evelina's hand lecherously. When Evelina and the Mirvans arrive back at the house, they're surprised by a visit from Lord Orville, who has come to wish them well once more before they leave London. Evelina will be sorry not to see him anymore, as he is so kind and polite.

Plays, which are fictional and necessarily artificial, are more truthful than upper-class people in 18th-century Britain, because actors do not claim to genuinely be their characters. Eighteenth-century British society claimed to revere authentic emotional responses, or sensibility. However, most fashionable people are not genuine and only pretend they are to line up with contemporary fashion. Captain Mirvan, meanwhile, is misogynistic; his attitude reflects wider 18th-century attitudes toward women, who had few rights and who were generally disrespected and not taken seriously.



Captain Mirvan looks down on fashionable society and thinks it is trivial and shallow. Although Captain Mirvan is an unpleasant character, he has more perspective on British society than the other characters because he is a naval officer and has spent time abroad. His point of view suggests that, from a global perspective, fashionable British society is not as important or special as it Britons think it is.



Like many fashionable people, Lord Merton tries to make himself look sensible by appealing emotionally to Evelina. However, Lord Merton does not really care about Evelina—if he did, he would not jeopardize her social standing by flirting with her publicly, as women's reputations were extremely fragile in this period. Instead, Lord Merton uses the appearance of sensibility to try to get his own way. Although Captain Mirvan is rude and misogynistic toward Maria and Evelina, he is correct when he asserts that fashionable society is shallow and that people pretend to be things they are not—they pretend to be sensible when, really, they are selfish.



Although nobility was often seen as synonymous with virtue in this period, Sir Clement and Lord Merton—who are both nobles—prove that this is not always the case. They do not care about how Evelina feels, just about getting their own way with her. Lord Orville, in contrast, is genuinely considerate and thoughtful: he does not embarrass or try to pressure Evelina.



Before Lord Orville leaves, Sir Clement also arrives to say goodbye. Evelina is irritated because Sir Clement keeps trying to speak to her privately; he seems forlorn about her departure. Captain Mirvan invites Sir Clement to visit them at Howard Grove, and Evelina thinks it's rude that the Captain does not invite Lord Orville as well. Lord Orville leaves shortly after this, and Evelina goes upstairs because she does not want to spend any more time with Sir Clement.

Sir Clement lacks sensibility because he does not pick up on Evelina's impatience with him—instead, he continues to pester her. Furthermore, Sir Clement doesn't care that he could damage Evelina's reputation if he insists on being alone with her. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in this period, and it was viewed as improper for unmarried women to be alone with men.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 24

Mr. Villars writes to Evelina at Howard Grove, where she is now staying with the Mirvans and Madame Duval. Mr. Villars writes to say that he has enjoyed her letters, even though at times they made him anxious. He was very annoyed to read about Sir Clement's conduct and thinks that Sir Clement likely has bad intentions toward Evelina. Mr. Villars was alarmed to read that Sir Clement escorted Evelina home from the opera and feels sure, now, that Evelina has learned from her mistake and will not accept such invitations in future.

Mr. Villars proves he is a good moral guide for Evelina and that he has her best interests in mind. He does not judge Evelina because she behaved naïvely but accepts that growing up involves trial and error. Mr. Villars further trusts that Evelina has learned from her experience with Sir Clement, which shows that he wants to give her freedom—alongside his guidance—to make her own way in the world.



Mr. Villars is also impressed with Lord Orville's conduct, especially when he alerted Mrs. Mirvan that Evelina had disappeared alone with Sir Clement after the opera. Mr. Villars says that this proves Lord Orville has real honor, as many young men would have left a young woman at Sir Clement's mercy. Unfortunately, Mr. Villars, writes, Evelina's sweet nature and her ambiguous class status means that she is just not suited to city life. He hopes that she will not be too disappointed to leave London and return to the country.

Lord Orville demonstrates genuine sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and genuine consideration for others) as he is genuinely concerned for Evelina and acts in her best interests. In 18th-century Britain, women were often stereotyped as deceitful and untrustworthy. Because of this attitude, many men would not give Evelina the benefit of the doubt and would instead assume that she wanted to be alone with Sir Clement. In reality, she simply made a naïve mistake by leaving with him. Meanwhile, Mr. Villars points out that although Evelina is noble by birth, she has been raised middle-class. Therefore, she does not have a good grasp of etiquette, the complex social rules which governed fashionable society.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 25

Evelina writes back to Mr. Villars to assure him that she has not been ruined by her time in the city—she is still eager to return to the country and **Berry Hill**. She says, however, that her return to Howard Grove with the Mirvans has not been as pleasant as she expected: Madame Duval is with them, and she and Captain Mirvan fight constantly. Their bickering began the morning the group set off for Howard Grove, when Madame Duval arrived late to set off and brought Monsieur Du Bois with her.

City life was associated with sin and corruption in the 18th century, whereas the countryside was associated with innocence and naïveté. Because Evelina has always had a strong moral role model in Mr. Villars, she tries hard to make moral decisions and is therefore uncorrupted—even though she's been surrounded by manipulative and unkind people in the city.



Captain Mirvan plans to ride to Howard Grove, while a carriage is prepared for Mrs. Mirvan, Maria, Evelina, and Madame Duval. When Monsieur Du Bois climbs into the coach with the ladies, Captain Mirvan roughly drags him out again. The Captain and Monsieur Du Bois then begin to argue in the street, but since neither speaks the other's language, their confusion and anger only intensifies. Finally, Mrs. Mirvan breaks it up and apologizes to Monsieur Du Bois in French. Sullen but appeased, Monsieur Du Bois, slinks away, and the coach party sets off. Madame Duval is furious with the Captain and complains about him until Mrs. Mirvan begs her to stop.

Captain Mirvan misogynistically takes charge and does not give the women a say in this matter. In spite of this, Mrs. Mirvan, proves that women are often more capable than men: she speaks French, while her well-travelled husband does not. This implies that 18th-century British society does not give women enough credit. Meanwhile, Madame Duval is rude and thoughtless to criticize Captain Mirvan in front of Mrs. Mirvan. She lacks sensibility, an 18th-century concept associated with empathy and consideration for others.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 26

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to tell him that she is very alarmed. One evening at Howard Grove, Madame Duval called her into her room and told Evelina that she had a surprise for her. Madame Duval said that she'd often lamented that Evelina was raised so poor and has no knowledge of the world—especially when Evelina is a noblewoman by birth. Madame Duval devised a plan to prove that Evelina is the nobleman Sir John Belmont's daughter and to secure his inheritance for her.

Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized around class. Evelina was born into the nobility—her father, Sir John, is a nobleman—but she has been raised middle-class by Mr. Villars. Her identity is not well-known because Sir John denies his relation to her. Although Madame Duval has married into the nobility, she is lower-class by birth and is portrayed as a social climber—she wants to help Evelina improve her social status so that she can also improve her own.



Madame Duval says that once Evelina has claimed her rightful place as Sir John Belmont's heir, Madame Duval will take her to Paris, where Evelina will mingle with many great people and receive an education in manners. Madame Duval will also find someone equally wealthy and powerful for Evelina to marry. Madame Duval speculates that once people know she is related to Evelina—who will be a great lady—nobody will be bold enough to push her around.

Eighteenth-century European society was preoccupied with etiquette, or manners, and English etiquette differed significantly from French. Throughout the novel, Madame Duval claims that French manners are better than English ones and wants Evelina to be educated in France. (Evelina does not understand etiquette because she was raised in the country rather than the fashionable city.) However, the fact that these two countries have different rules suggests that, in many ways, etiquette is based on arbitrary conventions and does not signify true virtue. Madame Duval, for instance, is knowledgeable about French etiquette but is a rude, selfish, and manipulative person. She only want to help Evelina to improve her own social standing.



Evelina is upset by Madame Duval's scheme to track down Sir John and demand Evelina's inheritance. She's also offended by the blunt way in which Madame Duval talks about Evelina's private affairs. Mrs. Mirvan later tells Evelina that Madame Duval got the idea from Evelina's cousins, the Branghtons, who sent a letter suggesting that Evelina should sue Sir John and claim her fortune. Evelina thinks it is disgraceful that the Branghtons, whom she hardly knows, should try to meddle in her affairs.

Madame Duval lacks sensibility (an 18th-century term meaning empathy or consideration for others) and does not consider that this subject may be painful for Evelina. Furthermore, Madame Duval and the Branghtons do not seek to help Evelina for her sake but to improve their own social status as her relatives. Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized around class, and social mobility was almost impossible. Madame Duval (who married a noble but is not considered true nobility) and the Branghtons (who are middle-class) hope to improve their own social status through their connection to Evelina.



To her surprise, Evelina finds that Lady Howard is not entirely against the idea of contacting Evelina's father, Sir John, and trying to secure Evelina's inheritance. Evelina does not know what to think. She does not hope to become a great lady, nor does she fear losing her inheritance, because she has been so fortunate in other ways. At the same time, however, she sometimes feels hurt that her father has never taken an interest in her.

Upper-class women in the 18th century could not earn their own money and had to rely on their father's inheritance, or their husband's wealth, to lead a comfortable life. Evelina trusts Lady Howard's guidance because she's Mr. Villars's close friend, and Evelina trusts Mr. Villars's judgement. Unlike many other characters, Evelina is genuine and virtuous: she's content with her lot in life and does not aspire to improve her social status.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 27

Lady Howard writes to Mr. Villars and tells him about Madame Duval's plan to sue Sir John, Evelina's father, for the inheritance he owes Evelina. Lady Howard writes that, although she opposed the idea at first, on deeper reflection she believes that it would be good for Evelina to meet her father. Furthermore, Evelina is charming and kind, and it would be sad if she did not receive her rightful title or inheritance because of her father's wrongs.

Upper-class women in the 18th century could not earn their own money—instead, they relied on their inheritance or their husband's wealth to support them. Lady Howard feels that Evelina deserves her noble title and recognition by Sir John because Evelina is a virtuous person—and without these things, people will think she is illegitimate. People considered illegitimate children unworthy and innately corrupt, though Evelina is neither of these. Sir John has wronged Evelina because he destroyed her mother, Caroline's, reputation: he denied his marriage to Caroline after she became pregnant. This damage also impacts Evelina's social status as, in society's eyes, she's inherited her mother's wrongs.



Lady Howard also writes that Evelina proved extremely popular in London. Mrs. Mirvan says that, if Evelina's true rank and title had been widely known, Evelina could have easily found a noble husband in London—but her unknown origins put people off. Lady Howard hopes that Mr. Villars will look at the situation rationally. She adds that they may not have long to take legal action against Sir John because he leads a debauched lifestyle and, therefore, may not live to old age.

Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized by class, and people's virtue and worth was judged based on the class they were born into. People generally believed nobility signified virtue—even though nobles, like Sir John, were often immoral. Evelina's unknown origins could put suitors off, as they might worry that she has lower-class roots that could lower her husband's social status. Upper-class women could not earn money in this period and relied on inheritance or attracting a wealthy husband to provide for them.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 28

Mr. Villars writes back to Lady Howard and says that although he fears introducing Evelina to her father, Sir John, he has often struggled with the issue and does not always know the right thing to do. Mr. Villars despises Sir John because he cruelly abandoned Caroline, Evelina's mother, while she was pregnant. Before Caroline died, Mr. Villars promised her that he would raise Evelina and protect her from Sir John. Evelina grew up into a sweet, sensible young woman, and Mr. Villars decided that, rather than expose her to her debauched father, he would leave her his own fortune instead and allow her to live anonymously.

However, Mr. Villars now sees that protecting Evelina is impossible and that Madame Duval will resort to violence and manipulation if she cannot get her own way. Mr. Villars also thinks there is some sense in trying to secure Evelina's rightful inheritance and wishes Lady Howard to attempt this, not Madame Duval. He is deeply opposed to a lawsuit, which he says would be a public disgrace to Evelina and wants the matter to be settled privately. Instead, Mr. Villars asks Lady Howard to write to Sir John and tell him about Evelina. Mr. Villars adds that he also has a letter from Caroline to Sir John, which he will send if necessary.

Mr. Villars is a good moral guide to Evelina: he does not always know the best way to behave, but he always strives to do the right thing. Mr. Villars carefully considers Evelina's needs, and this demonstrates his sensibility (an 18th-century term for empathy and consideration for others). Sir John's actions irreparably damaged Caroline's reputation because his abandonment made it look like she became pregnant out of wedlock. Eighteenth-century British society valued purity in women, and premarital sex was considered unacceptable, especially for women. Caroline did not want Sir John to meet Evelina, as she feared that he would be a bad example and that Evelina will be led astray as Caroline was.



Mr. Villars realizes that he cannot always shelter Evelina and that, if he tries, he may do more harm than good. Upper-class women could not earn money in this period, so Evelina must either be given her inheritance or find a wealthy husband to provide for her. Mr. Villars demonstrates sensibility as he thinks carefully about how a lawsuit would affect Evelina and impact her reputation.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 29

Mr. Villars writes to Evelina and reassures her that, even if she is rejected by Sir John Belmont and denied her rightful inheritance, Mr. Villars will always take care of her treat her as a daughter. If it were up to him, Mr. Villars writes, he would bring Evelina home to **Berry Hill** and protect her from the outside world—but he knows that he cannot do this and that Evelina must find her own way in the world.

Mr. Villars is an excellent moral example for Evelina because he does not care about her social status (she is a noble but is perceived as illegitimate because her father denies his marriage to her mother). Mr. Villars loves and supports Evelina no matter what. He's also a wise guardian because he understands that, although he wants to shelter Evelina, he must let her grow up and gain experience in the world. Berry Hill, Evelina's childhood home in the countryside, symbolizes her innocence—which she must leave behind as she matures.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 30

Evelina writes back to Mr. Villars to tell him that Lady Howard has written to Sir John Belmont in Paris. Evelina writes that the suspense is terrible for her: if Sir John accepts her as his real daughter, she feels that she will lose Mr. Villars as her adoptive father. If he rejects her, however, she will know the painful truth that her real father does not love her. She can hardly focus on anything because of her anxiety about the situation, and she hopes that the matter will be resolved soon.

Evelina feels torn between her desire to be recognized by her real father and her love for Mr. Villars, because Mr. Villars has raised Evelina and been a moral guide for her throughout her life. In the 18th century, young women could not earn their own money and often had little say over where they lived. Instead, they were considered their father (or their husband's) property. Evelina worries that if Sir John claims his parental rights over her, she will have to leave Mr. Villars for good.



VOLUME 1, LETTER 31

Lady Howard writes to Sir John Belmont and explains that, although she only met him briefly, she was friends with Caroline and Caroline's father, Mr. Evelyn. As she is sure Sir John knows, his daughter, Evelina, lives in England with her adoptive father, Mr. Villars. Lady Howard writes that Evelina has grown into a wonderful young woman and that, since she is nearly an adult, it is time for Sir John to decide what he will do with his inheritance.

In the 18th century, upper-class women like Evelina could not earn their own money— instead, they had to rely on their inheritance or find a wealthy husband to provide for them. However, as men often married women for their familial wealth or connections, it was hard for young women to find husbands without an inheritance of their own to make them desirable to potential suitors.



Lady Howard also says that Sir John could do a good deed by clearing Caroline's name, as Caroline's reputation was destroyed when Sir John denied his marriage to her after she fell pregnant. Lady Howard further explains that Evelina is not interested in his money but only wants to be recognized by her real father. She hopes that Sir John will not be offended by the letter and will do his best by Evelina.

Eighteenth-century British society valued women's purity and disapproved of premarital sex, which could ruin a woman's reputation. Once a woman's reputation was destroyed, it was almost impossible for her good name to recover. Because people believe that Caroline gave birth to Evelina while unmarried, this social stigma is still attached to Caroline's name and can be passed down to Evelina. Britain was strictly organized by class at this time, and social mobility was virtually impossible. Because of this, social climbers often tried to claim family connections to nobles, like Sir John, to improve their own position or to claim inheritance that did not belong to them. Therefore, Lady Howard anticipates Sir John's suspicions about Evelina's claim.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 1

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that Sir Clement Willoughby has come to stay with them at Howard Grove. Sir Clement claims that he was too forlorn to stay in town without Evelina and the Mirvans there. Captain Mirvan is delighted to see Sir Clement and immediately begins to plan an elaborate prank that he and Sir Clement can play on Madame Duval.

Captain Mirvan is misogynistic and does not respect Madame Duval, who is a widow and does not have a husband to defend her. Instead, Captain Mirvan treats her as a joke and demonstrates no sensibility (an 18th-century term used to describe empathy and consideration for others) as he constantly teases her.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 2

The next morning, at breakfast, Sir Clement opens a newspaper and says that he wants to find out what happened to a Frenchman whom he saw being arrested just before he left London to come to Howard Grove. Madame Duval turns pale and asks if the Frenchman's name was Du Bois. Sir Clement says that it was, and Madame Duval is horrified because Monsieur Du Bois is her companion whom Captain Mirvan forced her to leave in London.

Captain Mirvan asks Sir Clement if he thinks Monsieur Du Bois will be hung, and Sir Clement says it is possible. Madame Duval rushes from the table and says that she must go to London immediately to defend him. Evelina gets up to follow Madame Duval, but Captain Mirvan takes Evelina aside and privately tells her that this is a prank he and Sir Clement have cooked up. He insists that Evelina go along with the joke—but Evelina is disgusted with him, and she hurries after Madame Duval.

Madame Duval decides that she does not believe Sir Clement and Captain Mirvan's story about Monsieur Du Bois's arrest. Later that day, a servant delivers a letter to Madame Duval, and Madame Duval hurries to her room. Mrs. Mirvan, Lady Howard, and Evelina go after her to find out what has happened. Once in her room, Madame Duval tells the other ladies that the note has confirmed that Monsieur Du Bois has been arrested.

Madame Duval shows Lady Howard, Evelina, and Mrs. Mirvan the letter she has just received. It is allegedly from a "County Justice" who writes that Monsieur Du Bois has been arrested for treason and that Madame Duval must go to court as a witness for him, otherwise he will be hung. Madame Duval says that she will leave at once and go to the County Justice's house. She does not want Captain Mirvan to know, however, because he will make fun of her. Evelina is amazed that Madame Duval has fallen for the note—which is part of Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement's prank—because it does not make sense that a County Justice would be involved in a treason committed in London.

Monsieur Du Bois is Madame Duval's lover—but because they are not married, people view their relationship as improper, as it violates strict 18th-century etiquette.



In 18th-century Britain, and had more power and rights than women; Captain Mirvan takes advantage of this power imbalance to play cruel tricks on Madame Duval. He knows that the other women in the household, like Evelina, cannot challenge him because he is the man of the house, and he can bully them if they do not go along with his schemes.



Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement lack sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration toward others), as they callously disregard Madame Duval's feelings to play their joke. Eighteenth-century Britain was patriarchal, meaning that men had more rights and power than women. Therefore, Captain Mirvan knows that the women in the house will not challenge him—and Madame Duval, who is unmarried, does not have a husband to defend her.



In 18th-century Britain, men like Captain Mirvan were able to abuse their power over unmarried women, because they knew that such women could not easily defend themselves. Sir Clement, who is a nobleman, joins in with the Captain, proving Burney's point that nobility does not always signify virtue.



Madame Duval begs Lady Howard to let her use a carriage to visit the County Justice. Lady Howard agrees, although Evelina suspects that Lady Howard is also in on the prank because Captain Mirvan has been forced to go along with it. Madame Duval insists that Evelina go with her, and the pair sets off for the Justice's house. After they have spent about two hours in the coach, a servant rides alongside them and hands Evelina a note through the window. The note tells her that she is safe no matter what happens, and she suspects it has been written by Sir Clement to warn her about the next stage of the prank.

Madame Duval also receives a note from the servant, which tells her that Monsieur Du Bois has escaped from prison. Madame Duval tells the coachmen to turn around and hurry home—she wants to get back before Captain Mirvan discovers she is gone. As they drive, the coachmen begin to argue about which direction they should take. Eventually, they stop at a farm to ask for directions. When the coachmen return from the farmhouse, they tell Evelina and Madame Duval that there are thieves on the loose and that the ladies had better leave their valuables with the farmer, as they may be ambushed on the way home.

Madame Duval is afraid at the prospect of robbers, so she makes one of the coachmen sit in the carriage with her. They have not gone far when the other coachman cries out that they are under attack, and two masked men break into the coach and seize Evelina and Madame Duval. One robber carries Madame Duval away on his horse, and the other holds Evelina fast. Evelina soon discovers that this man is Sir Clement, who begs her not to be alarmed. He then begins to tell her how much he loves her, but Evelina angrily rebuffs him and demands to know what has happened to Madame Duval.

The other masked man, who is Captain Mirvan, then reappears, and he and Sir Clement ride off together. Evelina gets out of the coach and discovers Madame Duval tied up in a ditch, hysterical with rage and fright. Her clothes are ruined, her wig is missing, and she is bruised and covered in mud. When Evelina unties her, Madame Duval smacks Evelina across the face. Although this shocks Evelina, Madame Duval is clearly upset, so Evelina forgives her and tries to comfort her. Slowly, Evelina coaxes Madame Duval back to the carriage.

Captain Mirvan knows that he can play his cruel prank on Madame Duval unchallenged, because Lady Howard and Madame Duval are widows and do not have husbands to defend them. Sir Clement is two-faced and deceitful: he goes along with Captain Mirvan's joke but still tries to win over Evelina, even though he insults her grandmother. Although Sir Clement is a nobleman—and nobility was often associated with virtue in this period—he is an immoral person.



The plot about robbers is obviously part of the elaborate prank that Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement are playing on Madame Duval. Captain Mirvan, who orchestrates the prank, uses his power against Madame Duval and does not care that he puts her in a frightening situation, where she genuinely thinks she could be robbed or hurt. This shows that Captain Mirvan has no regard for Madame Duval's feelings.



Captain Mirvan is misogynistic and insensible toward Madame Duval's feelings—he genuinely frightens her for his own entertainment and because he knows that, as an unmarried woman, she has no one to defend or protect her. Sir Clement goes along with Captain Mirvan's prank because he wants to spend time with Evelina and knows the Captain will throw him out if he refuses to join in. This shows that Sir Clement is a selfish and immoral man, as he goes along with a vicious prank against Evelina's grandmother just so that he can try to seduce Evelina.



Captain Mirvan physically bullies Madame Duval because he knows he can get away with it, as men had unchallenged power over women in 18th-century Britain. As a woman, Madame Duval has fewer rights and less social power than the Captain. Captain Mirvan partly dislikes Madame Duval because he finds her pretentious—she wears a wig, which suggests that she's trying to make herself look younger. However, although Captain Mirvan is right about Madame Duval's being a shallow person, it does not justify his misogynistic violence against her.



Once Evelina and Madame Duval are back in the carriage, Madame Duval bursts into tears again and cries that the robber beat her terribly. She vows to take him to court, but Evelina knows that she cannot, because she never saw his face. Although Evelina is tempted to laugh at Madame Duval's hysterical reaction, she is annoyed with Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement for taking their cruel prank so far.

When Evelina and Madame Duval arrive home, Madame Duval sneaks up to her room because she does not want Captain Mirvan to see her without her **wig** and make fun of her. Captain Mirvan is gleeful during dinner—while Madame Duval hides in her room—because of the success of his prank. After dinner, Evelina begs Mrs. Mirvan to ask Captain Mirvan to leave Madame Duval alone. Although there is not much that Evelina can do to stop Captain Mirvan's antics, she wishes that she had protested sooner.

VOLUME 2, LETTER 3

The next morning at breakfast, Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement begin to torment Madame Duval once more. Evelina speaks to Mrs. Mirvan again, but Mrs. Mirvan says there is nothing she can do. Evelina then suggests that she herself speak to Sir Clement, but Mrs. Mirvan says that this may be dangerous, as Sir Clement wants Evelina to be obliged to him.

Mrs. Mirvan and Evelina track down Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement in the garden and plead with them to leave Madame Duval alone. Captain Mirvan is surly about this—but Sir Clement agrees that they have teased Madame Duval enough, and the Captain reluctantly agrees. Evelina spends the afternoon with Madame Duval, who is deeply concerned about her lost **wig** because she has not brought another one.

Although Madame Duval wants to take Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement to court, it was extremely unlikely that a woman would legally win against a man in this period. Although Evelina is tempted to laugh at Madame Duval, she is too considerate to ever do this, as she does not want to hurt Madame Duval's feelings.



Captain Mirvan bullies Madame Duval because, as a woman, she is powerless and defenseless. Women were also considered their husband's property, so although Mrs. Mirvan can ask Captain Mirvan to leave Madame Duval alone, there is no guarantee that he will listen to her.



Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement misogynistically pick on Madame Duval because they know they can get away with it—in 18th-century Britain, women were considered their husband's property and had few rights of their own. Mrs. Mirvan, therefore, cannot necessarily influence her husband's behavior—and unmarried women like Madame Duval have no husbands to defend them against men. Sir Clement wants to seduce Evelina and, if he does her a favor and makes her obliged to him, he may use this power against her to get his own way.



Although Captain Mirvan is married to Mrs. Mirvan, he does not respect her opinion and only agrees to leave Madame Duval alone when Sir Clement, whom he respects as an equal, asks him to. Meanwhile, Madame Duval's reliance on wigs reflects the fact that she is vain and superficial, as she uses wigs to hide her age.



When Evelina leaves Madame Duval, Sir Clement meets her on the stairs and asks to speak to her alone. Sir Clement tells Evelina that he only went along with Captain Mirvan's prank on Madame Duval because he feared that if he did not appease the Captain, he would not let Sir Clement stay at Howard Grove with Evelina. Sir Clement further says that if Evelina will tell him she loves him, he will leave Madame Duval alone for her sake. Evelina says that she will not say this when she does not mean it; when Sir Clement tries to press her, she rushes from the room.

Sir Clement clearly lacks sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy) and is an immoral person. He willingly goes along with Captain Mirvan's plans to torment Madame Duval so he can get close to Evelina. Although sensibility was fashionable in this period, few characters in the novel truly demonstrate it. Instead, Sir Clement tries to emotionally blackmail Evelina: he says that he will be kind to Madame Duval if he can get something from Evelina in return. True sensibility, however, involves being kind for the sake of being kind—not for personal gain. Evelina, in contrast, is truly sensible and will not lie to Sir Clement or go against her own sense of right and wrong.



Later that day, Mrs. Mirvan tells Evelina that Sir Clement received an urgent letter from London and had to leave immediately. Evelina is pleased that he is gone but feels that his company did liven up the household and cheer up Captain Mirvan, who is in a bad mood after this. Evelina that says there is little else for her to do now but wait for a letter from her father, Sir John Belmont, to see whether she will receive her inheritance or not.

In the 18th century, upper-class women like Evelina could not earn their own money and relied on either their family inheritance or their husband's wealth for financial support. Sir John's decision will drastically impact Evelina's future, as men often viewed women as commodities in this period and would choose a wife based on their family wealth and prestigious noble connections.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 4

Sir John writes a curt letter to Lady Howard and tells her that, although she may believe that he is a “devil” and that Mr. Villars is a “saint,” this is not the truth. He further writes that he knows nothing of Evelina but wishes her the best and hopes that Mr. Villars's attempts to find Evelina a fortune will be more successful elsewhere.

Although Evelina is Sir John's child, Sir John suspects that Mr. Villars is a social climber who wishes to trick him and steal his fortune. Eighteenth-century British society was strictly ordered by class, and social mobility was largely impossible. In spite of this, many middle and lower-class people aspired to join the nobility and often adopted false identities to claim noble connections or inherit wealth that did not belong to them.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 5

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and says that she is heartbroken by the cold response from her father, Sir John, who has rejected Mr. Villars's claim that Evelina is his daughter. Although Evelina knows that Sir John is worthier of pity in this situation than she is, she cannot help but feel sad because her father disowns her. Madame Duval is furious and intends to take Evelina to Paris with her—against Evelina's will—to pursue a lawsuit against Sir John. Evelina is glad that Sir Clement left before these events unfolded, as she does not want him to know her true parentage. Madame Duval refuses to give up her plan to take Evelina away with her, so Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to ask what she should do.

Here, Evelina once again demonstrates her natural sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and genuine kindness toward others). Although Sir John has hurt her by rejecting her, she still feels sorry for him because he is cold and unloving—and, therefore, probably unhappy. This shows that Evelina thinks of others above herself—a sign of true sensibility. Young, unmarried women had few rights in this society and were considered their parents' property. Madame Duval is Evelina's grandmother and therefore her rightful guardian, so Evelina has no say over what Madame Duval chooses to do with her. Mr. Villars, in contrast, is Evelina's adoptive father and is an excellent guardian because, although Evelina turns to him for advice, he also respects her decisions and lets her think for herself.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 6

Mr. Villars writes back to Evelina and says that if Madame Duval wants to take Evelina away with her, she must come and speak to him about it in person. Mr. Villars is also disappointed with Sir John's cold response to the revelation that Evelina is his daughter, but he tells Evelina that this is not her fault and that she is totally innocent in this regard. Mr. Villars also dislikes Evelina's description of Sir Clement's behavior toward her and says that if Sir Clement propositions her again, Evelina should return to **Berry Hill**.

Mr. Villars is a good moral guide for Evelina because he allows her freedom when necessary but also tries to protect her from bad influences (like Madame Duval, wherever possible). Although Sir John is Evelina's father, he denies his marriage to her mother, Caroline. Therefore, many people wrongly believe that Evelina is illegitimate because her parents were unmarried when she was conceived. In the 18th century, illegitimate children were generally seen as inferior, as premarital sex was considered a sin. Meanwhile, Sir Clement constantly tries to seduce Evelina, even though he does not plan to marry her—he does not care that he could damage her reputation if people found out about this. As Evelina's guardian, Mr. Villars feels it is his responsibility to keep Evelina innocent until she is married, as 18th-century British society valued sexual purity in unmarried women. Berry Hill (Evelina's childhood home) symbolizes her innocence—Mr. Villars's instruction for her to return there represents both a literal and figurative refuge away from Sir Clement's lecherous behavior.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 7

Mr. Villars writes to Lady Howard to tell her that Madame Duval came to see him and rudely attacked him for refusing to let Evelina go with her to Paris. Madame Duval demands that Mr. Villars let Evelina stay with her in London for one month, until Sir John returns from abroad. Madame Duval says that if Mr. Villars refuses, she will not leave Evelina any money in her will.

In 18th-century Britain, upper-class women could not earn their own money, so they relied on what their inheritance (or on their husband's wealth) to support them. Inheritance was especially important to unmarried women, as it could affect their marital prospects. Many men selected wives based on their family wealth and considered women to be useful commodities. Basically, the more inheritance Evelina has, the more likely she is to attract wealthy suitors.



Although Mr. Villars knows that Evelina does not care about money, he does not feel that it is his place to prevent Evelina from receiving Madame Duval's fortune. Evelina's future poverty may further impact who she marries and what society thinks of her, so Mr. Villars reluctantly agrees to let Madame Duval take Evelina to London. Madame Duval is very ungrateful, however, and storms out without thanking Mr. Villars. Mr. Villars thanks Lady Howard for her kindness toward Evelina and regrets that Evelina must now go to London with Madame Duval.

Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized around class, and social mobility was heavily restricted. Although inter-class marriages did happen, nobles tended to marry other wealthy nobles. Evelina is noble by birth but has been raised middle-class because she is estranged from her noble father. Although Evelina herself is not greedy or ambitious, Mr. Villars knows that to marry someone middle- or lower-class would be a social step down for her.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 8

Mr. Villars writes to Evelina expressing his regret that she must go stay with Madame Duval in London. However, Mr. Villars says that this will be a good opportunity for Evelina to learn to judge situations for herself. No matter what Madame Duval says, Evelina must not involve herself in any improper situations that could ruin her reputation. Mr. Villars cautions Evelina that women's reputations are extremely delicate, and that Evelina should not mix with Madame Duval's acquaintances, who might threaten her good name.

Mr. Villars is a wise parental figure to Evelina: he knows that although he wants to protect her, he must allow her to gain maturity through her own experience. He allows her the chance to put the moral lessons he taught her as a child into practice. However, given Mr. Villars's experience with Caroline, he also recognizes that women who break—or are merely suspected of breaking—society's strict moral codes struggle to redeem themselves and are often socially ostracized.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 9

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars from London. She and Madame Duval are staying near the Branghtons, and Mr. Branghton shows them to their lodgings when they arrive. Mr. Branghton tells Madame Duval that Monsieur Du Bois is at his house, and Madame Duval is amazed to learn that Monsieur Du Bois has not been in prison but has been with the Branghtons the whole time. Madame Duval realizes that Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement played a prank on her, and she rants furiously all the way to Mr. Branghton's house.

Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement are misogynistic, and they played a malicious trick on Madame Duval by making her believe that her lover, Monsieur Du Bois, was in prison. They did this simply to entertain themselves. They know that they will face no consequences for it, as Madame Duval is widowed and does not have a husband to defend her. In 18th-century Britain, unmarried women were often mistreated and victimized in this way due to their vulnerability.



When they arrive at Mr. Branghton's house, Evelina notes that the shop downstairs is large, but the upstairs apartment is small and messy. They find the family there with another man named Mr. Brown. Miss Branghton and Polly seem quite ashamed that Evelina should see their rooms. Madame Duval tells them all about the trick that Captain Mirvan played on her to convince her that Monsieur Du Bois was in prison. Tom laughs at this, and a chaotic argument breaks out.

The Branghtons are middle-class and have made their money through their shop, rather than inheriting it through familial wealth. Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly organized according to class, and even if middle-class people earned as much as nobles, they would not be considered nobility without prestigious family connections. Miss Branghton and Polly are ashamed to have Evelina see their rooms because Evelina is noble—her father is a nobleman—and, therefore, according to the class hierarchy, she's their social superior.



After the argument has settled down, Miss Branghton tells Evelina that Mr. Brown is Polly's lover. Polly and Miss Branghton seem to be in competition over who will get married first. Polly tells Evelina that Miss Branghton has no lovers but is in love with the downstairs neighbor, Mr. Smith, who is a gentleman and too refined for her. Evelina wishes that they would not tell her such things, as she finds it very improper.

Marriage was the main goal for young middle- and upper-class women in this period, as only lower-class women worked to earn their own money. Middle- and upper-class women had to rely on their families or their husbands to financially support them. British society was strictly organized around class during this era, and people did not often marry outside their own class.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 10

Evelina writes to Maria and complains that, although she enjoyed her first trip to London, the city seems gloomy now. Her companions also seem common and vulgar. It seems like a dream when Evelina thinks back to her time spent in London with the Mirvans and with Lord Orville, who was so charming, refined, and considerate compared to the Branghtons and Madame Duval. Evelina hopes that she will not meet any of Mrs. Mirvan's acquaintances in town, as they might recognize her and wonder why she is with rude, ill-mannered people.

Unlike the upper-class Mirvans, the Branghtons are middle-class and are not educated in etiquette, which was extremely important in fashionable 18th-century society. Although Evelina is uneducated in etiquette too, she is naturally sensible (empathetic, emotionally sensitive, and considerate). Therefore, she's more well-mannered than the Branghtons, who do not care about other people and therefore do not notice when they are being rude or inappropriate.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 11

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him about the previous evening that she spent with Madame Duval, Monsieur Du Bois, and the Branghtons. When they arrived at Mr. Branghton's house, Evelina, Madame Duval, and Monsieur Du Bois had to wait in the shop because Polly and Miss Branghton were still getting dressed. When the girls finally came downstairs, they had a huge argument with Tom before they even greeted Madame Duval or Evelina.

The Branghtons are middle-class and are not educated in etiquette, or manners, the way that upper-class people are. Their behavior therefore seems uncouth to Evelina—even though she is not educated in etiquette either, she has spent time with upper-class people in the past and knows how to behave properly.



The Branghton family bicker and fight all the way through dinner, after which Miss Branghton, Polly, and Tom take Evelina downstairs to sit in the shop. When they enter the shop, Evelina notices a gloomy young man in the corner, who leaves as soon as they come in. The Branghtons tell Evelina that the man, Mr. Macartney, is a poor Scottish poet who rents the upstairs room from Mr. Branghton.

The Branghtons are middle-class and have made their money in trade, through their shop, rather than inheriting it through family connections. Class divisions were quite rigid in 18th-century Britain, so the Branghtons have not socialized with people in upper-class circles. Their behavior is rude and uncouth, and this shows that they lack sensibility—an 18th-century term that refers to a person's empathy or consideration of others.



Evelina is concerned about Macartney because he looks so sad, but the Branghtons complain that he pays too little for the room and never seems to eat. The Branghtons show Evelina some poems that Macartney has written, and Evelina is deeply affected by them and thinks that they reveal a tortured soul. She wishes she could do something to help him and resents the Branghtons for their cold attitude toward him.

Evelina demonstrates her natural sensibility (which was also associated with emotional sensitivity and a deep connection to the arts) as she emotionally responds to Macartney's poetry and feels deep concern for him because he is poor and depressed. The Branghtons, in contrast, are insensible and only think about the money they can make from Macartney as their tenant.



Evelina, Madame Duval, and the Branghtons are then invited for tea with the Branghton's neighbor, Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith introduces himself to Evelina with an extremely pompous speech which, although it imitates good manners, only shows how poor Mr. Smith's etiquette really is. Evelina even says that she prefers the theatrical speeches Sir Clement makes over those Mr. Smith makes.

Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly divided by class, and social mobility was restricted. However, this did not stop lower- and middle-class people from aspiring to join the nobility, even though this was essentially impossible for them. Mr. Smith, who is middle-class, wants to fool people into thinking he is noble and therefore educated in etiquette and refined speech. Evelina, who has interacted with real nobles like Sir Clement, easily sees through Mr. Smith and finds him pretentious. However, just because someone is noble does not mean they are a good person. Evelina is not fooled by Sir Clement either—he is an immoral person though he is a nobleman.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 12

The next morning, Mr. Smith brings Evelina a ticket to a ball at Hampstead and asks her to go with him. He is shocked when Evelina says that he is rude because he did not ask Madame Duval's permission first. Mr. Smith then apologizes to Madame Duval and flatters her until she agrees to take Evelina to the ball. Evelina is irritated that she must go and dance with Mr. Smith.

Evelina has not been educated in etiquette, a strict manners system that dictated social interaction among the upper classes in 18th-century Britain. However, she has spent time with upper-class people like the Mirvans, so she understands that it is improper for a man she hardly knows to invite her to a ball without first asking her guardian. Madame Duval, who is Evelina's guardian in London, is also uneducated in etiquette, however. She isn't a good role model for Evelina, as she does not follow etiquette conventions and therefore may lead Evelina into situations that compromise her social reputation.



The next day, Evelina writes that she has been involved in a shocking incident and has saved a person's life. That morning, Madame Duval sends her to call upon the Branghtons, but Miss Branghton and Polly are not home when she arrives. Mr. Branghton invites Evelina upstairs and says that she can wait for them there. While Evelina waits, she sees Mr. Macartney rush upstairs past the Branghton's door toward his own room. He trips on his way and, to Evelina's horror, a pistol falls from his pocket.

Evelina is highly sensible (sensibility was an 18th-century term for empathy and strong emotional responses to other people's suffering). She tends to have strong emotional reactions to shocking or surprising incidents in her life, whereas those around her merely pretend to be sensible.



Evelina suspects that Mr. Macartney plans to hurt himself with the pistol. At first, she wants to fetch Mr. Branghton—but suddenly perceiving that there is no time to waste, she hurries after Mr. Macartney. Once upstairs, Evelina finds Mr. Macartney kneeling on the floor of his room with two pistols in his hands. She rushes to him, knocks the weapons away, and begs him not to harm himself. Mr. Macartney is stunned and cries out that Evelina must be his angel. Thinking quickly, Evelina grabs the pistols and hurries out of the room, taking them back downstairs to Mr. Branghton's flat.

Although Evelina is young and inexperienced, her trip to the city puts her in situations where she must learn to think quickly and responsibly by herself. Evelina's sensibility guides her decision making here and causes her to act impulsively. Although impulsive behavior was often considered impolite or improper by strict 18th-century etiquette codes, Burney demonstrates that sometimes, it is better to be guided by instinct than by manners.



Mr. Branghton is not in his room when Evelina gets downstairs. She immediately flings the pistols away, collapses on a sofa, and bursts into tears. When she looks up, Mr. Macartney is standing at the door with a look of wonder on his face. He tries to take the pistols again, but Evelina begs him to think of his life and to reconsider. Mr. Macartney says that he must be dreaming. Just then, they hear the Branghtons on the stairs; Mr. Macartney hurries away to his room, leaving the pistols behind.

Evelina faints as soon as Mr. Macartney leaves the room and is woken by the Branghton's screams as they enter and see her lying on the floor. They noisily interrogate her about what happened, and Evelina begs them to watch over Mr. Macartney for the next few days. Evelina knows that if Mr. Macartney is determined to hurt himself, no one can stop him—but she hopes that she has done some good in giving him time to think.

Evelina has just saved Mr. Macartney from suicide, and she has an extremely emotional reaction to his suffering further demonstrates her natural sensibility. Genuine sensibility was also associated with virtue, which Evelina clearly possesses in saving Macartney's life.



Again, Evelina's sensibility guides her behavior here. Whereas the Branghtons were quick to brush Mr. Macartney off and mock his sadness, Evelina's genuine concern for him ended up saving his life. Her sensibility reflects her innate virtue: she saves Mr. Macartney for his sake rather than for any personal gain, much like Lord Orville looked out for Evelina and expected nothing in return.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 13

The next evening, the Branghtons dine with Evelina at Madame Duval's house. Mr. Branghton says that he wants to throw Mr. Macartney out of his lodgings because Mr. Macartney tried to kill himself. Tom adds that now he knows how poor Mr. Macartney is, he will be less polite toward him. The group is joined halfway through dinner by Mr. Smith, who insists on sitting beside Evelina and Miss Branghton, as he prides himself on being popular with ladies. The group then begins to argue about the best places to visit in London, and they eventually agree to go to the **theater**.

The Branghtons are totally insensitive to Macartney's suffering, again demonstrating their lack of sensibility (empathy and emotional intelligence) compared to Evelina's naturally sensible nature. Eighteenth-century Britain had a rigid class hierarchy: the nobility, or upper classes, were considered superior to those poorer than them. Although social mobility was impossible in this period, the middle-class Branghtons aspire to be like the nobility, so they look down on Macartney because he is poorer than them. Such attitudes toward class are clearly damaging, as demonstrated by Mr. Macartney's suicidality. Burney implies that society should embrace true sensibility and kindness toward others, regardless of class or wealth.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 14

The next day, Madame Duval again sends Evelina to visit the Branghtons and make plans for the evening. Monsieur Du Bois accompanies Evelina and is very polite and attentive. When she arrives, she finds Mr. Branghton in the shop and Mr. Macartney reading in a corner. Mr. Macartney looks startled when he sees Evelina, and Mr. Branghton tells her that Polly is upstairs. Evelina goes up to Polly's room but finds her flirting with Mr. Brown; embarrassed, Evelina returns to the shop.

Monsieur Du Bois has genuinely good manners and seems to go out of his way to make Evelina comfortable. The Branghtons, in contrast, are not educated in etiquette, and Polly does not care that she makes Evelina uncomfortable with her behavior. While Evelina has spent time with upper-class people, to whom etiquette was extremely important, the Branghtons are middle-class and are more careless with their manners.



Back in the shop, Evelina and Monsieur Du Bois wait for Miss Branghton and Tom to return from an outing. When they arrive, Evelina and Monsieur Du Bois rise to greet them. Miss Branghton and Tom walk past them and immediately sit down in the chairs they have just risen from. Mr. Branghton says that Evelina should take Mr. Macartney's chair, but she refuses and irritably asks them about their plans for the evening. While Miss Branghton and Tom argue about where to go that night, Mr. Smith enters the shop.

Mr. Branghton says that Mr. Smith should decide where they go that evening, but Mr. Smith coyly remarks that he always prefers to let ladies choose. Evelina notices that, although Mr. Smith says this, he never agrees to anything that he has not suggested himself. His politeness, she thinks, is just a sham; she is amazed that the Branghtons think he is so refined.

Eventually, the group decide to vote on where to go that evening. Evelina insists that Mr. Macartney should vote too and join them, since he is in the room. When the Branghtons hear this, they all burst out laughing. Evelina, infuriated, coldly bids them good day and leaves with Monsieur Du Bois, who is also shocked by their rudeness. When Evelina gets home, Madame Duval angrily insists that Evelina must join the party that evening, so she is forced to go out.

VOLUME 2, LETTER 15

The next evening, Evelina, the Branghtons, Madame Duval, Monsieur Du Bois, and Mr. Smith go to Vauxhall Gardens. Although the garden is very pretty, Evelina feels it is spoiled because she is with such an unpleasant group. She only speaks to Monsieur Du Bois, who is polite to her. Evelina is annoyed by Mr. Smith, who constantly bothers her—at one point, he even grabs her hand and makes her run with him through the crowd. The group eats dinner together, and the Branghtons say that Evelina must be happy, since she has never seen a place like this in all her life.

The Branghtons are rude and inconsiderate of other people's feelings. Mr. Branghton, for instance, callously disregards Macartney because Macartney is poor—he does not care how this makes Macartney feel. Evelina, in contrast, is genuinely sensible (empathetic and emotionally intelligent): she thinks about Macartney's feelings and does not want to ostracize him from the group.



Although Mr. Smith is middle-class (and social mobility was largely impossible in this period), he tries to behave as though he is noble and refined. Evelina, who has actually spent time with upper-class people, easily sees through Mr. Smith's façade. But the Branghtons, who are middle-class, are ignorant about upper-class etiquette and are therefore fooled by Mr. Smith's performance.



Eighteenth-century Britons were divided by class, and wealth and status were believed to signify virtue and social worth. The Branghtons, therefore, shallowly judge Macartney because he is poor and totally disregard his feelings. Evelina, in contrast, demonstrates genuine sensibility, as she does not judge people based on wealth and is kind to everyone for the sake of being kind.



Although Evelina has been raised middle-class and is not educated in etiquette, she has spent time with genuinely refined upper-class people. She finds the Branghtons unpleasant by contrast: they are rude and ignorant and do not care about other people's feelings. Ironically, the Branghtons are condescending toward Evelina, whom they see as ignorant because she has been raised in the countryside. But Evelina demonstrates a deeper understanding of fashionable traits, like sensibility (empathy) and etiquette (manners) than they do.



After dinner, Miss Branghton and Polly suggest that they take Evelina for a walk in the Gardens. Evelina is reluctant to go, but Madame Duval insists, and Polly and Miss Branghton lead Evelina down one of the dark alleyways. They have not gone far when a group of drunk men surrounds them and refuses to let them go. Evelina and the Branghton sisters scream with fright, but the men just laugh, and one grabs hold of Evelina. She manages to break free and tries to rush back toward the well-lit Garden, but another group of men blocks her way.

Evelina recognizes one of the men in the group as Sir Clement and cries out to him for help. Sir Clement tells the other men that he will take care of Evelina and leads her away. The other men think that Evelina is an “actress,” but Sir Clement insists that he knows her. Sir Clement asks Evelina what she is doing there, and Evelina explains that she is lost. Sir Clement begins to make passionate advances toward Evelina and, to her horror, she realizes that he has led her deeper into the Garden’s maze.

Evelina tries to escape from Sir Clement and tells him that he insults her. Sir Clement then says that he doesn’t know what Evelina expects, since she has wandered into a dark place with no companions—he can only assume that she has devious intentions. Evelina begins to cry, and Sir Clement begs for her forgiveness. Evelina, once again, tries to break away from him, and he asks her why she teases him and resists his advances. Evelina insists that she does not mean to tease him and, again, tries to leave. Sir Clement follows her and, forcing her into one of the alleyways, holds her fast until she agrees to forgive him.

Evelina is worried about Miss Branghton and Polly, who are still lost in the garden, so she tells Sir Clement that she must find her group. Although he has insulted her, she is still embarrassed when they find the Branghtons and Mr. Branghton asks her where her cousins are in front of Sir Clement. Evelina explains that they are in the alleyways, and Mr. Branghton says that the foolish girls must want to be assaulted. Evelina asks Tom to look for his sisters, but Tom says that they must look after themselves if they choose to behave stupidly.

This passage symbolizes the idea that the Branghtons are a bad influence on Evelina and could potentially lead her astray. Women’s reputations were fragile in 18th-century Britain: if women deviated from acceptable social behavior (or were even rumored to have done so), they could face social ruin and ostracization. On top of this, men were afforded much more power and social influence, so they could abuse and take advantage of women without facing consequences. Evelina’s struggle against the Branghtons and against the men who try to assault her symbolizes her attempt to maintain her purity and choose a moral path in life.



Sir Clement is a bad moral influence on Evelina—he does not have her best interests in mind and both literally and metaphorically leads her astray. “Actress” means prostitute in 18th-century slang. Evelina’s situation is extremely precarious, as any accusations of misconduct or premarital sex could damage a woman’s good name irreparably. Sir Clement does not care about this, however, and tries to seduce Evelina regardless.



Eighteenth-century Britons tended to view women as untrustworthy and easily corruptible—and they simultaneously prized women’s purity. Even rumors of premarital sex or misconduct could seriously jeopardize a woman’s reputation, as men tended to be believed over women (as Sir John was believed over Caroline). Sir Clement is inconsiderate of Evelina’s feelings and doesn’t care about her reputation—he only cares about getting his own way.



Although Sir Clement is an unpleasant and immoral person beneath his outward etiquette, he is still a nobleman with a large amount of social clout. The Branghtons, in contrast, are middle-class and do not have good manners, so Evelina worries that Sir Clement will look down on her because she is related to them. Mr. Branghton misogynistically assumes that, because his daughters have wandered off, they are asking to be assaulted by men. Women in 18th-century Britain were treated as more corrupt and deceitful than men, so any abuse they suffered was often seen as deserved.



Evelina continues pleading with the Branghtons to go and look for Miss Branghton and Polly, who are lost in the Gardens. Suddenly, Mr. Smith bursts out of an alleyway nearby, grabs Evelina's hand, and teasingly exclaims that Evelina did a good job running away from him. Sir Clement is amazed by these proceedings and cannot understand why Evelina is with the Branghtons. He asks her where the Mirvans are, and Evelina says she is not with them anymore. She is hurt that this seems to change Sir Clement's attitude toward her.

Mr. Smith, who notices Sir Clement talking with Evelina, suddenly becomes very forlorn and sadly looks down at his clothes, which are shabby compared to Sir Clement's. Tom, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Branghton all disappear into the Gardens to look for Polly and Miss Branghton, and Evelina tries to distract Sir Clement by looking at some paintings on display. Mr. Smith comments on the paintings, but Sir Clement makes a sarcastic comment, and Mr. Smith looks ashamed. Polly then emerges from the Gardens; Miss Branghton appears not long after and says that two young men made her walk with them.

The party decides to go home, and Sir Clement offers Evelina a ride in his carriage, which she refuses. When they reach their carriage, however, Sir Clement insists they share and jumps into the coach with them before anyone can object. On the way home, he tries to take Evelina's hand several times and seems very curious to know where she is staying. Evelina is ashamed when they pull up outside their lodgings and sees the surprised look on Sir Clement's face. Madame Duval hates Sir Clement, however, so Evelina says that he will not be invited to visit.

VOLUME 2, LETTER 16

The next morning, the Branghtons descend upon Evelina and Madame Duval at breakfast and demand to know who Sir Clement is. Tom thinks he must be a rich businessman because he dresses so well, and Mr. Branghton bets that he could guess what Sir Clement earns per year. Madame Duval announces that she hates Sir Clement because he and Captain Mirvan once tried to kill her. Amid this confusion, Sir Clement arrives. He tells Madame Duval that he is on his way to see the Mirvans and wonders if she has any messages for them that she'd like him to deliver.

Mr. Smith does not believe that Evelina is uninterested in him, instead assuming that she avoids him because she wants to lead him on. Meanwhile, Sir Clement, who is a nobleman, looks down on the middle-class Branghtons. Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Sir Clement's attitude toward Evelina when he finds out she has middle-class cousins shows that he is not virtuous. He is, in fact, shallow and judgmental.



Although Mr. Smith strives to appear upper-class, his humble origins are obvious when he is seen next to a true nobleman. This reflects Burney's point that social mobility is largely impossible in 18th-century British society. Sir Clement's rude attitude toward Mr. Smith also shows that, although Sir Clement is a nobleman, he is not a virtuous person and is not a good moral example to emulate.



Although Sir Clement is a nobleman and is therefore educated in etiquette and manners, he is rude and inconsiderate of other people's feelings. Nobility was also associated with virtue in 18th-century Britain, but Sir Clement shows that he is not virtuous and does not have Evelina's best interests in mind—he does not care that holding her hand in public, while they are unmarried, could damage her reputation. Sir Clement is also shallow and looks down on the Branghtons because their house looks poor and because they are middle-class.



The Branghtons are middle-class social climbers and constantly look for opportunities to ingratiate themselves with noble people, like Sir Clement. However, in 18th-century Britain, only people born into nobility could be considered noble. In contrast, the Branghtons have made their money through trade, and this shows in their assumption that Sir Clement is a businessman. In fact, Sir Clement does not work for his wealth but has inherited it. Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Sir Clement has treated Madame Duval poorly in the past and is two-faced, as he now acts as though nothing happened.



Madame Duval coldly replies that she does not have any messages for Sir Clement. Much to her amazement, he calmly sits down and begins to talk about the weather with the Branghtons. Madame Duval cries out that she sees through Sir Clement; although he pretends to be polite, he was rude to her and treated her “like nothing” when he was with Captain Mirvan at Howard Grove. Sir Clement looks embarrassed by this, and the Branghtons seem to relax.

Sir Clement insists that Madame Duval must have him mixed up with somebody else, but Madame Duval replies that she knows about the prank Sir Clement and Captain Mirvan played on her, when they convinced her that Monsieur Du Bois was in prison. Tom and Mr. Smith start to laugh and Sir Clement angrily tells them to be quiet. Madame Duval says she wants nothing from Sir Clement and that he should leave. Sir Clement hastily says goodbye to Evelina and leaves. Madame Duval says that Sir Clement is the rudest Baronet she has ever encountered, and Mr. Smith immediately expresses regret that he laughed at a Baronet.

Although Madame Duval's outburst would be considered improper according to 18th-century British etiquette, she is right about Sir Clement. Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Sir Clement, who is a nobleman, is extremely bad-mannered and dishonest. He treated Madame Duval cruelly when it suited him—while he was with Captain Mirvan—and now pretends to be friendly with her when it suits him.



Eighteenth-century British society was strictly ordered by class, and only those born into the nobility were considered upper-class. Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Sir Clement, who is a nobleman, is immoral and unpleasant. Madame Duval, meanwhile, was not born noble but married into nobility. While Sir Clement was with other nobles, like Captain Mirvan, he cruelly abused Madame Duval because he felt that she was beneath him. However, now that he wants something from her (the chance to spend time with her granddaughter, Evelina), Sir Clement pretends to be polite and courteous toward her. In spite of this, Mr. Smith, who is a middle-class social climber, wants to impress Sir Clement because Sir Clement's rank gives him so much social status.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 17

A few nights later, Evelina, Madame Duval, Monsieur Du Bois, and the Branghtons again congregate in the Branghton's shop. Mr. Macartney reads in the corner, and the group cannot decide where to go out because they think it may rain. After much debate, they decide to go up to the roof and look at the clouds for a sign about the weather. Evelina stays behind in the room, and Mr. Macartney seems like he's about to speak to her. Evelina approaches him, and Macartney tells her that he has no hope for the future.

Evelina is dismayed by Mr. Macartney's sadness, and he is moved by her compassion and cannot bring himself to ask her for money, which is what he needs. Evelina, sensing this, drops the last of her own money on the ground and quickly leaves the room, as the Branghtons shout for her to come upstairs. In the end, their outing is postponed because of rain, and Evelina spends the evening writing to Mr. Villars. She hopes that Mr. Villars doesn't mind her giving money to Mr. Macartney.

Here, Evelina displays her natural sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity). While the others insensibly ignore Mr. Macartney, Evelina cannot turn a blind eye to his suffering and, instead, finds ways to talk to him in case she can help.



Evelina demonstrates natural sensibility because she feels genuine compassion for Macartney's predicament and selflessly helps him. Evelina relies on Mr. Villars for moral guidance, as he is her adoptive parent and role model. However, as Evelina gains maturity, she's learning to act for herself without waiting for Mr. Villars guidance or permission.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 18

Mr. Villars writes back to Evelina and says that he is not disappointed, but proud, that she helped Mr. Macartney. He feels that her compassion toward Mr. Macartney is very admirable and writes that women are just as brave and honorable as men when they are given the opportunity. Although Mr. Villars believes that Mr. Macartney must have done something to get himself into debt, he is intrigued by Evelina's story about Mr. Macartney's suicide attempt. He hopes that Mr. Macartney can resolve his problems.

Mr. Villars is extremely angry to hear about Sir Clement's flirtatious conduct toward Evelina, which he feels is forward and insulting. Mr. Villars does not want Evelina to associate with Sir Clement anymore. Mr. Villars writes that he will soon send his servant, Mrs. Clinton, to meet Evelina in London and, from there, the pair will travel to Howard Grove. He hopes that Evelina will come home soon, because he misses her.

VOLUME 2, LETTER 19

Evelina writes back to Mr. Villars and thanks him because Mr. Villars has sent her money to replace the amount she gave to Mr. Macartney. Evelina insists that she does not think Macartney has brought his poverty on himself but that he is a victim of misfortune. Evelina also thinks that she will have to see Sir Clement again, even though he insulted her. He is staying at Howard Grove with the Mirvans, where Evelina will travel soon.

The next morning, Mr. Smith arrives with tickets for the ball to which he has invited Evelina and Madame Duval. Evelina is disappointed that she must go with Mr. Smith and notices, at dinner with the Branghtons, that Miss Branghton seems jealous and moody. Mr. Smith, in contrast, is dressed very splendidly and seems proud, although Evelina thinks he looks awkward in his fine clothes.

Evelina's kindness toward Mr. Macartney proves to Mr. Villars that he has been a good moral guide to her and has raised her to be a compassionate person who genuinely cares for others. Mr. Villars's statement about Evelina's bravery supports Burney's thesis that 18th-century British society often does not give women credit for behaving sensibly or honorably.



Mr. Villars recognizes that Sir Clement does not have good intentions toward Evelina—he is happy to flirt with her but has no plan to marry her. Women's reputations were fragile in this era, and premarital sex was viewed as scandalous and unforgivable for a woman. Therefore, Sir Clement's forwards behavior may jeopardize Evelina's reputation because, even if Evelina rejects Sir Clement's advances, people will likely believe him over her if he claims to have seduced her.



In 18th-century Britain, people tended to view the nobility as honorable and deserving, and poor people as corrupt and undeserving. Evelina goes against this idea, instead suggesting that class and wealth are not markers of virtue but arbitrary societal roles assigned at birth.



Marriage was the primary aim for most young women in this period, and society encouraged women to compete for attention from men. Middle- and upper-class women, like Evelina and Miss Branghton, could not work to earn their own money and, therefore, relied on finding a husband to financially support them. This encourages women to compete for male attention and leads to Miss Branghton's jealousy toward Evelina.



Madame Duval announces that she will dance at the ball with Mr. Smith—who looks alarmed—and Tom bursts out laughing. Mr. Smith says that he planned to dance with Evelina, but Evelina indignantly tells him that she never agreed to dance. Tom warns Evelina that Mr. Smith never plans to marry, and Mr. Smith replies that if he did marry, he would marry Evelina—much to Miss Branghton’s annoyance. Soon, the coach arrives to take Evelina, Mr. Smith, and Madame Duval to the ball. Miss Branghton refuses to say goodbye to Evelina because she believes that Evelina leads Mr. Smith on and encourages him on purpose.

Evelina is relieved when, at the ball, Madame Duval says that she will dance the first two dances with Mr. Smith, who had planned to ask Evelina. Evelina is grateful that no one at the ball knows she is related to Madame Duval, as Madame Duval looks ridiculous dancing and only knows dance steps from several decades ago. While they are away, another young man asks Evelina to dance. She firmly turns him down, however, and does the same with several more. Mr. Smith returns and asks Evelina to dance. Evelina, however, remembers from the last ball she attended that she cannot refuse one man and then accept another. She tells Mr. Smith that several others have already asked her to dance, so she cannot dance at all.

Mr. Smith tells Evelina that he does plan to marry eventually—even though this will be very embarrassing for him—and Evelina tells him that this has nothing to do with her. Mr. Smith then tells Evelina that, besides herself and Miss Branghton, there are plenty of young women who wish to marry him—but he would choose Evelina above all. Evelina, annoyed at his presumptuous attitude, goes to stand with Madame Duval and refuses to dance or speak to Mr. Smith again for the rest of the night.

Madame Duval flouts British etiquette conventions because she wants to dance—something that was considered a young woman’s activity. Although Mr. Smith pretends to be courteous and considerate toward women, he’s really self-interested and thoughtless. He flirts with women even though he does not intend to marry them—something that could seriously damage their reputations.



When Evelina first came to London and attended her first ball, she was naïve and did not understand etiquette conventions, which often lead her into trouble. However, after gaining experience in the city, Evelina understands etiquette and can use it to her advantage. This suggests that growing up and gaining maturity involves trial and error, and that it’s important for people to make mistakes so that they can learn from them.



Although Mr. Smith claims to be courteous and refined, he is clearly selfish, arrogant, and thoughtless. He flirts with women even though he does not intend to marry them, and he doesn’t care that this could seriously damage their reputations. Furthermore, Mr. Smith does not respect Evelina and instead insinuates that she should be flattered by his attention. He’s unaware that Evelina is a noble by birth and is therefore Mr. Smith’s social superior, as he is middle-class.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 20

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that she has just received a letter from Mr. Macartney. Mr. Macartney writes that Evelina’s kindness has given him renewed strength and will to live again. He wants to explain how he ended up in desperate circumstances but begs her to keep his story a secret. Mr. Macartney writes that his mother was English but that he grew up in Scotland, where they moved after his father’s sudden death. Macartney and his mother were not wealthy, and he planned to enter the Church.

Evelina’s kindness toward Mr. Macartney demonstrates her innate sensibility—an 18th-century term associated with empathy, emotional sensitivity, and genuine kindness. She earns his trust, which suggests that true sensibility—which involves being kind for the sake of being kind rather than for any selfish reasons—will be rewarded.



At university, Macartney became good friends with a wealthy young man who left to tour Europe. Macartney could not afford to go with him, but the pair agreed to meet in Paris, and Macartney's mother loaned him money for the trip. While in Paris, Macartney met and fell in love with a young Englishwoman. Although the woman was wealthy, she was willing to give this up to be with Macartney. One afternoon, the lady's father discovered them together; in his rage, he attacked Macartney, and the pair duelled. Macartney wounded the lady's father and, distraught, fled Paris.

Inter-class relationships were a rare occurrence in 18th-century Britain. They did happen, but, as in Macartney's case, a noble person often jeopardized their social position by entering a relationship with someone of a lower class. It was also believed that women were their father's property until they were married, when they became their husband's. This means that men, like Macartney's lover's father, would often violently defend their wives or daughters because they were valuable assets to them.



When Macartney returned to Scotland, he told his mother what happened, and she fainted with horror. She revealed that Macartney's lover's father is also Macartney's father.

Macartney's mother's admission reveals that Macartney is a nobleman through his father. Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Macartney's father behaved negligently and cruelly toward his mother. Women's reputations were extremely fragile in this period, and women's purity was highly valued. If a woman had premarital sex, she could be socially ostracized, lose all chance of finding a husband to financially support her, and, therefore, end up poor or destitute.



Macartney's mother confessed that his father did not die—he was a wealthy nobleman who seduced and then abandoned her. Macartney's mother was then banished by her family to Scotland. Macartney was horrified that he may have killed his father, but he received word a few weeks later that the man had recovered.

Macartney then heard that his newly discovered father and sister were in London, and he planned to travel there and reconcile with them. Borrowing the last of his mother's money, Macartney set off and took lodgings in London with the Branghtons. However, his father unexpectedly became ill again, and Macartney waited for six weeks without seeing them. Running out of money, he wrote desperately to his mother but was horrified to learn his mother had died.

Macartney is estranged from his father because he is illegitimate—his mother and father were not married when he was conceived. 18th-century society viewed premarital sex as corrupt, especially for women, and therefore believed that illegitimate people were inherently corrupt and of low status.



Grief-stricken by his mother's death, Macartney continued to live with the Branghtons, who treated him contemptuously. His mother sent him a note appealing to her family to lend him money and, after several weeks, he reluctantly went to forward it to them. However, on his way, Mr. Branghton and Tom cornered him and demanded rent money immediately. In his despair, Macartney tore up the letter and considered desperate action. He bought a pair of pistols and intended to commit robbery.

The Branghtons are uncompassionate and insensible to Macartney's poverty and suffering. The Branghtons, who are wealthy middle-class, look down on people who are poorer than them. Ironically, they are looked down upon by the nobility, which suggests that social mobility is impossible in this period. Middle-class social climbers, who want to transcend their class, are just as bad as the nobility who look down on everyone else.



Macartney had just secured the pistols to commit his crime when Evelina saw him, followed him to his room, and knocked the weapons from his hands. Although Macartney initially bought the pistols to commit robbery, when Evelina found him in his room, he was about to kill himself with them. Macartney now views Evelina as his saving grace and writes that she has made him realize how foolish and proud he was by not asking for help when he needed it. He has now written to his mother's relatives to ask for assistance, and he plans to work hard to repay Evelina for the money she lent him.

Evelina demonstrates authentic sensibility because she genuinely feels concerned for Macartney and wants to help him for his sake rather than for any personal gain. Macartney, in turn, proves that he is an honorable person who will repay Evelina for her kindness. This supports Burney's argument that poverty is not a marker of immorality, as good people exist in all classes.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 21

A few nights later, Evelina, Madame Duval, Monsieur Du Bois, Mr. Smith, Mr. Brown, and the Branghtons visit Marybone Gardens to see a musical performance. Evelina enjoys the music but is startled by the firework display that comes afterwards. In her fright, she runs away and accidentally loses her companions. Evelina is frightened, and several men approach and try to walk with her. Alarmed, Evelina sees two women and runs up to them. She asks if she can walk with them until she finds her friends, and the women laugh scornfully and link arms with her.

Evelina quickly realizes that the two ladies she's walking with are prostitutes and are making fun of her. She cannot escape them, however, and is forced to walk between them. At last, Evelina spots Mr. Brown and bursts away from the two ladies to take his arm. Madame Duval, Miss Branghton, and Polly appear, and although Evelina tries to leave the two women behind, they follow her and try to join their group. One of the women even takes Evelina's arm again. As they march through the crowd, Evelina is mortified to see Lord Orville, who bows to her but looks very shocked by her companion.

Mortified because Lord Orville has seen her with a prostitute, Evelina rushes away from the woman and takes Madame Duval's arm. Lord Orville, who notices this and looks concerned, walks over again and asks Evelina how Mrs. Mirvan is. Evelina is grateful to break away from the others. Meanwhile, Madame Duval thinks that the prostitutes are noblewomen and tries to talk with them, while Miss Branghton and Polly laugh hysterically at Mr. Brown, who is being harassed by the two women. Noticing this, Lord Orville asks Evelina where she is staying in London and then leaves.

Evelina is mortified that Lord Orville saw her with the prostitutes in such an embarrassing and improper situation. Still, she is grateful that he behaved like a gentleman and did not try to take advantage of her situation, and try to seduce her, the way that Sir Clement did when he found her lost in Vauxhall Gardens. She realizes that she did not give Lord Orville her full address when he asked where she was staying, but she does not expect to hear from him anyway. Evelina concludes her letter by saying how grateful she is to have Mr. Villars, as he is always kind and supports her no matter what.

In 18th-century Britain, men were afforded more rights and social privileges than women, so they could often treat women badly without consequences. At the same time, women's reputations were fragile—if people saw women flirting with men in public, their good name could be irreparably damaged. Evelina is young and unmarried, so she does not have a husband to protect her or secure her reputation.



Evelina has lived a sheltered life in the countryside and is unfamiliar with city life and its seedier elements, like prostitution. In her naïveté, she does not recognize that the women are prostitutes until it is too late. Being seen with prostitutes could negatively affect Evelina's reputation, as any appearance or accusation of immorality was taken very seriously. This explains why Evelina fears Lord Orville will think badly of her when he sees her with the prostitutes.



Evelina worries that Lord Orville will now think badly of her because he has seen her with two prostitutes, as prostitutes were seen corrupt during this period because premarital sex was considered sinful. Although Madame Duval wants to fit in with the nobility (she is lower-class but married a nobleman), she is ignorant about etiquette and cannot tell that the women are prostitutes—even though this would be obvious to any true noble. Lord Orville is extremely sensible (an 18th-century associated with empathy or consideration of others) and tries to extract Evelina from this embarrassing situation.



If people think that Evelina is a prostitute, this could seriously damage her reputation. While Sir Clement claims to care about Evelina, really, he only cares about getting his own way. Instead of trying to help her when she was lost, he tried to take advantage of her situation. Lord Orville, in contrast, is genuinely concerned about Evelina and tries to remove her from the situation for her own sake, rather than to trying and get something from her.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 22

The next day, Evelina is shocked to receive a visit from Lord Orville. Lord Orville wants to know if Evelina knows that the two women that he saw her with the previous evening are prostitutes. Evelina says that she was not with them and will never see them again. Lord Orville is relieved—he was worried that the women had tricked Evelina, and he wished to warn her against them. Evelina is grateful for his concern and glad that he does not think badly of her. Before he leaves, Lord Orville kisses her hand, and Evelina marvels at a wonderful, courteous gentleman he is.

When Lord Orville has gone, Evelina goes down to breakfast with Madame Duval. During breakfast, Madame Duval abruptly announces that, if Evelina cannot be reunited with her father and find a wealthy husband, she should marry Tom. Evelina is affronted and does not want to discuss this. After this, Monsieur Du Bois passes Evelina a note that declares his love for her and his wish to marry her himself. Evelina is disappointed because she thought that Monsieur Du Bois was her friend.

In 18th-century Britain, women were generally considered more deceitful and untrustworthy than men. Even if an innocent woman was wrongly linked to a scandal, her good name could be ruined. Yet instead of assuming the worst about Evelina, Lord Orville gives her the benefit of the doubt and seeks to guide rather than berate her. This shows that Lord Orville is a genuinely kind and thoughtful person who wants to help others learn and grow.



Middle- and upper-class women in 18th-century Britain could not earn their own money, so they needed a husband to financially support them. Women often did not get a choice in who they married—they were essentially sold as commodities to a wealthy man to increase both family's wealth. Madame Duval knows that if Evelina is reunited with her father, who is a wealthy nobleman, Evelina will receive a large inheritance and attract a noble suitor. However, if Evelina does not reunite with Sir John, she will have little to offer her husband in terms of money or social status. If this happens, she will have little choice but to marry Tom, who is middle-class.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 23

The next day, Evelina, Madame Duval, the Branghtons, and Monsieur Du Bois go for a walk in Kensington Gardens. Evelina is annoyed because Tom will not leave her alone, and Monsieur Du Bois keeps moping near her. A sudden rain shower leads them to hide in a nearby shed and, while they are in there, Evelina notices Lord Orville's carriage parked outside and sees that one of his coachmen is also in the shed. She does not want to be recognized, so she whispers to Miss Branghton not to say her name. Miss Branghton demands to know why, however, and Evelina is forced to explain that she knows Lord Orville.

Miss Branghton quickly tells the others, and Madame Duval suggests that they ask Lord Orville's coachmen to let them borrow the carriage to go home. Evelina is mortified, but the Branghtons think this is a great idea. When Evelina objects, Madame Duval says she is silly and naïve. Madame Duval tells the coachman to take her home and says that Lord Orville will not mind because he is good friends with Evelina, who is horrified to hear her name used like this. One of Lord Orville's servants runs inside to ask Lord Orville and returns to say that Lord Orville is glad to let Evelina use his carriage.

Evelina does not want Lord Orville to see her with the Branghtons because she finds their behavior crude and embarrassing. Although Evelina is not educated in upper-class etiquette, she is naturally polite and sensible (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration of others), so she does not like people to see her as uncouth or rude.



Because Madame Duval is not noble by birth, she does not understand upper-class etiquette (even though she thinks she does) and believes that Evelina is naïve when, really, Evelina is being truly polite and considerate—she does not want to presumptuously take advantage of her friendship with Lord Orville. Unlike Evelina, Madame Duval and the Branghtons are social climbers and often try to use their connections with nobility to their own advantage.



Lord Orville's coachmen drop Madame Duval and Evelina off and then give the Branghtons a lift home. The next day, Tom comes to visit Evelina and proudly says that he now knows Lord Orville as well as Evelina does. Evelina asks him to explain, and Tom replies that after Madame Duval and Evelina got out of Lord Orville's carriage, a wheel fell off the coach, and Lord Orville had to be fetched.

Tom then went to Lord Orville's house to apologize and, when the servants would not let him in, he said that he had been sent by Evelina. Evelina is furious with him for using her name like this, but Tom says that Lord Orville was extremely polite. Lord Orville even told Tom that he was busy preparing for his sister's wedding, and Tom suggested that Lord Orville should buy the wedding silver from Mr. Branghton's shop. Evelina is now convinced that Lord Orville must despise her.

Evelina decides to write to Lord Orville and apologize for the Branghton's behavior. She writes that she did not approve of their borrowing his carriage. As soon as she has sent the note, however, she regrets her decision and tries to run after the servant who took it. But on the stairs, she sees Sir Clement, who has come to visit. Madame Duval has forbidden her from seeing Sir Clement, so Evelina hides upstairs until he is gone. By this time, it is too late to retrieve the note.

VOLUME 2, LETTER 24

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and says that she will be happy when Mrs. Clinton arrives to take her away from London. The previous morning, she was forced to visit the Branghtons with Monsieur Du Bois and was pestered by him, Tom, and Mr. Smith. When she returns, she discovers that both Lord Orville and Sir Clement visited while she was out. Monsieur Du Bois then chooses to follow Evelina into the drawing room and confess his love for her. Madame Duval walks in on them, and a dreadful scene ensues. Madame Duval furiously dismisses Monsieur Du Bois and announces that Evelina must immediately marry Tom, or she will have nothing more to do with her. Evelina says that she will not do this, and Madame Duval sends her to her room.

The Branghtons constantly want to ingratiate themselves with the nobility to improve their own social status. Unlike Lord Orville, who was born into nobility, the Branghtons have earned their money through trade. However, even though middle-class people in this period could become as wealthy as nobles, social mobility was still heavily restricted—they could not join the nobility simply because they had wealth.



Tom uses Evelina's name without her permission to get around strict etiquette conventions, ingratiating himself with Lord Orville to improve this social status. Upper-class etiquette in this period meant that people could not freely visit each other but must be formally introduced first. Tom, who is middle-class, disregards this rule and uses Evelina's name because he is a social climber and wants to make connections with nobles like Lord Orville. Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly divided by class, however. Even though Tom's family is wealthy, he cannot join the nobility and can only connect with them as a tradesman who can sell them things—not as an equal.



Evelina worries that her behavior—writing a note to Lord Orville—does not comply with 18th-century etiquette conventions. Upper-class society considered it improper for a young unmarried woman to write to an unmarried man. Young women also had to carefully guard their reputations, as any accusations of flirtatious behavior could ruin their good name.



As a young, unmarried woman, Evelina's reputation is precarious—any accusation of flirtatious or inappropriate behavior could be devastating for her. Burney shows how difficult it was for women to maintain their good social standing in this period. Although Evelina wants to remain pure, she is hounded by male suitors. Even though Evelina is not interested these men, others would likely believe that Evelina is a flirt, rather than that the men harass her uninvited. This is further demonstrated when Madame Duval blames Evelina for Monsieur Du Bois's attempt to seduce her, even though Evelina has not encouraged him.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 25

Mr. Villars writes to Evelina and says that he will immediately send Mrs. Clinton to fetch her from London and bring her back to **Berry Hill**, instead of sending her to stay with the Mirvans at Howard Grove. He cannot wait to see her any longer and hopes that, once she is back in her childhood home, she will feel her peace and happiness return.

Berry Hill, Evelina's childhood home, symbolizes her innocence, youth, and purity, which Mr. Villars worries her trip to the city will damage. Although Evelina has now spent time away from home, Mr. Villars hopes that she is still innocent and virtuous and has not been corrupted by city life.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 26

Evelina writes to Maria and tells her that she has left London and gone to **Berry Hill**. Evelina's time in London has been so stressful and tiring that Mrs. Clinton thinks Evelina is ill when she comes to fetch her. Evelina cheers up, however, as soon as they reach Berry Hill and she is reunited with Mr. Villars. Still, Evelina notes that her good mood has since waned and, although she loves Mr. Villars and Berry Hill, she now feels unhappy and despondent there.

Berry Hill symbolizes Evelina's innocence and naïveté about the world. Although Evelina is still attached to Berry Hill, she has been changed by her experiences in the city and cannot go back to being the carefree girl she was before she left. This suggests that Evelina's trip to the city has made her wiser and more mature, if slightly less happy.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 27

Evelina again writes to Maria and tells her the real reason she is sad. Lord Orville has written Evelina an insulting letter, and she is deeply disappointed in him. His note expresses passionate attraction toward her, and Evelina feels extremely hurt, as the note she wrote to him—to which he replied—was very proper and polite. At first, Evelina feels happy that Lord Orville loves her, but when she reads the note again, she feels insulted. She feels that Lord Orville is trying to take advantage of her naïveté and that she misjudged him when she thought he was honest and kind.

Lord Orville's note breaks 18th-century etiquette conventions and potentially puts Evelina's reputation at risk. Evelina feels that Lord Orville has misinterpreted the note she sent to him, mistaking it as an invitation to flirt with her. She is disappointed because, Lord Orville didn't give her the benefit of the doubt and assume that she wrote to him because she is inexperienced with etiquette and does not know that sending a letter to a man is improper. Instead, Lord Orville seemingly assumed that she meant to flirt with him. Evelina finds this insulting, as it suggests that Lord Orville does not respect her, after all.



Lord Orville's note makes Evelina feel bitter and depressed about the world, which she sees as a deceitful place. Her main concern, however, is how her mood will affect Mr. Villars. She wishes to be loving and cheerful with him and worries that, if he sees her looking dejected, he will think that she misses the city and does not like being in the country with him.

Although Evelina is back at her childhood home with Mr. Villars, she is not the same innocent and naïve person she was when she first left for the city. Instead, Evelina has gained wisdom and maturity through her experience and is disappointed because the world is not as pleasant or just as she had once believed. Meanwhile, Evelina displays natural sensibility (an 18th-century term which refers to empathy and consideration of others), as she kindly puts Mr. Villars's feelings above her own.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 28

Evelina writes back to Maria and dispels Maria's claim that Evelina is in love with Lord Orville and misses him now that she is away from London. Evelina says that she does not have any special feelings for Lord Orville and is mainly concerned because Mr. Villars has noticed her sad looks and has become unhappy himself as a result. Mr. Villars's acquaintance, Mrs. Selwyn, has invited Evelina to stay with her at Bristol—but Mr. Villars became so distraught when this was suggested that Evelina turned down the invitation.

Evelina demonstrates natural sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity), as she seems to care more about Mr. Villars's unhappiness than her own. Although Evelina is back at her childhood home—where she was once happy, carefree, and innocent—her experiences in the city have changed her and made it so that she cannot return to the pure happiness she once experienced there.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 29

Evelina writes again to Maria and says that nothing much has happened at **Berry Hill**, where she's staying with Mr. Villars. Although Evelina is despondent and disheartened, she tries to conceal this from Mr. Villars. A few days ago, however, he entered the library unexpectedly and found her crying. Evelina was distressed by how sad this made him and vowed to do better in future. The next day, however, Mr. Villars catches her staring morosely out of the window and begs her to tell him what is wrong. After all, he says, her suffering is also his suffering.

Evelina and Mr. Villars are both extremely sensible (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity) and can only be happy if the other is also happy. Evelina has seemingly learned her sensibility from Mr. Villars, who raised her, which suggests that he is a good moral guide (sensibility was associated with virtue).



Mr. Villars asks Evelina if she misses the city, but Evelina replies that she wishes she had never gone there. Mr. Villars laments that he allowed her to go and says that he should have trusted his judgement and kept her at home. Mr. Villars then asks Evelina if she misses her friends from the city—people like Lord Orville. Evelina begins to cry, and Mr. Villars says that, although he longs to know what afflicts her, he does not want to force her to confide in him.

Mr. Villars worries that Evelina's time in the city has corrupted her. He fears that she will now never be happy to live a simple country life, because she has seen how more cosmopolitan people live. Although Mr. Villars wants to shelter Evelina and protect her innocence, he allowed her to go to the city because he felt it was important for her to gain experience.



Evelina shows Mr. Villars the insulting letter that Lord Orville sent her, and Mr. Villars is amazed. He can only assume that Lord Orville was drunk when he wrote it. Mr. Villars further says that Evelina should have returned the note to Lord Orville so that he could read it when sober and feel ashamed of his actions. Evelina is comforted to hear that Mr. Villars does not blame her. He thinks it is understandable that she is disappointed in Lord Orville, as he hid his unpleasant character under such a noble veneer.

Lord Orville's letter to Evelina was extremely flirtatious. Evelina worries that Mr. Villars will blame her for this and assume that she has done something to lead Lord Orville on, even though she has not. Mr. Villars, however, trusts Evelina and understands that sometimes noble people are not virtuous people, even though fashionable society tends to conflate nobility and virtue.



VOLUME 2, LETTER 30

Evelina writes to Maria from Bristol—she has changed her mind and gone to stay with Mrs. Selwyn after all. Evelina has been ill, and she came to Bristol to recover. Mrs. Selwyn is kind to her, but she is a “masculine” woman with abrasive manners—although Evelina is not really offended by this. Mr. Villars is wary of Mrs. Selwyn because she likes to tease everybody—but he has sent his servant, Mrs. Clinton, with Evelina, and she is being well looked after.

People in 18th-century Britain generally believed that women should be delicate and feminine. A more assertive and independent woman, like Mrs. Selwyn, is therefore an object of suspicion because she does not conform to prescribed gender roles. Mr. Villars, therefore, worries that Mrs. Selwyn may be a bad example to Evelina, teaching her to behave in ways that are not considered proper for women according to 18th-century etiquette.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 1

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that one morning, when she and Mrs. Selwyn were out walking, they bumped into Lord Merton and his friends. Lord Merton approaches Evelina and says that he searched all over London for her. Evelina is embarrassed, and Lord Merton says that he is glad to have found her and that he will enjoy being in Bristol more now that she is here—the place can “go to the devil without her,” he says. Mrs. Selwyn says that Lord Merton likely will meet the devil one day, since he is a nobleman and, therefore, highly corrupt.

Like Sir Clement, Lord Merton flirts with Evelina and does not care that this may damage her reputation. In 18th-century Britain, innocent women were often blamed if men flirted with them or accused them of sexual behavior. Mrs. Selwyn suggests that nobles are often corrupt and immoral, even though 18th-century society generally conflated nobility with virtue.



Lord Merton is indifferent to Mrs. Selwyn’s sarcasm and asks Evelina where she will be that evening. Mrs. Selwyn replies that Evelina will stay in and reading. Lord Merton rudely asks Evelina if Mrs. Selwyn is her mother and then says that he does not know why women over 30 bother to exist. Lord Merton’s friend, Mr. Coverley, then tries to distract Mrs. Selwyn, while Lord Merton pesters Evelina.

Lord Merton preys upon Evelina because she is young and, he suspects, naïve. Unmarried women were often objectified and commodified during this time—and men often married them solely for their fortunes. People consider older women like Mrs. Selwyn irrelevant, because they are not enticing to men and therefore lacked social value.



Mrs. Selwyn swiftly leads Evelina away, and they lose Lord Merton in the crowd. Later that day, Mrs. Selwyn asks a shopkeeper about Lord Merton, and the shopkeeper replies that Lord Merton is a renowned “libertine,” but that he claims to be reformed. He is engaged to Lady Louisa Larpent, Lord Orville’s sister, although Lord Orville dislikes him. The shopkeeper says that Lord Orville will be in Bristol in a few days and that he will stay with Mrs. Beaumont, whom Mrs. Selwyn knows well. Evelina is shocked and disconcerted at this news, as she knows that she cannot avoid seeing Lord Orville.

The term “libertine” refers to a debauched nobleman who lives a life of drinking, seducing women, and fighting duels. This supports Burney’s argument that, although 18th-century British society considered nobility to be synonymous with virtue, this was often not the case. Premarital sex was considered sinful in this period, and Lord Merton’s claim that he is “reformed” supports the idea that he will no longer have “sinful” sex outside his marriage. Being reformed was a luxury which only applied to men, however, because if anyone accused a woman of premarital sex, her reputation would be lastingly destroyed.



Evelina worries that, when Lord Orville sees her again, he will try to seduce her—as he attempted to do in his letter. She does not understand why Lord Orville would treat her with such contempt when he dislikes men like Lord Merton, who treat women freely and inconsiderately. She supposes that he must be a hypocrite and wishes that she could return to **Berry Hill** and avoid him.

Evelina assumes that Lord Orville is a hypocrite who hides his true intentions behind a veneer of nobility and politeness. Nobility was often associated with virtue in this period, but debauched noble characters, like Lord Merton, prove that this is not always the case. Similarly, upper-class etiquette was believed to be synonymous with virtue and sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and consideration of others)—but, again, Lord Merton shows no consideration for Evelina or women in general.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 2

Evelina writes again to Mr. Villars and says that everything is resolved with Lord Orville. He is still as kind and polite as always, and she assumes that he was drunk when he wrote her the insulting letter—in which he tried to seduce her—and does not remember sending it. She met him again when she and Mrs. Selwyn walked to Clifton Hill to visit Mrs. Beaumont. While they were there, Lord Merton and Lady Louisa Larpent also arrived, and Lord Merton seemed surprised to see Evelina.

Here, Evelina once again displays her natural sensibility, an 18th-century term associated with empathy and kindness. She gives Lord Orville the benefit of the doubt, assuming that he made a mistake rather than holding his indiscretion against him. This suggests that Evelina has grown into a mature person who is prepared to forgive others for their mistakes.



Louisa does not greet Evelina as she enters but flings herself down onto the couch and exclaims that the sun and wind have exhausted her and are too much for her fragile nerves. She and Lord Merton have been out for a drive, and she complains that he goes too fast. They also ran into Mr. Lovel in his coach, and Lord Merton rammed their carriage against his and frightened Louisa. Mrs. Beaumont suggests that they take a walk in the garden, and Evelina and Mrs. Selwyn agree.

Sensibility was extremely fashionable in 18th-century Britain. Louisa pretends to be sensible, but really, she shows little empathy for others. She rudely ignores Evelina to complain about her nerves, which suggests that she is more concerned with the appearance of sensibility than with genuine kindness toward others. And given that Louisa is Lord Orville's sister—meaning that she, like him, is noble by birth—this further proves that virtue is something learned and cultivated rather than something that nobles inherently possess.



In the garden, they bump into Lord Orville. He seems delighted to see Evelina and, although she is pleased to see him too, she makes a haughty show of indifference toward him to punish him for insulting her. Lord Orville seems confused, and Mrs. Selwyn says that Evelina is still weak from her illness and must be taken home. Lord Orville offers them a lift, and Mrs. Beaumont assures them he is a careful driver. Mrs. Selwyn accepts, and Lord Orville escorts them home. Evelina hopes that Mr. Villars does not mind, but she feels she cannot be angry with Lord Orville anymore, as he is kind and courteous to her.

Lord Orville proves that he, like Evelina, is genuinely sensible, as he deliberately drives slowly to make the ladies comfortable. This is a stark contrast to Lord Merton, who drives recklessly on purpose to scare Louisa. Although Lord Orville insulted Evelina in the past, she is willing to forgive him and move on from his mistake, which proves that Evelina has matured into a wise and tolerant person.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 3

The next morning, Evelina and Mrs. Selwyn are invited to visit Mrs. Beaumont. Mrs. Selwyn complains that, because Mrs. Beaumont is from an ancient noble family, she believes that morality and nobility are the same thing, and that noble people can do no wrong. Mrs. Beaumont further believes that it is a noble's job to be courteous to everyone, although this often comes across as condescending rather than genuine. Mrs. Beaumont is only friends with Mrs. Selwyn because of a misunderstanding—Mrs. Beaumont thought Mrs. Selwyn was from a noble family but she is not. Still, Mrs. Selwyn accepts Mrs. Beaumont's invitation.

During their visit, Mrs. Beaumont questions Evelina about her family heritage. Mr. Lovel then arrives, followed by Louisa. They both ignore Evelina and only greet Mrs. Beaumont. Lord Merton then arrives and does the same. He asks Louisa how she is feeling, and Louisa replies that her nerves are very fragile. Lord Orville arrives next and, unlike the others, greets Evelina courteously. He even tries to formally introduce her to Louisa, but Louisa responds coolly and goes back to Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel. Mr. Coverley then arrives, and the group sits down to eat.

During lunch, Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley argue over who can drive the fastest, and they agree to have a race. Louisa makes a show of being very alarmed, and Lord Orville suggests that they make a wager over something less hazardous. After lunch, they sit in the drawing room, and Lord Orville slips out. Lord Merton, Louisa, Mr. Lovel, and Mr. Coverley completely ignore Evelina, so she sits near the window by herself. When Lord Orville returns, he is shocked to see this and immediately joins Evelina and talks with her for a long time.

Not long after this, the group agrees that they must decide on a wager for Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley. Mrs. Selwyn suggests a battle of wits, but they all seem rather uncomfortable with this idea. Mrs. Beaumont then suggests that they have a bowling competition, and the men agree enthusiastically and begin to practice. When it comes to Lord Orville's turn to suggest something, he gravely replies that, instead of betting, they should decide among themselves which one of them most deserves the money they would win. Evelina is impressed, but Mr. Coverley simply thinks it is an odd thing to say, and the party moves on.

Fashionable nobles, like Mrs. Beaumont, judge people based on their family connections rather than on their own merit. They assume that if someone is noble, this necessarily means they are virtuous. Mrs. Selwyn mocks this attitude and points out that Mrs. Beaumont's naïve beliefs that she is better than everyone else, and that nobles are always virtuous, leave her open to being taken advantage of—she may be tricked by people who pretend to be nobles but who really are not, or by nobles who pretend to be virtuous when really they are not.



Although nobles followed strict etiquette codes with one another, Mr. Lovel, Lord Merton, and Louisa, rudely ignore Evelina because they do not know her and assume that she is not a noble. Nobility was also associated with virtue and sensibility (an 18th-century term for empathy, emotional sensitivity, and kindness)—but while Louisa pretends to be highly sensitive, she is only interested in appearing sensible and does not care about being kind to Evelina. Lord Orville, in contrast, is extremely sensible and polite to Evelina, which shows that virtue exists in all classes.



People believed that nobility was synonymous with virtue in 18th-century Britain. However, nobles like Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel gamble—something that people considered sinful during this period. Furthermore, the noble characters are openly rude to Evelina because they do not think she is a noble, and they're insensible to her feelings. Lord Orville, in contrast, is genuinely polite and concerned about how Evelina feels, which again shows that virtue and sensibility exist in all classes.



Burney parodies the shallow nobility here as: although they do not know enough to have a “battle of wits,” they know a great deal about fashionable etiquette—something that Burney suggests is practically useless. Lord Orville, who is a noble but is also virtuous and sensible, tries to make the other nobles consider their actions more deeply, but he's unsuccessful.



Evelina feels ashamed that she participated in Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel's foolish gambling, and she says so privately to Lord Orville. Lord Orville replies kindly that it is he who should be ashamed, as he made things uncomfortable, whereas Evelina tried to join in with the group and make everyone feel at ease. During their ride home, Mrs. Selwyn asks Evelina if she feels well enough to stay with Mrs. Beaumont for the rest of their visit, and Evelina says that she does. Although Evelina dislikes being ignored by the others, she is glad that she has Lord Orville to speak to.

Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel's gambling suggests they are not truly virtuous. Meanwhile, Lord Orville suggests that sometimes being sensible (empathetic or considerate) involves making oneself uncomfortable so that other people can be comfortable.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 4

The next day, before Mrs. Selwyn and Evelina go to Mrs. Beaumont's, Mrs. Selwyn asks Evelina if she has met Mr. Lovel before. Evelina says that she has, and Mrs. Selwyn says that this explains the rude remarks she overheard Mr. Lovel make about Evelina. Evelina does not care what Mr. Lovel thinks about her. She finds the group (Mr. Lovel, Mr. Coverley, Louisa, and Lord Merton) very rude again at Mrs. Beaumont's, as they all continue to ignore her. Lord Orville, however, sits and talks with her for hours, while the others play cards and gamble.

Although nobility was associated with virtue and sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and kindness), many noble characters—like Louisa, Lord Merton, and Mr. Lovel—are totally insensible. They do not notice or care that they rudely leave Evelina out. Lord Orville, in contrast, is genuinely sensible, as he considers Evelina's feelings and goes out of his way to include her in conversation.



After several hours, Mr. Lovel announces that, to settle another bet between himself and Lord Merton, they have decided to hire two poor old women to race for them. Evelina is surprised by this, and Louisa makes a rude comment toward her, which Lord Orville smoothly rebuffs. Evelina continues her letter to Mr. Villars three days later and says that she is enjoying herself wonderfully as she spends every day talking with Lord Orville. She feels completely relaxed with him and confident that he will always be kind and polite to her.

In 18th-century Britain, women had few rights and were often commodified and valued based on their family wealth or social status—rather than for their own worth as human beings. Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel want to hire poor, old women because they see them as objects that can be bought and used without any consideration for their feelings. Additionally, although Louisa is a fashionable noblewoman—and nobility was associated with virtue in this period—she is not virtuous at all. She's rude and cruel to Evelina, whom she views as beneath her because she doesn't know that Evelina is noble by birth. Lord Orville, in contrast, is kind and considerate toward Evelina; he treats her as his equal regardless of her social rank.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 5

The next morning, Evelina gets up early and goes out for a stroll. She is shocked to meet Mr. Macartney, who has come to find her and pay her back the money she lent him. Evelina says that Mr. Macartney looks much better, and Mr. Macartney says that this is thanks to Evelina's kindness. Her compassion toward him encouraged him to write to his friend in Paris, who was concerned about him and has since sent him money.

Evelina's kindness to Mr. Macartney (she lent him money when he was desperate and in need) demonstrates Evelina's true sensibility. Sensibility was an 18th-century term that referred to a person's capacity for empathy. Burney suggests that sensibility and genuine kindness toward others is extremely valuable and can bring about positive change, just as Evelina's kindness helps Mr. Macartney improve his circumstances.



Just then, Lord Orville comes out to look for Evelina. She quickly bids Mr. Macartney farewell, but he asks if he can meet her the next morning to repay her. Evelina agrees but is horrified when she turns around and sees that Lord Orville has overheard. Lord Orville looks embarrassed, and Evelina worries that he's gotten the wrong impression and thinks Mr. Macartney is her lover. She tries to explain, but Lord Orville politely says that Evelina must judge for herself how best to act. Evelina promises that she will explain the situation when she can. Still, Lord Orville seems upset and is quiet and reserved over breakfast.

Evelina plans to miss her meeting with Mr. Macartney the next day. However, she feels sorry for him and decides to write him a note instead. When she has sent the note, Lord Orville enters the room and asks her if she is now ready to explain how she knows Mr. Macartney. Evelina does not feel comfortable revealing Mr. Macartney's secret, however, and makes an excuse to leave the room. During lunch, a messenger arrives and announces to the group that they could not find Mr. Macartney, to whom Evelina sent a note. Evelina is embarrassed and cannot decide which is worse: discussing Mr. Macartney's private secrets or being thought to have a secret lover.

The next morning, Evelina sneaks out to meet Mr. Macartney but immediately meets Lord Orville in the garden. Although Lord Orville seems embarrassed, Evelina does not know what to do, and she almost faints. Lord Orville helps her back into the house. Evelina attempts to return to her room, but Lord Orville again asks her about Macartney. Evelina says that she cannot explain her connection to Macartney, as she promised to keep it secret, and Lord Orville seems peeved by this.

Evelina laments that, although she wants to do the right thing, she is inexperienced and constantly makes mistakes—she is usually guided by Mr. Villars. Lord Orville says that he wishes to help her with her dilemma, and Evelina begs him to forgive her innocence. Lord Orville says that he does and is sorry that he upset her. He takes her hand and says that they are friends, then quickly lets it go as the others enter the room for breakfast. Evelina is delighted with Lord Orville's conduct but regrets missing her meeting with Macartney.

Although Mr. Macartney is poor—and poverty was associated with immorality in the 18th century—he is, in fact, honorable and virtuous. This suggests that virtue exists across all classes, not just among the nobility, as 18th-century Britons tended to believe. Meanwhile, Evelina fears that Lord Orville, may get the wrong impression when he sees her with Macartney because promiscuity could ruin a woman's reputation at this time. Lord Orville, however, gives Evelina the benefit of the doubt and trusts that, if she is meeting a man in secret, she must have a moral and virtuous reason for doing so. This shows that Lord Orville trusts Evelina to make her own judgments and does not feel the need to police her behavior. In short, he treats her like an equal.



Evelina feels torn between doing what is honorable and right (to meet Macartney and protect his secret) and what is proper according to 18th-century etiquette conventions. She knows that as an unmarried woman, it's scandalous to meet or have private communication with strange men. Although it is Evelina's natural inclination to be kind and keep her promise, she also worries that if people think she has a lover, her reputation could be irreparably damaged.



Evelina is worried that, if she does not explain her connection to Macartney, Lord Orville will assume that Macartney is her lover—something that could seriously damage her reputation. This suggests that, although people in 18th-century Britain think of sensibility (virtuous consideration of others) and etiquette as compatible, oftentimes they are not.



Lord Orville proves that he is an excellent moral guide for Evelina because. Like her wise guardian Mr. Villars, Lord Orville is interested in helping Evelina make a good moral choice, rather than judging or criticizing her for her mistakes. Like Mr. Villars, Lord Orville understands that gaining experience involves trial and error, and that Evelina will not get everything right first time.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 6

Mr. Villars writes back to Evelina and says that, although he hoped she would work this out for herself, he cannot hide the truth from her any longer. Mr. Villars suspects that Evelina is in love with Lord Orville and fears that she will get her heart broken. He feels that it is understandable Evelina should think highly of Lord Orville, as he is kind and charming. However, Mr. Villars is afraid because Evelina is very innocent, and appearances can sometimes be deceiving. Furthermore, since Evelina is not considered a noble, she cannot hope to marry Lord Orville. Mr. Villars wants her to leave Bristol as soon as possible.

Although Mr. Villars wants to allow Evelina to learn for herself and gain experience, he also wisely understands that, sometimes, young people need guidance to save them from making dangerous mistakes. Mr. Villars does not want Evelina to pin her marriage hopes on Lord Orville. Although Lord Orville seems kind, it was common at this time for men to seduce women without intending to marry them—something that could seriously damage the woman's reputation. Furthermore, 18th-century society was strictly ordered by class, meaning that nobles like Lord Orville did not often marry beneath their social rank. Although Evelina is a noble—her father is nobility—she is estranged from him, so her origins are not widely known.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 7

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to tell him about the bet between Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley, which was settled the day before. Lord Merton came to the house early to get ready and found Evelina alone in the parlor. Seizing his chance, Lord Merton tries to seduce Evelina, but she is disgusted and sends him away. After dinner, the group gathers on the lawn, where the two old ladies—whom Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley have hired to race for them to settle a bet—are waiting. Although the others think this is funny, Evelina feels sorry for them, as they look frail and confused. She notices, too, that Lord Orville does not laugh with the others.

In 18th-century Britain, people often believed that nobility and virtue were the same thing. However, Lord Merton is a noble and is not virtuous. He tries to seduce Evelina even though he has a fiancée, and he doesn't give any thought to Evelina's reputation, which could be irreparably damaged if anyone found out. Additionally, Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel show themselves to be misogynistic, as they treat the two old women they have hired as things, rather than people, that they can use to settle a wager.



Lord Merton announces the race's start, and the two old women try to run. They crash into each other, however, and fall, hurting themselves. Evelina tries to help the women, but Mr. Coverley and Lord Merton swear at the women and make them run again. At last, it is settled that Lord Merton's old woman wins. Lord Merton gloats over this and gets drunk. While inebriated, he again pesters Evelina and drunkenly says she is the "best young woman" present. Evelina tries to get away from him, and Mrs. Selwyn eventually intervenes.

Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel display no sensibility (an 18th-century term that meant empathy or kindness) toward the old women—instead, they treat them as objects that they can use how they like, because they paid for them. This demonstrates how women were often commodified in this period, and how this commodification was dehumanizing and often led to women being abused. Women also had few rights and were unable to earn their own money. They, therefore, relied on finding a wealthy husband to support them. Lord Merton demonstrates how this situation leads to women being pitted against each other, as he names Evelina the best compared to the others and thus pits Louis and Evelina in competition with each other.



Lord Orville offers to take Evelina inside; Louisa takes offense to this and is very moody about it. Once inside, Lord Orville apologizes that he didn't protect Evelina from Lord Merton and says that he considers her to be someone he should protect. Evelina complains that everyone else at Clifton Hill ignores or disrespects her, and Lord Orville gallantly promises that he will always be her friend.

Louisa looks down on Evelina because she believes that Evelina is not noble. This suggests that, although nobility was associated with virtue in this era, this was not always the case. Lord Orville, in contrast, is truly sensible: he treats Evelina as an equal regardless of class and considers Evelina's feelings.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 8

The next evening, Evelina, Mrs. Selwyn, Lord Orville, Louisa, Mrs. Beaumont, Lord Merton, Mr. Lovel, and Mr. Coverley attend a ball together. Lord Orville dances first with Evelina and then with another young woman. Lord Merton asks who the woman is, and Mr. Lovel replies that she is Miss Belmont—Sir John Belmont's only daughter. Evelina is amazed to hear this because she, herself, is Sir John's only child. Mrs. Selwyn is also confused—as she knows Evelina's heritage—and quickly and discretely begins to question Mr. Lovel about Miss Belmont.

Although nobility was often associated with virtue in this period, Sir John has clearly lived a debauched and immoral life. He is estranged from Evelina—since he abandoned her mother—and has seemingly raised another child by a different woman in Evelina's place. This could seriously jeopardize Evelina's chance of reuniting with her father and receiving her full inheritance. As upper-class women could not earn their own money in 18th-century Britain, Evelina relies on her inheritance for financial support and to help her attract a husband, so this revelation could severely impact her future.



Mrs. Selwyn discovers that Miss Belmont is set to inherit Sir John's fortune and learns that Sir John is staying in London with his daughter. Mrs. Selwyn proposes that if Mr. Villars agrees, she and Evelina should go to see Sir John immediately to ask about Evelina's inheritance claim. Lord Orville notices that Evelina is quiet for the rest of the evening but is too polite to pry.

Again, young women like Evelina relied on their inheritance for financial support at this time. Inheriting a large sum also helped women attract a husband as men often married women for their money. As society considered marriage vital for young women, not receiving her inheritance could have a drastic impact on Evelina's future and could prevent her from claiming her rightful place among the nobility.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 9

A few days later, Evelina walks into Bristol with Mrs. Selwyn and Lord Orville and bumps into Mr. Macartney. He is not angry with Evelina for missing their meeting but wishes to repay her the money she lent him. While they are talking, Miss Belmont enters the room, and Macartney grows pale and distracted. Evelina notices that Lord Orville is watching her, and Macartney and hurries away. She wonders if Miss Belmont was once Macartney's lover.

In 18th-century Britain, nobility was often associated with virtue, while poverty was associated with corruption and immorality. But Macartney, who is poor, proves that reliable and honest people exist in all classes.



Lord Orville asks Evelina what she wants with Macartney, and Evelina says that she is desperate to talk with him but cannot say why. Lord Orville seems hurt and says that he has a right to know, since he has sworn to protect Evelina. Evelina again protests that she cannot share Macartney's secrets, and Lord Orville says that he will help arrange a meeting for her to speak with Macartney.

Evelina feels torn between doing what she feels is right (keeping Macartney's secret) and complying with 18th-century etiquette, which states that an unmarried woman should not meet privately with a strange man. Rather than judge Evelina for her decision—and assume that Macartney is her lover—Lord Orville gives Evelina the benefit of the doubt and supports her right to make decisions for herself.



That evening, Lord Orville tells Evelina that Mr. Macartney will visit her the next day. When Macartney arrives, he gives Evelina back the money she lent him, and Evelina asks him how he knows Miss Belmont. Macartney replies that she was his lover in Paris, and Evelina realizes that Macartney is her brother, since he is also Sir John Belmont's son. She does not say anything, however, and only reveals this to Mrs. Selwyn after Macartney has left.

Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, while poverty was associated with immorality and corruption, Macartney's honest and honorable behavior proves that moral people exist in all classes. Furthermore, class is depicted as arbitrary here as Macartney is, in fact, a noble—his father, Sir John, is a nobleman. However, Macartney is oblivious to his noble status and behaves morally for the sake of being moral, not because of the class he was raised in.



Evelina receives Mr. Villars's letter in which he asks her to leave Bristol and get away from Lord Orville, whom he suspects she is in love with. Evelina now realizes that she has been blind—she does love Lord Orville, and if she does not get away from him, her happiness may be ruined forever. Even though she knows it will be hard, she vows to leave Bristol as soon as possible and never see Lord Orville again. She hopes that Mr. Villars will not judge her for her innocence and naïveté.

Although Evelina loves Lord Orville, she does not think she will be able to marry him as, although she is a noble on her father's side, her father denies his connection to her. As a result, she's been raised middle-class. Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly ordered according to class and Lord Orville, who is a nobleman, is unlikely to marry someone he believes is beneath his own social rank.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 10

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to say that she will not leave Bristol immediately as she had planned. Mrs. Selwyn has convinced her that they cannot leave until they know whether or not they have Mr. Villars's permission to go see Sir John Belmont, Evelina's estranged father, and to ask him about her inheritance.

Upper- and middle-class women could not earn their own money in 18-century Britain—instead, they relied on their inheritance or their husband's money for financial support. Mrs. Selwyn feels it is important that Evelina receives her rightful inheritance from Sir John, as inheritance also impacted a woman's ability to attract a husband since men often married women for money rather than for love. Sir John's recognition that Evelina is her daughter would also help Evelina claim her rightful place in society as a true noble.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 11

To avoid Lord Orville the next day, Evelina pretends to be ill and stays in her room. When she finally comes out, Lord Orville kindly asks how she is and offers to take her for a ride in his carriage. Evelina refuses and says she will go for a walk with Mrs. Selwyn instead. Lord Orville asks if Evelina will go to the ball that night, but Evelina says no. Mrs. Selwyn thinks that Evelina is deliberately doing this to tease Lord Orville, whom Evelina coldly ignores on her way out. Lord Orville, obviously hurt by this, says that he has some business to attend to and leaves the room.

Evelina and Mrs. Selwyn walk into town and, on the way, they are surprised to hear some young men whispering about Evelina. Mrs. Selwyn meets a friend in the town, and Evelina decides to visit the shops with some of her acquaintances. On the way, more young men point at Evelina, and it starts to rain. Evelina and the other young women rush to find shelter, and Evelina finds herself sheltering in a doorway next to Sir Clement Willoughby.

Sir Clement says that he knew Evelina was in Bristol because everyone is talking about her. Evelina is amazed, and Sir Clement says that someone has written an anonymous poem about her, which declares Evelina to be the finest young woman in Bristol. Mrs. Selwyn joins them and says that this explains why all the young women hate Evelina. Mrs. Selwyn wanders off again, and Sir Clement says that he has traveled all over town looking for Evelina, and that he thinks she evades him on purpose to cruelly tease him.

Sir Clement is friendly with Mrs. Selwyn and insists on walking home with her and Evelina and being introduced to Mrs. Beaumont. When they arrive at Clifton Hill, they immediately meet Lord Orville, and he and Sir Clement look surprised and unhappy to see each other. The group gathers inside, where Sir Clement is introduced. Evelina cannot help noticing the difference between Sir Clement, who is boisterous and forceful, and Lord Orville, who is polite and sincere.

After Sir Clement leaves, Lord Orville asks Evelina if he has done something to offend her, but Evelina coolly brushes him off once more. That evening, Lord Orville is further hurt and surprised when Evelina comes downstairs dressed for the ball, even though she told him she was not going. He asks if she plans to dance with anyone, and she says she will go with Sir Clement.

Evelina deliberately avoids Lord Orville because she realizes that she is in love with him. Although Evelina is a noble—her estranged father is a nobleman—she has been raised middle-class, and Lord Orville does not know her real identity. It is unlikely that a wealthy nobleman like Lord Orville would marry someone like Evelina, whom he believes is beneath his social rank—therefore, Evelina avoids him to avoid getting hurt.



The young men in town do not consider that they may be embarrassing Evelina. They openly discuss her because they do not feel that they need to be polite to women, whom they consider inferior.



In 18th-century Britain, marriage was generally considered to be women's main goal. Most upper- and middle-class young women could not earn their own money and relied on inheritance (which would often pass to male family members instead) or finding a husband to financially support them. Therefore, women needed to compete for male attention, and being attractive to men was considered a woman's ultimate achievement. Furthermore, people often blamed women for the male attention they got. Therefore, Mrs. Selwyn blames Evelina because Sir Clement follows her, even though Evelina has not encouraged Sir Clement.



Sir Clement does not care about Evelina's feelings and forces her to spend time with him, even when she has made it clear that she does not want to. In contrast, Lord Orville is sensible (empathetic and considerate) and always does his best to make Evelina feel comfortable.



Evelina is in love with Lord Orville, but she wants to distance herself from him because of their class differences. Knowing that they will probably never get married, Evelina tries to put Lord Orville off so that she will not get hurt.



Lord Orville is quiet and sad for the rest of the evening. Sir Clement arrives and sits with Evelina for a while before taking her to the ball. He tries to give her the flattering poem about her that was found (which she assumes was written by Mr. Macartney), but Evelina notices Lord Orville watching and tries not to take it. Sir Clement forces it on her, however, and Lord Orville looks hurt.

Although Evelina is ignoring Lord Orville to protect herself, she's being uncharacteristically selfish in not considering Lord Orville's feelings or telling him the truth about why she's putting distance between them. Evelina is only spending time Sir Clement him to put off Lord Orville, which only encourages Sir Clement's persistence and impoliteness.



Evelina is quiet on the way to the ball and refuses to dance with Sir Clement when they arrive. Sir Clement sits with her and complains that, now that he has been at Howard Grove without her, he despises the Mirvans. Evelina crossly tells him not to criticize her friends, and Sir Clement then begins to interrogate her about her time spent with Lord Orville.

Sir Clement proves that he is two-faced, deceitful, and unkind. He thoughtlessly criticizes the Mirvans, even though they are Evelina's friends. He is happy to flatter people to their faces—while being cruel about them behind their backs—if this helps him get his own way. Sir Clement is a noble and, although nobility was often associated with virtue in this period, his character proves that this is not always the case.



Evelina is pleased that the others want to leave the ball early, but she's disappointed that Sir Clement insists on staying for supper at Clifton Hill. Evelina even cries during supper, but Lord Orville—who is also very forlorn—does not see because Sir Clement is always between them. Evelina writes that it is painful to suddenly stop being Lord Orville's friend and begs Mr. Villars to reassure her that she's doing the right thing by cutting him off.

Again, Sir Clement is totally insensible to Evelina's feelings and cannot see that she is not interested in him romantically. Evelina is in love with Lord Orville but thinks that he will never marry her because he thinks they are from different classes. Lord Orville is a wealthy nobleman and, while Evelina is a noble on her father's side, her father denies his connection to her and she has been raised middle-class. Evelina's looks to Mr. Villars for guidance and moral advice. He has advised her not to pin her hopes for marriage on Lord Orville because inter-class marriage was rare in this period.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 12

Mr. Villars writes to Evelina. He is baffled to hear that Sir John Belmont has a second daughter who is set to inherit his fortune. Mr. Villars can only assume that Sir John married again after Evelina's mother, Caroline's, death. Still, since Evelina is Sir John's legitimate heir, Mr. Villars says they must find out who this other daughter is, otherwise Caroline's reputation could be further damaged. Mr. Villars is further concerned that this will damage Evelina's reputation, which is already at risk because of her perceived illegitimacy.

Sir John Belmont lived a debauched and immoral life, seducing and abandoning several women and destroying their reputations in the process. In 18th-century Britain, even an innocent woman could have her reputation destroyed if a man accused her of premarital sex or misconduct of any kind. Mr. Villars fears that if people find out that Sir John married again after he impregnated then abandoned Caroline, it will confirm people's belief that Caroline and John were never married and further ruin both Caroline and Evelina's reputation. Children often inherited their parents' reputations in this period, and people considered illegitimate children to be corrupt or unworthy because they were conceived in an allegedly sinful manner.



Although Mr. Villars regrets that Mrs. Mirvan could not take Evelina to meet Sir John, he thinks that she must immediately go to see him with Mrs. Selwyn. Mr. Villars also sends them a letter to Sir John that Caroline wrote before her death and will send Mrs. Clinton—who was Caroline’s maid—to go with them. If none of this convinces Sir John that he is Evelina’s father, her physical similarity to Caroline surely will.

Mr. Villars wants to clear Caroline’s name, which would also help clear Evelina’s. Caroline’s reputation was ruined after Sir John seduced, impregnated, then abandoned her. Although Caroline and John were married in secret, Sir John denies the marriage and does not admit that Evelina is his daughter. 18th-century society was misogynistic, and even an innocent woman like Caroline could have her reputation destroyed by an accusation of premarital sex. Caroline’s damaged reputation affects Evelina too. If people believe that her parents were not married, they will think she is illegitimate and therefore inferior and unworthy of her inheritance.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 13

Mr. Villars encloses the letter that Evelina’s mother, Caroline, wrote to Sir John Belmont. Caroline writes that, even though she knows that she will die soon, she hopes that Sir John will still take responsibility for his child, Evelina. Caroline further writes that she has tried everything to convince Sir John to admit to their marriage, but her pleas are ignored, and he shows her no compassion. She hopes that he will, one day, recognize Evelina as his daughter and that he will not let his love affair with Caroline destroy Evelina’s life as well as her own.

Sir John destroyed Caroline’s reputation by seducing, impregnating, and then abandoned her. Although Caroline and Sir John had been secretly married, Sir John denied this after Caroline became pregnant with Evelina. People in 18th-century Britain tended to distrust women, so they believed Sir John over Caroline and ruined her good name. Caroline’s ruined reputation also affects Evelina’s reputation, because people believe that Evelina is illegitimate and therefore inferior.



In fact, Caroline even feels pity for Sir John because he may, one day, feel remorse for the wrong he has done to her—and, by extension, to Evelina. Caroline hopes that Sir John will leave Evelina his fortune, though she hopes Evelina will not grow up to look like her, as this may make Sir John despise Evelina. Caroline concludes that, although she will die soon, she passionately loves baby Evelina and will pray for Sir John, whom she hopes will realize the error of his ways.

If people believe that Evelina is illegitimate, she could be socially ostracized and lose out on her inheritance. Much like Evelina, Caroline demonstrates innate sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and kindness), as she forgives Sir John even though he has wronged her.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 14

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and says that—although she wanted to break off contact with Lord Orville—she is sad that he now treats her coldly. That morning, she receives a visit from Sir Clement, who tries to seduce her, and is relieved when Mrs. Beaumont, Mrs. Selwyn, and Louisa enter the room and invite them to come for a drive. Evelina says no, but Sir Clement—who, she notices, follows Mrs. Beaumont around—says that he will go. Lord Orville stays behind too, and Evelina goes to her room to avoid him.

Evelina is in love with Lord Orville but tries to avoid him because she thinks that they cannot be married. Lord Orville is a nobleman and, although Evelina is a noble on her father’s side, her father denies his relation to her. Evelina, therefore, has been raised middle-class, and her identity has been kept secret. Lord Orville is unlikely to marry someone who is socially inferior to him. Meanwhile, Sir Clement is rude and thoughtless—he clearly doesn’t care about Evelina’s reputation, which could be lastingly destroyed if Sir Clement seduced her and then refused to marry her.



Sir Clement joins them again at dinner and, again, constantly badgers Evelina. Lord Orville ignores her and does not intervene. Evelina regrets her decision to break off contact with Lord Orville so quickly—she realizes now that he does not understand the reason for her sudden disinterest and is probably hurt by it. Evelina wishes that she had thought about this earlier, but realizes it is too late now.

Evelina now realizes that she has been careless with Lord Orville's feelings and has given him no reason as to why she's suddenly avoiding him. Although Evelina is naturally sensible and always tries to be virtuous, she is young and inexperienced and does not always make the right choice.



The next morning, Evelina goes walking in the garden, where Sir Clement finds her. He immediately ushers her into a secluded spot and begins to complain that she owes him because he puts up with Mrs. Beaumont and Mrs. Selwyn so that he could spend time with her. Evelina is repulsed by his rudeness, but he says that it is Evelina's fault he thinks other ladies are worthless, as they are nothing compared to her.

Sir Clement is rude, entitled, and arrogant. Although he is a noble, which was often associated with virtue in 18th-century Britain, Sir Clement instead proves that he is prepared to lie and flatter people whom he secretly dislikes, if he thinks this behavior will benefit him. Sir Clement also tries to blame Evelina for his own bad behavior, which supports Burney's argument that 18th-century society is misogynistic and that women are often blamed for men's actions.



Sir Clement complains that he particularly dislikes Mrs. Selwyn because she is too sharp and witty for a woman. Evelina again rebukes his rudeness. Sir Clement says that he also put up with the terrible Mirvans for her sake, and Evelina says that his behavior disgusts her and makes him seem like a hypocrite. She gets up to leave, but Sir Clement seizes her hand and begs her to forgive him. Lord Orville, who is passing, approaches and warns Sir Clement to let Evelina go. Sir Clement does so, and Evelina rushes into the house.

Sir Clement proves that he is misogynistic, arrogant, and two-faced. He thoughtlessly criticizes Evelina's friends to her face and admits that he only spends time with them because this benefits him, as it allows him to spend time with her. Although Sir Clement is a nobleman, and nobility is associated with virtue at this time, Sir Clement proves that this is not always the case.



Inside, Mrs. Selwyn is shocked to see Evelina's agitated condition. Evelina tells Mrs. Selwyn about the confrontation between Lord Orville and Sir Clement in the garden, and Mrs. Selwyn hurries outside. She returns and tells Evelina that she has overheard a conversation between Lord Orville and Sir Clement. Lord Orville calmly asked Sir Clement what he wants from Evelina. When Sir Clement asked why Lord Orville wanted to know, Lord Orville replied that he cares deeply about Evelina and worries about her because she is inexperienced.

Lord Orville is truly sensibility (sensibility in this period referred to a person's capacity for empathy and consideration toward others), and he proves that he genuinely cares about Evelina's feelings. He confronts Sir Clement and holds him responsible for his behavior toward Evelina, rather than wrongly blaming her for leading Sir Clement on.



Sir Clement told Lord Orville that he plans to pursue Evelina until she falls in love with him. Lord Orville then warned Sir Clement that, although Evelina seems unprotected, she has people looking out for her. He further reminded Sir Clement that Evelina is a bright young woman, not a toy to be played with. Sir Clement objected that, when Lord Orville first met Evelina, he thought she was flirtatious and stupid. Lord Orville replied that did not know how innocent she was then.

Women had few rights in 18th-century Britain and were considered their husband or father's property. Therefore, women could not defend themselves from abuse but had to rely on their male protectors. Evelina is not married, and her guardian, Mr. Villars, is elderly—therefore, she seems like an easy target for the predatory Sir Clement. Lord Orville shows that he is truly noble and virtuous, as he is willing to admit his mistake and defend Evelina because he sees that she is in danger.



Lord Orville asked Sir Clement if he planned to marry Evelina, and Sir Clement replied that he never plans to get married. He also commented that Evelina has no inheritance, so he would not choose to marry her. Lord Orville ended the conversation here. Evelina is disgusted with Sir Clement. She is impressed by Lord Orville, however, and wonders what Mr. Villars thinks of his conduct. Evelina further notes that Sir Clement tried to speak to her throughout dinner, but she resolutely ignored him.

Sir Clement proves that he has cruel intentions toward Evelina. Premarital sex was considered sinful at this time, and society was particularly harsh on women whom men seduced. If Sir Clement succeeded in seducing Evelina and then refused to marry her, he could ruin her good name and destroy her hopes of marrying someone else. Furthermore, Sir Clement openly admits that he is only interested in marrying for money, not for love, and will not consider Evelina for marriage because she does not stand to inherit. Meanwhile, Evelina is young and inexperienced and does not trust her own judgement when it comes to men. She therefore asks Mr. Villars for his verdict on Lord Orville's conduct.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 15

Evelina writes again to Mr. Villars and tells him that she will soon leave Bristol. That morning, Lord Orville meets her before breakfast and asks her for a private word. He begs to know how he has offended her and whether Sir Clement has anything to do with it. Evelina apologizes profusely for her cold behavior toward him and tells him that she wants nothing to do with Sir Clement. Lord Orville is delighted and asks Evelina if they can be friends again. She agrees, and Lord Orville seems much happier. Sir Clement comes to say goodbye after breakfast, but Evelina will not see him.

Evelina is in love with Lord Orville and tried to distance herself from him because she believed they could never get married because they are from different social classes: Lord Orville is a noble, while she was raised middle-class. Seeing her change in behavior, Lord Orville wrongly assumes that Evelina loves Sir Clement. Evelina now realizes that her unprovoked coldness toward Lord Orville was cruel and thoughtless and failed to take his feelings into account. Evelina is inexperienced and has not dealt with dilemmas like this before. She realizes now that she made a mistake and learns that maturing and making one's way in the world involves trial and error.



Evelina receives Mr. Villars's letter, which gives her permission to meet her estranged father, Sir John, in London. She is nervous, so Lord Orville tries his best to cheer her up. He is distressed when he hears that Evelina and Mrs. Selwyn will leave Bristol the next day. Evelina says that she must go, and Lord Orville falls to his knees before her and confesses that he loves her. At first, Evelina is overcome and nearly faints, but she soon recovers and admits that she loves him too.

Evelina is estranged from her father, the wealthy nobleman, Sir John Belmont. Sir John married and impregnated Evelina's mother and then denied the marriage and abandoned her, thereby ruining her reputation. Evelina believes that Lord Orville will not marry her because he is a noble while she has been raised middle-class (even though she is technically a noble, Lord Orville does not know this). 18th-century Britain was strictly ordered around class, and inter-class marriages were uncommon. But Evelina is proven wrong, as Lord Orville wants to marry her for love—something that did not happen often at this time.



Evelina and Lord Orville sit together and talk until Mrs. Selwyn finds them. Mrs. Selwyn immediately understands that Lord Orville has proposed, and she teasingly tells Evelina to go and pack. Lord Orville then asks Evelina who he should ask for permission to marry her, and Evelina says that she does not fully know. Lord Orville is confused, and Evelina says that she cannot explain now but promises to tell him everything as soon as she can.

In 18th-century Britain, women had few rights and little agency in their own lives. They were considered their father's property until they were married, after which they belonged to their husbands. Lord Orville, therefore, wants to ask Evelina's father's permission to marry her. However, Evelina potentially has two fathers: her adoptive father, Mr. Villars, and her estranged biological father, Sir John.



Lord Orville asks if he can write to Evelina when she travels to London, and Evelina says that she would rather not write to him after the last embarrassing written exchange between them. Lord Orville, confused, begs Evelina to explain. Evelina reminds Lord Orville that she wrote a note to him after the Branghtons crashed his coach, and that he wrote a flirtatious note to her in return. But Lord Orville replies that he never received her note and never wrote a reply. Evelina says that she will show him the note, as Lord Orville cannot explain it. Evelina hopes that Mr. Villars will approve of their marriage, as she is extremely happy.

Eighteenth-century British society was governed by strict etiquette conventions, and people considered it improper for an unmarried woman to write privately to a man she didn't know well—as Evelina did with Lord Orville. Evelina once believed that Lord Orville took advantage of her naïveté about etiquette conventions and used it as an excuse to write a flirty note back to her. She forgave him for this, but she now discovers that he did not write the note at all.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 16

The next morning, Evelina plans to meet Lord Orville in the garden to show him the flirtatious note that he says he did not write but that was sent to Evelina in his name. On the way, however, Evelina meets Sir Clement, who snatches the note from her. Sir Clement asks how Evelina can care for Lord Orville when he writes these things to her. Evelina replies that she loves Lord Orville, and Sir Clement rips up the letter. Sir Clement seizes Evelina and says that Lord Orville's deceitful façade has fooled her.

Although nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Sir Clement—who is a nobleman—behaves aggressively toward Evelina and does not care that he potentially frightens her and risks her reputation. At this time, innocent women were often blamed for men's violent or flirtatious behavior toward them.



Mrs. Beaumont and Louisa enter the room, and Sir Clement rushes away and storms from the house. Evelina guesses that Sir Clement wrote the insulting letter himself and pretended it was from Lord Orville. She feels sorry for Sir Clement because he was so distressed, but she does not want to see him again. Mrs. Selwyn, Mr. Lovel, Mr. Coverley, and Lord Merton enter the room, and Mrs. Selwyn says that she has just seen Sir Clement on the stairs and that he rudely rushed past her.

Sir Clement hides his deceitful and callous nature behind his noble veneer (nobility was associated with virtue in this period), but this façade crumbles when he loses his temper with Evelina. She finally realizes that Sir Clement wrote her the insulting and flirtatious note to her and tried to frame Lord Orville for it. Evelina demonstrates her innate sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and kindness), as she still feels sorry for Sir Clement even though he has insulted and betrayed her.



Lord Merton asks Louisa if she will walk with him in the garden, but Louisa says that her nerves are too delicate. Lord Merton says that he likes delicacy in a woman and looks maliciously at Mrs. Selwyn, who replies that she feels sorry for women since they must choose a husband who is more intelligent than them from a selection of idiots. During this exchange, Evelina sneaks out of the room.

Sensibility was extremely fashionable in 18th-century Britain, and many people considered it an ideal feminine trait. Mrs. Selwyn defies convention, as she refuses to pretend to act stereotypically feminine when she is not. Mrs. Selwyn's comment about marriage is a satirical critique about 18th-century patriarchal conventions, which dictated that a young woman's only goal in life was marriage.



When Evelina is alone, a servant enters and says that Mr. Macartney has come to see her. Evelina asks Macartney if he has spoken to his father, Sir John, and Macartney replies that Sir John is in Bristol. Sir John still despises Macartney, however, because Macartney fell in love with his daughter, Miss Belmont, before he knew that she was his sister. Evelina then tells Macartney that Sir John is also her father and that she, too, is his sister. Thrilled, Macartney joyfully embraces her.

Sir John has lived a debauched and immoral life and has clearly seduced and impregnated many women without marrying them. This is suggested by the fact that Evelina, Macartney, and Miss Belmont all seem to have different mothers, and yet they're all Sir John's children. This supports Burney's ongoing argument that nobility does not always signify virtue.



Lord Orville enters the room and tells Evelina that Mrs. Selwyn's carriage is waiting to take Evelina to London. Lord Orville greets Mr. Macartney coldly, but Evelina explains that Macartney is her brother, and Lord Orville is delighted. Mrs. Selwyn enters the room and Evelina tells her that Sir John is in Bristol. Mrs. Selwyn writes a note to him and asks if she may visit him that day. Sir John replies that Mrs. Selwyn may visit, and she immediately sets off.

Mrs. Selwyn returns and describes her visit to Sir John. Evelina is amazed to learn that Sir John Belmont claims to already have a daughter whose mother was Caroline Belmont and who has been raised in a convent in France. He sent Mrs. Selwyn away and had no interest in hearing her ridiculous tale. Evelina feels ashamed and rejected and does not understand how this has happened. She goes to her room and bursts into tears.

Lord Orville follows Evelina to her room and begs her to confide in him. Evelina cannot explain, so Lord Orville comforts her and then goes to speak with Mrs. Selwyn. Mrs. Selwyn then visits Evelina's room and tells her that she has told Lord Orville everything about Evelina's history—that her father, Sir John, denied his marriage to her mother, Caroline, and does not accept Evelina as his daughter. Lord Orville wishes to marry Evelina straightaway, although Mrs. Selwyn says that many men would be put off by her family status.

Mrs. Selwyn says that she and Evelina should visit Sir John again tomorrow and try and convince him that she is his daughter. Evelina is anxious about this but reluctantly agrees. After dinner, she and Lord Orville walk in the garden, and Lord Orville asks Evelina if she thinks Mr. Villars will approve of their marriage. Evelina assures him that he will, as Mr. Villars loves her very much and wants her to be happy.

Lord Orville is concerned by Evelina's connection with Macartney until he discovers that Macartney is her brother. Lord Orville has Evelina's best interests in mind and, although he wants to allow her freedom to make her choices, he worries that young men like Macartney may want to seduce Evelina or take advantage of her innocence.



Evelina is Sir John's rightful heir because he and Caroline were married—even though Sir John denies the marriage—when Evelina was conceived. If people believe that Sir John has another daughter—Miss Belmont—with Caroline, people will think that Caroline is not Evelina's mother. This would mean that Evelina would always be considered illegitimate and she would never inherit her rightful place.



Evelina worries that if Lord Orville thinks she is illegitimate, he will not want to marry her. People considered illegitimate children to be unworthy and inferior in this period, and a prestigious nobleman like Lord Orville is unlikely to marry someone illegitimate. Lord Orville proves Evelina wrong, however: he loves her for who she is, not for her status or family connections—a rarity in an 18th-century marriage.



It is vital that Evelina convinces Sir John she is his daughter. If she cannot, her reputation and inheritance will be compromised. Although Sir John did marry Evelina's mother, Caroline, before Evelina was conceived, Sir John denies this—and people believe him over Caroline. People, therefore, consider Evelina illegitimate, meaning that she will never occupy her true noble rank or receive her rightful inheritance.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 17

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars to tell him about her meeting with her father, Sir John. When they arrive at Sir John's, Evelina is so nervous that she almost faints, so Mrs. Selwyn goes inside to meet Sir John. Evelina hears Mrs. Selwyn explain to Sir John that his daughter is waiting outside to meet him. Sir John confidently assures her that he has just had breakfast with his daughter, but nonetheless, he comes out to look at Evelina.

When Sir John sees Evelina, he turns pale and cries out because he thinks she is her mother, Caroline. Evelina collapses in tears, and Sir John, looking down at her, says that Evelina is certainly Caroline's daughter because she looks so like her. He orders Mrs. Selwyn and Evelina to leave and staggers from the room. Mrs. Selwyn makes to leave, but Evelina begs her to wait a little while. Soon, a servant appears and says that Sir John is ill but will see them the next morning.

When Evelina returns to Clifton Hill, she tells Mrs. Clinton what has happened. Mrs. Clinton suddenly remembers that one of Caroline's maids, Dame Green, also had a baby around the time that Evelina was born. The maid left before the child was born, and Mrs. Clinton says that her daughter must be the girl whom Sir John has raised as his own and who he believes is Caroline's daughter instead of Evelina. Evelina calls for Mrs. Selwyn, and Mrs. Selwyn takes Mrs. Clinton to see Sir John again.

When Mrs. Selwyn and Mrs. Clinton arrive to see Sir John, he tells them that, now that he has seen how much Evelina resembles her mother, he knows for sure that she is his daughter. Sir John summons Dame Green and, when she sees Mrs. Clinton, she breaks down. She confesses that instead of bringing baby Evelina to Sir John many years ago, she really gave him her own illegitimate daughter, whom he raised as Miss Belmont. When they ask Dame Green why she did this, Dame Green says that she knew Mr. Villars would provide for Evelina, whereas her child would receive nothing.

It is vital that Evelina convinces Sir John that she is his daughter, as he claims that he already has a daughter and that Evelina is an imposter. Although Sir John did marry Evelina's mother before Evelina was conceived, Sir John denies this, and people believe Sir John over Caroline. If Evelina cannot convince Sir John, people will always consider her illegitimate, something that could negatively affect her social status, as people considered illegitimate children inferior. This would mean that Caroline's reputation would never be cleared, and Evelina would never receive her rightful inheritance.



Evelina can't inherit anything financial from her mother—women did not control finances or inheritance in this period, and Caroline was socially ruined and cut off from her wealthy family. However, Caroline's legacy lives on in Evelina's looks and kind temperament, and this reveals Evelina's true identity to Sir John.



Eighteenth-century Britain was strictly ordered around class, and lower- and middle-class people had few opportunities for social mobility. Therefore, lower- and middle-class people often went to extreme or devious lengths to ensure that they or their children reaped some of the social benefits of being upper-class. Dame Green took this opportunity for her daughter because she knew that, as a poor servant's child, her daughter would have no opportunity to gain wealth or social status on her own.



Unlike Dame Green, Caroline was wealthy and privileged before Sir John ruined her reputation. Dame Green knew that even if Evelina was considered illegitimate, she would have more social advantages than her own child.



Miss Belmont knows nothing about her true status—she is not Sir John’s daughter, as she believes, but the servant, Dame Green’s, daughter. Sir John says that he rejected all attempts to introduce him to Evelina because he believed it was a trick to steal Miss Belmont’s inheritance. Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and says that she has no hard feelings against Miss Belmont and thinks of her as a sister. Sir John is too fatigued to see Evelina straightaway, but he will meet Mrs. Selwyn again the next morning.

VOLUME 3, LETTER 18

The next morning, Mrs. Selwyn bursts into Evelina’s room and tells Evelina that she will be married next week. Mrs. Selwyn has discussed the matter with Sir John, and he has decided that Miss Belmont and Evelina should both marry immediately to avoid any disgrace. Miss Belmont will marry Mr. Macartney, whom Sir John has reconciled with, and Evelina will marry Lord Orville, who has spoken to Sir John and received his blessing.

Mrs. Selwyn further explains that Sir John will give Evelina a portion of her inheritance, and she will immediately go to live at Lord Orville’s estate. Although Miss Belmont’s real identity will never be publicly exposed—she will now take the title of Mr. Macartney’s wife, and Mr. Macartney is also Sir John’s heir as he is his son—Evelina will now publicly claim her rightful place in society as Sir John’s daughter.

Evelina asks if she can meet Sir John, and Mrs. Selwyn replies that Sir John thinks Evelina hates him. Evelina is distressed by this and wishes to assure him she does not. That evening, she and Lord Orville discuss their marriage arrangements. Evelina does not want to marry without Mr. Villars’s blessing, so she writes to **Berry Hill** to ask for it. Lord Orville also says that, after their marriage, they can spend a month at Berry Hill before moving to his house.

Dame Green tricked Sir John into believing that Miss Belmont was his own, knowing that Miss Belmont would otherwise struggle in life and never escape her class. The nobility were often wary attempts like this made by social climbers, because they felt that social mobility undermined their superior position in society. Burney suggests that class is arbitrary, however, and that people may not be of the social status that they appear to be.



Although Sir John has lived a debauched and immoral life, he clearly regrets his mistakes and is willing to make amends for them by treating both his adopted daughter and his biological daughter, Evelina, fairly. If people discover that Miss Belmont is illegitimate and working-class, she will be socially ostracized. However, Sir John does not want to deprive Evelina of her rightful, noble status as his daughter.



As Miss Belmont has never been formally introduced to society—young women were not allowed to socialize freely until they were old enough or were married—people will not know what Sir John’s daughter looks like and will accept Evelina in her place. Meanwhile, Sir John will allow Miss Belmont to retain her upper-class status: she will marry his son, Macartney, who has now discovered that he, too, is a noble.



Evelina demonstrates her kind temperament and innate sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity), as she forgives Sir John even though he has wronged her. Meanwhile, Mr. Villars and Lord Orville both demonstrate that they have Evelina’s best interests in mind and want her to be happy—Mr. Villars by allowing her to marry Lord Orville, and Lord Orville by allowing her to spend time with Mr. Villars. In 18th-century Britain, women were generally considered to be their father’s or husband’s property. Evelina is lucky, because her adoptive father and future husband respect her wishes and allow her freedom to make her own decisions—something that Burney implies every woman should have a right to.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 19

The next morning, Mrs. Beaumont and Louisa invite Evelina to walk in the garden with them. Evelina has noticed that they treat her differently now that she is engaged to Lord Orville and try to spend more time with her. Evelina tries to treat them coldly as revenge for their previous cool attitude toward her, but this is not in her nature. While they walk in the garden, Lord Orville approaches and formally introduces Evelina to Mrs. Beaumont and Louisa as Sir John Belmont's only daughter. The two ladies are amazed and immediately begin to flatter Evelina.

Lord Orville tells Evelina that she may visit Sir John that evening, which makes Evelina extremely nervous. Sir John wants to see Evelina alone; as soon as she enters his chamber, he begins to weep. Evelina is shocked and does not know what to do. Sir John then orders her to leave, since she has punished him enough. Evelina sadly says that she blesses him and does not wish to hurt him. Sir John is amazed at her kindness and begins to apologize to her. Evelina gives Sir John the letter from Caroline, which Mr. Villars sent to her, and he takes it to a corner to read.

Sir John begins to sob as he reads Caroline's letter and cries that Caroline's last words torture him with guilt. Evelina can hold back no longer and goes to him, crying herself, and begs him not to abandon her. Sir John says that he loves her, but her appearance reminds him of Caroline, and it is painful for him to look at her. He tearfully gives her his blessing and sends her out of the room. Outside, in the hallway, Evelina finds Lord Orville and Mr. Macartney waiting for her. Lord Orville comforts her, and Mr. Macartney tells her that his fiancée, Miss Belmont, will also receive half of Sir John's inheritance, which pleases Evelina.

VOLUME 3, LETTER 20

The next day, Evelina receives a letter from Sir Clement. He has heard about her engagement to Lord Orville and admits that he wrote the insulting letter to Evelina, which he signed with Lord Orville's name several weeks ago. Sir Clement confesses that, when he wrote the letter, he believed that Lord Orville did not love Evelina. Sir Clement does not apologize and says that Evelina can show Lord Orville this letter if she wants. Sir Clement will go abroad soon and does not care what Lord Orville thinks of him. Evelina thinks that this is a strange letter and that Sir Clement is extremely proud.

Mrs. Beaumont and Louisa prove that they are shallow and judge people based on their class. Mrs. Beaumont and Louisa now know that Evelina is Sir John Belmont's daughter and, since Sir John is a prestigious nobleman, they want to spend time with Evelina to improve their own status. Before, when they thought Evelina was middle-class, they treated her rudely. Although nobility was associated with virtue and sensibility in this period, Mrs. Beaumont and Louisa prove that this is not always the case.



Evelina demonstrates her innate sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity), as she forgives Sir John and does not want him to suffer. Although Sir John has lived a debauched and immoral life, he has clearly learned from his mistakes and now regrets them.



Evelina does not want Sir John to suffer for her sake, because he clearly feels remorse for his mistakes. Sir John also shows that he wants to live a moral and virtuous life now, as instead of turning away Miss Belmont (who is not his own daughter but a servant's child who was given to him in Evelina's place), Sir John shares his wealth with her. This goes to show that people can learn and grow from their errors.



Although Sir Clement is a nobleman, and nobility was associated with virtue in this period, Sir Clement proves that he is rude and entitled, and that he will not admit or learn from his mistakes. Instead of apologizing for trying to frame Lord Orville, Sir Clement refuses to admit that he was wrong to do this and fails to grow or learn from his misdeed.



Evelina writes a short note back to Sir Clement and tells him that she does not want to hear from him again. Mr. Macartney then comes to see Evelina and gives her a note from Sir John that contains details of her inheritance. Evelina feels she must get used to the idea that her status in life is about to change. She wishes that she could make Sir John accept her forgiveness.

Evelina's upward mobility—she was raised middle-class but has now been recognized as the nobleman, Sir John's daughter—is unusual given the rigid class hierarchy of 18th-century Britain. It does not reflect a genuine class change but a reclaiming of her rightful place among the nobility. Burney therefore suggests that true social mobility is impossible in this society.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 21

The next day, Evelina and Lord Orville go out for a drive to Bath with Louisa, Lord Merton, Mr. Lovel, and Mrs. Selwyn. On the road, they bump into Captain Mirvan who, to Evelina's amazement, tells her that Maria is in the coach he's driving. Evelina and Maria are joyfully reunited, and the group goes to a hotel together. While they are there, Captain Mirvan recognizes Mr. Lovel from London—the pair met at a play, and Captain Mirvan made fun of Mr. Lovel because Mr. Lovel claimed he did not know what the play was and only came to the **theater** to be seen. Mr. Lovel seems embarrassed and Captain Mirvan begins to tease him about this incident.

Captain Mirvan mocks Mr. Lovel because he finds his behavior petty and shallow; he thinks that Mr. Lovel is obsessed with his public image. Like many nobles in this period, Mr. Lovel is more interested in appearing fashionable than actually living a virtuous and meaningful life, and Captain Mirvan points this out. Although Captain Mirvan's behavior is also rude, he does not care because he lives outside English upper-class society (he is a naval officer) and doesn't feel the need to follow etiquette conventions.



When Louisa has rested, the group goes out to tour Bath. Captain Mirvan is disappointed that Madame Duval is not there, since he loves making fun of her. Captain Mirvan begins to tease Mr. Lovel instead, threatening to throw him in the public baths. Mr. Lovel is shocked by Captain Mirvan's violent humor. Later, the group returns to Mrs. Beaumont's house for dinner. During dinner, Captain Mirvan is annoyed by Lord Merton and Mr. Lovel's simpering conversation, and he continues to make inappropriate comments.

Sensibility (an 18th-century term associated with empathy and emotional sensitivity) was fashionable in this period. Many nobles, like Mr. Lovel, pretended to be delicate and emotionally refined to fit in with this ideal. They are, therefore, shocked by Captain Mirvan's rough behavior, although the Captain rightfully points out that nobles like Mr. Lovel are often petty and shallow.



After dinner, Captain Mirvan gives Evelina two letters: one from Mrs. Mirvan, which wishes her well in her marriage, and one from Madame Duval. Madame Duval writes that she has a cold and cannot come to Evelina's wedding but that she has broken up with Monsieur Du Bois and, therefore, will leave her whole inheritance to Evelina. Captain Mirvan then leaves with Maria to go to his hotel but returns not long after and says that he has found Mr. Lovel's twin. Mr. Lovel is confused, and the party is amazed when Captain Mirvan brings in a monkey dressed in fashionable clothes.

Madame Duval wants to leave her inheritance to Evelina because Evelina has now claimed her rightful place as Sir John's daughter and is, therefore, now a noblewoman. Madame Duval's attitude demonstrates the idea that social mobility was often impossible in this period; wealthy people left their money to other wealthy people and not to their poorer relatives. Meanwhile, Captain Mirvan suggests that Mr. Lovel is like a monkey because he is a silly, senseless man who only cares about his fashionable appearance.



The ladies are very alarmed by the monkey, and Mr. Lovel tremulously tries to fight it. The monkey then attacks him and bites his ear, which Captain Mirvan finds hilarious. Mr. Lovel cries out that he will die, but he soon realizes that it is only a small cut. The blood has ruined his clothes, however, and he is extremely annoyed with the Captain. Mrs. Selwyn jokes that the scar will make Mr. Lovel look tough, and Captain Mirvan says that Mr. Lovel wears a **wig**.

Eighteenth-century nobles, like Mr. Lovel, often pretended to be very fragile and emotionally dramatic just to enhance their reputations. This is why Mr. Lovel reacts so theatrically to the monkey, and why Captain Mirvan says that Mr. Lovel wears a wig—an ongoing symbol of vanity, deceit, and shallowness.



Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley say that Mr. Lovel must fight Captain Mirvan, as he cannot let himself be insulted. Mr. Lovel looks worried, however, and quickly makes an excuse to leave. Captain Mirvan is extremely pleased with his joke. That evening, the group plays cards. Evelina receives her letter from Mr. Villars, which gives her permission to marry Lord Orville. She is very touched by Mr. Villars's kind words and grateful to have him as her guardian. She and Lord Orville will be married in a few days, and Mr. Macartney and Miss Belmont will attend the wedding.

Mr. Lovel is afraid of Captain Mirvan because the Captain lives outside upper-class British society and does not follow the strict etiquette conventions of the period. Meanwhile, Mr. Villars wants Evelina to be happy and is pleased that she has grown into a mature and sensible young woman, as evidenced by her selection of a good partner in Lord Orville.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 22

Mr. Villars writes to Evelina and says that he feels his life's every hope has now been fulfilled. Evelina is restored to her rightful place as Sir John's heir, Caroline's name has been cleared, and Evelina will marry her true love, Lord Orville. He joyfully gives his consent to the wedding and will live out his remaining life happily knowing that Evelina is cared and provided for.

Mr. Villars has always had Evelina's best intentions in mind and is pleased that his guidance has helped her grow up into a mature and sensible young woman.



VOLUME 3, LETTER 23

Evelina writes to Mr. Villars and tells him that she has married Lord Orville. She is blissfully happy and can only write a quick note, as their carriage waits outside to take them to **Berry Hill**, where they will stay for a month. She cannot wait to be reunited with Mr. Villars, whom she calls the "best of men," after her long time spent away from him out in the world.

Berry Hill, Evelina's childhood home, symbolizes her innocent and inexperience. Evelina's triumphant return to Berry Hill with her new husband reflects the idea that Evelina has successfully gone out into the world to gain experience. She has navigated upper-class society and achieved the ultimate goal for a young woman in this period (finding a good husband). Evelina can now return to her childhood home, unspoiled by her experiences but changed for the better by them.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Greenall, Lily. "Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 17 Aug 2020. Web. 18 Aug 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Greenall, Lily. "Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World." LitCharts LLC, August 17, 2020. Retrieved August 18, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/evelina-or-the-history-of-a-young-lady-s-entrance-into-the-world>.

To cite any of the quotes from *Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Burney, Fanny. *Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*. Dover Thrift Editions. 2015.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Burney, Fanny. *Evelina: or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*. Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift Editions. 2015.