Day 4: The Bronte sisters

- Charlotte: 1816-1855 (38)
- Emily: 1818-48 (30)
- Anne: 1820-1849 (29)
- Pen names (already mentioned Currer, Ellis and Acton)
- Sisters and other siblings co-wrote from childhood, wrote from passion, created fictional worlds together. Grew up separated from society, isolated
- Came from poor family, father a clergy man, lower middle class, went to charity school – church administered with lower fees than the “proper” schools, but actually quite good many of them.
- Branwell, brother, became poet and artist, seduced by alcohol and opium
- Most of the sisters work as either school teachers or governesses in rich families at some point, although Emily only lasted 6 months at a private school at Law Hill.
- 1825: Two older sisters die at very young age when they all study at Cowan Bridge school. Similarities to Lowood in jane eyre, cruel headmaster and Helen that dies. Charlotte blamed the school for the death, for having poor medical care. Died of TB.
- Charlotte on to Miss Wooler’s school, and afterwards works there as her assistant – jane eyre’
- Charlotte’s works sometimes include Byronic heroes – attractive, suave, passionate, arrogant, flawed, dark.
- Corresponded with Robert Southey to have him publish her poems, but he didn’t think it was worthwhile. After all, she was a woman.
- Anne: books should have moral lessons. Evident in several books.
- All three: Often a hero/heroine who overcomes life’s hardships through their strong tempers and character, and at the end retrieves hope.
- Anne and Emily: Very shy, especially Emily. Shunned the public, Emily to the extent of a potential diagnosis.
- 1842: Emily and Charlotte to Brussels with father to study at boarding school. Brilliant student, are soon offered job as teachers there, accept.
- Same year: Their aunt dies, leaving them quite a lot of money, relinquishing their debt, but forcing them back to Haworth, England. Charlotte returns to Brussels 1843 to teach, Emily went (didn’t like the headmaster).
- When Charlotte returns to Haworth again, her father has lost his sight (jane eyre), but been successfully operated (1846).
- Same year: First publication “Poems” by Acton, Currer and Ellis Bell. Charlotte’s initiative after coming upon some of Emily’s poetry that she thought was brilliant. Received hardly any attention, 3 copies sold.
- Charlotte’s Jane Eyre, Emily’s Wuthering Heights, and Anne’s Agnes Grey, appeared in 1847. Jane Eyre, An autobiography is clearly that. Wuthering Heights also an epic with different versions of Emily living different lives. Agnes Gray also clear autobiographical elements.
- Wuthering Heights: Criticised for violence and immorality, praised for narrative style, originality. Agnes Grey and Jane Eyre praised. From then 1848, their identities could no longer be concealed.
- 1854: Charlotte marries Arthur Bell Nichols, who had been curator at Hayworth for several years. Writes in her letters that becoming someone’s wife has changed her. Dies in 1855 of either TB or typhoid fever, age 38.