

The following paragraphs begin E. M. Forster's essay "My Wood," written in 1936. In the essay, Forster considers his reaction to owning the small estate he bought with royalties from his novel *A Passage to India*.

Write an essay in which you define Forster's attitude toward the experience of owning property and analyze how Forster conveys that attitude. In your discussion, consider Forster's word choice, his manipulation of sentences, and his use of Biblical allusions. *playful seriousness*

A few years ago I wrote a book which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India. Feeling that they would have had no difficulties in India themselves, the Americans read the book freely. The more they read it the better it made them feel, and a cheque to the author was the result. I bought a wood with the cheque. It is not a large wood—it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected <sup>Line (5)</sup> by a public footpath. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? Don't let's touch economics; the effect of private ownership upon the community as a whole is another question—a more important question perhaps, but another one. Let's keep to psychology. If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood? In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he stuck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle and being woven into the robe of God. The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness. They point out what is perfectly obvious, yet seldom realized: that if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, that furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps, and the whole tangle of them makes you think twice before you accept an invitation to dinner or go for a bathe in the Jordan. Sometimes the Gospels proceed further and say with Tolstoy that property is sinful; they approach the difficult ground of asceticism here, where I cannot follow them. <sup>why not?</sup> But as to the immediate effects of property on people, they just show straightforward logic. It produces men of weight. Men of weight cannot, by definition, move like the lightning from the East unto the West, and the ascent of a fourteen-stone<sup>3</sup> bishop into a pulpit is thus the exact antithesis of the coming of the Son of Man. My wood makes me feel heavy. *Note tone of final line*

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 19:24 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."  
<sup>2</sup> The Jordan is the river in which John the Baptist christened repentant sinners.  
<sup>3</sup> A stone is a British unit of weight. 14 stones equals 196 pounds

*imagery of weight*

*lightness with which he uses Biblical allusions reflects deeply embedded uncertainty*

*the use of Biblical and religious allusions supports his point, Forster's position reflects through his taunting manner a distrust for the clergy*

*introduces role of guilt*  
*"blood money" comic*  
*satirizes British mindset; polite mindset*  
*embroidered allusion*  
*lively, humorous, exaggerated description*

*piling up of humor*

*irony/smiriness*  
*self-deprecating re: purchase*  
*aside-rhetorical denial*  
*rhet. questions*  
*witty definition of parable*  
*movt. away from central issue*  
*quip re: Leo Tolstoy*  
*humorous scene*