

Penguin Readers



*A
Room
with a
View*

E. M. Forster

Penguin  Readers

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

E. M. FORSTER

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People in the story



Miss Charlotte Bartlett



Lucy Honeychurch



Mr Emerson



George Emerson



Mr Beebe



Cecil Vyse

New words



carriage



church



clergyman



piano



shadow



violet

Note about the story

E. M. Forster (1879–1970) was an English author. He is best known for his **novels*** *A Room with a View*, *A Passage to India* and *Howards End*.

In *A Room with a View*, Lucy and George meet in a *pension* (a small hotel) in Florence in Italy, in the early 1900s. Florence has many famous old places, like the squares of Santa Croce and della Annunziata. Lucy also goes to Rome and visits the famous St Peter's Square.

Italian art is an important topic in the novel. In Florence, Lucy looks at *frescoes* (paintings on a wall) by the painter Giotto. Lucy thinks that George is like a man in the paintings of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, and Cecil thinks that Lucy is like a woman in the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci. Cecil meets the Emersons in London's National Gallery, which has many famous Italian paintings.

A Room with a View is about **class** and **manners** at the time that the story happens. People who are “middle” or “upper” class must always say and do the “right thing” and show good manners. People who do not have much money and **education** are “working” class.

Before-reading question

- 1 The first part of *A Room with a View* happens in Florence. Have you ever been to Florence or Italy? If your answer is yes, what was it like? Describe the buildings, the weather and the people.

*Definitions of words in **bold** can be found in the glossary on pages 78–80.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE A room without a view

“It is terrible,” said Miss Bartlett. “Really terrible. The *signora* promised us south rooms with a **view**. But we have north rooms with no view.”

“And she sounds like she’s from London!” said Lucy. She looked at the row of English people who sat on either side of the dinner table and the bottles of water and red wine that stood in front of them, and then at the picture of the English queen above their heads. “Don’t you feel that we could be in London in this *pension*?” she added, turning to her cousin. “Oh, I really wanted a view of the River Arno!”

“Any room is fine for me,” Miss Bartlett replied. “But it does seem hard that you don’t have a view.”

“Of course, you must have a view over the Arno, too, Charlotte,” Lucy said, quickly. “The first room at the front that comes . . .”

“No, you must have it,” **argued** Miss Bartlett, knowing that Lucy’s mother was paying for this journey. “Or your mother would never **forgive** me.”

“No, no!” Lucy was **embarrassed** – she knew that Miss Bartlett was poor. “*You* must have it. Or she would never forgive *me*.”

Some of the other **guests** were looking uncomfortable. Then one of them moved forward in his chair and said, "I have a view."

Miss Bartlett was **shocked**. Usually at a *pension*, the different guests did not speak much for the first few days. She knew that the man who spoke was of a lower **class**. He was old, and heavy, with a wide, pale face and large eyes that were like a child's. Miss Bartlett looked away and said, coldly, "How lovely a view is!"

"This is my son, George," said the old man. "He has a view, too. What I mean is, you can have our rooms. We'll change."

"Thank you very much," replied Miss Bartlett. "But we can't allow it."

"Why?" said the old man.

"We don't like to take . . ." Lucy began.

"But *why*?" he said again. "Women like a view and men don't." Suddenly, he hit the table with his hand and turned to his son. "George, tell them!"

"Of course they should have the rooms," replied George.

The young man did not look at the ladies as he spoke, but he sounded **confused**, and a bit sad. Lucy felt confused, too – she looked at the old man and saw that trouble was coming. He began to attack them with words. Why should they not change? What reason could Miss Bartlett give? He and his son could have their things out in half an hour.

Miss Bartlett reddened and she looked around at the other guests with a face that said, "Are you all like this?"



Two little old women looked back. “No. We are from a good class and we have **manners**,” their faces replied.

“Eat your dinner, dear,” Miss Bartlett said, quietly, turning back to Lucy. “This *pension* is no good. We’ll change it tomorrow.”

But as soon as she decided this, the door to the dining room opened and a large **clergyman** with a kind face entered. Lucy jumped to her feet and cried, “Oh, Mr Beebe! How lovely! Oh, Charlotte, we must stay here now!”

“How do you do, Mr Beebe?” said Miss Bartlett. “Do you remember us? Miss Bartlett and Miss Honeychurch who were at Tunbridge Wells that very cold April?”

The clergyman did not remember the ladies very well, but he came forward smiling and sat in an empty chair.

“Miss Honeychurch lives in Summer Street,” said Miss Bartlett. “I understand that you are going to be their clergyman?”

“That’s right,” replied Mr Beebe. “I’m going to move there in June. I’m very lucky – it’s a lovely town.”

“Oh, I’m **glad**!” said Lucy. “The name of our house is Windy Corner. There is Mother, me and my brother, although he doesn’t go to **church** often.”

“Please, Lucy, Mr Beebe wants to eat his dinner,” said Miss Bartlett.

“I am eating it, and enjoying it,” replied Mr Beebe.

He talked to Lucy about Florence and he was happy to hear that it was her first time there. Suddenly, everyone around the table was trying to give her information – what

to see, when to see it, how to use the trains. "You must go to Prato!" cried a clever-looking lady. "Prato is wonderful!" Only the old man and his son did not speak. Lucy felt embarrassed watching them, and, when she left, she gave them a small nod. The father did not notice, but the son looked up and smiled back at her in a strange way. It was like he was smiling across something.

Lucy entered the hall to find Miss Bartlett speaking to Mr Beebe and their English *signora*. Lucy realized that they were talking about the old man and the offer of his rooms.

"His name is Emerson. I only know him from the *pension*," Mr Beebe was telling Miss Bartlett.

"I am here looking after this young lady," said Miss Bartlett. "And she must not feel that she has to give something back to these people."

"He is quite an unusual man," said Mr Beebe, and then added in a **gentle** voice, "but I do not think he will want you to feel that way. He just says what he means. Sometimes it is difficult to understand people who speak the **truth**."

"Oh, I am glad he is nice!" said Lucy. "I always hope that people will be nice."

But Mr Beebe was already going back into the dining room. He appeared a minute later with a smile. "It is fine about the rooms. Mr Emerson hopes that you will say yes this time."

Miss Bartlett took young Mr Emerson's room. She closed the window **shutters** and locked the door. Then she noticed a piece of paper on the wall. On it was written:

?

Miss Bartlett studied it closely. Suddenly, she had a very bad feeling. She wanted to burn it, but knew she must not because it belonged to the young man. Very carefully, she took it down and put it between two pieces of paper to keep it clean. Then she **sighed** heavily, and went to bed.



During-reading questions

CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Why are Miss Bartlett and Lucy unhappy with their *pension*? Who tries to help them, and how?
- 2 Why does Miss Bartlett not like Mr Emerson?

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Why is the clever lady, Miss Lavish, in Florence?
- 2 Why is Mr Emerson worried about George?

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 “How wonderfully people climb up the classes these days!” says Miss Bartlett. What does she mean, do you think?
- 2 Who does Lucy want to visit in Rome? Why does she really want to go to Rome, do you think?

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Who drives the carriage to Fiesole? Who does Mr Beebe think about as he watches them?
- 2 What happens in the field of violets?

CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 Why does Cecil think that Sir Harry Otway is a snob?
- 2 What does Cecil ask Lucy to do in the forest? What happens next?

CHAPTER SIX

- 1 Who are the new tenants at Cissie Villa?
- 2 Why is Lucy angry with Cecil?

After-reading questions

- 1 How do Mrs Honeychurch's and Lucy's feelings about Cecil change during the novel?
- 2 Compare George's kiss in Chapter Four to Cecil's kiss in Chapter Five. What does this tell us about the two men and Lucy's feelings for them?
- 3 "George . . . works in an office at the railway, not on the trains," Lucy tells Miss Bartlett in Chapter Eight. Why is this important to her, do you think?
- 4 We learn from Freddy's letter that Lucy's mother is angry with Lucy for marrying George. Does this surprise you/not surprise you? Why?

Exercises

CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

- 1 Match the words with their definitions in your notebook.**

Example: 1 – c

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1 argue | a You play music on it. It has black and white keys. |
| 2 clergyman | b to let air out of your mouth slowly when you are tired or sad |
| 3 sigh | c when people talk together in a strong or angry way because they do not agree |
| 4 guidebook | d a book that gives information about a place |
| 5 tourist | e someone who is on holiday in a place |
| 6 piano | f a man who works in a church |