Shannon Cooper Life, Death and Hope

Analysis on *Emma’s Child*

**Given Circumstances**

Environmental Facts

Geographical Location

Emma’s Child takes place in Chicago Illinois “between the fall of 1990, and the summer of 1991.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Most of the scenes take place in “Christ Hospital, Robin’s World”[[2]](#endnote-2) and those scenes that do not take place in the hospital room are either at Jean and Henry’s house, a forest or in an office.

Scene-to-Scene Breakdown of Date, Time of Day and Climate

Act 1

Scene 1

October 6th, 1990. This scene takes place at Henry and Jean’s house on a warm fall day at 11am. Being as the script states there are still leaves on the trees I Infer that it is early in the month as according to the underground weather history web site, this day was clear, 29 degrees Celsius, 63% humidity and 39 km/h winds. [[3]](#endnote-3)After this date the temperature drops and there would not be full leaves on the trees as falls takes hold.

Scene 2

June 22nd 1991. We know this is the date as it is the only date Jean is allowed to visit Robin as stated in Act 3 scene 1. This scene takes place at Christ Hospital at 2pm. It is a Foggy, windy, thundery day, 31 degrees Celsius and 94% humidity.[[4]](#endnote-4) It rained on and off with 10.2 mm of rain that day however at the time of the scene it was not raining.

Scene 3

This scene is a continuation of Scene 1 and takes place later in the day, 3pm, October 6th, 1990 in Jean and Henry’s house.

Act 2

Scene 1

Wed, June 13th 1991. I infer that this is the date as Robin was born in the middle of the month as stated in scene 3 and Henry has an article that is due for Sunday’s magazine that he is under pressure to finish. It is 31 degrees, clear and sunny with 86% humidity.[[5]](#endnote-5) This scene takes place in Jean and Henry’s living room at 5pm.

Scene 2

Being as this scene takes place after Jean has met Robin, on June 22nd, and it is stated in the script that the scene takes place at the end of June, this scene takes place on June 25th as Jean is still learning about Robin’s medical treatments but has been in the hospital enough to observe other patients and to have established a bit of a relationship with Laurence. This scene is located in Robin’s hospital room. It is a clear sunny day, 27 degrees, and 89% humidity with no rain. [[6]](#endnote-6) It is 11am.

Scene 3

This scene takes place three days after Robin’s birth on June 13th making it June 16th and is located in Henry and Jean’s living room. It is after dinner, 7pm, and it is a clear evening, 27 degrees, with a light breeze and 63% humidity.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Act 3

Scene 1

July 3rd, 1991. This scene takes place in Dr.Arbaugh’s office at 8am. It is a rainy day, 32 degrees with 90% humidity. [[8]](#endnote-8) The office itself is air-conditioned. Being as the doctor is working on her second cup of coffee in infer it is early in the morning.

Scene 2

As it stated in the script this scene takes place later in the morning of Scene 1. July 3rd, 1991. It is 11am as it states in the script that Jean gets to do the 11am feeding for Robin. The location of the scene is in the hospital room by Robin. It is still a rainy day, 32 degrees with 90% humidity.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Scene 3

Takes place just after the meeting with the doctor in Scene 1. Everything is the same with the exception of time as it is now 845am.

Act 4

Scene 1

This scene takes place at Michigan’s AuSable River and “it is a dark and stormy night”[[10]](#endnote-10) at 11pm. According to the weather web page, on July 20st 1991 at 11pm there were thunderstorms, it was 17 degrees and 96 percent humidity. [[11]](#endnote-11)

Scene 2

This scene takes place on July 5th 1991 in the hospital room. It is 10am and Jean is just arriving for the day. It is 26 degrees, windy and 56% humidity.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Scene 3

This scene takes place back in AuSable River. It is now July 21st 2am and the sky is clear. It is 16 degrees and there is a slight breeze, 90% humidity.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Act 5

Scene 1

This scene takes place on July 6th 1991 in the hospital room at 10am. It is a cloudy morning, 27 degrees, and 69% humidity.[[14]](#endnote-14) 10am is Jeans usual arrival time, as she wants to be there for the 11am feedings and wants enough time to be caught up about Robin’s night and morning.

Scene 2

This scene takes place at the family resource office on October 14th 1991. Being as Michelle is due on December 9th and she is, at this time 8 months pregnant October would put her at about 8 months. It is 2pm, overcast, 11 degrees with 63% humidity.[[15]](#endnote-15)

Scene 3

This scene takes place in the hospital room on July 8th 1991 at 10am. It is 24 degrees with scattered clouds and 58% humidity. [[16]](#endnote-16)

Environments

According to a quick Google search, Chicago Illinois had record-breaking number t of murders in 1991. While this states how dangerous this time was, the people in this play would not be immediately affected by it. The president is George W Bush and in the middle of the gulf war, that later ended on Feb 28th 1991. Emma plays a more passive role in her participation. During this time Emma is on Medicaid for Robin and herself as she is of low socioeconomic status. If Jean had indeed adopted the baby, she would have had to pay for a majority of his bills where Emma would have had more help.

Economic

In this play, Jean is a professor, Henry is a writer, Emma works for the park district, Franny works in a midwifery, Tess is a social worker, Laurence is a nurse, Mary Jo is a nurses aid, Vivian is a Hospital administrator, Sam is a business man, Helen is a Neurosurgeon and it is not stated what Michelle does although she is of low socioeconomic standing like Emma. With exception to Emma and Michelle, all of the characters have jobs that allow them to live a comfortable life and are of upper middle class. Emma and Michelle are a lower class and do not have the stability that the other character have.

Jean and Henry seem to be pretty content, with the exception of wanting a child, with their lives until the issues come up surrounding Robin. Henry is in control of the money, as stated in the play that he pays the bills.

Franny and Sam are both unhappy and move on from each other although Sam has no real choice since Franny is having an affair. Sam is in charge of the money or at least he was when they were together.

Emma is trying to make a better life for herself, getting a job and trying to take more responsibility for Michael. She is in charge of her income but gets assistance from the government.

Social

All of the characters adhere to the social norm presented by their community and society. Henry and Jean do what they think is right and follow the rules of society. Emma fits into her low socioeconomic society and lives by the rules she has grown up with.

Franny appears to be more of a free spirit, the affair and moving around while Sam attempted to stick to the rules and got burned.

Religious

This play has many different religious references sprinkled throughout. On a few occasions Jean uses the word “God” when she is speaking, for example “God Help us”[[17]](#endnote-17). In Scene 3, Henry and Jean are singing Christmas carols, and we learn that Henry comes from a Jewish background when he sings the “Dreidel” song. While not a super important part of the charters lives during the course of the play, at the end it is important to Jean that Robin was baptized, even if it was Methodist and Laurence says a prayer over Robin once he has passed.

Previous Action

Before the play began Henry and Jean had 15 years trying to conceive a child.[[18]](#endnote-18) Unsuccessful they are now trying to adopt a child. Henry had cancer, 5 years previous and the odds of him recovering did not look good although he did fully recover.

Franny and Sam’s relationship is falling apart and Franny is having an affair with a man named Scott. Franny had a son named Tom from a previous relationship and Sam took him in as his own son. Sam was in a terrible motorcycle accident and Sam carries the blame of it, as he was the one who bought him the bike. [[19]](#endnote-19)

Emma was in a relationship with a man named Jamie, she got dumped and then found out she was pregnant. [[20]](#endnote-20) She opted to put her child up for adoption and did not let Jamie or her mother know she was pregnant.[[21]](#endnote-21) She had a child named Michael from a previous relationship and lives with her alcoholic father and her son.[[22]](#endnote-22)

**Dramatic Action**

**Unit Titles and Detailed Breakdown of Action Per Unit**

1. Awkward Hug

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to criticize Henry so that Jean will validate Emma’s mistrust of men.

1. Robin meet Jean

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants Jean to meet Robin so that Jean will unburden her of all guilt and responsibility

1. Jean’s reaction

Aggressor: Jean

Emma is disheartened by Jeans reaction and tries to suppress it by walking away.

1. Larry the Fruit Cake

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to demean Laurence so that Jean will not judge her.

1. Nothing But Excuses

Aggressor: Jean

Emma wants to defend her actions and uses her son, Michael, to manipulate Jean in order to get sympathy.

1. Spooky Sleep

Aggressor: Jean

Emma tries to comfort Jean and ease her worry about Robin

1. Do Not Revive

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants Jean to evaluate Emma’s decision so that Jean will absolve her of responsibility.

1. More Excuses

Aggressor: Jean

Emma is berated and tries to conciliate all blame.

1. Baby Clothes

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to rectify her action to Jean so that Jean will overlook them.

1. The Reality Of the Beep

Aggressor: Jean

Emma wants to enlighten Jean about the beeps and convince her it is not that bad.

1. The Story Of Jamie

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to beguile Jean so that Jean will consider being there for Robin

1. Mom’s a Whore

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to abase her mother so that Jean will support her.

1. Jamie doesn’t Know

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to inflict her sob story on Jean so that Jean will conciliate Emma and show concern.

1. Robin has a Father

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to demonstrate strength to Jean so that Jean will excuse her decisions.

1. The Rash

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to stage the scene so that Jean will

1. Family Albums

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to reiterate her choice so that Jean will support Robin

1. He needs Love

Aggressor: Emma:

Emma wants to lure Jean into admitting her feelings for Robin so that Emma can leave.

1. Hold Him

Aggressor: Emma

Emma wants to devastate Jean so that Jean will evaluate Robin’s wellbeing.

1. Time To Say Goodbye

Aggressor: Jean

Emma is tormented by her decision.

1. Jeans Decision

Aggressor: Jean

Emma wants to suppress her feelings and leave Robin.

**Character**

Biography

Emma is a 20 year-old Caucasian woman with blond hair, brown eyes. She is 5’6 and 170 pounds. She has a two-year-old son named Michael from a high school relationship that did not work out. She is also pregnant with her second child and has decided to give that child up for adoption without telling the father. She knows that keeping the child would be a poor decision as she can barley take care of herself and Michael and knows that he would be better off with someone else. While this was not an easy decision it was the right decision.

Emma dropped out of high school when she got pregnant with Michael, at 16 years old. She was never a great student as she was always worrying about her mother and trying to figure out where the next meal would come from. She had to get a job in order to support herself and her child. She has not had a lot of help throughout her life as her father is an alcoholic and her mother is MIA most of the time. This lack of structure in her life forced her to become street smart at a young age. Her life is lived through instinct and a “trust no one” attitude. This attitude prevents her from making and keeping long-term friendships. She has many different quittances from her days at the bar but does not have anyone she can truly count on.

Emma does not actively practice religion but she is quick to pray when things get extremely tough. Her grandmother was a Methodist and in the short time she knew her grandmother, she died when Emma was 10, she learned a little bit about religion. Her grandmother was also an alcoholic but would let Emma stay with her when her mother went on long benders.

Super Objective

Emma wants Jean take on the role of Robin’s mom so that Emma can leave knowing he will be loved and taken care of.

Arsenal and Handicaps

Emma is fighting with her feeling of responsibility and guilt about Robin’s condition. She also feels guilty about the fact she promised this little boy to someone and now he is dying. That being said she does not want nor know how to deal with Robin so she manipulates Jean through sob stories about her past and current situations. She knows that if she pulls at Jeans heartstrings Jean will most likely not be able to walk away from Robin. By asking him to hold him, talking about the baby clothes and the bad rash, she knows Jean will want to help Robin. Emma is good at reading people and adapting to different situations. She knows how to maneuver in order to get what she wants. This does not work all the time mind you, but in this situation she knows jean will not be able to walk away.

Summary List Of Adjectives

* Adaptable
* Independent
* Resourceful
* Bitchy
* Quarrelsome
* Impulsive
* Chatty
* Brave

Polar Attitudes

In the beginning of the scene I just want Jean to come in, like me, make me feel less guilty about Robin and to take on the responsibility of Robin so I can leave. At the end of the scene I am torn, as I do not want to leave my child, even though I have gotten my wish about Jean, he is still my son and I don’t want to go, the reality of my choices have finally set in it is devastating.

Dialogue and Specific Characteristics

Emma is not well educated nor has she had any good examples of people who speak eloquently in her life and it comes through in her speech patterns. She has a tendency to eliminate letters from words, ‘member or nuthin, and phrases her sentences in such a way that she sounds of lower socioeconomic status. This is in great contrast to Jean in the scene, which, although she does not speak a lot, sounds educated.

Structure

Emma dominates this scene with long paragraphs of speech. She speaks in full sentences and uses the dialogue to try and manipulate Jean. Jean has only short responses to Emma as she takes everything in. Emma uses these paragraphs to set up the background of Robin and her past history of why things are they way they are.

**Idea**

Meaning Of The Title

Before reading or seeing the play one may be lead to believe that the play is indeed about someone named Emma and her child. However, as one gets familiar with the play, it can be discovered that the play is more about the impact of Emma and her child on others.

In the title, *Emma’s Child,* the *Emma* part of the title represents society while the *child* part represents individual people. Emma represents how society can toss things away knowing that someone somewhere will eventually clean up after her. In a fast paced world of change society takes little responsibility for their actions and can easily move on. While the *child*, or individuals within society, is left scrambling to pick up the pieces, keep up with all the changes and, in some cases, save each other.

Theme

The theme of *Emma’s Child* is Hope. Hope that everything will work out even though the odds are stacked against them. Hope that in the face of incredible loss there will is always someone there to help you through it. Hope that relationships can be saved if you take the time and have the desire to fix them. Jean hopes that she can love Robin to good health. Henry hopes that Robin will not suffer and that he can help Jean to be strong enough to let go. Emma hopes that Jean will take on Robin so that she can move on with her life.

Purpose of the Scene

The scene between Emma and Jean provides the audience a peek into what Emma is like and to see the moment she walked away from her son. It is important because if this scene did not exist Emma would not be in the play nor would the audience be able tot hear Emma’s story about Robin, her life and her feelings about Robin and Jean. This scene is also important because it allows the audience to see the first meeting of Jean and Robin and see the pinnacle moment where she decided to take care of him.

Character Building

In order to really try and embrace the character of Emma I had to really let go of Cooper, which was hard. I had to rethink my posture as Emma leads more from her stomach and is not afraid to do so. I worked on coming up with different things that she would do with her hands when she was insecure, playing with her finger in a rhythm, biting her lip, scratching her inner part of her hand when she is feeling really stressed. I also worked on the softer side of Emma when she is dealing with her child, working from her shoulders, never wanting to actually touch him as she is afraid if she does she wont be able to let go.

Vocally, I worked on creating a smoker’s voice, raspy and tough from years of abuse. She elongates her vowels and talks with a lower pitch. She is also speaks more from her nose, nasal sounds, and breathes from her chest rather than long breaths from her diaphragm.

1. Kristine Thatcher, *Emma’s Child.* New York. 1997. Print. Page. 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. *Ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. “Weather History for KORD- October 1990. “Weather History for Chicago ,Il/Weather Underground. N.p,n.d Web. 30 Jan. 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Kristine Thatcher, *Emma’s* Child. Page. 52 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Weather History for KORD- October 1990. “Weather History for Chicago ,Il/Weather Underground. N.p,n.d Web. 30 Jan. 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. *ibid* [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Kristine Thatcher, *Emma’s Child.* Page 27 [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. *Ibid Page 19*  [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. *Ibid pg 67* [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. *Ibid pg 12* [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. *Ibid pg 12* [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. *Ibid pg 11*

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