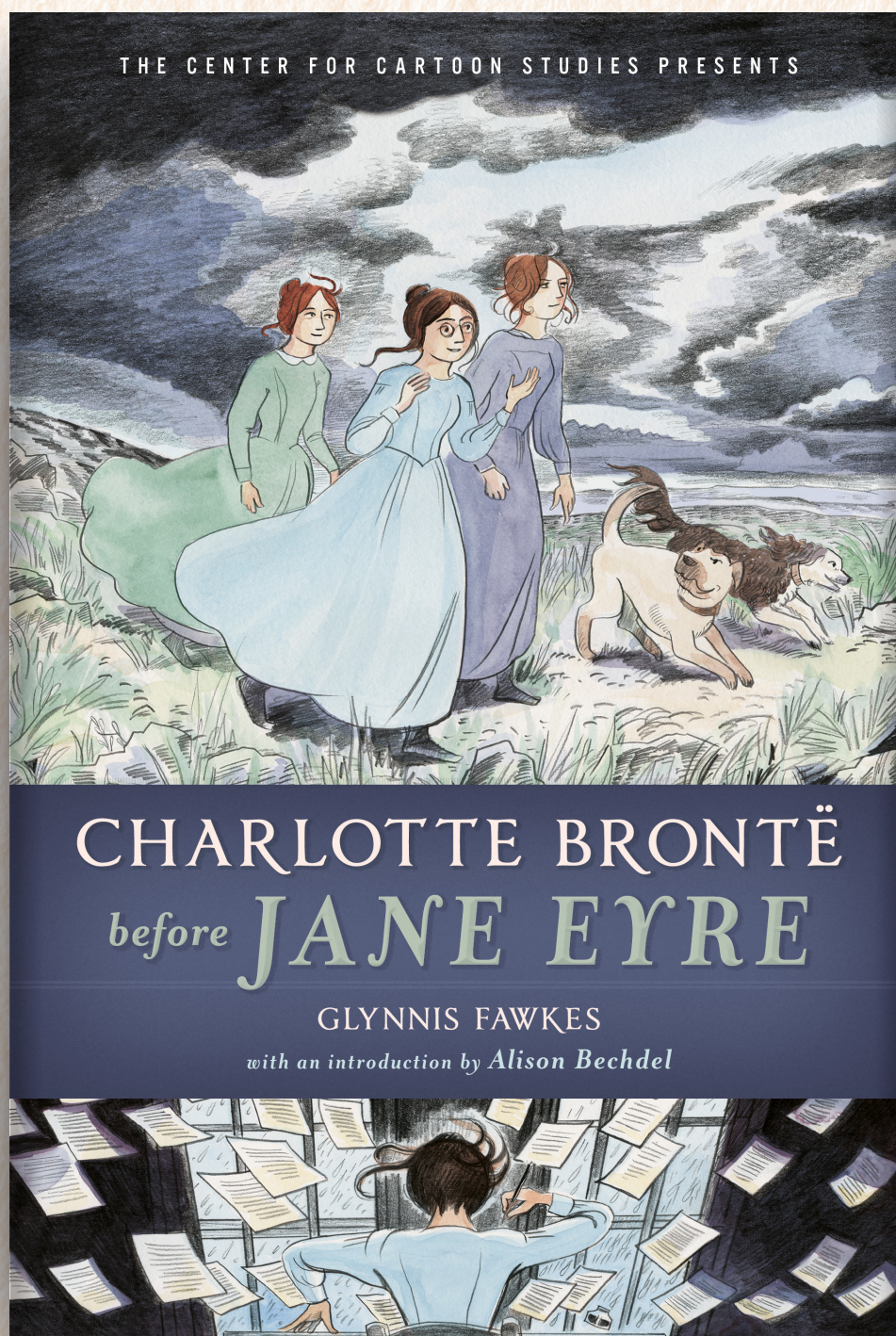


LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Educator's Guide | Ages 12 and Up



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- From an early age, Charlotte was inventing stories with her siblings about Great Glass Town. Do you think her childhood habits helped her achieve success as a writer? Why or why not? Can you think of any childhood habits of your own that might help you in your future?
- In nineteenth-century England, choices were very limited for adult women. If they weren't married, they could generally only work as nurses, teachers, or governesses. Why do you think this was the case? Are there echoes of that for adult women today?
- Charlotte's older sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, died after getting sick at their boarding school. Do you think the school was negligent in taking care of them? If so, why do you think the school was allowed to stay open?
- Like many successful people in history, Charlotte faced overwhelming odds and multiple setbacks before ever achieving success. In spite of this, she persisted. Why do you think she kept trying?
- Charlotte's younger sisters, Anne and Emily, were published before her, even though they all submitted their work together. In spite of that, the sisters remained close confidants. Have you ever been in competition with someone close to you? Did it affect your relationship? How did you handle it?
- Charlotte received a wedding proposal from Henry Nussey, which she turned down. Given the extremely limited choices for women at the time, it was an unusual thing to do. Have you ever been in a situation where you opted for the riskier choice rather than the expected one? Why did you make the decision you did?
- Charlotte gets the opportunity to study in Brussels and learns French as a way to improve her ability to write expressively. Why do you think that would affect her writing in English? In what ways? If you are bilingual, how does knowing one language affect your ability to communicate in the other?
- One of Emily Brontë's poems is shown on page 78. What do you think it's about? Do you relate to the poem? Why or why not?
- Class position mattered a great deal in nineteenth-century England. Charlotte was part of the middle class, which meant she could live comfortably and would be aware of formal social niceties. Even so, her choices were extremely limited and dictated not only by sexism, but by the strict separation of classes of the time. Do you think she would have been more successful or achieved success sooner if that had not been the case? Are there echoes of this in life today? If so, why do you think we have been unable to change it?
- Despite not making or having a lot of money, Charlotte's parents had six children: five girls and one boy. Given that the social and economic challenges at the time (especially for girls/women), why do you think they had so many? Do you think it was irresponsible for them to do that?
- Charlotte formed a very strong attachment to her teacher, M. Heger. He was the first teacher to take an interest in her writing and show her ways to improve. Have you ever had a mentor or teacher that recognized your abilities and encouraged your growth? How did that affect you? If you haven't, how do you think it would affect you? Do you believe, as Charlotte did, that it would change your life?

Charlotte Brontë Before Jane Eyre

- In a letter, poet laureate Robert Southey warns Charlotte that “Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention. Whoever therefore is ambitious of distinction in this way ought to be prepared for disappointment.” Have you ever received advice, especially from someone you admired, that was discouraging? How did you handle it? How did Charlotte?

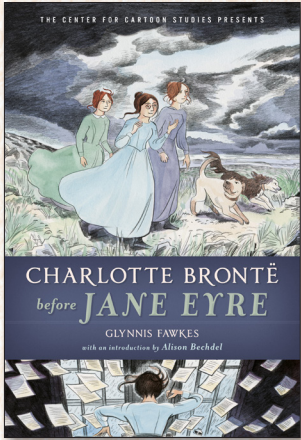
ACTIVITIES

- Have students interview a classmate (or a family member or a community leader, etc.—be creative!) and then create a mini-biography for that person. Encourage students to think beyond the written word. They can craft a collage, make a video, write a performance piece, set ideas to music, or create a graphic novel. (Social Studies, Vocabulary, Language Arts, Art, Music, [Writing, Speaking and Listening])
- Have students choose a historic figure they have heard of but don’t know much about. Have them do research on that person and then create a simple graphic novel in the style of this series on their subject. You can also have them work with other forms of media, as suggested above. (Social Studies, Vocabulary, Language Arts, Music, Art, [Writing, Speaking and Listening])
- Have students pick a character from any of the graphic novels. Then have them dress up and act like that character. They can interact with one another or you can have a class interview with each individual character. (Social Studies, Arts, Language Arts, Vocabulary [Writing, Speaking and Listening])



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About the Book



9781368023290 HC
9781368045827 PB

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a beloved classic, celebrated today by readers of all ages and revered as a literary masterwork. But what of the famous writer herself? Originally published under the pseudonym of Currer Bell, *Jane Eyre* was born out of a magnificent, vivid imagination, a deep cultivation of skill, and immense personal hardship and tragedy. Charlotte, like her sisters Emily and Anne, was passionate

about her work. She sought to cast an empathetic lens on characters often ignored by popular literature of the time, questioning societal assumptions with a sharp intellect and changing forever the landscape of Western literature. With an introduction by Alison Bechdel, *Charlotte Brontë Before Jane Eyre* presents a stunning examination of a woman who battled against the odds to make her voice heard.

Praise for the book

"Fawkes's intricate line work skillfully places focus on characters' expressive faces, while Charlotte's energized writing sessions emphasize her undeterred spirit and dedication to her craft."

—Horn Book

"A wonderful peek into the early life of one of the most celebrated literary figures of the Western world."

—School Library Journal

Kelly Johnston created this guide. He taught high school and college English for over ten years in addition to being the founding artistic director for the Arizona Shakespeare Festival. He currently lives and works in New York City as a freelance theater director and screenwriter.

About the Author



Glynnis Fawkes is an Ignatz Award-nominated cartoonist and illustrator living in Burlington, Vermont. She has worked as an illustrator for archeological excavations since 1998 on sites in Greece, Crete, Turkey, Israel, Cyprus, Syria, and Lebanon. She is currently at work on a book about her first trip to Greece, a draft of which received the MoCCA Arts Festival Award in 2016. Find out more about Glynnis and her work at glynnisfawkes.com.

