About the author
Edward Morgan Forster (1879–1970) is an English writer best known for his ironic novels examining class difference and hypocrisy in early twentieth-century British society. Forster’s sympathy towards all human beings is summed up in the epigraph to his 1910 novel *Howards End*: ‘Only connect.’ For more information about him, refer to the Introduction in the book.

Summary
Lucy Honeychurch and her cousin, Miss Bartlett, are on holiday in Florence. They meet Mr Emerson and his son George, who offer them their rooms, which, unlike theirs, have a view. Lucy is torn between being conventional or freethinking, like the Emersons. Then, one day George kisses her passionately in a field of violets. Miss Bartlett quickly refuses, considering them very impolite and below them socially. In the pension they meet Mr Beebe, an important clergyman and an old acquaintance of theirs. He persuades the ladies to accept the Emersons’ offer and they swap rooms. While Charlotte is ridden with doubt and guilt as to whether or not they have done the right thing, Lucy is delighted with her room with a view.

Chapter 2: On their first day in Florence, Miss Bartlett wants to rest, while Lucy wants to go sightseeing. One of the guests, Miss Lavish, offers to take young Lucy to Santa Croce Church with her and she finally persuades Charlotte to allow Lucy to let her do so. Miss Lavish and Lucy wander about the city and soon get lost. When they arrive at Santa Croce Church, Miss Lavish disappears and Lucy is left by herself. Inside the church, she runs into the Emersons, who offer to keep her company. Lucy is in two minds as to what to do. She wants to mingle with them but she knows her cousin, and especially her mother, would disapprove. Lucy and the Emersons take delight in the beautiful Italian church while they engage in a lively talk. Lucy realises that the Honeychurches and the Emersons are poles apart, and yet she feels oddly attracted to them. Charlotte arrives at Santa Croce and Lucy has to leave with her, since she knows she is not in the right company.

Chapter 3: Lucy plays the piano and everybody in the pension is delighted with her music, but she starts feeling bored and decides to go out unchaperoned. She buys some photographs and begins to enjoy herself while she suddenly finds herself witnessing a murder at the Piazza Signoria. She faints and when she comes to she sees nothing but George’s face. He has carried her to a safer place. Once again, Lucy is in two minds as to how to behave. She does her best to avoid George, but he insists on keeping her company, so she finally accepts. He walks her home and, as they talk, they both find they are attracted to each other.

Chapter 4: Lucy is amazed to find that Charlotte is not upset about her having gone out by herself or about the incident. In fact, she is even grateful to George for having brought her back home safe. The next morning Lucy and Charlotte run into Miss Lavish at the Piazza Signoria. She’s trying to pick fresh data about the murder incident for her new novel. Miss Lavish tries to get information from Lucy but she soon notices that the young lady feels very tense about it. As they leave Miss Lavish, the cousins meet the vicar, Mr Eager, who joins them and offers to
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take them on a mountain ride to Fiesole the next day. They once again talk about the murder and Lucy feels uncomfortable. They start gossiping and Mr Eager tells the ladies that Mr Emerson is said to have murdered his own wife.

Chapter 5: The party sets off to Fiesole and, to everyone’s surprise, Mr Beebe has invited the Emersons without consulting anyone, so they have to travel in two carriages. As they get to the hillside, they split into groups. Lucy first tries to join Miss Lavish and Charlotte, but they politely dismiss her in order to gossip at ease. Lucy then looks for the vicar, only to find George Emerson in a magical natural backdrop full of violets in which he kisses her. They soon hear Charlotte coming towards them. On the journey back home a terrible storm breaks out and Mr Emerson worries about his son, who is not with the party. Charlotte decides that they should leave Florence for good and that they should keep what happened between Lucy and George a secret.

Chapter 6: Back home, Lucy is to marry Cecil Vyse, a well-off, good-mannered young man. After having rejected him twice in Rome, Lucy finally accepts him. Lucy’s mother is delighted, but her brother is upset. Mr Beebe meets Cecil and they both talk about Lucy and her talents. Cecil tells the clergyman that they are engaged but, although he congratulates the young man, he seems not to be too happy about the news.

Chapter 7: Mrs Honeychurch organises a nice engagement party at Windy Corner for Lucy and Cecil. When the party is over, Cecil complains about country life and people. Lucy starts to feel that they are different. Lucy and Cecil go to Summer Street to visit Albert and Cissie, the villas that Sir Harry Otway has bought. Albert is lived in but Cissie is not. Lucy proposes that he should let it to Miss Teresa and Catherine Alan but Cecil thinks they would spoil the neighbourhood because of their social class. Lucy starts to feel a great divide between them.

Chapter 8: Lucy starts seeing the society with new eyes. She realises she is now different from Cecil and her mother. Lucy is surprised to find that Villa Cissie has not been rented to the Alans but to the Emersons as a result of Cecil’s influence. She starts wondering whether or not they are the very same Emersons she met in Florence and turns red with embarrassment remembering what happened back then. Lucy asks Cecil why he has arranged for Cissie to be rented to the Emersons, whom he thinks to be criminals, and not the Alans, as she has arranged herself. She is very angry about his decision and disloyal attitude.

Chapter 9: Lucy receives a letter from Charlotte, who has learnt that the Emersons have rented Cissie, asking her to tell Cecil about George’s behaviour in Italy. Lucy refuses to do so. Mr Beebe introduces Lucy’s brother to George and accompanies the young men to a pool for a swim. The three men spend a joyful time bathing and playing in the pool, until Cecil, Lucy and Mrs Honeychurch appear and are scandalised by their behaviour. George, half-dressed and barefoot, greets Lucy, who is embarrassed to acknowledge they have met.

Chapter 10: Lucy finds it hard to believe that George is so cheerful and is so nice to her. Mrs Honeychurch is upset by Cecil’s behaviour and delusions of grandeur. Freddy tells Lucy he’d like to ask George in for a tennis match. Haunted by the ghosts of the past, Lucy tries to persuade him not to, but he ignores her. On the day George visits the Honeychurches, Miss Bartlett comes to Windy Corner to stay for a short while. She is shocked to see him and asks Lucy if she has told Cecil about what happened between them.

Chapter 11: George spends time at Windy Corner. He and Freddy play tennis with Lucy and Floyd while Cecil reads an awful novel by a Joseph Emery Prank, who is no other than Miss Lavish writing about the Florentine incident. Cecil starts reading different parts of the novel and he even reads an extract which describes George and Lucy’s first kiss, leaving them both dumbstruck. While everybody is walking towards the house for tea, George passionately kisses Lucy and leaves.

Chapter 12: Lucy tells Charlotte about Miss Lavish’s novel and is disappointed that she has told her about her secret encounter and kiss. Charlotte is furious with Miss Lavish. Lucy confesses to Charlotte that George has kissed her again and asks her to talk to him as she did in Italy. Yet, she understands that she must talk to him herself. She tells George that he should leave Windy Corner and never come back or interfere with her life. George asks her not to marry Cecil, as he loves her and cannot live without her. However, seeing that Lucy rejects him, George decides to leave. That very afternoon Lucy puts an end to her engagement.

Chapter 13: Mr Beebe receives a letter from the Alans, who are now very excited about going to Greece, and decides to show it to Lucy. As he arrives at Windy Corner,
he finds out that Lucy has broken off her engagement with Cecil. Lucy decides to join the Alans on their trip to Greece.

Chapter 14: Lucy gets ready to travel to Greece with the Alans and refuses to let people know about her breaking up with Cecil for fear they might gossip or that George may find out. She and her mother have a row due to Lucy’s new ideas of ‘independence’. Lucy learns that the Emersons have left Villa Cissie. She visits Mr Beebe and meets Mr Emerson there. He gets her to confess that she is in love with George. He tries to convince her, together with Mr Beebe, that she should marry George and be happy.

Chapter 15: Lucy and George get married, without the approval of the Honeychurches, and go to Italy together. They stay at the Bertolini Pension, in a room with a view. Lucy and George realise that Charlotte, without letting anyone find out, has helped them to make their dream come true: be together forever.

Background and themes

One of the main themes in A Room with a View is the conflict between duty, respectability and social approval and the desire for passion, freedom and satisfaction. The novel was published in 1908, when the choices for a middle class English girl such as Lucy were limited. Forster draws a detailed picture of a section of society, its manners and its values. He creates characters of various types who illustrate how society constrains the individual. For example, Miss Bartlett’s tortured desire to do the right thing is in a sharp contrast to the Emersons’ clumsy honesty. The Emersons appear eccentric, when, in fact, they are just straightforward.

The use of a bright and passionate foreign country, like Italy, to illustrate how cold and stifling English society can be is a common resource in English literature. Forster certainly has little sympathy for the artificial and over-educated people who inhabited much of middle and upper class Britain. It is a particular aspect of the English novel to use comedy to show how ridiculous people can be; Eliot, Dickens and Thackeray all used it. There is much gentle comedy in this novel. Miss Bartlett’s complaints, Miss Lavish’s lawful novel, the wild scene by the pool: these things make us smile. But Forster is compassionate in his view of all humans. Instead of attacking people, Forster shows how silly all of us might be.

Lucy is one of the most attractive heroines in English literature, a confused young girl longing for love. Cecil Vyse is easy to dislike, but his reaction to Lucy breaking off her engagement reveals him to have more insight and understanding than we might have thought. Miss Bartlett, a narrow-minded woman who causes so much trouble, is given a moment of tender friendship at the end of the novel when it is revealed that she possibly brought George and Lucy together.

In its form, A Room with a View closely resembles the novels of Jane Austen from almost a century before. Forster creates a tightly-knit group of characters who move in a small world and who are concerned with social values and their own feelings.

Discussion activities

Before reading

1 Discuss: A special woman?
   a Get students to look at the cover of the book and answer these questions:
   How old are the lady and the young man? Where are they? What do you think they are doing there? What do you think they do every day? What do they like? Why do you think so?
   b Group work:
   Divide the class into two groups. Tell Group One to write down what hobbies, activities, duties etc., they imagine men and women generally did in early twentieth century England. Group Two should write what men and women were not supposed to do in those days. Ask students to read their lists out loud.

2 Group work: Put students into groups. Ask them to look at the Table of Contents. Give them the following instructions:
   Read the chapter titles and try to work out a romantic love story using the chapter titles.

Introduction

3 Discuss: A room with a view
   Ask students to think about the title of the book and tell you what they think it might be about. Then tell them to read the extract that opens the Introduction. Put students into pairs and ask them the following:
   Discuss how the text you have just read relates to the title. Does it seem romantic or exciting? Why? Why not? Do you both agree?

4 Predict: A Room with a View has been made into several films. Divide the class into those who have/ haven’t seen any of them. Have each group retell or predict what the story is about using as many of the words below as possible:
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chaperone despise gratitude murmur clergyman nude sermon sigh violet bachelor conventional embrace outing passion respectable villa fate tolerate wince vicar muddle

Tell students to look up the words they do not know in the Word List at the back of the book.

Chapters 1–3

While reading

5 Discuss: The upper-class
Ask students to work in small groups and discuss the following: What view of the twentieth-century English upper class is shown in Chapter 1? What are the lives of young and older single women like? How do people live and feel?

6 Role play: New acquaintances
Have students choose between any of the two situations in Chapter 1 below and get them to dramatise them:

a Imagine you are George. You have just seen Lucy and you cannot stop thinking of her. Tell a friend what impression she has made on you.

b You are Lucy and Charlotte in one of the rooms with a view. As you both look out the window, discuss what your first day in Italy has been like.

7 Write: A different kind of love
Get students to write down Lucy's feelings after reading pages 12–15. Tell them the following:
In Chapter 2, we find that Lucy is alone at the church and filled with guilt and fear as she talks to Mr Emerson. Write down her thoughts.

11 Predict: What will happen?
Tell your students:

a Write five questions you would like to know about how the story goes on. Make sure each question is about a different character.

b Try to answer the questions imagining what may happen next.

Chapters 4–6

While reading

12 Discuss and write: A frightening chapter
Guide your students with these instructions for pages 24 and 25 in Chapter 4:

In pairs, imagine that you are Miss Lavish feeling desperate for detailed information about the murder scene for her next novel.

a Discuss and write down her ideas to write a most tragic chapter after talking to Lucy.

b Write some paragraphs for the opening chapter in pairs and then read them out loud.

13 Write: A different life
Get students to retell part of the story changing its point of view. Give them these instructions:

In Chapter 5, on pages 32 and 33 we are told how Lucy and George feel when they first kiss and are suddenly interrupted by Miss Bartlett. Tell this part from Miss Bartlett's point of view. What does she think of George Emerson? How does she feel about Lucy's future? Does she worry about what Mrs Honeychurch might say? What should she do?

14 Discuss: A perfect life?
Ask students to work in small groups and to discuss the following: As you read pages 37–40, think of these questions and then discuss them with your group:

a How interesting does life at Windy Corner seem to be?

b What do Freddy and Mrs Honeychurch think of Cecil? Why?

c Do you think that Lucy and Cecil are really in love? Why (not)?

After reading

15 Check: Were you right?
Tell students to go back to the list of questions in Activity 13: In pairs, re-read the questions you asked in Activity 13 and try to answer the questions now that you have read this section.

16 Pair work: Murder at the Piazza
Students work in pairs to answer these questions:

In Chapter 4, how do the following people react to the murder: Miss Bartlett, Miss Lavish and Mr Eager? What does this tell you about them? Write some sentences for each. Compare some of the sentences in class.

17 Group work: Different men
Put students into groups and ask them to do the following: Think about George Emerson in Chapter 5 and Cecil Vyse in Chapter 6. Make two lists saying what is similar and what is different about the two men. Write down as many things as you can. Then see how many of the groups have got the same words in their lists.
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Chapters 7–9
While reading
18 Role play: The talk of the town
Tell students to work in pairs and act out the following conversation after reading pages 46–48:
You are two gossips sitting on a bench in the woods. You see Lucy and Cecil talking and trying to kiss. Describe what you see and what you think of them as a couple.

19 Discuss: Expected events?
Put students into groups and ask them to discuss each of the following events from Chapter 8, pages 49–53. As you write each one on the board, ask them:
Were you surprised by each of these events or did you expect them?
   a Lucy’s feeling that she could return to England with new eyes (p. 49)
   b The fact that Cecil did not realise how much Lucy had changed (pp. 49–50)
   c Cecil arranging for Cissie to be rented to people other than the Alans: the Emersons (pp. 50–51)
   d Mr Emerson murdered his wife (p. 52)
   e Lucy became very upset by Cecil’s behaviour (p. 53)

After reading
20 Role play: Ask students to work in pairs and to choose one of the situations below to dramatise:
   a How Lucy and Cecil start growing apart.
   b How Freddy and George develop a good relationship.
   c How Lucy and Miss Bartlett talk about what ladies should be like.

21 Discuss: A terrible decision?
Put students in small groups and ask them to discuss the following: In Chapter 8, when Cecil and Lucy discuss what he has done, she says ‘It isn’t fair, Cecil. I blame you. I blame you very much indeed.’ Why do you think she says so?

22 Group work: Divide students into small groups.
Write the words ‘forest’, ‘room’ and ‘pool’ on the board and ask them to think about them as you ask:
What importance do these things have in Chapters 7–9?
How do they relate to what happened in Chapters 1–6?
Think of everything you can about these three things and then make notes.

Chapters 10–12
While reading
23 Write: A secret sadness
Tell students to work in pairs. Give these instructions:
You are Charlotte in Chapter 10, page 66. Write out her thoughts as she argues with Lucy.

24 Write: Terrible events
Ask students to talk about this in pairs: In Chapter 11, pages 72–75, Cecil is reading parts of the novel written by Miss Lavish, without knowing that the heroine is his own girlfriend. Write the parts that Cecil never read!

25 Group work: Private thoughts
Ask students to do the following in pairs or in small groups: In Chapter 12, pages 76 and 77, Lucy seems to be upset with George. Write down what she really feels in her own diary.

After reading
26 Pair work: Funny Charlotte
Ask students to get into pairs and ask them the following: Find three things Charlotte Bartlett says or does that you find funny in Chapter 10.
Compare the lists in class.

27 Discuss: A different novel
Ask students to think of an alternative title for the book by Miss Lavish, In a Piazza. Then get pairs to share their titles with the rest of the class and vote for the best one.

28 Group work: A lonely young man
Get students into groups and ask them to give their views on the following: Think about Cecil’s reaction when Lucy breaks off their engagement. Is this what you expected? How do you feel about him now? Could he be a good husband to another woman?

Chapters 13–15
While reading
29 Role play: A heated discussion
Ask students to imagine they are Lucy and her mother at the end of Chapter 13. Ask them to act out the following scene: You are Lucy and her mother on page 88. You seem to agree but suddenly something goes wrong and you start a terrible fight. Show how different you are.

30 Write: Real thoughts
Ask students to work in pairs and do the following activity: Choose some parts of the conversation between Lucy and Mr Emerson in Chapter 14, pages 92–94. Copy them and write next to each line what each of them is really thinking.

After reading
31 Predict: A new life?
Ask students to continue the story: Imagine what will happen to Lucy and George in Italy and in England when they finally come back. Write Chapter 16.

32 Pair work: Hidden dialogues
Get students to work in pairs. Give them the following instructions: We do not see Lucy and George meeting after her conversation with Mr Emerson. Think about what might have happened when they did meet, and write a short dialogue.

33 Discuss: Love
Have students discuss the following:
The Introduction opens with words about love, and the final paragraph of the book describes love, too. What kind of love does Forster write about in his novel? Love between two people or something else? Is love the most important thing in the world, or are there other equally important things?

Vocabulary activities
For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.