

KIEZgroup 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018      Welcome to all, especially Stephan.

Wishes for the class for the coming year - subjects or techniques or.....

We're talking about biographies and autobiographies:

Will you ever write your autobiography? Have you started? Cf Professor Hausmann  
(Cf the involuntary effect on me of reading autobiography of Claire Tomalin's.)

### The Bronte Story - a fictionalized autobiography Oxford Bookworms level 3

A. Talking about biographies:

Books, books, books - but also films, plays etc.

(1) - Talk to each other about what you have been reading and watching and what you have been given (in that line or important to you).

- Are all novels a kind of autobiography? Mrs Pilcher can only write about what she has experienced. NB the interview. Get it out to read what she says about her experience (end)

(Reading together: ) By the way:

Diana Athill wrote a memoir called 'Somewhere towards the end' which she published when she was 91. She is now 100! Among other things she says that she is glad she is still given novels to review but that really she only enjoys reading biographies nowadays. It rather seems to her that everything else has been said. (Pilcher or Brecht???)

(2) Talk to each other about which biographies or autobiographies you have read recently or long ago. Were there some which impressed you greatly?

(3) Autobiography or biography? Which do you prefer? Where are the (subtler) differences?

(4) How do you like this poem by Emily Bronte? I'll read it out then you can, too.

#### Past, Present, Future - Poem by Emily Jane Brontë

Tell me, tell me, smiling child,

What the past is like to thee ?      (thee = you)

'An Autumn evening soft and mild

With a wind that sighs mournfully.'      (sadly)

Tell me, what is the present hour ?

'A green and flowery spray ( branch with      flowers or leaves on it)

Where a young bird sits gathering its power

To mount and fly away.'

And what is the future, happy one ?

'A sea beneath a cloudless sun ;

A mighty, glorious, dazzling sea

Stretching into infinity.'

(May be we'll come back to this poem, to what the past, present and future is for us all.)

B.

1) **The book we're going to read is called 'The Bronte Story'.**

Who are or were the Brontes? (Charlotte 1816 - 1855) I'll collect facts on the board.  
(NB Importance of Charlotte - *Reader I married him.... cf other articles*)

2) Look at the picture on the front of the book. It is the most famous picture of the three sisters who wrote and published. What exactly do you see?

3) On the back of our book it says:

"On a September day in 1821, in the church of a Yorkshire village, a man and six children stood around a grave. They were burying a woman: the man's wife, the children's mother. The children were all very young, and within a few years the two oldest were dead, too.

Close to the wild beauty of the Yorkshire moors, the father brought up his young family. Who had heard of the Brontës of Haworth then? Branwell died young, but his sisters became famous writers.

But they did not live to grow old or to enjoy their fame. Only their father was left, alone with his memories."

I suppose there are a lot of other authors, composers, painters.... Who became more famous after their deaths?

4) Then we can read the introduction to the book. ("Some people have a special talent....no-one knows where this talent comes from.....")

and

look at page 60 for the first check on what you've understood :-)

If we have time: 5) Look at pages 57 - 59 and pick out a word you already know to 'explain' it to your neighbour who must guess. So you can't use the explanation given in the book!

For homework (for January 16<sup>th</sup>) please read Chapter 1 (pages 1 - 6).

(Everybody buys a book - of different quality and price.)

Try to remember the names of the people

and

notice what are the things you read about which do not really make you happy.

Later, when we've read this book we'll talk more about the Brontes and decide which other books to read and how. = Whether we all read the same or some read different ones and we compare.



[Department of English Language and Literature, DAV College, Jalandhar](#) hat [3 neue Fotos](#) hinzugefügt.

[28. März 2016](#) ·

The three Dimensions of Life: Past, Present and Future!

Life is defined by three things: How we look back at the past, what we do with the present and how we envision the future. Past, Present and Future are the inevitable changes in our ever-changing life. When we look back, we remember many yesterdays, and when we look ahead, we see many tomorrows. What links yesterday and tomorrow is "today", the time for beginnings. Past can be difficult and hard but it is static and frozen, can't be altered. You can either run from it or learn from it. Future is blank but has endless possibilities. The most important time is today, the time to make plans and do things with the belief that this moment in the present could be that life-altering moment which can change the course of life.

This short poem "Past, Present and Future" by Emily Bronte is a philosophical explication of these three aspects of life. The poem raises a question - what do these three stages of life mean to us? The answers are simple yet insightful. The poet asks a child about the meaning of past, present and future. The child's answers, though simple and innocent, give a profound description of these complexities of life. For the child, past was calm and mild but interspersed with some "mournful sighs of the winds", that is, the difficulties of life. The present, for him, is a bold beginning when he is about to take his maiden flight and fulfil his dream of soaring high in the sky. The child sees the future as limitless and infinite which can offer new opportunities to go beyond the limits of imagination.

....

*Past, Present, Future Analysis*

*Past, Present, Future* is divided into three verses, each one being of thematic importance to one of the titular words. Each of the three verses is a quatrain; four lines long, and uses a simple ABAB rhyming pattern. The shortest line is six syllables long and the longest is eight – this gives the poem a consistent rhythm that makes it easy to read aloud and follow along. The final verse breaks this mould only slightly, preferring an AABB rhyming pattern to the one established in the previous two verses. This is done to invoke a particular effect better explored within the specific context of the verse.

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....

- Mood of the speaker:  
The speaker asks many questions. Perhaps, he or she is in confusion.

.....

The Brontë Sisters (1818-1855)

*Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë were sisters and writers whose novels have become classics.*

Charlotte was born on 21 April 1816, Emily on 30 July 1818 and Anne on 17 January 1820 all in Thornton, Yorkshire. They had two sisters, both of whom died in childhood and a brother, Branwell. Their father, Patrick, was an Anglican clergyman who was appointed as the rector of the village of Haworth, on the Yorkshire moors. After the death of their mother in 1821, their Aunt Elizabeth came to look after the family.

All three sisters attended different schools at various times as well as being taught at home. The Brontë children were often left alone together in their isolated home and all began to write stories at an early age.

All three sisters were employed at various times as teachers and governesses. In 1842, Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels to improve their French, but had to return home early after the death of their aunt Elizabeth. Charlotte returned to Brussels an English teacher in 1843-1844. By 1845, the family were back together at Haworth. By this stage, Branwell was addicted to drink and drugs.

In May 1846, the sisters published at their own expense a volume of poetry. This was the first use of their pseudonyms Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily) and Acton (Anne) Bell.

They all went on to publish novels, with differing levels of success.

Anne's 'Agnes Grey' and Charlotte's 'Jane Eyre' were published in 1847. 'Jane Eyre' was one of the year's best sellers. Anne's second novel, 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall' and Emily's 'Wuthering Heights' were both published in 1848. 'The Tenant' sold well, but 'Wuthering Heights' did not.

Branwell died of tuberculosis in September 1848. Emily died of the same disease on 19 December 1848 and Anne on 28 May 1849.

Left alone with her father, Charlotte continued to write. She was by now a well-known author and visited London a number of times. 'Shirley' was published in 1849 and 'Villette' in 1853. In 1854, Charlotte married her father's curate, Arthur Nicholls. She died of tuberculosis on 31 March 1855.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/bronte\\_sisters.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/bronte_sisters.shtml)

## Why those subversive Brontë sisters still hypnotize us:

They are beloved by everyone from misunderstood teens and fools for love to the serious-minded middle-aged and those of a critical bent. Now the Brontë sisters are taking centre stage again as the bicentenary of Charlotte's birth next month brings a host of events at their Yorkshire home and elsewhere.

At Haworth parsonage on the bleakly beautiful Yorkshire moors, where Charlotte and her sisters Emily and Anne lived and wrote and now home to the [Brontë Parsonage Museum](#), the bicentenary will be marked by a full programme from the Brontë Society. Highlights include [Charlotte Great and Small](#), an exhibition curated by the novelist Tracy Chevalier, which combines new art works with existing pieces, and the launch of *Reader, I Married Him*, a collection of short stories.



Happy 200th birthday Charlotte Brontë: illustrating Jane Eyre - in pictures  
[View gallery](#)

But it's not just the Brontë Society that is succumbing to Brontëmania. The National Portrait Gallery has an exhibition, [Celebrating Charlotte Brontë: 1816-1855](#), which will display personal items including previously unseen paintings, letters and journals from the parsonage museum alongside portraits from the gallery's collection. BBC Radio 3 recently paid homage to Charlotte with the series *I Am Yours Sincerely*, in which a number of her letters were read, and Radio 4 has been dramatising *Jane Eyre* in 15-minute slots on *Woman's Hour* this month.

On Saturday night, BBC2 screened *Being the Brontës*, in which presenter Martha Kearney, journalist Lucy Mangan and novelist Helen Oyeyemi [debated their favourite sister](#) and examined their continuing appeal. Claire Harman's well-reviewed biography of Charlotte is published in paperback next month, while three new novels will also consider the Brontë legacy: Catherine Lowell's much praised debut *The Madwoman Upstairs*, which centres on a young woman who is the Brontë family's last living descendant; Sam Baker's [hugely anticipated thriller](#), *The Woman Who Ran*, a modern-day retelling of Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; and Lyndsay Faye's "satirical romance" *Jane Steele*, which riffs on *Jane Eyre* for its tale of a Victorian female serial killer. Later this year Sally Wainwright will follow her crime series *Happy Valley* with *To Walk Invisible*, a [two-hour drama](#) focusing on the Brontës' lives between 1845 and 1848 "when they were all either drawn or forced back to the family home".

So why exactly do the Brontë sisters, these rural curate's daughters with only a handful of novels between them, continue to fascinate us? From the moment *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 they have exerted an almost hypnotic pull: where other literary sensations flash bright, then fade to earth, the Brontës endure, their stories adapted again and again for both stage and screen *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

"I think a lot of it is that we're fascinated by the idea that these three women living in a cold, cramped house in Yorkshire wrote these extraordinary novels about the most intense human experiences," says author and playwright Samantha Ellis, whose book, *Take Courage*, about [Anne Brontë](#), will be published early next year.

"There's something very appealing about the idea that they pushed back against the limits of their world. There are lots of neater, better planned books, but the Brontë novels work because they're open-ended. We don't know what Anne, Emily and Charlotte really wanted us to think and that means we take away something new each time."

Certainly it's true that there's something almost mythical about the Brontë creation story, the idea of these three isolated young women writing so desperately that the words were almost flung on to the page. Ted Hughes called them the "three weird sisters", intentionally summoning *Macbeth's* blasted heath to Haworth parsonage. To his

wife Sylvia Plath, who paid homage in a poem named [Wuthering Heights](#), they “wrote ... in a house redolent with ghosts”. Daphne du Maurier was so obsessed that she paid homage twice - to *Jane Eyre* with the sharp-edged and haunting *Rebecca* and to *Wuthering Heights* with the wild menace of *Jamaica Inn* - and writers from Jean Rhys and Muriel Spark to Emma Tennant and Fay Weldon have reimagined their lives and work.

“I think their tragic real-life experiences [the deaths of their mother and older sisters and later of their brother Branwell] undoubtedly give added appeal to readers,” says Kearney. “It’s amazing to think that *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are still so popular. I think it’s the sheer power of the storytelling - who can forget the madwoman in the attic or Heathcliff?”

Lowell agrees. “One of the things I most love about the Brontës is that they give the lie to the notion that to be a great writer you have to have epic life experiences - that whole Ernest Hemingway, Jack London thing,” she says. “Emily never left her home, but she wrote *Wuthering Heights*. To be a great writer you just have to be a great observer. There’s also a real nugget of truth in all the books. *Jane Eyre* is a great lesson in authenticity and being true to yourself which still resonates in an era when women are still told so much how they should dress and act.”

Yet it is also true that the Brontë myth can confuse more than enlighten. Writing in the *Guardian* in 2011, [Blake Morrison astutely noted](#) that “the morbid caricature that developed in the wake of [Elizabeth] Gaskell’s biography - with Haworth depicted as a remote and sinister spot and the parsonage as a gloomy hideout for a trio of unworldly spinsters - is largely nonsense. The Brontë letters ... are sharp and sometimes funny. Their novels ... full of insights into the social conditions of the day.”

Indeed, the most striking thing about the Brontë novels is how subversive they are. On the surface these might seem like tales of love lost and won, of happy endings and reader, I married him, but they are also strange and spiky tales. “There’s a lot of wanting and yearning, not all of it romantic,” says Ellis. “These are difficult books to contain. They’re over-egged and weird and often troubling.” Thus Jane takes Rochester once he has been crippled and blinded, unable to exert his male power. *Wuthering Heights* is less the story of wild romantic love as much as a tale of abuse, madness and unfettered rage, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is more concerned with the act that frees Helen, her slamming of the door against her drunken husband, than it is with her conventional end. “There’s a clear line from Rochester to Heathcliff to Arthur Huntingdon,” says Baker. “All three male leads are really abusive.”

Nor does the uncomfortable subject matter stop there. While *Wuthering Heights* stands apart simply by dint of its strangeness - like it or loathe it, there is nothing else quite like it in literature - Charlotte and Anne were tackling subjects that women did not normally write about: the need to find your own place in the world; the tribulations of having to do soul-sapping, back-breaking, mind-numbing work simply to survive; the problems of being trapped in an abusive marriage. “I think of the Brontës as outsider authors,” says Baker. “Charlotte and Anne in particular are really radical and because of that their stories transcend their time. The themes feel just as relevant today.”

Nor is it just women who respond to their work. “I know lots of men who love the Brontës,” says Ellis. “There’s a bit of myth that they’re writers for women, that it’s all about Heathcliff and Rochester, but more men read them than you’d think.”

Yet whoever is reading them, they’ll always have one sister they think of as “theirs”. “Definitely,” says Ellis. “You’re either Charlotte, Emily or Anne and you can tell a lot by which book someone claims as their own. I was doing a reading in London last year about *Jane Eyre* versus *Wuthering Heights* and a teenage girl came up to me afterwards and

said to me, 'I will never give up Cathy and Heathcliff, not now, not when I am 40.' And that's how it should be. Your passions are your own."

*The Madwoman Upstairs* by Catherine Lowell is published by Quercus Press, £14.99; *The Woman Who Ran*, by Sam Baker, is published by Harper Press, £7.99; *Being the Brontës* is [available on BBC iPlayer](#)

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/27/bronte-sisters-enduring-love-affair>

11 things you didn't know about the Brontës [Amy Blumsom](#) 7 October 2015

#### 1. Three different men proposed to Charlotte Brontë

One proposal came by letter, and another was from a man who had only met her once. The letter-writing suitor was the Reverend Henry Nussey, brother of her friend Ellen. He proposed shortly before Charlotte's 23rd birthday, but she declined because she didn't love him, and thought she was too romantic to be a clergyman's wife. The character of St John Rivers in *Jane Eyre* is thought to be based on Nussey.

The Reverend David Pryce, a curate, came to tea in the summer of 1839 and proposed to Charlotte after meeting her only once.

The other two proposals came from Arthur Bell Nicholls, her father's curate, who had been in love with her for years.

Her father's jealous opposition to the marriage led Charlotte initially to reject Nicholls. She accepted his second proposal, but died less than a year into the marriage.



Charlotte Brontë reportedly had very bad teeth Credit: Alamy

#### 2. Emily Brontë told her pupils she preferred the school dog to them

Emily once told the children she was teaching at Law Hill School that she preferred the school dog to any of them. Emily was a great animal lover, and her pets included several dogs and a hawk called Nero. The evening before her death, Emily insisted on feeding the family dogs, just as she had always done.

#### 3. Charlotte Brontë died of extreme morning sickness

Charlotte may have died in 1855 of the same condition - extreme morning sickness - from which Kate Middleton suffered during her pregnancies. Charlotte was 38 when she died and had been married for only 9 months.

There are other competing theories. Charlotte's death certificate states that she died of "phthisis" or acute tuberculosis, the same disease that killed her sisters Emily and Anne. It is also possible that she may have caught a digestive infection, such as typhoid, from the Brontës's servant.



The parsonage where the Brontë family lived in Haworth, West Yorkshire Credit: Alamy/Ian Dagnall

#### 4. Charlotte Brontë spent some of her first earnings from *Jane Eyre* on dentistry

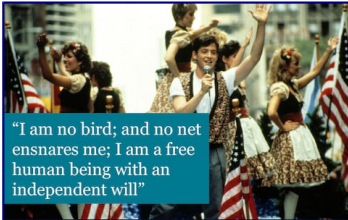
Charlotte wrote to her friend Ellen Nussey in October 1849, two years after *Jane Eyre* was published, saying: "I find I really must go to Mr Atkinson the dentist [in Leeds] and ask him if he can do anything for my teeth."

Her bad teeth were one of the first things Elizabeth Gaskell noticed about Charlotte. In a letter after they first met, Gaskell gave a less than flattering description of her friend: "a reddish face, large mouth and many teeth gone; altogether plain."

[QUIZ: Which Brontë are you?](#)

#### 5. Charlotte really wanted to be a painter

Charlotte's first ambition was to be a professional artist and she exhibited two drawings in a fine art exhibition in Leeds in 1834. In 1848, the publishing firm Smith, Elder & Co wrote to Charlotte Brontë to request that she personally illustrate the second edition of *Jane Eyre* - but she modestly declined.



6. The Brontës wrote more words as children than in all of their published adult works put together.

After their two elder sisters died, the surviving Brontë children, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne, created the fictional worlds of Angria and Gondal, writing stories, articles and poems together.

Many of their juvenile manuscripts were written in miniscule script, barely legible. One of Charlotte's tiny books is more than 60,000 words long.

Branwell Brontë was sacked when the railway accounts didn't add up

7. Branwell Brontë got the sack from his job on the railways

Branwell Brontë worked as a railway booking clerk on the Leeds to Manchester line when it opened in 1840, but was sacked when the accounts didn't add up. His dismissal was attributed to incompetence rather than fraud -while in charge of Luddenden Foot station near Hebden Bridge, he was known to frequent the Lord Nelson tavern.

8. Branwell had an affair with his boss's wife

In January 1843, Anne managed to secure the post of tutor for Branwell with the Robinson family at Thorpe Green. Two years later, he was dismissed from his post when it was discovered he was having an affair with Mrs Robinson. Branwell became increasingly dependent on drink and opium. After hearing of the death of her husband, he attempted to rekindle his relationship with Mrs Robinson and failed.

9. Anne Brontë may have had a stammer or speech impediment

Charlotte worried that "the talking part" would be difficult for Anne when she left home for her first job as a governess. Anne herself told Ellen Nussey, a good friend of Charlotte, in 1848: "You must know there is a lamentable deficiency in my organ of language which makes me almost as bad a hand at writing as talking unless I have something particular to say." This may be one of the reasons why she was often thought of as the quietest Brontë.

10. Branwell Brontë was burned in effigy

Branwell was burned in effigy during the 1837 elections in Haworth for his support of the Tory candidate. Enraged at hearing the politician howled down by the crowd, Branwell intervened. The local populace demonstrated their displeasure by burning an effigy of Branwell himself, shown holding a potato in one hand and a herring in the other in allusion to the Brontës' Irish heritage.

11. The Brontës' father was from a barely literate Irish family

Patrick Brontë was born into an almost illiterate family, whose surname had no fixed spelling. He was the eldest of 10 children, born at Emdale, County Down. Initially, Patrick was apprenticed as a blacksmith but his aptitude for learning led him to St John's College, Cambridge. It was there he corrected the spelling of his name from Brunty to Brontë - perhaps to hide his humble origins.

**Charlotte Bronte: A Life by Claire Harman** is published by Viking (RRP £25). To order a copy from the Telegraph for £20 call 0844 871 1514 or visit [books.telegraph.co.uk](http://books.telegraph.co.uk)

The Brontë family timeline

The Brontë family contributed to the literary canon, but suffered from illness, premature death and alcoholism.



1777	Branwell is dismissed in disgrace from his job as tutor,
Patrick Brontë born in Emdale, County Down	after having an affair with his pupil's mother.
1783	His decline into alcoholism and depression begins.
Maria Branwell born in Penzance, Cornwall	1846
1802	The Brontë sisters' first book, Poems, is published, under the pseudonyms Currer Ellis and Acton Bell.
Patrick, now known as Brontë, goes to Cambridge	Branwell and Patrick Brontë are not told about it. It sells only two copies in the first year
1812	1847
Now an ordained clergyman, Patrick meets and marries Maria. They have their first child Maria, in 1814. Elizabeth follows in 1815, Charlotte in 1816, Branwell in 1817, Emily in 1818 and Anne in 1820	Publisher Thomas Newby accepts Emily's Wuthering Heights and Anne's Agnes Grey, but is slow to produce them. Meanwhile Charlotte writes Jane Eyre, which becomes an immediate best-seller making 'Currer Bell' famous overnight.
1820	The three 'Bell Brothers' become subjects of fervent gossip
The family move to Haworth, West Yorkshire	1848
1821	Charlotte reveals her true identity. Branwell dies of drink and drug abuse. Emily dies of consumption
Maria dies, aged 38, either of consumption or cancer	1849
1824	Emily dies of consumption. Charlotte and her father continue to live at the parsonage. Her second novel, Shirley, is published
A year after Patrick's spinster sister moved in with the family, Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily are all sent to boarding school in Lancashire	1850s
1825	Charlotte contacts other famous writers to ease her grief. She keeps regular correspondence with Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau
Maria and Elizabeth both fall ill at school and die at home	1853
1831	Charlotte publishes her third novel, Villette
Charlotte begins teaching at the Haworth Sunday school after completing her studies	1854
1837	Charlotte dies after falling pregnant
After years of producing unpublished work with Branwell, Emily and Anne, Charlotte sends her poems to Robert Southey, Poet Laureate, and tells him she wishes 'to be forever known'. Branwell writes to Wordsworth.	1857
1840	Elizabeth Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë ignites interest in the tragic family
Charlotte sends part of a novel ('Ashworth') to Harley Coleridge, who sends a discouraging reply	1861
1844-5	Patrick dies, aged 84. Arthur Nicholls returns to Ireland, and remarries three years later
Charlotte tries and fails to set up a school at Haworth Parsonage. Discovers Emily's recent poems and presses her sisters to publish a joint collection	1906
1845	Arthur Nicholls dies

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/authors/11-things-you-didnt-know-about-the-brontes/>

Welcome to Brontë200 - a five year programme celebrating the bicentenaries of the births of four of the Brontës: Charlotte in 2016, Branwell in 2017, Emily in 2018 and Anne in 2020. In 2019, the Brontë Society will celebrate Rev Patrick Brontë, 200 years after he was invited to take up the role of parson in Haworth. <https://www.bronte.org.uk/bronte-200>