



Selected Letters

Charlotte Brontë , Margaret Smith , Janet Gezari

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Full of acute observations, pithy character sketches, and passionate convictions, the letters of Charlotte Brontë are our most direct source of information about the lives of the Brontës and our closest approach to the author of *Jane Eyre*. In them Charlotte writes of life at Haworth Parsonage, her experiences at a Belgian school, and her intense feelings for the Belgian schoolteacher, M. Heger. She endures the agony of the death of her siblings, and enjoys the success as a writer that brings her into contact with the London literary scene. Vivid and intimate, her letters give fresh insight into the novels, and into the development of her distinct literary style. The only available edition, this selection is derived from Margaret Smith's three-volume edition of Brontë's complete letters. In addition to Smith's Editor's Preface, the edition includes a critical introduction by Janet Gezari, who looks at the relationship between Brontë's letters and her fiction and how the letters add to the debate about her literary persona and the split between her public and her private life. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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From Reader Review Selected Letters for online ebook

Susan says

PS1744.G57 Z48 2009

Moira Russell says

~~This is really wrong – it should be Selected Letters of Charlotte Brontë, edited by Margaret Smith. Fixed thanks to the lovely Elizabeth!~~

Helena says

siste boka lese på ein togtur til skulen i 2017

Lauren says

I had mixed feelings throughout reading this: Sadness, guilt, anger, empathy. If you cried a lot when Helen died in Jane Eyre, then you will definitely cry when you get a peek at the sufferings of Charlotte Brontë's actual life. I couldn't read it chronologically because it was truly heart-rending, especially nearing the latter part of her life.

I felt so guilty invading the privacy of her letters. They were never meant to be seen by anyone, apart from to whom they were originally written, and it is plainly obvious throughout; "I don't think I have said anything rash – however you must burn it when read." - CB. I would have put the book down immediately if I wasn't already absorbed with acute curiosity *guilty look*.

Mainly, though, I had an overpowering anger towards Charlotte's so-called friend, Ellen Nussey, who sold the letters as soon as Charlotte died (Even though CB had asked her to destroy them on several occasions - "Dear Ellen, Arthur [CB's husband] complains that you do not distinctly promise to burn my letters as you receive them. He says you must give him a plain pledge to that effect – or he will read every line I write and elect himself censor of our correspondence.")

It is evident that her novels echo parts of her real life and I think that is why her writing is so popular, even to this day. She writes from the heart, with true and honest feeling. Reading these letters has made me appreciate her narratives even more (if possible) – and although her life was sadly cut short - her legacy will live on forever.

Charlene says

This was a great overview of Charlotte's life through her letters. I loved that there were footnotes after each

letter (instead of having to turn to the back) and those footnotes were very helpful. Reading this book gave me a new insight into what Charlotte might have been like, and has made me think about her novels in a new light. Especially in how so many of her characters are based on people she knew.

Sarah says

The desire to start letter writing is overwhelming!

The similarities between Charlotte Bronte and Jane Eyre are greater than I realised. It was great reading about the novels I was less familiar with as well as the trials and tribulations the Bronte sisters faced in getting published. An emotional read, it will be interesting to re read Jane Eyre with the added insight into the author and the tragedies that befell the Bronte family.

Cheryl Callahan says

I always love my favorite authors even more than the books they write. Charlotte is no exception. Her short life, as seen through her personal letters, is its own best love story.

Rachel Sutcliffe says

The only improvement could be selecting more letters.

Michaela Wood says

I love reading personal correspondence

Dominique says

It's very odd to be writing anything about this, because in many ways, I feel completely unjustified passing any kind of judgement upon it at all. It sounds silly, because they're letters, so of course they're personal, but there are really some intensely *private* pieces collected in here that I honestly felt very uncomfortable reading. I felt like I was intruding and poking my nose into something I shouldn't be seeing and that I was violating someone else's privacy. And privacy where it really *mattered*, as well.

(As a sidenote, this correspondence is really illuminating in historical terms; they're written in an incredibly different style from the kind of epistles we see included in Victorian novels. Depending on who they're addressed to, Charlotte's style can be variously colloquial, disjointed, earnest, affectionate and informal. It's kind of amazing to think, wow, these are *real* letters that were sent and composed and received).

A part of me feels uncomfortable with the fact that these letters are so easy to get hold of? They're of invaluable use to scholars and researchers and undergrads like me writing dissertations because they're the closest and most accurate insight we have into the lives of the reclusive Bronte's, but...I also feel like there

are some letters that really oughtn't to be looked at in any academic capacity whatsoever. For instance, here is a passage that genuinely made me tear up, about Charlotte's inability to look at the landscape around her in the same way after Anne and Emily's death:

I am free to walk on the moors – but when I go out there alone – everything reminds me of others when when others were with me and then the moors seem a wilderness, featureless, solitary, saddening – My sister Emily had a particular love of them, and there is not a knoll of heather, nor a branch of fern, not a young bilberry leaf not a fluttering lark or a linnnet but reminds me of her. The distant prospects were Anne's delight, and when I look around, she is in the blue tints, the pale mists, the waves and shadows of the horizon. In the hill-country silence their poetry comes by lines and stanzas to my mind: once I loved it – now I dare not read it.

It's just heartbreaking to read. And I suppose, for me, it ties in too uncomfortably with this abounding fascination of the personal biographies of the Bronte's -- this sense that you can trace their lives so faithfully in their books -- that people have tried to uncover and unturn every tiny trivial detail of their day-to-day lives. Not even the handkerchief that Anne held to her mouth to cover her coughs, stained with her blood as she died from TB, is exempt from the public's prying eyes in the parsonage museum. I suppose I just feel like we should give them the respect they're due and let them rest in peace. Especially because it seems that the more we discover about their lives the more tragic they seem, the closer that narrative superimposed over their novels; the more people are inclined to pity them, seeing their lives as confined, miserable, unfulfilled, wasted, or seeing their books as mere exercises wish-fulfillment (coughcharlottecough). We really need to discourage this narrative that so effectively reduces their work down to diluted reflections or fantasies of themselves, rather than works of real literary merit, and even pure creative genius.

Jenny says

This is a really interesting collection of letters. It was interesting to learn about the process of getting the sisters' works published and the pseudonyms, but I especially enjoyed the letters from Charlotte to her friend Ellen concerning her thoughts on the role of women, her relationship with Arthur and the declining health of her family members. For Bronte fans, it's definitely worth reading.
