CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Shirley

Charlotte Brontë · *1849 · original English text*

Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England. From that comic opening Charlotte Brontë's 1849 novel moves into the Yorkshire of the Luddite years: mills, hunger, a proud heiress, and a quieter girl whose courage is of another kind.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

In a hard manufacturing season, what kinds of love and work can hold, and how do two very different women come into their own strength?

"Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England:"

The opening of Chapter I, "Levitical"

The shower of curates is a joke that opens a graver book: Robert Moore's mill, a threatened machinery, Caroline Helstone's hidden ache, and Shirley Keeldar, who has a man's fortune and a will of her own. This is Brontë's original English, PG #30486, complete. The historical frame is the war years and the Luddite attacks. Teach the riot and the shooting with gravity. For older students: work, class, illness, and two courtships that are not simple. The opening is exact, including the colon.

KEY CHARACTERS

Caroline Helstone
The quieter girl, whose strength is patience, loyalty, and a hard-won recovery.

Shirley Keeldar
The heiress of Fieldhead, frank, landed, and not easily ruled.

Robert Moore
The mill-owner whose machines and pride set the public plot.

the curates and the mill-hands
The comic clergy of the opening, and the men whose work is threatened.

A SHOWER OF CURATES

> *"Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England:"*
>
> The opening of Chapter I

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Shower of Curates

CHAPTER I, LEVITICAL

The book opens in comedy: curates lying thick on the Yorkshire hills. The joke will not be the whole weather.

- The first sentence is exact, including the colon.
- The chapter title in this text is LEVITICAL.
- Keep the comedy; it is Brontë's way into a harder country.

> *"Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England:"*
>
> Chapter I

02

A Mill, and a Time of Need

THE EARLY YORKSHIRE

Robert Moore will have his machines. The men who fear for their work will not be invisible. Caroline watches and waits in a house that does not feed her heart.

- The Luddite frame is historical, not decoration.
- Caroline's quietness is not emptiness.
- Moore's hardness is a business and a character.

03

Shirley Keeldar

THE HEIRESS ARRIVES

Miss Shirley Keeldar comes to Fieldhead: rich, frank, and not easily ruled. The book now has two centers.

- Shirley is not a simple 'boyish' toy; she has a conscience and a fortune.
- Her friendship with Caroline is one of the book's truths.
- Class and land enter with her, not only romance.

04

Riot, and a Hidden Illness

THE CRISIS

An attack on the mill, a wound, and a quieter decline in a girl's health. The public violence and the private wasting belong to the same hard season.

- Teach the attack and the shooting with gravity.
- Caroline's illness is a moral and physical fact; do not skip it.
- Robert's later learning is costly, not automatic.

05

Two Strengths

THE CLOSE

The two women, and the men they will have or refuse, come to a settlement the opening joke could not have predicted. The hosted text is complete, with transcriber notes after the tale.

- Do not quote the typographical corrections as Brontë.
- The book is a condition-of-England novel as well as a courtship.
- For older students: work, class, illness, and two very different courages.

Work and Machines | Two Women | A Hard Season | Courtship | Yorkshire

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The hosted text is Charlotte Brontë's original English (Project Gutenberg #30486), complete. The opening of Chapter I, "Levitical," is exact: "Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England:" Transcriber notes at the end are not the novel; do not quote them as Brontë.
2. The book is set in the Luddite years: a mill-attack and a shooting, plus a girl's serious illness. Teach those chapters with gravity. For older students.
3. This is Shirley, not Jane Eyre (already mapped). Keep the plots distinct.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #30486, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/shirley/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.