



[A Room with a View](#), by E.M. Forster

In A Nutshell

A long, long time ago in a galaxy far away (that is, in movie theatres in the early nineties), E.M. Forster seemed like a pretty serious guy. A double whammy of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Howard's End*, two of his, shall we say, less hilarious works, emerged in cinemas, both with very serious British actors and very serious British plots. This made it easy to forget that an even longer time ago, in the mid-eighties, a frothy, lighthearted, and really quite charming film was made of *A Room with a View* (interestingly, Helena Bonham Carter, a fine actress who occasionally suffers from the same misattributed dire seriousness, appeared in all three films). While most of Forster's other novels, particularly *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, are most often praised for their social consciousness and clear-sighted critiques of Britishism at the beginning of the twentieth century, none of the other books manage to accomplish the latter with the same comic flair, light touch, and panache that *Room* possesses. In this novel, Forster gleefully skewers the institutions of upper-middle class English society, while simultaneously remaining sympathetic to the characters he creates.

A Room with a View was the first novel Forster started, but it was actually published in 1908, after he'd written and published two other books. One of them, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), is often paired with *Room*, since it also takes place in Italy and deals with some similar issues, such as the British tourist abroad, albeit in a more serious fashion. In comparison with the latter text and others, *A Room with a View* stands out as the author's most lighthearted and optimistic work, and his dry wit and keen, observant eye make for the ultimate intelligent

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romantic comedy.

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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 Cecil comments that it matters “whether we fence ourselves in, or whether we are fenced out by the barriers of others.” Following this analogy, do you think Forster’s characters create their own social barriers, or are they fenced out by the barriers of others?
- 2 We don’t actually see George and Lucy interact very much in the book – how true do you think their “true love” really is?
- 3 Do you think a character like Cecil will ever find love? *Can* he?

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