CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Little Lord Fauntleroy

Frances Hodgson Burnett · *1886 · original English text*

Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him. He knew that his papa had been an Englishman, because his mamma had told him so; but his papa had died when he was so little a boy that he could not remember very much about him. The hosted text is Burnett's original English, Project Gutenberg #479, complete. For younger readers (catalogue 3–5).

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What happens when a kind little boy from a New York side-street is told he is an English lord, and is sent to an old grandfather who has not been kind, and how should a school read that change?

"Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him."
I, opening

Cedric Errol lives with his mother, whom he calls "Dearest," in America. He is open-hearted, and he has already learned to comfort her in her grief. The news that he is heir to an earldom will take him to England and to his grandfather, the Earl of Dorincourt, a hard old man. Teach the kindness, the courage of a child in a strange house, and the softening of an old heart, for grades 3–5. The curls and the lace of the famous pictures are not the point of the book; the boy's goodness is.

KEY CHARACTERS

Cedric Errol (Little Lord Fauntleroy)
The child who knows nothing of the earldom at the opening, and whose kindness is the book's center

His mother ("Dearest")
The American widow, pale in black at the window, whom he comforts in the first pages

The Earl of Dorincourt
The hard grandfather, whose heart the book will ask to be softened

Mr. Havisham
The lawyer who brings the English news

HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT IT

> *"Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him."*
> I

Grades 3–5
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Cedric Knew Nothing about It

I, OPENING

His papa has died. His mamma, pale and in black, sits by the window. He calls her "Dearest," as his father did, and he puts his arms around her neck when he sees that she is going to cry.

- The first sentences are exact: "Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him."
- He remembers being carried around the room on his father's shoulder
- "Yes, he is well," she sobbed; "he is quite, quite well, but we--we have no one left but each other."
- Teach the grief with gentleness; this is a book for young readers, and it begins in a loss

> *"Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him."*
> I

02

A New York Boy

THE EARLY AMERICAN CHAPTERS

Cedric has friends in the neighborhood —a grocer, a bootblack, a soldier—and he is accustomed to being kind and interested in other people. The news of the earldom comes into this ordinary life.

- Keep the American friends in view; they are part of who he is, and they will not be forgotten
- Mr. Havisham the lawyer is the bearer of the English news
- The boy does not put on airs; that is already his character
- For grades 3–5; a story of kindness in ordinary streets

03

Dorincourt, and a Hard Grandfather

THE MIDDLE OF THE BOOK

Cedric is sent to England. The Earl, his grandfather, has been proud and often unkind, and has not loved the boy's American mother. The child walks into that house without fear, and without ceasing to love "Dearest."

- The Earl's hardness is real; do not soften it before the book does
- Cedric's courtesy is not mere manners; it is a habit of thinking of other people
- The mother is kept at a distance at first; that injury is part of the story
- Teach the great house as a test, not as a mere wish-fulfillment of rank

04

A Heart Softened

THE LATER CHAPTERS, AND THE CLOSE

The old Earl is changed by the child he did not expect to love. There is also a threat to the inheritance, and a proving of the boy's place. The close restores, as far as the book will go, a household of affection.

- The change in the grandfather should be taught as repentance and love, not as a trick of a pretty costume
- Do not invent a last-minute villain the chapters do not give, and do not hide the one they do
- The American friends and "Dearest" belong in the close as well as in the beginning
- Kindness, in this book, is stronger than pride

05

The Hosted File

PG #479

The hosted text is complete, original English, 1886 (serialized 1885–86). For grades 3–5.

- Quote "Dearest" as the boy's name for his mother, as the book gives it
- The famous look of the Fauntleroy suit is not the moral of the story; do not let a costume replace the character
- It may be read with other Burnett, if hosted, as a tale of a child who changes a house by goodness
- The book begins in a father's death; teach that opening with gentleness

Kindness | A Child's Courage | A Hard Heart Softened | A Mother and Son | Pride and Humility | Home in Two Countries

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. The book opens: "Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it. It had never been even mentioned to him." He calls his mother "Dearest." The first pages are a grief; teach them with gentleness.
2. This is Burnett's original English, 1886, PG #479, complete. For grades 3–5.
3. The curls and the famous suit are not the point. The boy's goodness, and the softening of a proud old heart, are the point.
4. The Earl of Dorincourt is really hard at first, and the mother is kept at a distance. Do not soften that injury before the book does.
5. Kindness, in this book, is stronger than pride. The American friends belong to the story as well as the English house.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #479, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/little-lord-fauntleroy/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.