



The Brontë Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne

Catherine Reef

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne

Catherine Reef

The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Catherine Reef

The Brontë sisters are among the most beloved writers of all time, best known for their classic nineteenth-century novels *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte), *Wuthering Heights* (Emily), and *Agnes Grey* (Anne). In this sometimes heartbreaking young adult biography, Catherine Reef explores the turbulent lives of these literary siblings and the oppressive times in which they lived. Brontë fans will also revel in the insights into their favorite novels, the plethora of poetry, and the outstanding collection of more than sixty black-and-white archival images. A powerful testimony to the life of the mind. (Endnotes, bibliography, index.)

The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Details

Date : Published October 23rd 2012 by Clarion Books (first published October 1st 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Catherine Reef

Format : Kindle Edition 245 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, History, Historical, Childrens

 [Download The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emi ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Catherine Reef

From Reader Review The Bronte Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne for online ebook

Lisa - (Aussie Girl) says

Great insight into the lives of these amazing writers and their tragic and short lives.

Alicia says

A beautifully simple but alarmingly deep look at the Bronte sisters and their brother Branwell and their life in the parsonage. Now, it details everything from their upbringing with a religious father (who ended up outliving his wife and all of his children), their care by their aunt for the majority of their lives, their imaginations and interactions with each other, and their subsequent rise in popularity, though for the most part, obscured by the fact that they were writing under male pseudonyms.

For the simple organization in chronology, there are so many facets of life during that time period that were discussed including a woman's place, her need to be married and silent and dutiful, while their brother, the male of the family, pissed most of his "independence" with stupidity. The girls worked hard but suffered from illness and depression while muddling through life. It's amazing to understand their work in publishing, the proposals by men, their relationship with each other and especially after all were dead except Charlotte and what that did to her-- writing, companionship, outlook.

I would highly recommend reading it since it also paints a picture of authorship and creation as much as it was about their family intricacies.

Jeanette says

4.5 stars but I must round it up for appreciation. Started in the afternoon after a strenuous day of tree planting, and garden wall /soil renewal- I would never have thought I could stay up and finish this in one evening. It was GOOD!

The research and references are 40 pages plus at the end of the Kindle read. The written letters and association correspondence for a dozen others followed to an excellent degree. Even the period after the sisters had passed and their fame increasing- who helped with the salvage of their remnants and who did not.

But what was core and central was the personality detail! And the portraits and photos embellished those with physical reality. Love, love, loved the detail.

Now I do understand more of the source for the insight. And the gulf of differences between their writing and their "eyes" of worldview, as well.

Because they were all set into a world that restricted their employment and their singular and narrowly encapsulated personalities doubled down on the onus to escape and the near impossibility to do so. BOTH. Charlotte was the only self-identity that pushed herself to travel, for instance. And eventually, after increased

tragedy, she actually went to Belgium alone. UNHEARD of for a single woman of her class and situation.

All three sisters were forced by circumstance to work as governess or teacher. None of them had the least inclination to do so. In fact, all the Brontes' perceived work as intrusion. And two of them were majority personality introverts from the get-go, as well. Anne was spiritual and religious to a deeper degree than the other two. Emily rarely wanted to leave the house, and did not when the other 2 had to go to London for publication access connection. But all were employed by private households of wealth at different periods for tutoring and governess work. In great majority of the employments, it was necessity of duty direction. Not a desired occupation for any of them. I really did LOL when they wrote in letters that they were required to work from morning until evening and then given mending or sewing to finish, as well. One mentions that she does her writing when the charges are refusing to do any studies anyway. The letters seem to indicate that any time actually performing the job was an unwelcome burden to be associating with such dolts. Because this took time away from their reading, games of imaginary places, and twined fantasy worlds of secluded occupation within each and between each other; work for outsiders was always intrusion. And the cruelty and worldview of disdain at their first "away" school was horrendous. In fact, it was so bad that it did play a role in their older sisters' deaths. Marie, especially, seemed to have been bullied and literally killed in her disease onset and progression at that place.

There are many other writers and poets in this book that are excellent windows into the world of these Bronte siblings too. Even though their town was too far and obscure to connections of travel that the short lived school they started never had a single student. But what came across the most to me was how and what they made of their own REALITY in that clergyman's house. More than most could make of a downtown Manhattan. Also the Moors and nature play such a role too, especially for Emily with her dog, Kemper. She seemed, to me, always preferring outside and the natural world to people.

And the marriage proposals! And the funerals! And the scowling father. And the beloved brother that in every job and occasion for employment finds the way too hard, too restrictive, filled with too many rules, or just plain gets caught and fired in short order. And then coming right back home again in tears. Real tears. The small red-headed man with the big forehead is described sublimely.

The most shocking story, I think, was Anne's. Asthma, and more. Then so sick and you are directed to go to the shore for a cure? And when you say good-bye you know you are not coming back. And how she is the only one not in the church graveyard but resting by the shore forever.

What a good, good survey of these women. Bright, arrogant, spirited, mostly wise and generous- and stuck in the mire of the mid 1800's when there was almost no tunneling out. And when they did burrow through, I thought it was truly incisive that the luckier women and the celebrated and literate men (like Coleridge and Southey, the poet laureate) discouraged them. Not just discouraged but chided them to return to feminine duty and purpose. And after the last funeral, a few of those women would not even help the collections of the Bronte papers and drawings.

Well, I just finished an Anne Bronte, so I think I will have to read the Charlotte that she wrote just before her death at 38. TB and the particulars of how these people lived their medical and physical lives! Well I can't help but use exclamation point. They were not lazy in household chores, but were ill so much of the time. Their ages at death 11,9 for the oldest two. And all others but Charlotte before they were close to 30. Charlotte, married she became for a very short time, and then died at 38. Many, many hours of those years spent in imagination of "other" places. Psychologically and with full intellect available, you can certainly see why.

Ana Rînceanu says

This was an informative read and I think anyone can read this and draw the parallels from the real lives of the Brontë sisters and their work.

Karyl says

In reality, I would give this 3.5 stars, but alas, Goodreads is chintzy on the half-star thing. At any rate, this is an interesting look at the very short lives of the three Brontë sisters, all of whom were published authors in a time when women were not expected, or even really allowed, to be anything other than wives. Publishing originally under male pseudonyms, the sisters gained the recognition they would not have gotten had them published under their true names. It was only after the deaths of Anne and Emily that Charlotte revealed who they really were.

It's kind of a depressing read, this book on the Bronte sisters, mainly because they endured so much loss. First they lost their mother, then they lost their two elder sisters to sickness after all the girls were sent to a boarding school at which they suffered a great deal of abuse. Only Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and their brother Branwell achieved adulthood. Branwell, however, seemed to be destined for failure, and turned to drugs and alcohol to alleviate his pain. He died without realizing his sisters had all been published; they had kept the knowledge from him in order to spare his feelings. But within the year after the loss of Branwell, Charlotte and her father experienced the loss of the two other sisters. Charlotte herself was dead before she reached 39 years of age, causing her father to outlive all six of his children. It brings to the fore the likelihood of early death from common illnesses that was so prevalent in the Victorian era.

The book goes into some detail on each work published by the three sisters. Before this, I had not been aware that Charlotte had published anything other than *Jane Eyre*, but she also wrote two other novels. It was interesting to learn that *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* weren't immediate successes, and were even panned to some degree. They brought up issues that Victorians had preferred to leave hidden, like abuse in boarding schools, drunkenness, and the idea that women could feel passion. It's rather surprising, as these books are now gothic classics and taught in most English classes.

I found the writing to be a bit elementary-sounding, as though the author was speaking to middle-school or younger children, instead of high school students, the typical readers of YA literature. This is why I can only give this 3.5 stars.

lauren says

Original Rating: 4.5 stars.

I haven't read a Brontë biography in a while and I was needing my fix. I picked this up when I last visited the Parsonage in October 2017, and hadn't gotten around to reading it yet. As the only biography on my shelf that I haven't read, I picked it up... and I'm so glad that I did!

As the title suggests, this is a **brief** look into the lives of the Brontës. Although the title says 'Charlotte, Emily, and Anne', Reef does look into Branwell, Patrick and Nicholls. Therefore, this book is **brilliant** for

those looking to read into the family more. It gives you all the necessary detail. I'd definitely recommend starting with this before venturing out to read Juliet Barker's, Elizabeth Gaskell's or Claire Harman's, for example.

I had a few minor issues with this. Firstly, the writing style. Despite enjoying the fact this was written like a novel (I have never read a biography wrote in such a style), it made it seem almost unreliable. It felt like Reef was fictionalising their lives, even though she wasn't - if you get me? The fact she didn't include footnotes didn't help matters. Although she included the references at the back of the novel, she didn't include footnotes directing me to where she got this or that from. In addition to this, she wouldn't call the people she were referencing by their real names, instead referred to them as 'the critic' or 'the reviewer' or 'the ladies magazine'. More evidence was needed.

Overall, I really enjoyed it. I would recommend it to those of you interested in reading up on the Brontës as it's simple, brief yet touches on all the main aspects of their lives. However, if you've already read up on the family, then this wouldn't give you any information you didn't already know. Still, it was a fun read and I'm glad I finally picked it up!

I'll be writing a much longer and in depth review of this for my blog, so I'll update this when it's live if you're interested in knowing more. Thanks!

Destiny says

This is around the fifth biography I've checked out on a Bronte but only the first that I have finished. I have the massive tome by Juliet Barker but I was overwhelmed when I opened it. I've started and put down several more.

I felt I needed something light to introduce me fully to the sisters. Currently I've only read one book from Charlotte but it really made an impression on me. I've started both Shirley and Vilette but I haven't finished them yet. The same goes for Anne's Agnes Grey.

But reading this I felt like I got a good overview of them. And I reacted to it. Near the end with the family tragedies. I really felt upset. I don't know what it was about this particular book but yeah. I knew how they all died of course but I didn't really feel it until I read this.

I think this a good introduction to the family and it's easy to read. Four stars.

Brooke says

I wanted to read this after watching To Walk Invisible on PBS. It gave me the extra info on the Brontes I wanted without dragging it out into literary criticism.

Gina Johnson says

April's book club read. This biography of the Bronte sisters was an enjoyable easy read. It was well written and very informative and it made me want to read Jane Eyre (and their other books) again.

Kristen says

To say that I am a big Bronte fan, would be an understatement. I am the girl who BEGGED my husband to let me choose Bronte as a middle name. I also asked if we might PLEASE name our daughter Charlotte. Or our dog Heathcliff...please, Dear! Though all of those monikers fell by veto, my love for all things Bronte remains in tact. Though I have read most of the Bronte sisters' works, I learned a great deal about them in this family biography.

For example, I did not know that there were two more Bronte sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, who died in childhood after being abusively treated at a Christian boarding school for girls. Sound familiar? Yes, the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge was the model for Jane Eyre's nightmarish experiences at Lowood school.

I had heard that Charlotte had fallen in love with a married man and was prepared to pursue this relationship against propriety. (This relationship became somewhat reversely reflected in the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester in "Jane Eyre). I also knew that all three writers had short lives, each dying before age forty, but I did not know that Charlotte married. I was so happy for her, though it seems so cruel that her marriage was so short. Reverend Patrick Bronte, their father outlived each of his children.

I knew little about their brother Branwell. I did not know that he struggled with alcoholism, poverty, opium use, and depression.

Like "Jane Eyre" and "Wuthering Heights", the short lives of the Bronte sisters had possessed plenty of sadness, darkness even. But the joy of family, of passionate expression, of education and art transformed even their darkest moments and disappointments into enduring legacies. I am grateful that their passions and beautiful heartaches were captured on paper, both in story and poetry.

My only negative observation about this book is that the writing was a little dry and seemed to jump all over the place. I'm not sure that a family biography is a good idea. The author wrote of the Bronte family's experiences chronologically for the most part, so I was never sure whose experiences were being discussed when. It was a very confusing format. My other complaint would be the pages-long summaries of each of the Bronte novels. It seemed that the author only included the summaries in order to lengthen her own manuscript.

Overall, this was an interesting and quick read. I would recommend it to anyone who loves the Bronte's as much as I do.

Martyn says

I thought I knew a lot about the Brontës but I had never fully appreciated before how closely together

Branwell, Emily and Anne died. I can't begin to imagine the desperate grief that must have caused, on top of the earlier deaths of Maria (mother and child) and Elizabeth. I also never realized that Patrick Brontë outlived his last child by six years.

This book is primarily aimed at the YA audience but, like the best books for that market, it isn't insubstantial in the slightest. It's a great starting point to learn about this fascinating family. I read it after watching the amazing 2016 BBC tv show *To Walk Invisible*, which was written and directed by Sally Wainwright who grew up close to Haworth in Sowerby Bridge.

It's a tragedy that they were born at a time when disease was not fully understood, it's a tragedy that their genius was not allowed full exposure simply because of their sex; I can't quite grasp the fortitude that these women must have had just to physically write, let alone accomplish what they did. In my opinion the ultimate tragedy in literature is that Emily only wrote one novel; fortunately she filled it with more ideas and passion than most writers achieve with much larger outputs.

Grandpa Joe says

This little book, which might be retitled "A Brief History of the Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne" is an interesting and informative look at their inside lives and provides some insight as to the inspirations for their novels.

This book is best not read until several of the Bronte classic novels themselves have been read to have an appreciation of their writing style and the characteristics of their novels. Indeed, I skipped over the brief reviews contained in this book of the Bronte works I have NOT read, because I did not want to encounter any spoilers.

In this book, we learn that Emily and Anne died at about age 30, and that Charlotte did not live to reach age 40. They were all survived by their father, a pastor. We learn of their childhood home, which was also their adult home for the most part, and its proximity to isolation and the moors so predominately featured in their novels. We learn of their wonderful imagination as children, which foretold their later success as authors although Charlotte, Emily, and Anne did not early on appreciate this possibility. We learn of the overlooked and highly talented authors, Maria Bronte and Elizabeth Bronte. Well, they may well have been highly talented - Maria's and Elizabeth's sisters certainly were, but unfortunately, Maria and Elizabeth died at ages 11 and 10 respectively. But Maria was mistreated and "fiercely" whipped by a "sadistic schoolmistress" at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge before she subsequently fatally contracted tuberculosis. This mistreatment was witnessed by Charlotte and is later reflected in her own writing.

We learn of the society's ignorance of germs, the causes of tuberculosis, and how it is spread so that Anne was probably unwittingly spreading the disease as she walked among the healthy in the last weeks and days of her life. We learn how women novelists were not yet in favor, encouraging authorship under a pen name. We learn how some contemporary critics judged novels by the "correctness" of the behavior of its characters, resulting in criticism of the "excess passion" that often gripped the female heroines of the Bronte novels - a passion that was a contributing reason those novels became classics. We learn how only Charlotte ever married, did so late in her brief life, but was then very happy. We learn of their brother Patrick, whose trouble with alcohol might equally have taken place in the 20th or 21st centuries.

There is so much more of interest here. Overall, it's an interesting story.

Jarm Del Boccio says

Fascinating to see the parallels between the Brontë sisters cloistered lives and their now classic works. Although this is a YA book, I recommend it to all, especially writers, who love "behind the scene" peeks into author's lives. I re-watched "Jane Eyre" (the 2006 BBC Masterpiece Theatre version, of course!) as I read the book. . .

Michele says

4.5 stars.

What? The Bronte sisters got fired? They hated their jobs? They weren't exactly the ideal teachers? There are lots of juicy things to learn from reading this biography. It is excellent and well done. Great pictures and backgrounds. I couldn't put it down.

On page 32 Charlotte is in the classroom and she starts picturing an imaginative scene: "One particular day, she envisioned a Byronic hero named Zamorna dismounting his black horse. The schoolroom disappeared, and Charlotte stood beneath a sky that was 'quivering & shaking with stars.' Then she heard an annoying voice calling her back. Africa faded, and she was back at her desk looking into her pupil's questioning face." I loved this passage because if you've ever read a really well-written book, this has happened to you. While reading, "The Last of the Mohicans" I had this happen to me. I was there! I was on the trail while those boys were hiking and trying to hide thier tracks. Oh, it was an amazing experience. And the great thing was, that when I put it down and picked it up again, I was right back in the story. It has only happened that one time, so I treasure it, but loved to see that Charlotte had experienced the same thing.

Loved this quote about "Jane Eyre:" Someone commented, "This is because reality --deep, significant reality is the great characteristic of the book." page 113.

This book is for grades 5 and up, but I believe anyone who is a fan of the Bronte girls will enjoy it.

Steven Peterson says

The title of the book refers to the three Bronte sisters--but it also touches upon the short tragic life of their talented brother--Branwell. I was not that familiar with the lives of the sisters--although I did know that their lives burned brightly as authors and ended far too early.

For me, this book fills in the blanks of their lives nicely. We see their lives traced from their birth to their (tragically early) deaths. Each of the three sisters wrote at least one impressive novel. They had begun writing much earlier, when they were quite young. As they grew up, they continued and deepened their commitment to writing. They went by the nom de plume of Bell--each with a different first name. They assumed male personae, given that the times were not favorable toward women authors (although, as the work noted, there were exceptions).

The volume describes their efforts to make a living, their home base with their father, the effects of living

where they did.

All in all, we get a good introduction to their lives and their works. I, for one, found this a very nice work, albeit rather brief.

The book is 190 pages long, but the type is rather large and the spacing between lines rather large. On the other hand, the content was most helpful to me, and I think that for those who want a well written introduction to the lives of the Bronte sisters (and family), this will suffice nicely.
