

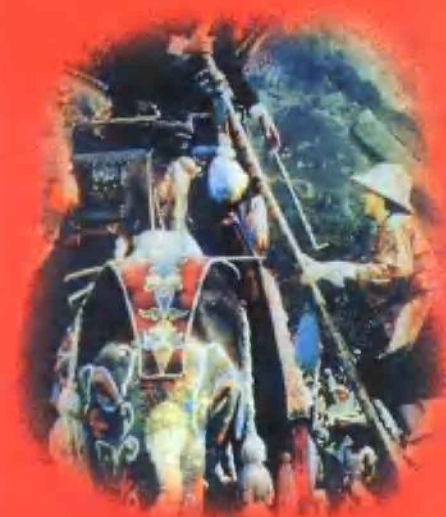
世界经典文学作品赏析(英汉对照)

E. M. Forster's
A PASSAGE TO INDIA
and **HOWARDS END**

S. M. Gilbert

E · M · 福斯特的

印度之行
和
霍华德别业



外语教学与研究出版社



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INTRODUCTION

E. M. FORSTER: Edward Morgan Forster was born in London in 1879, the son of an architect, who died shortly after the child's birth. As a boy, he lived in Hertfordshire, in the house which was later to become the central symbol of *Howards End*. He attended Tonbridge School, a typical English "Public School," which he disliked intensely, and later, King's College, Cambridge, where he studied classics and history and was quite happy. There he became friendly with the circle of intellectuals which subsequently came to be called the "Bloomsbury Group," because most of them lived near each other in the Bloomsbury section of London.

THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP: The Bloomsbury Group included many of the most important British intellectuals of the early twentieth century: Lytton Strachy, whose *Queen Victoria* and *Eminent Victorians* are classics of biography; Roger Fry, a well-known art critic and aesthetic theorist; Virginia Woolf, the novelist, and her husband Leonard, the publisher; Bertrand Russell, the philosopher-mathematician; and Maynard Keynes, the economist. All were influenced by the ideas of the Cambridge philosopher, G. E. Moore, whose major work, *Principia Ethica*, was published in 1903, shortly after Forster had left the University. Moore believed, in K. W. Gransden's words, that "the contemplation of beauty in art and the cultivation of personal relations were the most important things in life," and we can easily see how these views are reflected in *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*.

Forster himself, however, has often rejected the attempts of literary historians to identify him wholly with the Bloomsbury Group. And indeed, though Bloomsbury has been accused of “exclusiveness” and “remoteness from other ways of life,” Forster is often exempted from these attacks, even by the movement’s bitterest critics.

EARLY WRITING: After leaving Cambridge, E. M. Forster began to write short stories and novels. In fact, his three earliest novels appeared in rapid succession while he was still in his twenties—*Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), a story partly set in Italy, where Forster lived for a time after graduation; *The Longest Journey* (1907), set in Cambridge; and *A Room with a View* (1908), again partly set in Italy. Finally, in 1910, this series of novels was climaxed by *Howards End*, his most mature work to date.

MID-CAREER: After the publication of *Howards End*, Forster stopped writing novels for fourteen years. He turned to literary journalism, and in 1912-13 he went to India with G. Lowes Dickinson, a philosophy Don at Cambridge whom he much admired and whose biography he later wrote (*Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, 1936). During World War I he engaged in civilian war work in Alexandria, later producing a travel book about that city (*Alexandria, A History and a Guide*, 1922). After the war he returned to work as a journalist in London.

A PASSAGE TO INDIA: In 1921 Forster went to India as secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior. This experience, combined with his earlier trip, resulted in 1924 in *A Passage to India*, which he finished in England. The book was generally acclaimed as his finest novel, and it won a number of prizes throughout the world.

ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL: In 1927 Forster delivered a series of lectures at Cambridge, which eventually developed into his most important critical pronouncement, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). A reading of this work in conjunction with a careful examination of Forster's own major novels will prove most rewarding for a student interested in relating the author's critical theory to his creative practice.

OTHER WORKS: Other works by E. M. Forster include *The Celestial Omnibus* (1923) and *The Eternal Moment* (1928), two collections of short stories; *Abinger Harvest* (1936), a group of essays; and *The Hill of Devi* (1953), a collection of letters and reminiscences about India which are especially fascinating to a critic of *A Passage to India*.

FORSTER TODAY: Forster, who is still fairly active in the literary world, lives at Cambridge, where he has been an Honorary Fellow of King's College since 1946. His country has showered numerous honors upon him, including membership in the Order of Companions of Honor (awarded by Queen Elizabeth II), and he is generally considered one of the major British novelists of this century.

HOWARDS END AND A PASSAGE TO INDIA: These two novels are usually ranked as E. M. Forster's maturest and most brilliant books; indeed, though they are separated by a span of fourteen years in which the author produced little or no creative work, they comprise, together, the final and culminating novels in a series of five books which got increasingly better as the novelist's abilities ripened. Both works, moreover, have many themes and ideas in common (see Essay Questions and Answers for Review), and it is interesting to notice how the years which intervened between them modified Forster's handling of these persisting themes. Generally

speaking, *Howards End* seems more optimistic than *A Passage to India*, and perhaps more sentimental. It focuses in a semi-idealistic way on England, its past, present and future, and in doing so it tends to romanticize the traditions of the past, while clear-sightedly prophesying the trends of the future. *A Passage to India*, on the other hand, is obviously the product of a writer who is older, tougher, more pessimistic, and as a result this book seems more condensed, more intense, and less discursive. It gazes steadily and realistically at the past and the present; if it has any hope at all, it is only a minor and vague hope for the future, implied rather than stated.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the thinker who advised "Only connect" in *Howards End* was still obsessed with the problems of connection and "separateness" when he came to write *A Passage to India*. Only now, in the later book, had he begun to think connection was no longer a very serious possibility; if it was not actually an impossibility, he certainly thought it an improbability. And perhaps this was because in *Howards End* Forster confined himself pretty strictly to novel-writing as a kind of social science: England in the book was simply England, the nation, the social structure. But in *A Passage to India* Forster fictionalized metaphysics: India stood for more than India; as in Whitman's poem, "Passage to India," from which he drew his title, Forster's India became a kind of cosmic symbol. Thus the hopes and dreams of the young man who wrote *Howards End*—hopes and dreams which could be nourished in the man-centered, social context of the earlier book—had to be abandoned by the wiser, older man who wrote the later book and knew that man's dreams are infinitely small and petty in comparison to the impersonal, indifferent universe in which he finds himself.

To the average reader, *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* may

seem to be rather simple and open in their style and structure, but while it is true, of course, that they are easy—indeed, delightful—to read and to understand, they are in fact extraordinarily complex in their use of recurring motifs, themes, symbols and images. This study of the two novels will try to deal with as many of these poetic devices as possible throughout the Detailed Summary, but if an attentive reader studies the texts of the two books carefully, he will find each reading of *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* increasingly rewarding. For E. M. Forster's greatest achievement as a novelist is the intricate structure of ideas and the elaborate texture of images which he is able to maintain, and through which he reflects and refracts his vision of the world, throughout these two novels.

DETAILED SUMMARY: *HOWARDS END*

CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter of *Howards End* consists of two letters from Helen Schlegel (who we later learn is a girl of twenty-one) to her older sister Meg (twenty-nine). Helen is visiting the Wilcoxes, a family whom the Schlegels have met abroad (in Germany), at their suburban home, Howards End. Helen's letters seem quite routine—descriptions of the house, family activities, members of the party, etc.—until in the last one-line note she drops a bombshell: “Dearest, dearest Meg—I do not know what you will say: Paul and I are in love—the younger son who only came here on Wednesday.”

COMMENT: Though Helen's descriptive, chatty letters may not seem to open the book with any very obvious drama, they are actually one of the best possible ways of introducing the reader to some of the novel's principal characters and themes. First of all, of course, there is Helen, whose rather mercurial, enthusiastic personality is quickly revealed in her letters. Furthermore, the more conventional “bourgeois” nature of the Wilcoxes is shown through Helen's memories of Mr. Wilcox's “bullying porters,” and through her story of his scolding her for advocating women's rights. We see that for some reason Helen, the sensitive intellectual type, is strangely attracted to these rather “nouveau-riche,” cricket-playing Wilcoxes, and we guess that the relationship between the Schlegels and Wilcoxes is going to form an important part of the plot of *Howards End*.

We are also introduced to Mrs. Wilcox, so oddly different from

her husband and children as she trails lovingly across the lawn in her beautiful dress, and the theme of hay fever which makes its appearance here for the first time helps to emphasize her differentness. All the Wilcoxes have hay fever which forces them indoors out of the lovely garden except Mrs. Wilcox, who goes about with her hands full of hay, sniffing it and never sneezing. The house was hers to begin with, we eventually learn, and her lack of hay fever is thus almost a mark of grace, a sign that she belongs, whereas the others don't.

Finally, when Helen writes her third note, about being in love with Paul, the youngest son, the urgency of her message sets it off from the casual chatty exposition for which her letters were first used and plunges the reader directly into one of the dramatic crises of the book.

CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter we are introduced to the other important Schlegel, Helen's sister Margaret, who is shown at the breakfast table with her Aunt Juley (Mrs. Munt), a kindly, old-fashioned, very British busy-body who has come to keep Margaret company while Helen is away. Margaret has just received Helen's note about Paul, and she is quite naturally upset. She explains to Aunt Juley that she knows rather little about the Wilcoxes, that she and Helen had met them on a tour in Germany, and that both sisters had been invited down to Howards End for the week, but the illness (from hay fever) of the third Schlegel—Tibby, the girls' sixteen-year-old brother—had prevented Margaret from accompanying Helen.

Aunt Juley offers to go down at once to Howards End to investigate the matter, but Margaret, feeling strongly that her aunt (who calls

the sisters “odd girls”) can never understand Helen, refuses to let her. “I must go myself,” she insists. Aunt Juley replies frankly that Margaret is sure to botch the situation. “ . . . You would offend the whole of these Wilcoxes by asking one of your impetuous questions—not” (she adds) “that one minds offending them.” Margaret, however, remains determined. Mrs. Munt very practically feels that the engagement, if engagement there is, must be broken off at once. But Margaret, who has rather more faith in her sister, plans to proceed more slowly.

It soon develops, though, that Tibby’s ridiculous hay fever is worse than ever; a doctor is sent for, pronounces him quite bad, and Margaret is finally forced to accept Aunt Juley’s offer and dispatch her to Howards End with a note for Helen. She warns her, however, “not to be drawn into discussing the engagement. Give my letter to Helen, and say whatever you feel yourself, but do keep clear of the relatives.” Margaret doesn’t approve of scenes—and certainly not of “uncivilized” wrangling over marriages.

Mrs. Munt duly departs from King’s Cross Station after promising to carry out her niece’s instructions. But when Margaret returns home after seeing her aunt to the train, she is met by another message from her sister—a telegram this time, stating “All over. Wish I had never written. Tell no one. Helen” . . . “But Aunt Juley was gone—gone irrevocably, and no power on earth could stop her.”

COMMENT: This chapter continues the delineation of the Schlegel family, begun in Chapter One with Helen’s letters. We see Margaret, the rather less flighty but still “impulsive” older sister, running her solid, well-established household at Wickham Place in London with competence and compassion. She is

“not beautiful, not supremely brilliant, but filled with . . . a profound vivacity, a continual and sincere response to all that she encountered in her path through life.” The Wickham Place house itself, located in a quiet, rather aristocratic “backwater” of London, symbolizes the family’s established dignity and culture. Mrs. Munt, the sister of Helen’s, Margaret’s and Tibby’s British mother, represents the English side of their background, and a brief discussion between her and Margaret of the relative merits of the English and the Germans (the Schlegels are German on their father’s side) introduces the theme of Englishness, which is to become more important later on. Tibby’s hay fever, on the other hand, expands a theme already introduced—the theme of hay fever as a kind of symbolic allergy to the natural world—which is so significant a part of the lives of certain characters in this novel.

CHAPTER THREE

“Most complacently” Aunt Juley proceeds on her irrevocable way to Howards End. She is glad to be of service to her nieces, especially since their independent personalities usually lead them to keep her at arm’s length. Even when they were left motherless as children (their mother had died giving birth to Tibby, sixteen years before the opening of the book, when Helen was five and Margaret thirteen) their father had refused all Mrs. Munt’s offers of help, with Margaret’s concurrence, and when their father too had died, five years later, Margaret had again refused Aunt Juley’s offer to keep house for them. Conservative, well-meaning and incurably curious, Mrs. Munt has for years tried to mind her own business, but she has a powerful itch to interfere, if only by advising the girls on what stocks to buy (“Home Rails” rather than “Foreign Things”).

After an hour's journey northward Aunt Juley arrives at Wilton, near Howards End, where she accidentally meets a young man who she is told is "the younger Mr. Wilcox." Thinking he is Paul, Helen's new fiancé, she gratefully accepts his offer to run her up to the house in the family motor, which he has just taken out "for a spin" and to do some errands. He seems surprisingly cool at the mention of Helen, but Mrs. Munt, who tends to be rather unobservant, doesn't notice this, and within a few minutes she has disobeyed Margaret's instructions and confronted the young man with the entire story of his (Paul's) supposed relationship with Helen. Of course, it comes out almost immediately—to the accompaniment of much embarrassment—that *this* younger Mr. Wilcox is not Paul but Charles, Paul's older brother, who becomes violently angry at the news of his brother's engagement. Paul "has to make his way out in Nigeria," he storms, conducting the family rubber business, and "couldn't think of marrying for years," especially not a girl like Helen, who is definitely the wrong type in Charles' very emphatic opinion. Mrs. Munt, of course, grows furious in her turn, exclaiming that if she were a man she would "box his ears. . . for that last remark," and, as Forster puts it, they play the game of "Capping Families" all the way to the house.

When they arrive at Howards End, Charles is on the verge of precipitating a showdown with Paul when Mrs. Wilcox makes her first, very memorable appearance, "trailing noiselessly over the lawn" with a wisp of hay in her hands. In her gentle, unaffected way she sees that there is trouble, and going straight to the heart of things—without any social pretenses—she explains that the engagement has been broken off and sends the embattled Schlegels and Wilcoxes off in different directions to recover their tempers before lunch.

COMMENT: In this chapter the picture of Aunt Juley is filled in further, as is that of the Wilcoxes. Strait-laced as she seems, there is "a vein of coarseness" in Mrs. Munt, which Margaret may have recognized in her desire to avoid sending her aunt on this mission in the first place. Similarly, there is a vein of coarseness, indeed a river of apoplectic bad temper, in the Wilcoxes, especially Charles, which was first hinted at in Helen's phrase about Mr. Wilcox's "bullying porters" and which is to prove most important in the *dénouement* (solution) of the plot.

Most important in this chapter, however, is our first real introduction to Mrs. Wilcox. She is just as graceful and magical as she seemed in Helen's letters, only more profoundly so. A gentle woman of about fifty, she seems part of the small, beautifully proportioned house at Howards End, a kind of *genius loci* or spirit of the place, and, as Forster puts it, "one knew that she worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her—that wisdom to which we give the clumsy name of aristocracy." This whole question of the past—of tradition and the individual's share in it—is to become one of the novel's most important themes, a theme whose embodiment throughout most of the book will be the enigmatically beautiful and serene Mrs. Wilcox.

CHAPTER FOUR

Helen and Aunt Juley return to London "in a state of collapse," but Mrs. Munt soon recovers, self-righteously congratulating herself on having spared "poor Margaret" such a dreadful experience. Helen, however, is more seriously upset; she seems, indeed, to have fallen in love, "not with an individual, but with a family."

Helen—indeed all the Schlegels—is an intellectual and a liberal, with all the standard enlightened views on social reform, women's suffrage, art, literature, etc. The Wilcoxes, on the other hand, are a robust, athletic family of businessmen. They think all the Schlegels' pet ideas and projects are nonsense. Except for Mrs. Wilcox, they are rude to servants, arrogant to underlings and utterly insensitive to culture. Helen, who has never encountered such people before, who has always lived a sheltered life in the best intellectual circles of London, can't help being fascinated by the Wilcoxes, who strike her like a breath of fresh air. Her affair with Paul—no more passed between them than a brief kiss, really (which, however, meant a good deal in 1910, the date of the novel)—was the result.

In their conversations after the event, Helen and Margaret—they are compulsive talkers—try hard to understand the difference between the Schlegel and Wilcox ways of life, and to decide which is preferable. They finally decide that the Wilcoxes live an outer life of "telegrams and anger," a life which fails to withstand moments of crisis as their own inner life of personal relationships and commitment can. Gradually they forget the Wilcoxes' momentary magnetism and revert to the style of living for which their English-German background has prepared them. Their father, Forster tells us, was an idealistic German, of the Hegel-Kant variety, who left his native land when it became too commercial and imperialistic for him. "It was his hope that the clouds of materialism obscuring the Fatherland would part in time, and the mild, intellectual light re-emerge." How are the offspring of such a dreamer to reconcile themselves to an England in which the same imperialism, hastened by Wilcoxes, has begun to predominate? Trying hard to do the right thing, the two girls go to meetings and rule a kind of blue-stocking salon at Wickham Place. Of the two, Helen is more popular, Margaret more sensible. As for

their brother Tibby, he is not of much importance as yet—"an intelligent man of sixteen, but dyspeptic and difficile."

COMMENT: This chapter gives further information about the Schlegels' background and their reaction to the Wilcoxes. It also provides a breathing space in which the pace of the plot can be relaxed for a moment before the introduction of important new characters in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

Here we are introduced to a character who represents the third important social grouping in the book, for if the Schlegels represent the solidly established intellectuals in the middle of the middle-class financial scale, and the Wilcoxes the newly rich industrialists at the top of the scale, Leonard Bast, the poor young clerk who meets Helen and Margaret at a concert, stands for the struggling, impoverished white-collar worker at the bottom of the scale.

The chapter opens with a discussion of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony—"the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man." The cultivated Schlegels, Tibby, Margaret and Helen, along with their Aunt Juley, a German cousin, Frieda Mosebach, and her "young man," Herr Liesecke, are attending a performance of the symphony. Mrs. Munt and Helen notice that Margaret, at the end of the row, is talking to a strange young man. Mrs. Munt is curious about him, but Helen's mind wanders, as she listens to the music, to thoughts of a goblin walking through the universe, whose footfalls seem to be suggested by the rhythm of the drums. "Panic and emptiness! Panic and emptiness!" she thinks, is what Beethoven sees at the heart of things. And she too, she reflects, has had a glimpse of panic and emptiness—at the heart of the Wilcoxes' world, in the