



# A Room with a View

By E.M. Forster

First published in 1908

## Genre & subject

Classical Fiction

Romance Fiction

## Synopsis

Lucy has her rigid middle-class life mapped out for her, until she visits Florence with her uptight cousin Charlotte and finds her neatly ordered existence thrown off balance. Her eyes are opened by the unconventional character she meets at the Pension Bertolini: flamboyant romantic novelist Eleanor Lavish, the Cockney Signora, curious Mr Emerson and most of all, his passionate son George.

Lucy finds herself torn between the intensity of life in Italy and the repressed morals of Edwardian England, personified in her terminally dull fiancé Cecil Vyse. Will she ever learn to follow her own heart?

## Author biography

Edward Morgan Forster (1 January 1879 – 7 June 1970) was an English novelist, short story writer, essayist and librettist. He inherited £8,000 (£753,240 as of 2014) from his paternal great-aunt who died in 1887. The money was enough to live on and enabled him to become a writer.

After leaving university, he travelled in continental Europe with his mother. In 1914, he visited Egypt, Germany and India with the classicist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, by which time he had written all but one of his novels.

Forster's humanistic impulse toward understanding and sympathy may be aptly summed up in the epigraph to his 1910 novel *Howards End*. His 1908 novel, *A Room with a View*, is his most optimistic work, while *A Passage to India* (1924) brought him his greatest success.

## Discussion starters

- *A Room with a View* explores the individual's need to find a sense of self and purpose despite suffocating circumstance. Discuss the role of nature in the book and its relevance to the struggles of characters to make decisions about their lives.
- How are Lucy's character and mood captured in the descriptions of her piano playing throughout the novel? Why does she refuse to play Beethoven in Mrs Vyse's well-appointed flat? What compels her to sing, after breaking her engagement with Cecil, the song that ends with the line "Easy live and quiet die"?
- A frequent criticism of Forster's plots is his reliance on coincidence and chance. What improbable circumstances are required to unite Lucy and George? Is George right when he says of their reunion in England, "It is Fate. Everything is Fate"? Does the novel suggest an external force that brings the lovers together?

- Who are the villains in the book? What is it about their faults that make them so abhorrent? Which ones are the worst, and why?
- Mr Emerson sees a day when men and women will be equal and proclaims that this time will be like a paradise. What are the traditional ideas of womanhood that Lucy has brought from her youth? Which characters seem to perpetuate these ideas?
- "Muddle" is one of Forster's favourite words and seems to carry more weight in his work than in current colloquial usage. Lucy declares at the end of Part 1, "I want not to be muddled. I want to grow older quickly." What does Mr Emerson mean when he uses the word to describe Lucy's state of mind near the novel's end, saying, "It is easy to face Death and Fate...It is on my muddles that I look back with horror"?
- Charlotte and Mr Beebe both act "out of character" near the end of the book. How can these behaviours be accounted for, given what is known about them so far? Do you think that Forster gives satisfactory preparation for their actions? If not, what purpose does the ambiguity serve?

### If you liked this book, you may also like...

*The sense of an ending* by Julian Barnes

*The last samurai* by Helen Dewitt



If you are looking for something new to read try **NoveList!** It is a free database to help you find that perfect book. Visit [www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/library](http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/library)

Author biography from Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.\\_M.\\_Forster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._M._Forster)), discussion starters from [www.sparknotes.com/lit/room/study.html](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/room/study.html)) and read-a-likes from NoveList.