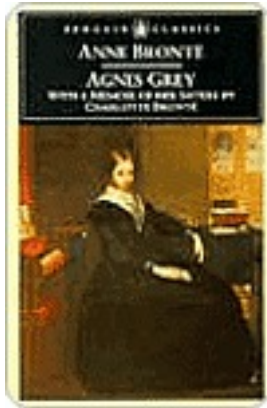

Anne Brontë

Agnes Grey



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Author: Anne Brontë

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Description

"The name of governess, I soon found, was a mere mockery . my pupils had no more notion of obedience than a wild, unbroken colt' When her family becomes impoverished after a disastrous financial speculation, Agnes Grey determines to find work as a governess in order to contribute to their meagre income and assert her independence. But Agnes's enthusiasm is swiftly extinguished as she struggles first with the unmanageable Bloomfield children and then with the painful disdain of the haughty Murray family; the only kindness she receives comes from Mr Weston, the sober young curate. Drawing on her own experience, Anne Bront's first novel offers a compelling personal perspective on the desperate position of unmarried, educated women for whom becoming a governess was the only respectable career open in Victorian society. This edition also includes Charlotte Bront's memoir of her sisters, the Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell. Angeline Goreau examines Anne Bront's complex relationship with her sisters and her unhappy career as a governess as influences in writing Agnes Grey."

Insightful reviews

Francine: There were a few things I really, *really* loved about *Agnes Grey*:

1. The beauty, simplicity and flow of Brontë's writing (in epistolary form, no less!),
2. The remarkably early consciousness regarding animal rights, and
3. The excitement of once again losing myself in a quaint, romantic little jaunt through Victorian England.

There were also a few things that really, *really* irked me about it:

1. Agnes (both the character and the work) had a tendency to be overly preachy and moralistic,
2. Despite being a coming-of-age story, Agnes herself undergoes very little growth, and
3. As beautiful as the writing was, there were some passages throughout the novel that were tedious and dry.

Okay, so positives first. The writing was beautiful. To me, there is nothing that quite approaches the beauty of works written in the late 18th through the 19th centuries. Some of my favorite authors and poets -- Austen, all three of the Brontës, Shelley, Tennyson, Frost, Eliot, Rosetti, Thackeray, Dickens, etc. -- were from that era. There are some fantastic modern writers that I would read over and over again, but nothing gives me pause or quickens my senses more than a wondrously written, perfectly worded passage, something that can whisk me away to some other place and time, something that stays with me just because it was so sublime.

To wit: my team and I were having a grousing session at work the other day, and I shared this passage from *Agnes Grey* with them as I thought it was quite apropos (Agnes was complaining about the thankless nature of her job as governess):

I can conceive few situations more harassing than that wherein, however you may long for success, however you may labour to fulfill your duty, your efforts are baffled and set

at nought by those beneath you, and unjustly censured and misjudged by those above.

I was, at first, met with silence, then all of them gushed simultaneously:

Martin: "Wow...that was great. Never would I ever have thought to use 'that wherein' together!"

Alison: "That is so true! But so wordy! No one uses half those words anymore!"

Melissa: "Don't you ever read anything simple? Funny? Easy?"

Of course, I could've just as easily have said "Nothing we do will ever please anyone here," but I thought Brontë's passage was so much more beautiful. Wordier, sure. But the fact that someone over a hundred years ago wrote this and elicited a sense of connection and understanding within me...that was pretty amazing.

There were many other passages throughout the text that were so carefully and brilliantly crafted, and to me, that made this work something special. I was also quite taken by how Brontë was ahead of her time in crafting a novel that actually tried to make headway in the yet-unknown arena of showing decency to animals. While animal rights are commonplace in our age, a hundred fifty years ago, this was widely unknown. Some critics have posited that Brontë tried to draw parallels between animals and women and their shared vulnerabilities in a society that regarded both quite poorly. No matter the reason though, I liked this aspect of the novel a lot.

Of the three Brontë sisters, I've always liked Anne the best, as I think [The Tenant of Wildfell Hall](#) is significantly better than [Jane Eyre](#) and [Wuthering Heights](#) in tone, scope and delivery. While all three sisters wrote about very strong women, I thought that Wildfell Hall was different in that it was about a woman who chose to openly defy societal and legal strictures to escape from a horrible life/marriage and establish herself as her own woman. Agnes Grey was written before Wildfell Hall, but in a way, I think that Anne Brontë may have used parts of Agnes Grey in what later became Wildfell Hall (e.g., a woman trapped in a horrible marriage, a woman deciding to leave her family and find her own way in the world). While Wildfell Hall is far superior to Agnes Grey, I think any reader would still benefit from a reading of the latter.

Now to some of what annoyed me: Agnes was obviously devout and some may even say a bit Puritanical. However, she was also quite proud and I sometimes found myself thinking that she thought her character to be better than her charges' characters. Through a good portion of the first half of the novel, I kept thinking that for someone so religious and pious, Agnes sure didn't recognize that she was quite flawed herself. It was disappointing to me that there really wasn't much growth in Agnes' character. Yes, she left her family to make a living and not be a financial burden. Yes, she tried to instill better values in the children she was hired to watch and teach. But she wasn't very effective as a governess at either family she worked for. She wasn't well regarded by her employers and was even less so by her charges. It was a shame, because I felt that at least in this, Brontë missed the mark.

Her romance with Mr. Weston was sweetly done; there was nothing out of the ordinary about it. What gave me pause, however, was not that the romance only blossomed in the last third of the book but that as Mr. Weston grew more familiar with Agnes, he -- and the readers -- didn't really see any growth in her. She was the same person at the start and end of her story and what is

there in that, that would make someone fall hopelessly in love with that person? She didn't grow emotionally or psychologically; she didn't have any great discoveries about herself; she didn't have any "A-ha!" moments that made her realize that she had to be someone better. She just was. And that was kind of a letdown.

Nevertheless, despite those two things, this was a good, solid read. It wasn't perfect (for that, read Wildfell Hall!), but it was passable and enjoyable. A nice easy read, for someone who just wants something different and who wouldn't mind being whisked away to a quieter, calmer, simpler time.

lauren kellie: I don't know how you can't adore this book. It's short and sweet and it makes a little teary-eyed and gives one hope that *yes, you may go through a lot of crap, but it will still turn out happily in the end.*

But don't get me wrong--*Agnes Grey* is not in any form a ball of fluff. In fact, the first half of the novel deals primarily with Agnes's daily struggles with three children under the age of seven. **Anne Bronte did not write this story to be a romance novel.** It's realistic, never overdramatic, and I think anyone who's ever found themselves in a position with little to no allies would find some part of them that reconciles with Agnes.

And yes, it's not a romance novel, ***BUT AGNES & MR. WESTON ARE THE ABSOLUTE CUTEST MY HEART WAS SCREAMING PRETTY MUCH THE ENTIRE SECOND HALF MY LITTLE MORALLY SUPERIOR BABIES.***

All of Anne's characters, even the side ones, were strikingly vivid. Bit by bit you got to know the Murrays' tenants, Rosalie's suitors, the Bloomfield's relatives. Even the younger children Agnes takes on as pupils had very defined personalities, which is rare in nineteenth century literature.

While portions of the plot were very similar to [Jane Eyre](#), it's understandable that Anne and Charlotte would have similar experiences in their writings, and after a while, it didn't really bother me.

The *only thing* that bothered me about this book was Agnes's attitude. I mean, she chooses the fate of being a governess for herself but still complains relentlessly about it. And I know I said that it's nice to hear about womanly struggles, but it still got very old. I really did feel bad for her--I mean, she was dedicating all her time and effort to ensuring her pupils' success, but their parents see her as an insufficient educator and criticize her for problems they themselves can't solve, no one in the community even acknowledges Agnes (well, except Weston), even when she's right there, and her beauty of a pupil decides to make a romantic conquest out of one of her only friends who she also happens to be in love with.

Like, yeah, Agnes, babe, I know you've got it hard, but maybe if you would stop looking down on everyone else's "lack of implemented morals" you could make friends. The entire book all you hear about is how Agnes knows best simply because she was brought up a parson's daughter. ***Babe no.***

All in all, this ended up being a really fun read, and I could honestly recommend it solely based

on fluff or solely based on female empowerment or solely based on its being an easy classic read. At any rate, I do recommend this little gem, wholeheartedly.

Rane:

While her sisters may have started in the realm of Gothic romance, Anne Bronte gave us realism and if you dreamed once being a governess was awesome from reading Jane Eyre, Anne's Agnes Grey puts that notice to bed once and for all, with the question would have anyone have liked to have been a governess in this time and age?



Anne does give us at times an ironic view of the higher society in the way they handle their children and in their own actions of not being to be blamed when one of their kids gets out of line as they handed their kids off to the nurse or governess to be raised.

Agnes starts off as a open but shelter child, who matures slowly, falling back on her own teachings and childhood to get her through some bad times with some truly spoiled and mean children she has to care for.

She truly doesn't change throughout the novel, but finds her inner strength when the chips are down. Does she get on my nerves? Yes. Only when I felt she should have stood up for herself, but as a product of her time and the terms of her employment one can see she must keep her anger and misgivings to herself. This didn't stop me from wanting to kick some of the characters in the butt for their gross and hurtful actions.

Still, I can see where Anne herself as a writer was a force to be reckon with with her style that pulled the reader in and real life truth that made one see things in a different light.

Sarah Actually: i finished up relatively loving this. Anne is so truly underrated. This e-book is de facto religious, so perhaps that turns a few humans off, yet i did not brain it simply because there has been a transparent distinction among the crappy spiritual humans and the type of non

secular those who love others, together with humans much less lucky than they are, and care approximately animals. I additionally came across Agnes to be fairly humorous and sarcastic and realistic. And a cat lady. and she or he falls in love with a cat guy. MR. WESTON IS WONDERFUL. The animal rights subject during this was once lovely. four stars as the first 5 chapters have been SO tough TO GET THROUGH, yet when you get prior the satanic children, you are good. I do want she'd elaborated extra at the love story. She stored asserting such things as "I don't desire to bore you with the details" - AGNES. BORE ME WITH THE DETAILS. PLEASE.

Lauren: 4.5* - This was once my first Bronte novel and that i love it. I completely loved interpreting concerning the stories of a Victorian Governess who used to be attempting to support her family members in addition to the various features of social category and the way varied those sessions particularly were. This novel touches on many vital matters that during many circumstances this day are nonetheless being dealt with. the affection tale certainly left me desirous to be aware of greater than was once told. the very last thing i would like to nation is MR WESTON is wonderful.

Wealththeow: A prosperous and feted girl falls in love with a humble clergyman, and insists on marrying him, even though it loses her her dowry. The vicar can't cease tormenting himself over all his spouse gave up, to the level that he loses what little cash he has in a too-bold investment. As gentleborn, well-educated, penniless women, there are few innovations left for his daughters; the older takes up promoting gentle watercolors, whereas the younger, Agnes, hires herself out as a governess. the 1st kin she works for is terrible; she isn't really allowed to self-discipline the children, and each grownup round them turns out bent on ruining them. it truly is the following that Agnes's precise power of personality is revealed. instead of enable a bit boy from torturing a nest of child birds to death, she squashes them flat. whilst his uncle says he'll locate the boy one other nest to "play" with, she lightly informs him that if he does, she is going to kill them too. She is difficult as nails. i used to be happy to learn this interlude, simply because for nearly all of the booklet Agnes is silent and probably submissive, and basically her inner narration unearths her stubborn, judgmental piety. As a governess, she is rarely in a state of affairs the place she will be able to display her precise feelings, or perhaps impact a lot change. She can't self-discipline or gift her scholars with something yet her personal approval or disapproval--no topic how usually she thinks approximately how necessary a great beating could be. The moment relatives is extra interesting, and drawn with a little bit extra nuanced strokes. Agnes is to shine younger ladies: Rosalie, who's attractive yet shallow, and her sister Matilda, who's boisterous and careless. it's the comparable uncomplicated thought as in *Villette*, the place the poor, plain, virtuous narrator is contrasted with a vivacious, wealthy, inconsiderate blonde. either girls are drawn to the type and virtuous Mr. Weston. In *Villette*, the competition used to be advanced through the heat and friendship among the 2 women; this is often mostly absent from *Agnes Grey*, to the book's detriment. Agnes feels in simple terms patronizing pity or anger for Rosalie, and Rosalie has no intensity of feeling. a number of times, her anger at her state of affairs flashes up--even as attractive and privileged as she is, she is familiar with that her existence is sure by means of the alternatives of the boys in her life, no longer her own, and she or he takes what petty revenges she can. yet within the end, Rosalie serves extra as an item lesson opposed to looking excitement and freedom than as a personality in her personal right. (As a lot as I hate Amy/Laurie, not less than their marriage isn't really a morality play in

distress to make the most character's personal lackluster marriage glance better.) I fairly loved this booklet at first. The writing variety is good, and several other of the characters are well-drawn (Agnes's mom was once a favourite of mine). yet Anne Bronte can't appear to support herself from making every little thing a lesson. The few instances while she we could slip her sarcasm are fantastic, yet a lot of this e-book is a colorless sequence of occasions within the lifetime of a priggish and self-satisfied woman. Agnes herself is frustrating--I discovered her the least likeable while i used to be in actual fact imagined to respect her the main (when, for instance, she moralizes to a sickly outdated woman). She has no feel of humor. She consistently martyrs herself. And the guy she moons over is totally colorless: all we all know of him is that he likes vacationing the bad and misses his mother. The few interactions he has with Agnes sound like task interviews: do you're keen on to read? are you unsociable? how a lot charity paintings do you do? etc. We the reader understand little approximately him, and positively not anything approximately how he talks, for Bronte wrote extra conversation among Rosalie and one in all her suitors than she presents for Agnes and the affection of her life. i feel Bronte used to be really extra interested in the tale of Rosalie, yet felt it mistaken to not offer an ethical heroine. to be had on-line

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