

# Emily Brontë

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**Emily Jane Brontë**



Portrait by her brother

**Born:** July 30, 1818  
Thornton, Yorkshire, England

**Died:** December 19, 1848

**Occupation:** Novelist, Poet

**Emily Jane Brontë** /brɒnti/ (July 30, 1818 – December 19, 1848) was a British novelist and poet, now best remembered for her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, a classic of English literature. Emily was the second eldest of the three surviving Brontë sisters, being younger than Charlotte and older than Anne. She published under the masculine pen name **Ellis Bell**.

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## Biography

Emily was born at Thornton in Yorkshire to Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell. She was the younger sister of Charlotte Brontë and the fifth of six children. In 1824, the family moved to Haworth, where Emily's father was perpetual curate, and it was in these surroundings that their literary oddities flourished. In childhood, after the death of their mother, the three sisters and their

brother Patrick Branwell Brontë created imaginary lands (Angria, Gondal, Gaaldine, Oceania), which were featured in stories they wrote. Little of Emily's work from this period survived, except for poems spoken by characters (*The Brontës' Web of Childhood*, Fannie Ratchford, 1941).

In 1842, Emily commenced work as a governess at Miss Patchett's Ladies Academy at Law Hill Hall, near Halifax. Later, with her sister Charlotte, she attended a private school in Brussels. They later opened up a school at their home, but had no pupils.

It was the discovery of Emily's poetic talent by her family that led her and her sisters, Charlotte and Anne, to publish a joint collection of their poetry in 1846. To evade contemporary prejudice against female writers, the Brontë sisters adopted androgynous first names. All three retained the first letter of their first names: Charlotte became Currer Bell, Anne became Acton Bell, and Emily became Ellis Bell.

In 1847, she published her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, as two volumes of a three volume set (the last volume being *Agnes Grey* by her sister Anne). Its innovative structure somewhat puzzled critics.

Although it received mixed reviews when it first came out, the book subsequently became an English literary classic. In 1850, Charlotte edited and published *Wuthering Heights* as a stand-alone novel and under Emily's real name.

Like her sisters, Emily's health had been weakened by the harsh local climate at home and at school. She caught a chill during the funeral of her brother in September, and, having refused all medical help, died on December 19, 1848 of tuberculosis. She was interred in the Church of St. Michael and All Angels family capsule, Haworth, West Yorkshire, England.

## **Popular culture**

Emily Brontë is popularly regarded as the epitome of the talented writer who died with a short blaze of genius, more so than either of her sisters, but allusions to her in popular works are infrequent.

In the 1967 film *Week End* by Jean-Luc Godard, Emily Brontë appears in a scene in which one of the main characters asks her for directions.

## **Further reading**

- *A Life of Emily Brontë*, Edard Chitham
- *Heretic*, Stevie Davies
- *Emily Brontë*, Katherine Frank
- *The Brontës*, Juliet Barker
- *Emily Brontë*, Winifred Gerin
- *The Brontës' Web of Childhood*, Frances Ratchford
- *Gondal's Queen*, Fannie E. Ratchford
- *The Birth of Wuthering Heights: Emily Brontë at Work*, Edward Chitham
- *Emily Brontë*, Charles Simpson
- *In the Footsteps of the Brontës*, Ellis Chadwick
- *The Oxford Reader's Companion to the Brontës*, Christine Alexander & Margaret Smith
- *Literature and Evil*, Georges Bataille
- *The Brontë Myth*, Lucasta Miller
- *Emily*, Daniel Wynne.

## See also

- Brontë
- Walterclough Hall
- Wuthering Heights
- F. De Samara to A. G. A.

## External links

- Works by Emily Brontë at Project Gutenberg
- Website of the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth
- Short Bio and Select Poems on Dreams
- Emily Brontë's Grave
- Short Bio and selected Poems
- BrontëBlog
- Emily Brontë at the Internet Book List
- Reader's Guide to Wuthering Heights
- Some of Emily's Poems

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