

Charlotte Bronte's life.

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- PLAN:

- 1. The beginning of her life.

PART I

- 2. Her second novel.

PART II

- 3. The early years and education.

PART III

- 4. First publication.

PART IV

- Video





PART I

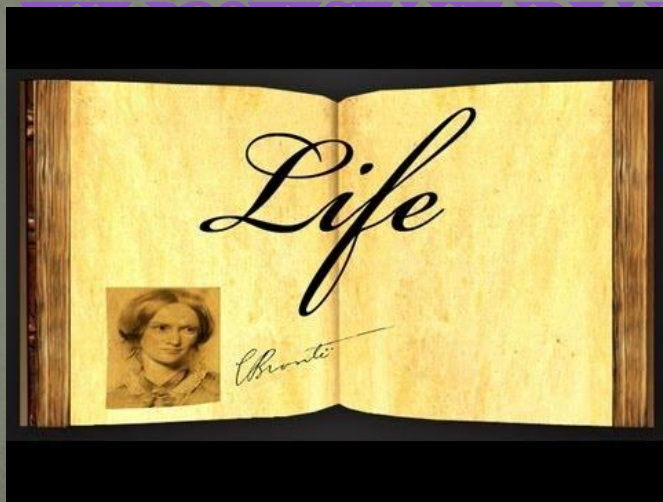
THE BEGINNING OF HER LIFE AND NOVELS.

Charlotte Brontë (commonly 21 April 1816 – 31 March 1855) was an English novelist and poet, the eldest of the three Brontë sisters who survived into adulthood and whose novels became classics of English literature. She enlisted in school at Roe Head in January 1831, aged 14 years. She left the year after to teach her sisters, Emily and Anne, at home, returning in 1835 as a governess. In 1839 she undertook the role as governess for the Sidekick family, but left after a few months to return to Haworth where the sisters opened a school, but failed to attract any pupils. Instead they turned to writing and they each first published in 1846 under the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Her first novel *The Professor* was rejected by publishers, her second novel *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, although it was not initially well received; one critic described it as a "pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition". The sisters admitted to their Bell pseudonyms in 1848, and by the following year were celebrated in London literary circles.

CHARLOTE BRONTE'S
SISTERS .



- IN 1842 CHARLOTTE AND EMILY TRAVELLED TO BRUSSELS TO ENROL AT THE BOARDING SCHOOL RUN BY CONSTANTIN HÉGER (1809–1896) AND HIS WIFE CLAIRE ZOÉ PARENT HÉGER (1804–1887). DURING HER TIME IN BRUSSELS, BRONTË, WHO FAVOURED



CONFORMITY AND SUBMISSION TO THE DOPE

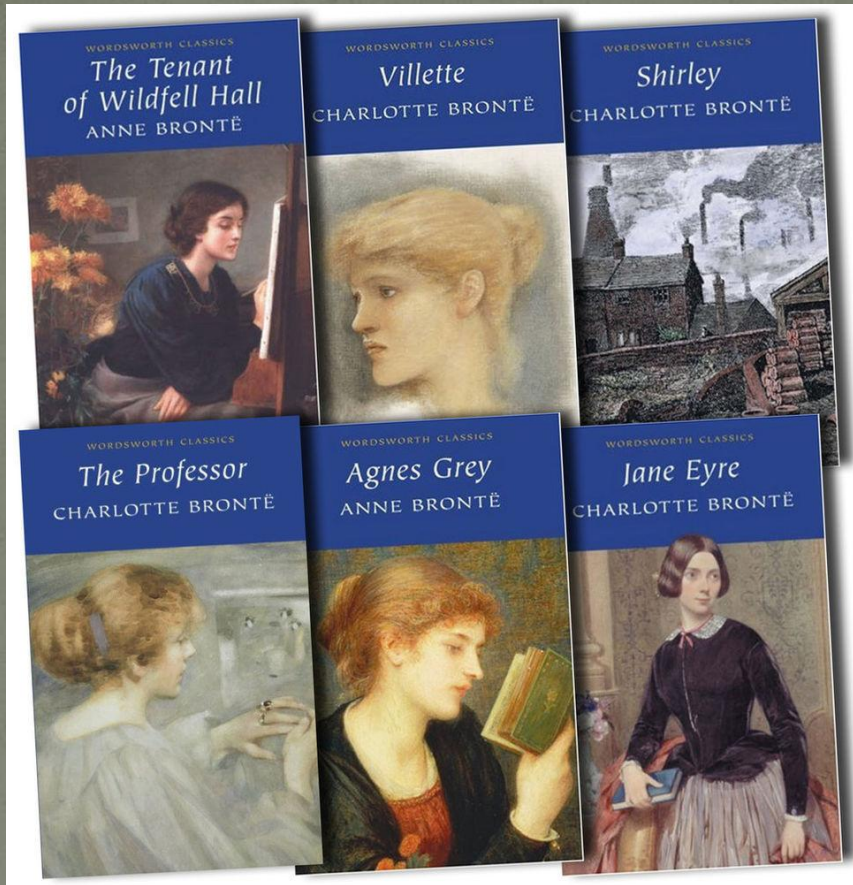
- IN RETURN FOR BOARD AND TUITION CHARLOTTE TAUGHT ENGLISH AND EMILY TAUGHT MUSIC. THEIR TIME AT THE SCHOOL WAS CUT SHORT WHEN THEIR AUNT ELIZABETH BRANWELL, WHO HAD JOINED THE FAMILY IN HAWORTH TO LOOK AFTER THE CHILDREN AFTER THEIR MOTHER'S DEATH, DIED OF INTERNAL OBSTRUCTION IN OCTOBER 1842. CHARLOTTE RETURNED ALONE TO BRUSSELS IN JANUARY 1843 TO TAKE UP A TEACHING POST AT THE SCHOOL. HER SECOND STAY WAS NOT



SUBTOPIC PSEUDONYMS IN 1848, AND BY THE FOLLOWING YEAR WERE CELEBRATED IN LONDON LITERARY CIRCLES.

BRONTË EXPERIENCED THE EARLY DEATHS OF ALL HER SIBLINGS. SHE BECAME PREGNANT SHORTLY AFTER HER MARRIAGE IN JUNE 1854 BUT DIED ON 31 MARCH 1855 OF TUBERCULOSIS OR POSSIBLY TYPHUS.





PART II

HER SECOND NOVEL.

Shirley and bereavements

- In 1848 Brontë began work on the manuscript of her second novel, *Shirley*. It was only partially completed when the Brontë family suffered the deaths of three of its members within eight months. In September 1848 Branwell died of chronic bronchitis and marasmus, exacerbated by heavy drinking, although Brontë believed that his death was due to tuberculosis. Branwell may have had a laudanum addiction. Emily became seriously ill shortly after his funeral and died of pulmonary tuberculosis in December 1848. Anne died of the same disease in May 1849. Brontë was unable to write at this time.
- After Anne's death Brontë resumed writing as a way of dealing with her grief, and *Shirley*, which deals with themes of industrial unrest and the role of women in society, was published in October 1849. Unlike *Jane Eyre*, which is written in the first person, *Shirley* is written in the third person and lacks the emotional immediacy of her first novel,^[24] and reviewers found it less shocking. Brontë, as her late sister's heir, suppressed the republication of Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, an action which had a deleterious effect on Anne's popularity as a novelist and has remained controversial among the sisters' biographers ever since.





PART III.

Early years and education.



Before the publication of *Villette*, Brontë received an expected proposal of marriage from [Arthur Bell Nicholls](#), her father's [curate](#), who had long been in love with her. She initially turned down his proposal and her father objected to the union at least partly because of Nicholls's poor financial status. Elizabeth Gaskell, who believed that marriage provided "clear and defined duties" that were beneficial for a woman, encouraged Brontë to consider the positive aspects of such a union and tried to use her contacts to engineer an improvement in Nicholls's finances. Brontë meanwhile was increasingly attracted to Nicholls and by January 1854 she had accepted his proposal. They gained the approval of her father by April and married in June. Her father Patrick had intended to give Charlotte away, but at the last minute decided he could not, and Charlotte had to make her way to the church without him. The married couple took their honeymoon in [Banagher](#), County Offaly, Ireland. By all accounts, her marriage was a success and Brontë found herself very happy in a way that was new to her.

- Roe Head School, in Mirfield
- Between 1831 and 1832, Brontë continued her education at Roe Head in Mirfield, where she met her lifelong friends and correspondents Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. In 1833 she wrote a novella, *The Green Dwarf*, using the name Wellesley. Around about 1833, her stories shifted from tales of the supernatural to more realistic stories. She returned to Roe Head as a teacher from 1835 to 1838. Unhappy and lonely as a teacher at Roe Head, Brontë took out her sorrows in poetry, writing a series of melancholic poems. In "We wove a Web in Childhood" written in December 1835, Brontë drew a sharp contrast between her miserable life as a teacher and the vivid imaginary worlds she and her siblings had created. In another poem "Morning was its freshness still" written at the same time, Brontë wrote "Tis bitter sometimes to recall/Illusions once deemed fair". Many of her poems concerned the imaginary world of Angria, often concerning Byronic heroes, and in December 1836 she wrote to the Poet Laureate Robert Southey asking him for encouragement of her career as a poet. Southey wrote back to say she was a bad poet and to consider another career, a letter that greatly hurt her. One scholar Dawn Potter wrote that Brontë had a streak of sadism in her novels with her characters always suffering in some way, which she suggested was due to her own unhappy life.
- In 1839 she took up the first of many positions as governess to families in Yorkshire, a career she pursued until 1841. In particular, from May to July 1839 she was employed by the Sidgwick family at their summer residence, Stone Gappe, in Lothersdale, where one of her charges was John Benson Sidgwick (1835-1927), an unruly child who on one occasion threw a Bible at Charlotte, an incident that may have been the inspiration for a part of the opening chapter of *Jane Eyre* in which John Reed throws a book at the young Jane.¹⁰¹ Brontë did not enjoy her work as a governess, noting her employers treated her almost as a slave, constantly humiliating her.
- Brontë was of slight build and was less than five feet tall.





PART IV

HER FIRST PUBLICATION.

In May 1846 Charlotte, Emily and Anne self-financed the publication of a joint collection of poems under their assumed names Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The pseudonyms veiled the sisters' sex while preserving their initials; thus Charlotte was Currer Bell. "Bell" was the middle name of Haworth's curate, Arthur Bell Nicholls whom Charlotte later married, and "Currer" was the surname of Frances Mary Richardson Currer who had headed their school (and made their fathered the decision to use noms de plume: Charlotte wrote).

Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because - without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called "feminine" - we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise.♥

Although only two copies of the collection of poems were sold, the sisters continued writing for publication and began their first novels, continuing to use their *noms de plume* when sending manuscripts to potential publishers.

- Brontë's first manuscript, *The Professor*, did not secure a publisher, although she was heartened by an encouraging response from Smith, Elder & Co. of Cornhill, who expressed an interest in any longer works Currer Bell might wish to send. Brontë responded by finishing and sending a second manuscript in August 1847. Six weeks later, *Jane Eyre* was published. It tells the story of a plain governess, Jane, who, after difficulties in her early life, falls in love with her employer, Mr Rochester. They marry, but only after Rochester's insane first wife, of whom Jane initially has no knowledge, dies in a dramatic house fire. The book's style was innovative, combining naturalism with gothic melodrama, and broke new ground in being written from an intensely evoked first-person female perspective. Brontë believed art was most convincing when based on personal experience; in *Jane Eyre* she transformed the experience into a novel with universal appeal.

