Howards End: Characters Impacted Socially And Economically

Individual's lives are constantly altered by everyday experiences. Personalities are influenced by those around them and opinions of others impact those of an individual. Whether or not individuals have more or less material wealth, their actions still impact the lives of who they interact with socially and economically.

In E.M. Forster's novel Howards End, Margaret is impacted socially and economically from her relationship with others who are a part of and outside of her social class. By connecting with others throughout Howards End, Margaret's personality and outlook on life changes. Margaret's personality changes and becomes more similar to Ruth Wilcox by slowly fading away from the discussions she used to take part in (Firchow 8). Margaret's interactions with Ruth alter the way Margaret thinks about the world. As a result of Margaret connecting with the Wilcox family, she not only changes her perspective on society, but the Wilcox family's perspective, as well. Ruth Wilcox connects with Margaret by inviting her to stay at Howards End, which Margaret considers a request of friendship between them and appreciates it (Firchow 5). When Ruth leaves Howards End to Margaret after her death, the rest of the Wilcox family is dumbfounded. They do not understand the close connection that formed between Ruth and Margaret. Even though Margaret was not impacted by having to move from Wickham Place, Ruth's opinion about the value of having a home rubs off on her. Margaret explains to Helen that besides money, everyone needs a place they belong to and without that, there is no sense to life (Firchow 8).

Margaret's new perspective is then transmitted to Henry Wilcox through their marriage. Love is what helps Margaret connect to Henry and resolves the opposition of fragmentation (Daleski 1). This leads to Henry being able to connect with others and Margaret having the ability to bond with Helen and Henry. The individuals Margaret interacts with have an impact on the way she develops as a character, regardless of their social class. In contrast to Henry's attitude towards people of lower class, Margaret is much kinder and friendlier towards them. As a result of Margaret speaking with Miss Avery about Howards End, Margaret is more understanding and does not have a rude tone towards her (Forster 194). She does not act as if she is better than her just because of her wealth and is able to learn from Miss Avery about personal relations, expanding her mindset.

This is the complete opposite of how Henry treats people belonging to lower classes. Henry creates a fake friendship with people of lower classes by tipping them rather than actually having a genuine discussion with them (Womack 7). His attitude towards the poor impacts Margaret's perspective on the lower class as well, with regards to how she treats Jacky and Leonard Bast at Evie's wedding. Margaret's statement proves this when she says, "Oh no, it's only my sister screaming, and only two hangers-on of ours, whom she brought here for no conceivable reason (Forster 161)." Although, by the end of the novel, Leonard is the reason for how joyous her life has become. The final scene in the novel brings all the different classes in Howards End together: the leisured middle class, the urban lower-middle class, and the agricultural laboring class (Martin 17). This emphasizes how if the people from different classes did not get along, Margaret's entire life would have been changed for the worse. She would

have had to pick between Henry and Helen and decide how she wants her life to continue.

In addition to Margaret being impacted socially by her interactions with others, she is impacted economically with respect to houses and the business-like Wilcox family. Margaret learns to appreciate having a home and enjoys living in Howards End. She appreciates the sentimental value of Howards End, as a result of her friendship with Ruth Wilcox (Martin 6). After it is too late for her to cherish Wickham Place, Margaret continues to value Howards End as a way of showing her gratitude to Ruth. The characters' thoughts regarding Howards End reflect their overall view on life. Ruth considers it aesthetically beautiful, while Henry regards it as a piece of property with material benefits (Womack 4). This further demonstrates how the individuals Margaret interacts with all have their own opinions about Howards End, which helped form her opinion.

Lastly, Margaret believes that the Wilcox's behavior of treating her as if she was a child is not on purpose, but a flaw from working in business (Daleski 4). She came to this conclusion after spending a long time with Henry and the Wilcox family. She now understands the way they act towards people in the lower class and why their beliefs are justified with reference to their background. Margaret grows closer to the Wilcox family and as a way to defend them from criticism, she blames their actions on the fact that they work in business and that is how they are expected to act.

Throughout the novel, Howards End, Margaret's relationships help her develop into the kind person she is. Whether or not people are wealthier or poorer than she is, they still have a major impact on her life. Socially and economically, her point of view on topics was shaped by the perspectives and characteristics of those around her.