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# The Provincial Letters

**Blaise Pascal** · *1656–1657* · *Thomas M'Crie (1847)*

We were entirely mistaken. It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. Until that time I had labored under the impression that the disputes in the Sorbonne were vastly important, and deeply affected the interests of religion. So Letter I begins, dated Paris, 23 January 1656, in Thomas M'Crie's English (1847; New York 1856), Project Gutenberg #73959. For grades 11–12. A series of letters; one map cannot teach them all. Keep the spelling M'Crie. Tact: argument, not a jeer only.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## How should a school read the Provincial Letters as M'Crie's English—opened by Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656, "We were entirely mistaken"—rather than as a single tract, or as a later nickname only?

*"We were entirely mistaken. It"*
Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656

The hosted file is Blaise Pascal's Provincial Letters in Thomas M'Crie's translation (1847; the New York edition of 1856), Project Gutenberg #73959. Keep the spelling M'Crie. Letter I is dated Paris, 23 January 1656, and opens: SIR,—We were entirely mistaken. It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. Until that time I had labored under the impression that the disputes in the Sorbonne were vastly important, and deeply affected the interests of religion. Teach that opening, for grades 11–12. This is a series of letters, often dense with controversy; later letters have their own dates and openings. One map cannot teach them all. Quote M'Crie, not only a later editor's headings or a nickname. Tact: this is argument, not a jeer only.

KEY CHARACTERS

**The writer of Letter I**
*Who, on 23 January 1656, tells a correspondent that they were entirely mistaken, and that he was only yesterday undeceived*

**Blaise Pascal**
*Whose Provincial Letters, 1656–1657, this file holds*

**Thomas M'Crie**
*The translator of this English; keep that spelling, and name him*

HOW TO BEGIN THESE LETTERS

> *"We were entirely mistaken. It"*
> Letter I

> *"It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. Until"*
> Letter I

**Grades 11–12**
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01

### We Were Entirely Mistaken

LETTER I, PARIS, 23 JANUARY 1656

*We were entirely mistaken. The first letter begins with a correction, not with a later famous quarrel only.*

- Keep "We were entirely mistaken."
- 11–12.
- M'Crie's English; keep that spelling.
- Letter I, not the whole series.

> *"We were entirely mistaken. It"*
> Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656

02

### Only Yesterday I Was Undeceived

LETTER I

*It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. The correction is dated as a recent undeception, in this wording.*

- Keep "only yesterday" and "undeceived."
- 11–12.
- Quote this English.
- The heading dates the letter 23 January 1656.

> *"It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. Until"*
> Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656

03

### Disputes in the Sorbonne

LETTER I

*Until that time I had labored under the impression that the disputes in the Sorbonne were vastly important, and deeply affected the interests of religion. The first subject is named as a dispute, and as an impression now given up.*

- Keep "disputes in the Sorbonne" and "vastly important."
- 11–12. Tact; argument, not a jeer only.
- Quote M'Crie.
- Later letters have their own openings.

> *"Until that time I had labored under the impression that the disputes in the Sorbonne were vastly important, and deeply affected the interests of religion. The"*
> Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656

04

### A Series of Letters, Not a Single Tract

THE COLLECTION

*The Provincial Letters are a series, 1656–1657. Letter I is the opening, dated Paris, 23 January 1656. One map cannot teach every letter. Quote each letter's own English when you come to it.*

- Name the series, and the first date.
- 11–12.
- Not a later nickname only.
- Tact in later controversy.

> *"We were entirely mistaken. It"*
> Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656

05

### M'Crie, 1847, This English

THE EDITION

*Thomas M'Crie, 1847 (New York edition 1856), PG #73959. Keep that spelling of the translator's name. For grades 11–12. Quote the letters, not only a later editor's headings. Tact: argument, not a jeer only. One map cannot teach the whole series.*

- Name M'Crie, and keep the spelling.
- 11–12. Tact.
- Letter I opens: we were entirely mistaken.
- A series, honestly sized.

> *"We were entirely mistaken. It"*
> Letter I, Paris, 23 January 1656

A mistake, named at once

An undeception, only yesterday

Disputes in the Sorbonne

A series of letters

Argument, not a jeer only

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. Letter I, dated Paris, 23 January 1656, opens: "We were entirely mistaken. It was only yesterday that I was undeceived." The disputes in the Sorbonne had seemed vastly important.
2. Thomas M'Crie, 1847 (New York 1856), PG #73959. Keep that spelling. For grades 11–12.
3. A series of letters, not a single tract, and not a later nickname only. One map cannot teach them all.
4. Tact: this is argument, not a jeer only. Quote the letters, not only a later editor's headings.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the Thomas M'Crie (1847), Project Gutenberg #73959, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/pascal-provincial-letters/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.