

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**Madame Bovary**

by Gustave Flaubert

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ISBN 978-1-60389-847-8  
Reorder No. 201253

## Notes

When Gustave Flaubert's novel was published in 1857, Flaubert was criticized for portraying French women as immoral. The public placed the novel on trial for its incidents of lewd behavior, sexual immorality, and glorification of adultery. While the text itself does not explicitly speak of sexual acts, the reader can infer the nature of the relationships between Madame Bovary and her lovers. The teacher should be prepared to discuss and address the serious nature of adultery and marriage and the consequences that may stem from such decisions.

All references come from the Dover Thrift edition of Madame Bovary, copyright 1996.

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the use of irony as it is used in the novel.
2. explain the use of foreshadowing as it is used in the novel.
3. compare and contrast the major male characters in the novel.
4. discuss and explain the use of symbolism in the novel.
5. characterize Emma as she fits into the social classes represented in the novel.
6. understand the use of setting as it is used in the novel.
7. illustrate and explain Flaubert's use of diction to reflect the action and mood in the novel.
8. discuss Emma's view of love and romance as compared to Léon, Charles, and Rodolphe's view of love and romance.
9. discuss Emma's view of women, men, and motherhood.
10. understand Emma as a heroine in the novel.
11. discuss 19th century life in regard to religion, literature, science, and economics.
12. understand the motivation behind the key events of the novel.
13. discuss the character arcs of the major characters of the novel.
14. discuss why Flaubert's book caused such a great public controversy when it was first published.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How does the text, diction and syntax, of the novel reflect the mood of Emma Bovary? Does Flaubert achieve his purpose in creating a novel whose action is reflected in the narrative written?
2. Explain the nature of the point of view used in the novel and how it impacts the meaning.
3. Discuss the author's attitude toward religion, materialism, and women as portrayed in the novel.
4. How does Flaubert use irony to impact action in the novel?
5. Compare and contrast the relationships of Emma and Charles, Emma and Léon, and Emma and Rodolphe.
6. Discuss Emma Bovary as a heroine. Can we characterize her as a heroine? Why or why not?
7. Explain the major conflicts in the novel. Which seem to be predominant? Which impact the action of the novel the most?
8. Explain how Flaubert uses language to illustrate the romantic characteristics of Emma.
9. Create a plot diagram of the novel, focusing on the major events that make up the action of the novel.
10. How does religion play a role in the novel?
11. Explain the use of setting in the novel and how it parallels or contrasts the characters and action in the novel.
12. Cite examples of and explain Flaubert's use of foreshadowing in the novel.
13. How does Flaubert use the blind beggar to foreshadow Emma's downfall?
14. Discuss the social classes evident in the novel. Explain where Emma Bovary fits in the classifications given.
15. What is the function of love in the novel? Is it a major contributing factor in Emma's downfall, or is her desire for riches her downfall?
16. How does Homais function in the novel?

# Madame Bovary

## Part One

### Chapter I

#### VOCABULARY

**advent** – the coming of; the arrival of  
**cantor** – choir leader at religious services  
**chorister** – a singer in a choir  
**composite** – made up of different parts  
**curé** – priest  
**etymologies** – word origins  
**fêtes** – celebrations  
**hosier** – one who makes stockings  
**injunctions** – orders  
**oust** – throw out; get rid of  
**ovoid** – egg-shaped  
**sacristy** – room in a church where religious vestments are kept  
**speculation** – business ventures  
**stoicism** – refusal to admit to or acknowledge pain  
**viaticum** – Holy Communion given to one who is dying  
**virile** – manly; vital

1. Describe the newcomer who has just arrived at the school.

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2. At what grade level is the newcomer placed? Why is this unusual?

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3. What might the description of the newcomer's hat and compartment lead one to conclude about him?

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**Chapter V**

VOCABULARY

**breviary** – book of prayers, hymns, and short religious readings  
**dilapidated** – decaying; run down  
**eglantines** – roses  
**espaliere** – growing on a trellis or railing  
**secretary** – writing desk with bookshelves  
**tilbury** – small open carriage

1. About Emma entering her new house for the first time, Flaubert writes: “The smell of melted butter penetrated through the walls when [Charles] saw patients, just as in the kitchen one could hear the people coughing in the consulting-room and recounting their whole histories.” Why do you think Flaubert includes these details?

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2. What does Charles do with his first wife’s bridal bouquet, and what does his action make Emma think?

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**Chapter IX**

## VOCABULARY

**approbation** – official approval  
**copiously** – in large quantities; a lot  
**execrated** – denounced  
**indolence** – sloth; laziness  
**inveighed** – protested; railed  
**taciturn** – reserved; not talkative  
**traversing** – crossing in a zigzagging manner

1. How does Emma eagerly occupy herself in the weeks following her trip to Vaubyessard?

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2. How is Emma's view of Paris flawed and incomplete?

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3. Of Emma, Flaubert writes, "She longed to travel or to go back to her convent. She wished at the same time to die and to live in Paris." What does such a disparate and dramatic set of longings tell us about Emma?

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**Part Three**

**Chapter I**

VOCABULARY

**expatriated** – banished  
**indissolubly** – permanently  
**munificence** – lavishness

1. What has Léon been doing for the last three years?

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2. How does Léon feel about Emma now?

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3. How does Emma react to Léon’s profession of his love?

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4. Quote two passages that may lead readers to think that Léon is excited to see Emma.

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