

The Brontë Sisters – Monthly Reading Group at the Rosenbach – Syllabus

Location: The Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia
2008-2010 Delancey Place
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Time: 2-4pm (for dates, see meeting schedule on the flip side)

Instructor: Christine Woody, Lecturer in English, University of Pennsylvania
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Texts:

If you are in the market for a copy of our books, please consider seeking out the editions listed below. This will facilitate our discussions as pagination will be the same. However, please do feel free to use editions you may already own of our novels.

Brontë, Anne. *Agnes Grey*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 978-0140432107.

Brontë, Anne. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 978-0140434743.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 978-0141441146.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 978-0141439556.

Goals & Approaches:

This course is devoted to the literary achievements of the Brontë sisters, whose first novels arrived on the scene in 1847 with the collective publication of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Grey*. Representing themselves as a trio of brothers—Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell—the Brontës polarized their critics, with many insisting that works as complex as theirs could only be produced by men, while others noted their daring and sometimes radical representation of gender and sexuality.

Over our six months together, we will read and discuss four Brontë novels, delving into the deep waters and unexpected crosscurrents of this collective oeuvre. Focusing on novels that the sisters wrote in conversation with each other, we will have the opportunity to examine and debate the various stances that they took on issues of gender, class, love, and the quest for personal fulfillment. Together we will explore the shifting tapestry of genres and forms on which the Brontës drew, interrogating what we mean when we term something “Brontëan.” Along the way, we will learn about the social issues of nineteenth-century Britain and probe what makes these novels still so engaging and relevant to readers almost two hundred years later.

Meeting schedule:

| Date | Readings | # of pp |
|---|--|---------|
| 9/30 | Charlotte Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chapters 1-23 Lucasta Miller, <i>The Brontë Myth</i> (optional selection)* | 296 |
| 10/28 | Charlotte Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chapters 24-38 Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> (optional selection)* | 222 |
| 11/25 | Anne Brontë, <i>Agnes Grey</i> Mary Poovey, <i>Uneven Developments</i> (optional selection)* | 193 |
| 12/30 | Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> Lord Byron, <i>Manfred</i> (optional)* | 337 |
| 1/27 | Anne Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chapters 1-29 William Hogarth, <i>The Rake's Progress</i> (optional)* | 252 |
| 2/24 | Anne Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chapters 30-53 Charlotte Brontë, "Biographical Notice of Acton and Ellis Bell" (optional)* | 237 |
| *optional readings will be circulated as pdf documents via email in advance of the dates on which they are listed | | |