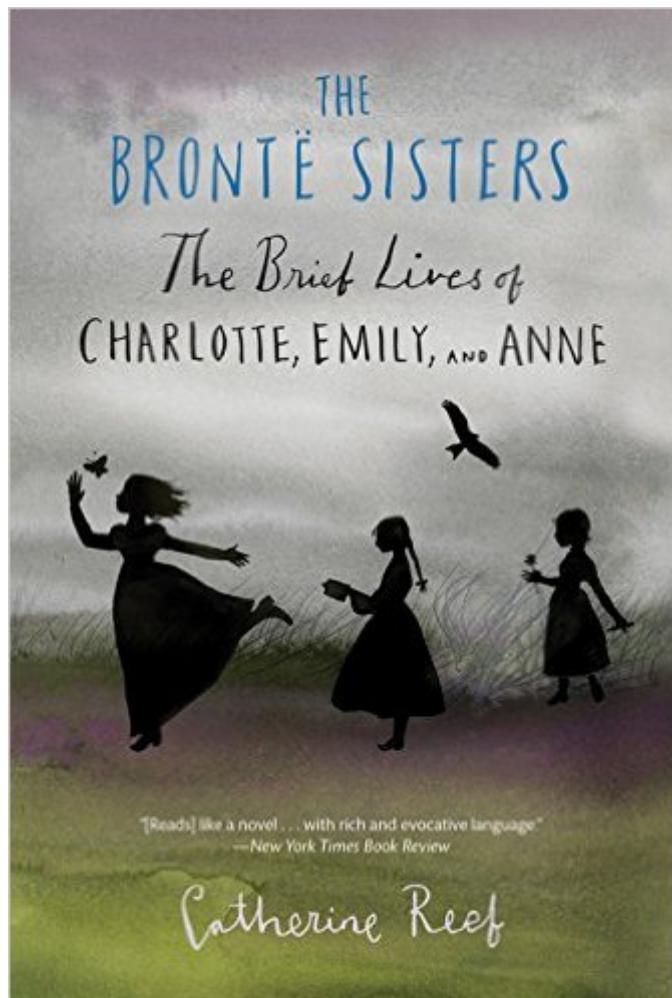


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The Brontë Sisters: The Brief Lives Of Charlotte, Emily, And Anne



Synopsis

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.)

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1080 (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (43 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #725,803 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #227 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Literary #451 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Women

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

I didn't know that this was a book aimed at young people when I started reading. I was surprised by the clean, spare prose, the skillful narration, and the vivid portraits of the Bronte family that I encountered. When I realized this was published as part of the children's book group, I thought that adult authors could learn a lot from reading this. It is a delight. There are multiple biographies on the Bronte's as individuals, and as a family, so this does not break new ground. Nevertheless, it tells their story with direct and sympathetic prose, in a manner that completely captivated me. I knew the story in outline from my dim and distant literature classes, but Catherine Reef brings them to life in a way my English teachers never did. This would be an excellent introduction to the Bronte family for anyone who might be interested in literature and history, and especially for younger readers (age 12

and up) who are just getting into the world of ideas.

Mid-teens looking for a readable family biography need look no further. Author Catherine Reef focuses on Charlotte, Emily and Anne, with a healthy dose of Branwell and their father, the Reverend, as well. Two other Bronte daughters did not survive their teen years, and Reverend Bronte outlived all his offspring -- they were claimed by tuberculosis, the effects of hard living, and in Charlotte's case an unknown illness. None of six children lived to see 40 years. Though they grew up in a time when women were expected to stay home and raise families, three of the Bronte daughters quietly broke with tradition without openly scorning it in public. Reef inserts illustrations and artwork every few pages, including family drawings, photos of typical scenes in the Bronte's time, book illustrations and movie stills. At 226 pages, including endnotes and index, this is a rather quick and very enjoyable read on its own merits, and would serve as a starting point for students researching Anne, Emily, Charlotte or Branwell, or the Bronte family in general. As an aside: I had no idea how pervasive and deadly tuberculosis has been in human history. Teen readers interested in that topic should look at *INVINCIBLE MICROBE* by Jim Murphy. A fascinating book for roughly the same audience, with great writing and many interesting illustrations and photos. **About me:** I'm a middle school/high school librarian **How I got this book:** purchased for the library

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.

I never could get into the Bronte sisters' actual works of fiction, but I had always heard that much of their fiction was based on their real life experiences, which is what led me to this book, which I really enjoyed for several reasons. First, it is an extremely fast read. If you wanted to, you could pound this out in a day. If you buy the Kindle version, the footnotes begin around 70% of the way through the book, so the last 30% of the book is not actual text. Second, it's an interesting look at the lives of the Bronte sisters, as well as their father, brother, and some of their friends. The women's books are, to some degree or another, vastly influenced by their experiences as middle-class women with little social standing. The author summarizes the books each sister wrote, along with their critical and popular reception. The book moves at a brisk pace, quoting just enough of the literature to be relevant and not over-sampling. I have found, on reading this book, that I have a greater appreciation for Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights now. I still don't really care for those books, but now that I see them in their political and social context, I understand them better. I would actually suggest this book to anyone who has to read any of the Bronte books for school - I wish I had had something like this when I was in high school. It is definitely easy to read and will probably give a reader of Bronte fiction a better understanding of the books themselves and the Bronte sisters' real goals in writing those novels.

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