1. **General information**
* The title of the book is ‘A room with a view’.
* Written by E. M. Forster.
* Forster was a 20th century novelist, essayist, librettist and short story writer from England.
* In 1908 the novel was first published.
1. **Summary**

This novel consists of two parts, this is the only subheading Forster makes in his romantic but critical story about the English society at the beginning of the 20th century. Therefor the novel does have chapters, but I divide this summary in two parts, a ‘first part’ and a ‘second part’, just like the main division made in the novel. Both parts I will summarise per chapter.

*Part one*

*Chapter One: The Bertolini*

Lucy visits Italy with her cousin and chaperone Miss Bartlett. They had been promised a room with a view over the river Arno, which Miss Bartlett had arranged for Lucy. But when they arrive in Florence at the Pensione Bertolini , it turns out that they have rooms with a view on a courtyard. When George Emerson and his father, two unconventional Englishmen, who are staying there as well, find out that the two ladies, especially Miss Bartlett, are so disappointed with their rooms, Mr. Emerson offers to switch rooms. Miss Bartlett is deeply offended by his directness and even wants to leave the hotel.

Cover of the book

But they meet Mr. Beebe, a clergyman they know from England, and he and Miss Allen persuade Miss Bartlett to accept Mr. Emerson’s offer. Of course Miss Bartlett does make sure that Lucy doesn’t get George’s room, that would be inappropriate.

*Chapter Two: In Santa Croce with no Baedeker*

At breakfast, Lucy and Miss Bartlett get a lot of advice about the stuff they should see in Florence. Miss Lavish, a clever but very radical, who had given them all the advices, takes Lucy out to the Santa Croce church. First they get lost in Florence and when they eventually end up at the church, Miss Lavish spots someone she knows and leaves Lucy, without her Baedeker, alone. Lucy finds she cannot enjoy the church and the paintings without her Baedeker or guide, because she never learnt to. Then she meets the Emersons, who invite her to join them. Lucy feels very uncomfortable by this, because it is not appropriate for her to be accompanied by unknown men, but she gives in after all. Mr. Emerson tells Lucy that George is very unhappy and constantly busy with the ‘Why’ of life. When he asks her if she could help George, she responds that he should find a hobby. Then she sees Miss Bartlett entering the church and rushes back to her.

*Chapter Three: Music, Violets and the Letter S*

This chapter starts with Lucy playing Beethoven on the piano in The Bertolini on a rainy day. Mr. Beebe, her sole audience, remarks as Lucy finishes, “If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting—both for us and for her.”

When Catherine Alan, the old lady who is on holiday with her sister Teresa enters the room, she and Mr. Beebe discuss the Emersons. Miss Alan dislikes them, but there are also people, like Mr. Beebe who does like them, so Lucy doesn’t know what to think of them. Mr. Beebe encourages her to form her own opinion.

When they’re done gossiping, the evening has already fallen. Lucy wants to go out anyway but Miss Bartlett and Miss Lavish are on a trip together, so she decides to go alone, with disapproval from Mr. Beebe and Miss Alan.

*Chapter Four: Fourth Chapter*

Lucy feels rebellious by buying pictures of a nude of Venus by Botticelli, knowing her cousin won’t approve. Then she walks to the Piazza Signoria, Lucy still feels restless, thinking “Nothing ever happens to me.” Suddenly, something does happen, two men are fighting and one gets stabbed. Lucy faints and is being caught by George, when she regains consciousness, she’s deeply embarrassed. George insists on walking with her, and she makes clear she doesn’t want anyone to know about what happened. By witnessing the murder together, the both feel a bond and George feels better about himself.

*Chapter Five: Possibilities of a Pleasant Outing*

Both Miss Lavish, who’s writing a novel about Florence, and Mr. Eager, a snobbish English Chaplain they meet in the Piazza Signoria, ask Lucy details about the murder. Lucy is bothered by this and even slightly offended, which is the first time she forms an opinion on her own. Mr. Eager is gossiping about the Emersons and claims to know that Mr. Emerson has murdered his wife.

*Chapter Six: The Reverend Arthur Beebe, the Reverend Cuthbert Eager, Mr. Emerson, Mr. George Emerson, Miss Eleanor Lavish, Miss Charlotte Bartlett and Miss Lucy Honeychurch Drive out in Carriages to See a View; Italians Drive them*

In this chapter the above are taking a trip to Italian fields. When they arrive there, Charlotte and Eleanor send Lucy away so they can gossip. Lucy wants to go to Mr. Beebe but ends up in a field of violets with George. He rushes to her and kisses her when Charlotte comes up and ruins the moment.

*Chapter Seven: They Return*

When they’re back, Charlotte warns Lucy that George wants to take advance of her and she should not speak with him again. Charlotte decides that they’ll leave the next morning to Rome and tells this to George too. They agree not to talk about the incident to Lucy’s mother.

*Part two*

*Chapter Eight: Medieval*

This chapter starts back in England, in Lucy’s house the Windy Corner. Cecil, son of the Vyse’s, who are friends of Honeychurch’s and where Lucy and Charlotte had stayed in Rome, has just proposed to Lucy. This third time, she accepts. When Lucy’s brother Freddy and their mother go outside to congratulate Lucy, Mr. Beebe visits for tea and enters the room where Cecil still is. During the conversation with this snobbish young man, Mr. Beebe is talking freely about Lucy, predicting that she will one day live life as wonderfully and heroically as she plays the piano, not knowing they’re just engaged. Therefor he is disappointed at first, because Cecil is, even though he’s extremely rich, very boring and old-fashioned.

*Chapter Nine: Lucy as a Work of Art*

On a party, Lucy tells Cecil that she dislikes Mr. Eager for accusing Mr. Emerson of murdering his wife. “Cecil is a bit taken aback by Lucy’s passionate moral outburst over Mr. Eager.”

Lucy introduces Sir Harry Otway to Cecil, who thinks Otway is a snobbish man. Otway has one villa for rent and Lucy suggests the Miss Alans. On their way home, Cecil wants to walk through the woods rather than take the carriage, Lucy can only imagine Cecil in closed rooms and that annoys him. He asks if he can kiss her and he does but it is totally awkward.

*Chapter Ten: Cecil as a Humorist*

Cecil looks down on the country aristocrats and the nouveau riche of Lucy’s society. That’s why he wants to introduce her to broader society, but fails to see that Lucy is beyond that since she’d been to Italy and all she really wants to find is a soul mate, an equal partner.

Lucy is shocked to find out that the villa has been rented to the Emersons, who have been invited by Cecil as a joke on Sir Harry, as Cecil thought them very vulgar. Lucy is angry that he has spoiled her work in inviting the Miss Alans and made her look bad towards them.

*Chapter Eleven: In Mrs Vyse’s Well-Appointed Flat*

Lucy and Cecil are in London at Mrs Vyse’s, Cecil’s mother, apartment. She throws a dinner party for the all the descendants of famous people, where Lucy plays the piano and Cecil is very pleased with her. Mrs Vyse is also very pleased with her; ‘Make her one of us.’ (blz. 142)

Charlotte wrote a letter to warn Lucy about the arrival of the Emersons, saying they should confess everything to her mother and Cecil, but Lucy is irritated by the letter and thinks it’s nonsense.

*Chapter Twelve: Twelfth Chapter*

The Emersons have moved in and Freddy and Mr. Beebe are visiting them, after which they’re going for a swim with George. Mr. Beebe notices that the Emersons have a lot of interesting books, which suggests they’re highly educated and free-thinking men. Lucy, Cecil and Mrs. Honeychurch stumble into the naked men in the pond.

*Chapter Thirteen: How Miss Bartlett’s Boiler was so Tiresome*

At tea with one of their neighbours, Mrs. Butterwort, Cecil is wis so snobbish that it begins to be uncivil, and Mrs. Honeychurch notices, for this Lucy is upset and embarrassed.

Lucy is nervous about the fact that her mother wants to know what was in Charlotte’s letter, and that she is even coming over because there is plumbing to be done at her place in Tunbridge Wells. Both Cecil and Lucy object her visit, but she’s coming over anyway.

*Chapter Fourteen: How Lucy Faced the External Situation Bravely*

Lucy has a hard time seeing George again; she’s still moved by him, but doesn’t want to admit to it. Charlotte is pushing Lucy confide in Cecil and her mother, and keeps warning her for George.

*Chapter Fifteen: The Disaster Within*

George Emerson visits the Honeychurches for a Sunday afternoon tennis match and he keeps impressing Lucy by his niceness and his wisdom. Cecil doesn’t join the game and reads out loud from the book Under a Loggia, where he makes fun of all the time because it’s so bad written. Lucy finds out it’s the novel of Mrs. Lavish about Italy, she laughs until Cecil is reading a part that’s clearly about George’s and Lucy’s kiss in the fields of violets. After that they all go in for tea, and the passionate George seizes his chance to kiss Lucy again.

*Chapter Sixteen: Lying to George*

This chapter starts with Lucy confronting Charlotte about Miss Lavish’s novel. Charlotte admits that she was the one who told Miss Lavish the secret, and is genuinely upset that it was used in the novel. Lucy denies her feelings for and towards George, as he explains that Cecil is no good for her. But when she hears Cecil repeat Freddy’s words “There are some chaps who are no good for anything but books,” (blz. 188) she realises that George was right. The same evening she breaks off her engagement.

*Chapter Seventeen: Lying to Cecil*

Lucy repeats the phrases that George used: “You’re the sort who can’t know any one intimately… You’re always protecting me. I won’t be protected. I will choose for myself what is ladylike and right.”  to Cecil to explain why she can’t be with him, but denies that there is someone else. Cecil sees that she’s right and loves her even more for this.

Now she has lied to both Cecil and George, which makes her decide to never get married, entering a period of darkness.

*Chapter Eighteen: Lying to Mr. Beebe, Mrs. Honeychurch, Freddy and the Servants*

When Mr. Beebe tells Lucy about the plans of the Miss Alans to travel to Greece, in the first place to distract Lucy from her sadness about her broken off engagement, she surprisingly claims she wants to go with them. Miss Bartlett and Mr Beebe agree that it would be good for Lucy to go and cheer up.

*Chapter Nineteen: Lying to Mr. Emerson*

Lucy makes arrangements for her trip to Greece with the Miss Alans, just when everything is settled she finds out that George has left the villa. Mr. Emerson does stay there and Lucy gets to speak with him in the Rectory while she’s waiting for Charlotte and her mother. In this conversation Mr. Emerson tells her George is very depressed and has lost all his faith in love, Lucy is very sad to hear it but still acts like she’s very bothered by the way George has behaved towards her and denies her feelings for him. Mr. Emerson sees through all this and tells her  “Remember the mountains over Florence and the view . . .Truth counts, Truth does count.” She bursts into tears and tells the truth, both Mr. Emerson and Mr. Beebe, who has entered the room, are very disappointed in her lying but also relieved she finally admits to her feelings.

*Chapter Twenty: The End of the Middle Ages*

This is titled “The End of the Middle Ages” because it marks the beginning of Lucy’s Renaissance, her rebirth as a happily married and independent woman. The Miss Alans go to Greece, but they go alone. They’ve eloped from the Windy Corner and got married, without permission of Mr. Beebe and the Honeychurches. They go back to the Pension Bertolini and they’re free to live happily together, only the fact that her family doesn’t approve, is still bothering Lucy. George helps Lucy see that Charlotte might have helped them to get together after all.

1. **Title**

The title is ‘A room with a view’. This refers to the first scene of the book, where Lucy and Miss Bartlett switch rooms with the Emersons because of the nice view they wanted. But there’s also another explanation for the title of this novel. Forster brings a lot of oppositions into the storyline, one of them being “rooms” opposite “views” . In this novel “rooms” refer to closed spaces, conservatism and oppression, “views” on the other hand, represent open spaces, creativity and modernity.

1. **Setting**
* The first part of the story is set in the romantic Italian Florence, where freedom and personal development come first. The second part of the story is set in the England, the total opposite of the promising Italy, since repressed sexuality and complying to the rules of conduct where big themes in conservative England.
* The story takes place at the beginning of the 20th century.
* The novel is written chronologically.
1. **Characters**
* The main characters are Lucy Honeychurch and George Emerson.
* Lucy Honeychurch is the beautiful young daughter of a nouveau riche family in the early 20th century England. She’s the most important character in the novel, a young and naïve girl who begins questioning the rules of conduct of a society which is repressing her in her personal development. Especially after her visit to Italy, where she found out that there is another world besides her "protected life in Windy Corner", which makes her doubt if she still wants to be part of this society. Still she finds it very hard to admit to her own feelings, that’s why she struggles realizing she has to allow her feelings for George Emerson. Only that will make her the strong and independent woman she more and more becomes as the book progresses.

Then there is George Emerson, the son of Mr. Emerson, a Socialist journalist and a very straightforward and honest man. Both father and son don’t really take part in the society’s rules of conduct. George finds his connection with Lucy after they witness a murder during a small riot on a square in Florence. George is a very intelligent, sensitive and thoughtful young man and is a perfect partner for Lucy. However, Lucy’s social circle thinks about that differently.

* Lucy makes a major change, just like I indicated in the previous point, from most naïve girl to very independent woman. George doesn’t make such an obvious personal change during the story.
1. **Theme**

The main themes of the story are repressed sexuality, the search for freedom, personal development and true love. With this novel I think Forster wanted to show how strictly the codes of practices were in the nouveau riche community of early 20th century England. He mainly did this by emphasizing the contrasts between Italy and England, where he idealized Italy as a place of freedom and sexual expression. ‘Italy promised raw, natural passion that inspired many Britons at the time who wished to escape the constrictions of English society.’ (Wikipedia²). By addressing this subject, Forster comments on these social issues.

Therefor I think his message was obvious, find your own path and take your own decisions.

1. **Your own opinion**

At first, I thought it would be quit a boring novel, because it was written a century ago. I really expected very old-fashioned use of language but I was actually positively surprised by how fluently it was written. Now and again it was even humorous, for instance the description of the snobbish Cecil or the fussy control freak Miss Bartlett. I also thought that, definitely considering the time it was written in, the theme was quit daring and bold. It was interesting to see how Lucy developed during the story, as a young girl in search of herself in a whole other time then we live now. Nowadays these rules of conduct seem so unreal, because we live in a time where individual growth and freedom of speech is considered very important. Even though we have codes of practice as well.

All in all I’ve read this 232 page book in about 13 hours.

**Used sources**

* Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.\_M.\_Forster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._M._Forster#Key_themes)
* Wikipedia² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\_Room\_with\_a\_View](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Room_with_a_View#Appendix)