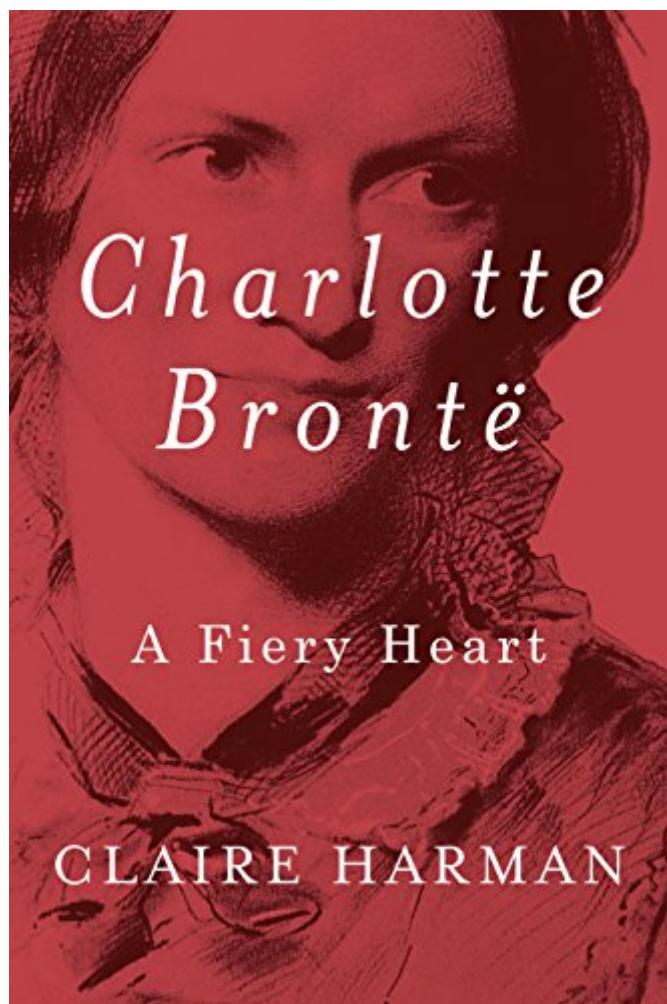


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Charlotte Brontë: A Fiery Heart



Synopsis

On the two hundredth anniversary of her birth, a landmark biography transforms Charlotte Brontë from a tragic figure into a modern heroine. Charlotte Brontë famously lived her entire life in an isolated parsonage on a remote English moor with a demanding father and siblings whose astonishing childhood creativity was a closely held secret. The genius of Claire Harman's biography is that it transcends these melancholy facts to reveal a woman for whom duty and piety gave way to quiet rebellion and fierce ambition. Drawing on letters unavailable to previous biographers, Harman depicts Charlotte's inner life with absorbing, almost novelistic intensity. She seizes upon a moment in Charlotte's adolescence that ignited her determination to reject poverty and obscurity: While working at a girls' school in Brussels, Charlotte fell in love with her married professor, Constantin Heger, a man who treated her as nothing special to him at all. She channeled her torment into her first attempts at a novel and resolved to bring it to the world's attention. Charlotte helped power her sisters' work to publication, too. But Emily's *Wuthering Heights* was eclipsed by *Jane Eyre*, which set London abuzz with speculation: Who was this fiery author demanding love and justice for her plain and insignificant heroine? Charlotte Brontë's blazingly intelligent women brimming with hidden passions would transform English literature. And she savored her literary success even as a heartrending series of personal losses followed. Charlotte Brontë is a groundbreaking view of the beloved writer as a young woman ahead of her time. Shaped by Charlotte's lifelong struggle to claim love and art for herself, Harman's richly insightful biography offers readers many of the pleasures of Brontë's own work. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Charlotte Bronte fans, rejoice! This is a very well-researched biography. Claire Harman spent hours at the Bronte Parsonage Museum in Haworth, England, going over Bronte material. She also worked with the Bronte Society, British library and various other libraries in other countries. Much of Harman's analysis also comes from reading Charlotte's 600 letters that she wrote to her life-long friend Ellen Nussey. I had read several Bronte works by the famous sisters, so I am familiar with the general sadness of the girls' childhood. Harman goes a step further and places works by Charlotte in perspective to times in her life. Her themes of repressed desires, isolation and loneliness are prevalent in her work. Harman shows why Charlotte (and Emily and Anne) had these repeated themes in their work. Their short lives were filled with reclusive parenting, hidden love, profound loss all while living with demanding and repressive men (both father Patrick and brother Branwell) as England goes through turbulent times. Maternal aunt Elizabeth Branwell, who tends to the siblings after their mother dies in 1821, leaves the three sisters enough money after her death in 1842 to keep them financially afloat. That is the one good thing these sisters got despite a good, middle-class upbringing with servants and steady education. Their devotion to each other and to their father keeps correspondence between them flowing all their lives. Their writing reflects that devoted kinship. The writing style is scholarly, so for people wanting a straight biography, this work may disappoint. This book is more for those who want to understand Charlotte Bronte as a writer as she transforms herself over time.

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