

Agnes Grey Study Guide

Agnes Grey by Anne Brontë

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Plot Summary

In her novel, *Agnes Grey*, Anne Bronte tells the story of a young woman who takes on a job as a governess in order to help her family. Believing that she will be a capable teacher, Agnes embraces the idea of her job, but soon learns the task is not as easy as she once thought. Difficult students and pampering parents combine to make her job almost impossible. Agnes perseveres, though, and soon finds the life that she has prayed to have.

Agnes is the daughter of a clergyman. Her mother was born to a rich family that disinherited her when she decided to marry a man with no wealth. She schools her daughters at home, keeping them away from the realities of life. When Agnes' father loses what little saving he had when the man whom he sends to invest his money is killed at sea, Agnes decides to help the family out by becoming a governess.

In her first job, Agnes is in charge of children who are unmanageable. The boy hits, kicks and bosses Agnes around. He and his sister refuse to learn even the simplest tasks. The parents will not allow Agnes to punish the children for their misbehavior. Near the end of her time with this family, Agnes kills a nest of baby birds in order to keep the boy from torturing the birds as he had wanted. Soon after this incident, Agnes is told her services will no longer be needed. Mrs. Bloomfield sites the children's bad behavior and their lack of learning as reasons for Agnes' dismissal.

In her next job, Agnes is in charge of two older girls who are not much more cooperative about learning than her first charges. Agnes attention is focused mainly on one of the girls, Rosalie Murray, who reaches the age at which she is introduced to society, entertains suitors and marries, while she is under Agnes' instruction. Although Agnes tries to rein in this girl's flirtatious manner, she has little affect on her. Rosalie flirts with men to the point she makes them believe she is interested in marrying them, and then turns them down, delighted that she is able to crush them. Agnes finds her manner of courting not only unbecoming, but also unnatural.

During this time Agnes meets Mr. Weston, the new curate at the church that she attends. She develops an admiration for Mr. Weston's religious and serious nature. Sensing this admiration, Rosalie takes it upon herself to woo Mr. Weston with her charms. Rosalie is never successful in winning Mr. Weston's heart even though she puts Agnes to much dismay as a result of her behavior and the lies that she tells Mr. Weston concerning Agnes. Agnes is forced to return home suddenly when her father passes away and she chooses to help her mother start a school instead of returning to the Murrays.

Agnes hopes to see Mr. Weston again when she returns to visit Rosalie in her new home. She learns, however, that he has moved to a different church. Agnes busies herself in helping her mother start her school. One day while walking on the beach, Agnes is surprised when a dog that had been her pet at the Murray home runs up to meet her. She is surprised again when she discovers this dog is accompanied by Mr.

Weston, who has been searching for her. Mr. Weston later asks Agnes to marry him and she accepts his proposal.



Chapter I and II

Chapter I and II Summary

In her novel, *Agnes Grey*, Anne Bronte tells the story of a young woman who takes on a job as a governess in order to help her family. Believing that she will be a capable teacher, Agnes embraces the idea of her job, but soon learns the task is not as easy as she once thought. Difficult students and pampering parents combine to make her job almost impossible. Agnes perseveres, though, and soon finds the life that she has prayed to have.

In Chapter I, Agnes describes her family. When her parents were married, Agnes' mother left her affluent family to marry Richard Grey and was disowned by them. Her father is a clergyman who provides a comfortable life for his wife and two daughters. Agnes has one sister, Mary. Because Agnes is the youngest, she is considered the baby and is petted by the whole family. Both Agnes and her sister are raised in seclusion and taught by their mother. Her mother's stories of her childhood, however, make Agnes want to see more of the world.

Agnes' father does not save money even though her mother asks him to. In the hopes of earning a fortune for his family he allows a friend to take what money he has and invest it. The ship carrying the friend and the clergyman's money is wrecked and lost at sea. Meanwhile, the clergyman and his family have run up bills at various places around town. Agnes' mother begins right away to work on paying off the family's debts, and restoring Agnes' father's spirits. In an effort to help her family, Agnes gets a governess job with the Bloomfield family.

In Chapter II, Agnes' arrives at the Bloomfield home. She meets Mrs. Bloomfield and is shown to her room. After Agnes is given dinner, she is taken to meet the children for whom she will be caring. She will be teaching Tom, and will be teaching and caring for Mary Ann, who will even sleep in Agnes' room. Fanny will soon be moved to the schoolroom, but Agnes will not be responsible for little Harriet. Agnes notices during their first meeting that Mary Ann has a need to be noticed while Tom takes all of the attention for himself. When Tom shows Agnes his rocking horse and how he can ride it, she notices how cruelly he treats the toy with his spurs and whip. When Tom offers to take Agnes to see his garden and Mary Ann notes that it is her garden too, he makes a motion as if to hit her. After the children have gone to bed, Mrs. Bloomfield talks to Agnes about their dispositions and the subjects she wants them to learn.

Chapter I and II Analysis

In these chapters, Bronte sets up Agnes' family background as well as her social and education experiences. She also includes a description of Agnes' desire to be a



governess and an introduction to Agnes' first students. Bronte also describes the circumstances under which Agnes decides to pursue a job.

Agnes is the daughter of a clergyman while her mother is the daughter of a rich family. Because she had insisted on marrying the clergyman, her family had disowned her. Although Agnes' mother has lost her wealth, her position and her servants, Agnes' mother is still happy with the life that she has chosen. Watching her parents' relationship, Agnes realizes that money is not all there is to life. She also witnesses her parents' love for one another despite their circumstances. When Agnes' father loses their savings, Agnes' mother could have treated him badly, but chooses instead to help her family get out of debt as best she can.

It is also noted in the first chapter of the book that Agnes and her sister Mary are the only two of six children in the Grey family who survived past infancy. Agnes is the youngest of these two children and for this reason, is always petted and babied. Although she believes she should be useful, her family will not let her assist them in the way that she would like. The family has a comfortable life until the clergyman tries to invest his money and it is lost. It is at this point that Agnes begins to think she might like to be a governess.

Unfortunately, Agnes has very little experience with people or children outside her own family. She believes that she will be able to connect well with children because she was once one herself, but had had no idea she would be faced with a child who kills birds and is cruel to those around him. She had expected her students would be eager to learn but from her first few hours with the children, it appears this might not be the case.



Chapter III and IV

Chapter III and IV Summary

In Chapter III, Agnes struggles with getting Mary Ann dressed and her hair fixed. Once in the schoolroom, she finds both her students uncooperative with the learning process. They want to boss her around, forcing her to go with them and do whatever they wish. Although Agnes tries to distract the children while outside one day, they will not leave a well in which they are playing. Mr. Bloomfield sees them and scolds Agnes for allowing them to play in the water. At lunch, Agnes' opinion of Mr. Bloomfield does not improve as he criticizes the food, and then criticizes his wife.

At the end of the first day, Agnes feels disillusioned. She is unable to punish the children for bad behavior and has no way to reward them for good behavior. The children show her plainly that they are not interested in learning. The boy not only refuses to do what he is asked, but also hits and kicks when he does not get his way. Agnes is determined to use her virtues of patience, firmness, and perseverance to convince the children to do as they ought. She forces them to stay in the schoolroom until their lessons are finished, even if she has to bodily restrain them. Mary Ann often cries so sharply and loudly when Agnes tries to get her to do her work that Mrs. Bloomfield comes to see what is wrong. Although Mrs. Bloomfield tells Mary Ann to behave, she looks at Agnes as if she clearly believes the trouble is on account of the teacher.

When Fanny begins to take lessons from Agnes, she is as uncontrollable as the other two children. Her parents make comments that Fanny's behavior has gotten worse since she has begun to take lessons from Agnes. They also attribute the other two children's bad behavior to Agnes. Agnes does not say anything in defense of herself because she wants to keep her job. Agnes feels that since it was her idea to get the job, she should do the best she can to keep it. Although Agnes is allowed only two weeks vacation at Christmas, she is happy to get this leave. She feels as if Mrs. Bloomfield is justified in cutting her vacation because she has not worked a full term.

In Chapter IV, Agnes explains that she has written about her troubles with the Bloomfield children in the hopes that parents or governesses might benefit from her experiences. She tells of one snowy afternoon when the children are particularly bad, they escape from the schoolroom and run out to play in the snow. Although Agnes tries to get them in, she is unable. When Mr. Bloomfield hears the commotion, he calls the children and they come at once. The children run upstairs with their dirty, snowy feet. Agnes mentions to him that he is the only one capable of getting the children to do what they are asked.

As she follows the children upstairs, she hears Mr. Bloomfield's mother, who is visiting with them, ask Mrs. Bloomfield if Agnes is really a decent governess. This statement is hurtful to Agnes because this elderly lady had seemed like a confidant to Agnes. From her past conversations with the lady, Agnes had felt that she sympathized with Agnes



for her troubles with the children. After hearing these comments, Agnes can not help but act differently toward the old lady. The lady responds in the same manner. With a little extra attention, however, Agnes is able to get back into the lady's good graces. From that point on, however, Agnes regards the lady as being insensitive and hypocritical.

Agnes believes that Mr. Bloomfield is overly influenced by his mother's opinion of her. Agnes feels that Mr. Bloomfield has suddenly taken an unusual interest in watching her activities with the children and showing up at the most inappropriate times. There is no way that Agnes can react to the children that pleases their father. Agnes writes that the only person in the house who has any sympathy for her is the nurse. The nurse confides in Agnes that she sometimes slaps the children when they are acting badly. The nurse, however, has lost her job because of her habit of punishing the children.

Chapter III and IV Analysis

In this section of chapters, Agnes shares how distressed she is with the job that she has been hired to do. The Bloomfields are different from the families to which Agnes is accustomed. She is ashamed of and embarrassed by the arguments that Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield have during dinner. She notes that she has never felt so badly about something not her fault before. The way that the Bloomfields treat one another must be a shock to Agnes because her parents seem to have never acted this way before. Mr. Bloomfield is a vastly different man from her father. Agnes' father seems to be a soft-spoken man who respects his wife and children. They, in turn, respect him. Agnes and her sister would have never dreamed to have acted the way that the Bloomfield children do.

Agnes writes that the threat of not receiving a good night kiss from her mother was enough to make her act correctly. The children that she watches, however, are not motivated by anything that Agnes can do. The parents will not let Agnes punish the children. Agnes is too polite to tell Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield how badly behaved their children are. Instead, they blame their children's behavior on Agnes.



Chapter V and VI

Chapter V and VI Summary

In Chapter V, Agnes writes of the children's Uncle Robson, whom she dislikes. He regards Mary Ann as a favorite and flatters her. He praises and laughs at the faults of both Tom and Mary Ann, causing them to act worse than ever. Robson encourages Tom to dominate his sisters and to be cruel to animals, insects and birds. One day Tom brings a whole nest full of five baby birds to the house that he and his Uncle have found. Tom intends to torture the birds, but Agnes drops a stone on them so they will not have to bear this torture. Mrs. Bloomfield later chides Agnes for taking away Tom's fun. She reasons her son is not wrong in torturing the creatures, since she believes that all animals were made for humans to do whatever they wished with them.

Agnes notes that she hates when guests of any kind visit Wellwood House. The children refuse to leave the guests alone even though Mrs. Bloomfield expects Agnes to keep them away from company. Neither the parents nor the guests will show any displeasure toward the children's behavior and Agnes does not have the power to pull them away from the flattering guests.

At the end of the summer term, Mrs. Bloomfield tells Agnes that she will not be needed to continue her services as governess for the children. She indicates that the children have not made enough progress in their studies and had been badly behaved, they thought, because Agnes hadn't been firm enough with them. Despite this bad experience, Agnes wants to apply for another tutoring job.

In Chapter VI, Agnes returns to the parsonage. Although she had hoped to be able to share her earnings with her family, Agnes' father will not let her put any part of her money toward the family's bills. Mrs. Gray tells her husband to stop worrying about bills and money so that he will live to be old enough to see his daughters married. He asks who would want to marry them since they have no money. Mrs. Gray makes the point that Mr. Gray married her even though she was poor.

Agnes tells her mother that she would like to try again with another governess position. Agnes' mother makes her promise to be patient, and not take the first job she is offered. Agnes replies to many ads, none of which meet her mother's specifications. She finally puts in an article of her own. Agnes gets two applicants, only one of which will agree to give Agnes the salary she has requested. Agnes is accepted for the position and she is to start her new job the end of January. Agnes hopes this job will be more fulfilling since the children will be older.

Chapter V and VI Analysis

In these two chapters, things come to a head with the Bloomfields when Agnes kills a batch of baby birds that Tom plans to torture. This family lets Agnes go because they



say she is not firm or persistent enough in her care of the children. This complaint frustrates Agnes, because she feels that she has been both firm and has also persevered with the children. She believes the main cause of her failure with the Bloomfield children has been the lack of discipline the children have received from their parents.

Another aspect of the Bloomfields' behavior that has irritated Agnes is the loose way that they translate the passages of the Bible. One particular translation that gives Agnes trouble is that Mrs. Bloomfield takes the passage that states that all animals were created for man's convenience to mean that her son has the right to torture and kill animals if he so desires. She believes mercy should be reserved only for human beings and that God does not care about the way in which animals are treated. These are issues about which Agnes takes particular offense. In fact, the killing of the birds is the only offense over which Agnes ever challenges Mrs. Bloomfield's authority.

Agnes' characteristic of perseverance is demonstrated when she decides to try again as a governess even after the bad experience that she has just had in this job. At one point, Agnes stresses that it is not just that she feels responsible for taking care of her family that she wants to take another job, but because she still believes as a governess that she can make some difference in the lives of children. The children in her newer position are older, so she feels they will be more inclined to study. Agnes also believes that she can draw on the experience that she got in her first job to help her along in her second job.

Another aspect of her second job is that Agnes' mother closely screens the applicants. This may show not only how much Agnes' mother wants her to get a good job that she can handle, but also may indicate that Agnes' mother really does not want her to get another job. By being highly choosy about which jobs she lets her daughter apply for, the mother may be trying to keep her from getting another job at all. When Agnes does finally get another job, she is happy that the job is near a large town because she believes this will give her the chance to experience life.



Chapter VII and VIII

Chapter VII and VIII Summary

In Chapter VII, a snowstorm hits the day of Agnes' trip to Horton Lodge, which makes her long journey even more difficult. When she finally arrives at the house, Agnes is led into the schoolroom where she is formally introduced to two girls and two boys which she believes to be her students. The older girl asks Agnes if she would like to go upstairs, and has her sister, Matilda, take her to her room. Agnes is served tea in her room. She has to go in search of a servant to bring up her luggage. The servants treat her in a seemingly uncaring manner. She wakes the next morning feeling as if she has been transported to another world. Although Agnes is not particularly excited to meet her students, she has already decided to begin their relationship by calling them "Miss" and "Master."

Agnes then gives a character sketch of Mr. Murray whom she describes as a hunter and farmer who although he goes to church does not shirk from using bad language to address his servants. Mrs. Murray is an attractive woman who loves to give parties and dress fashionably. Mrs. Murray seems more interested in the comfort of her children than in their education. She wants her daughters to be showy and seem accomplished. She wants the boys, however, to learn Latin. Like Mrs. Bloomfield, she asks that Agnes not do any punishing herself, but leave this task to Mr. and Mrs. Murray.

Rosalie Murray is a pretty girl of sixteen. Rosalie is at first cold and unfriendly toward Agnes, then becomes rude and disrespectful. As their relationship develops, however, Agnes believes that Rosalie comes to respect her even though she makes it obvious that she never forgets that Agnes is the daughter of a poor clergyman while she is rich. Matilda is thirteen when she and Agnes first meet. Matilda is an ill-humored student who would rather ride her pony and play with her brothers than learn anything. Agnes is charged with trying to break Agnes of swearing, as her father does.

John Murray is eleven when Agnes first meets him. She finds him unteachable and is glad when his parents send him to school a year after she had begun her job there. Charles is about ten when Agnes begins her job. He is Mrs. Murray's pet. Agnes teaches Charles for two years before he goes off to school. It is his mother's request that Agnes quickly correct Charles' mistakes. Agnes does so even though she believes that it does not give the boy a chance to learn on his own because his mother insists that Agnes teach him in such a way.

The family goes to church every Sunday morning, an activity that Agnes would enjoy if she were not forced to sit in a place in the carriage that made her sick. Sometimes the children of the family go to church in the evening also and Agnes is allowed to go with them.



The children have no set schedule for meal, study or recess, but demand that servants and Agnes alike be ready to serve them and do their wishes whenever they would like. It is not uncommon for Agnes to be called early to start school just to find the children have changed their minds and stayed in bed. The servants see the manner in which Agnes is treated by her superiors, and treat her in much the same way. Agnes, however, seems to make some impression upon Rosalie since the girl begins to notice her perseverance and steadfast mindset.

In Chapter VIII, Rosalie's family has planned a coming out ball for her in early January. One day as Agnes is trying to read a letter from her sister, Rosalie asks her to put the letter away and concentrate instead on the ball. In fact, Rosalie requests that Agnes delay her Christmas holiday until after the ball is over even though Agnes will not be allowed to attend. Agnes tells her she wants to go home not only to see her friends, but also to help her sister make plans for her wedding. Rosalie shows interest in Mary's wedding until she learns that the soon to be husband is neither rich nor handsome. Rosalie states that she believes Mary will be very unhappy in her marriage to the poor clergyman.

Chapter VII and VIII Analysis

As Agnes describes her new students, it appears that four of them have little more propensity to learning than the ones that she had before. With one, however, there is hope that Agnes can influence her, at least with her attitude and perseverance. This idea of the influence that a steady attitude can have is an important one in this novel. Agnes had hoped to break through to the young Bloomfields with this steady attitude, but they are not moved by it. Three of the Murray children also seem oblivious to Agnes but Rosalie seems to take notice of her governess' steady attitude and values. Although she is at first hateful to Agnes, in time she seems to begin to show some respect for her.

Note in this chapter that, once again, Agnes does not receive the respect that she believes she should as a governess. Although it does not seem she wants to be held in high esteem by the people for whom she works, she would like to know that they are at least concerned about her comfort and welfare. Mrs. Murray seems to care only about the comfort of her children even if it is at the expense of their own education and Agnes' values. Although Rosalie does gain some respect for Agnes, it is apparent that she never forgets that Agnes is not of the same social standing as she. Mrs. Murray, likewise, seems to look down her nose at the governess. Agnes notes that even with their servants, her mother never treated them the way that the Murrays have treated Agnes.

The theme of marriage is again presented in these two chapters. Rosalie learns that Agnes' sister is getting married. Although she is intrigued by the idea at first, Rosalie tells Agnes she does not know why Mary would want to marry a clergy man with no money and no position. She belittles the idea of the place of the clergy in society, indicating that she believes it would be distasteful to have to serve others. Keep this attitude of Rosalie's in mind since it will be of importance later in the story.



The social standing of the rich and the poor is another theme that is returned to again and again in this novel. First, Agnes' mother is disinherited by her family because they believe that she has married below her caliber of people, simply because she has married a relatively poor clergyman. In this section of chapters, it is noted that Rosalie always keeps an air that she is somehow better than Agnes because she is rich and Agnes is not. The idea of lack of riches being associated with unhappiness is returned to again when Rosalie talks about how unhappy Agnes' sister must be marrying a poor clergyman.



Chapter IX and X

Chapter IX and X Summary

In Chapter IX when Agnes returns from her holiday break, Rosalie and Matilda argue which one should share their news with Agnes first. Matilda finally wins out and is allowed to tell about her horse first. She does so using less than ladylike language and some stretches of truth. After Matilda is finished, Rosalie tells Agnes about her ball. As she tells Agnes how beautiful she was and how many conquests she made that evening, Agnes asks why the ball and the conquests are so important to Rosalie. She tries to make the point that only one conquest is needed if the feelings are mutual but Rosalie only passes over the comment by saying the two never agree on these topics. She tells Agnes how she danced with one woman's husband, making that lady angry. She also tells Agnes of her admirers, one of which is Sir Thomas Ashby whom she describes as being young and gay, but ugly. Also among her admirers is Mr. Hatfield, the area's rector. Agnes is surprised the rector would have attended a party, but Rosalie assures her that he did not dance although she believes that he looked as if he wanted to dance with her. Rosalie also tells Agnes there is a new curate in the area, Mr. Weston, whom Rosalie describes as stupid and ugly.

When Rosalie returns to talking about the ball, Agnes asks her which of her four suitors she likes the best. She tells Agnes that she hates them all. She believes, however, that she will wind up with Sir Thomas Ashby. Rosalie seems to believe she can overlook that fact that she dislikes the man as long as she can have a title and reside over a large manor. If she had her wish she tells Agnes she would like to remain single and marry only when she is on the verge of being an old maid.

In Chapter X, after the first church service she attends, Rosalie asks Agnes' opinion of their new curate. Agnes tells her the only opinion she is able to form of him is that he is a better reader than their former curate. Rosalie seems to have made a quick opinion of the man that he is still not worthy of her attention because he did not look at her, as did Mr. Hatfield. Agnes notes internally that Mr. Hatfield not only did not speak to her, but also closed her out of the carriage. She also notes to herself that no one in the church speaks to her.

Rosalie decides to return to church again that evening since Harry Meltham has also begun paying attention to her. At the evening service, Agnes has the opportunity to hear Mr. Weston preach. Mr. Weston's sermon is drastically different from Mr. Hatfield's, containing simplicity and evangelical truth. On the way home, the two Murray sisters fight over who should have Harry Meltham. Rosalie tells Matilda no one will care for her until she stops using her rough language. Matilda, in turn, tells Rosalie she is not interested in a man for his money, but only wants a few horses and dogs.



Chapter IX and X Analysis

In this section of chapters, Rosalie's ideas about romance and suitors are introduced. She is enthralled with the idea that she is beautiful and men like to look at her. She is pleased that even married men leave their wives to dance with her. Although she likes the idea that all of these men are attracted to her, Rosalie does not like any of them. In fact, she goes so far as to tell Agnes that she detests all of the men whom she considers her suitors. Rosalie even flirts with the clergymen. The man who seems to take the most notice of Rosalie is Harry Meltham, a man whom Rosalie says is good for nothing because he is a second son. Rosalie believes that she will wind up with Sir Thomas Ashby whom she describes as wicked and ugly. Even Matilda recognizes that Rosalie is not interested in a relationship but instead in a man who will give her riches and a good name.

Meanwhile, Agnes has discovered a man whom she admires for his way of reading scripture and delivering sermons. She compares him with the current rector who delivers sermons that are too studied and polished for Agnes' tastes. She also does not care for the topics on which the current rector, Mr. Hatfield, chooses to preach. Although the Murray family does go to church, they only do so to be seen and admired. In fact, Rosalie has already classified Mr. Weston as a blockhead because he has not yet been intrigued by her charms.



Chapter XI and XII

Chapter XI and XII Summary

In Chapter XI, Agnes basically has only one student and more time to herself than she has ever had in the past. Several times the sisters ask Agnes to visit the cottagers on the park with them or visit them by herself to do favors they have promised, but don't want to carry through with. Agnes enjoys visiting with these cottagers alone because she does not like the way the sisters act around the cottagers. They are both rude and inconsiderate of the feelings of these people even though Agnes has tried to explain the proper behavior they should have around these people.

One day when Agnes has a rare day of solitude, she decides to go and visit Nancy Brown, one of the cottagers who has an inflammation in her eyes. Although the lady admits to Agnes her eyes are no better, she tells her she is easier in her mind than she has been. Agnes reads the chapter in John to Nancy that she requests, even reading it slowly so the lady can take it all in. After Agnes is finished, Nancy asks her how she likes Mr. Weston. Nancy tells Agnes that Mr. Weston visits the cottagers much more often than the rector or other curate ever did. She says the rector always comes with a criticism for the people whom he visits. Nancy admits that she only sent for the rector once and during that visit Mr. Hatfield had scorned her when she told him that she was troubled because all Bible verses seemed to condemn her. He tells her that her troubles come from being with the Methodists, whom she has not been around, and not going to church, where she has not gone because of her illness. As he is about to leave, he asks Mrs. Brown if she has seen the Murray girls. When she tells him where, he eagerly leaves the house, kicking the cat on his way out. Mrs. Brown says that she tried to talk to Mr. Hatfield again but he told her that he was too busy to talk to her. Mr. Weston had been in the vestry helping Mr. Hatfield with his gown when this conversation took place. The next morning, Nancy is visited by Mr. Weston. Although she admits she thought the man cross looking at first, his friendly speech and kind behavior toward her cat make her think he might be all right. Mr. Weston soothes Nancy's concerns and helps her to understand how she can remedy her position of spiritual concern without berating her. Nancy tells Agnes that Mr. Weston has been to see her many times since that day.

On another day, when Agnes goes to fulfill a promise one of the Murray girls made to a man suffering with consumption, she again hears the praises of Mr. Weston from both the patient and his wife. When Mr. Weston had learned how the couple's supply of coal was almost gone, he had sent them a sack of coal so the two could stay warm in the cold weather. Agnes returns from her visit thanking God that she has something to think about other than her loneliness. The only person whom she has had to talk to since she has come to Horton is Nancy Brown. It is noted how those with whom she spends time constantly have such a great influence over one's mind and emotions. They will lead one to speak and act the way that they do, even if one does not want to do so. Agnes fears that the girls with whom she spends so much of her time will eventually degrade her way of thinking down to their own. Agnes is happy to learn there is one person in



her general area who excels. Attending church on Sundays becomes even more of a pleasure for her than before.

In Chapter XII, it is nearly one month later when Agnes is able to visit Nancy again. She finds Nancy worried about her cat who has been missing most of the day. She has been working on a Sunday shirt for her son. Agnes takes over working on the shirt because Nancy's eyes are still not better. As Agnes is working, Mr. Weston comes in the cottage carrying Nancy's cat. Nancy tries to get both Mr. Weston and Agnes to stay until the rainstorm that has begun is over. Mr. Weston tells Agnes that he and the squire had words about Mr. Weston rescuing Nancy's cat. Agnes tells Mr. Weston that she never sees Mr. Murray to speak to him. She stays and sews for Nancy until it is nearly dark.

When she returns home, Agnes finds Matilda has had tea alone and is very upset. Matilda had to end her ride early because of the rain and accuses Agnes of never thinking of others. Agnes has to bite her tongue to keep from responding hastily.

Chapter XI and XII Analysis

In this section of the novel, Mr. Weston becomes a bright spot in Agnes' life. Agnes has heard opinions about Mr. Weston from parishioners other than Rosalie Murray. All of their opinions of the man is that he is a more loving and godly man than Mr. Hatfield, or the old curate ever was. Nancy relates how Mr. Weston has eased her mind about her spiritual concerns without degrading or berating her. Another couple shares with Agnes that the minister brought them coal because he had learned they were running low. Agnes witnesses herself how Mr. Weston finds and brings Nancy's cat back even though he exchanges words with Mr. Murray to do so. Agnes finds herself attracted to Mr. Weston because he is one of the few people who she feels is better than herself. She has had the fear that dealing only with selfish children all day long as she does, she will eventually become like these people. When she returns home from Nancy's home and finds Matilda in a tizzy because no one was there to share tea with her, she is able to bite her tongue and not respond to Matilda's thoughtless and hurtful comments as she would like because she remembers the lessons she has learned from Nancy and Mr. Weston.



Chapter XIII and VIX

Chapter XIII and VIX Summary

In Chapter XIII, Agnes relates that Rosalie has begun the habit of attending church twice each Sunday as it gives her the opportunity to be noticed. She also enjoys the walk home with at least one gentleman who lives in the same direction as the Murrays. At times when Agnes is allowed to walk with the ladies, she tends to pretend to be interested in some flower or tree so that she can walk alone. On one of these times, Agnes is looking for some flower that reminds her of her home when she spots three primroses. The roses are so high up that she cannot get to them without climbing a bank. She does not go climbing because she hears someone walking up behind her. Mr. Weston's voice offers to get the flowers for her. As they walk along together, Mr. Weston asks Agnes about her love for flowers, and then comments to her that it must be nice to have a home. Mr. Weston admits there was a time when he thought he could not live without the thought of a home but that since that time, many hardships have taught him otherwise. Agnes begins a thought about Mr. Weston after he leaves her on the road to the Murray's home, which she does not finish. She indicates that some thoughts should not even be shared with angels. When Agnes rejoins the Murray sisters, they tease her about her walk with Mr. Weston. They are also very inquisitive as to when she had seen the man to speak to him before. Once she is in her room, Agnes sends up an earnest prayer which she believes is for herself as well as another's welfare. She keeps two of the flowers in a vase until the maid throws them away. The other she presses in her Bible, where it has stayed.

In Chapter XIV, as Agnes works on a watercolor piece for Rosalie, a terrier keeps her company. Matilda had bought the dog as a puppy and had soon gotten tired of nursing it. Agnes had taken over its care and the dog now regards her as its mistress. The allegiance causes Matilda to kick and abuse the dog verbally. As she works, Agnes is interrupted by Mrs. Murray who requests that she go and see about Rosalie whom she believes is meeting Mr. Hatfield in secret. Just as Mrs. Murray had suspected, Agnes finds Rosalie together in the field with Mr. Hatfield for company. Snap, the dog, takes care of Agnes' concern that she does not know how to properly approach the situation by running ahead and barking at Rosalie and tugging at her dress hem. When Mr. Hatfield leaves, Rosalie tells Agnes that she had been glad that Agnes had come to rescue her from him. When Agnes tells Rosalie of her mother's wishes, Rosalie admits to Agnes that she has been using Mr. Hatfield as someone with whom to flirt. She tells Agnes that her mother will allow her only to talk to Sir Thomas because she is afraid that if Rosalie is caught talking to another man, the Ashbys will decide she is not worthy of their son, even though Rosalie thinks Sir Thomas is far worse than any woman of common decency. Rosalie believes Sir Thomas will change once he is married, her only wish is that he wasn't so ugly. Rosalie admits that all she is interested in is the material wealth that will come with her match with Ashby. Mr. Hatfield, however, has no material wealth to share with her. Although Agnes tries to convince Rosalie that her behavior



toward Mr. Hatfield is cruel, Rosalie does not believe she is doing anything wrong and that Mr. Hatfield should know that he is not worthy of her.

One day during one of Rosalie's walks, she asks Agnes, who has been accompanying her as requested, to take some money to Mark Wood. Because of Rosalie's quickness in making the arrangements, Agnes suspects something is up. She turns in time to see Mr. Hatfield entering the field in which Rosalie is walking. Believing there will be no harm in the two meeting, Agnes goes ahead to the Wood residence as she was asked. After she finishes reading to the man, and gives him the money as directed, Agnes leaves. She runs into Mr. Weston walking toward the same house. They talk for a moment, then part. As she walks back to the Murray's home, she meets Rosalie who appears to be very happy with herself. Rosalie takes great pride in telling Agnes that Mr. Hatfield proposed to marry her. She seems pleased with the way that her words affected him when she told him no. She even continues to tell him no when he asks if she would have agreed to the proposal if he were rich. She even tells Agnes that Mr. Hatfield had asked that she tell no one of his proposal to her. He warns her that if she does tell anyone about the affair, he will tell his side of the story, a story that will probably ruin her chances with any other suitor who might be interested in her. Agnes tries to convince Rosalie that her treatment of Mr. Hatfield is improper, but Rosalie believes she should be commended for her heartlessness.

Chapter XIII and VIX Analysis

In these chapters, Agnes' quest for love is drastically contrasted with Rosalie's. Rosalie appears to be a flirt who is concerned with no one's feelings but her own. She feels there is nothing wrong with toying with Mr. Hatfield's emotions, then destroying him coldly when he shows that he is interested in her. Agnes, on the other hand, does not even have the courage to write down her own feelings about Mr. Weston. Although she never states it directly, it is obvious that she has developed a crush on this man. She follows the example of her own parents in believing that true love will overcome all difficulties if the love is in God's will. She does not understand Rosalie's need to have a rich husband, especially since she knows this man is not a good person. Agnes cannot understand this need for riches that goes beyond wanting what is best for one's self. Agnes seems to truly believe that Rosalie has some feelings for Mr. Hatfield that even she is not admitting to herself and that these feelings will eventually cause Rosalie to follow the path that would make sense to Agnes. She has no idea that Rosalie is pursuing Mr. Hatfield only as a conquest and that she has no intention to use him for anything but proof that she can take care of herself and turn down would be suitors.



Chapter XV and XVI

Chapter XV and XVI Summary

In Chapter XV, Rosalie wonders how Mr. Hatfield will look during church on the following Sunday and supposes he will pretend to be ill and miss the service. Matilda, however, makes the correct assumption that he will not, because he does his duties as required. In her boredom, Rosalie asks Agnes to go with her into town for some yarn. There, she runs into the Green sisters. As they are talking, Mr. Weston approaches Agnes. Mr. Weston asks Agnes about these girls, then why Agnes feels she cannot make friends in this area. Mr. Weston leads Agnes through several topics of conversation asserting what her likes and dislikes are. When Rosalie and the Green sisters part ways, Agnes is unhappy to see that Rosalie greets Mr. Weston with a friendly smile. For the rest of the walk, Rosalie engages Mr. Weston in conversation even when Mr. Weston is obviously talking to Agnes. Agnes is upset by Rosalie's actions toward Mr. Weston. When he leaves them, Rosalie says aloud that she knew that she could get an adoring look from him. Agnes prays that Mr. Weston not fall prey to Rosalie's charms.

In Chapter XVI, Rosalie is the only one who will go to church the following Sunday. Agnes goes with her so she can admire Mr. Weston. At the conclusion of services, Agnes is surprised when Rosalie leaves church as soon as services are over. She learns, though, that Rosalie has done this so that she can talk to Mr. Weston. She asks him to go see a cottager whose daughter is ill and requests to know when exactly he will make his visit. As the two ladies make their way to the carriage, Mr. Weston offers Agnes his umbrella. Later in the carriage, Rosalie tells Agnes that she plans to take up with Mr. Weston as a replacement for Mr. Hatfield. She tells Agnes she believes Ashby will propose to her on the following Tuesday. She plans to use her time until then to the best of her ability. The next morning, Rosalie requires that Matilda go with her on a walk. Agnes notices the time of the walk is the same time that Mr. Weston is to go to the porter's lodge. They return to tell Agnes what a pleasant walk and talk they had with Mr. Weston.

Chapter XV and XVI Analysis

To Agnes' distress, Rosalie decides that her next conquest will be Mr. Weston. She briefly thinks of a parable of a poor shepherd who has only one lamb while a rich man who has many desires the one lamb. Of course, in this use of the parable, Agnes is the poor shepherd who has only one lamb, Mr. Weston, whom she admires. Rosalie, however, has many suitors but seems determined to take Mr. Weston away from Agnes. Agnes finds comfort only in the fact that Mr. Weston does not seem to pay much attention to Rosalie's flirtations.

One of the interesting topics that Mr. Weston brings up with Agnes is the fact that she is not very close to the girls that she teaches. Agnes tells Mr. Weston that this is one of the

reasons that she does not have many friends in the area, because most of the people believe that she is not of the same class as they. Interestingly, Mr. Weston seems interested in discovering Agnes' likes and dislikes.



Chapter XVII and XVIII

Chapter XVII and XVIII Summary

In Chapter XVII, on the day of the ball at Ashby Park, Agnes had intended to go visit Nancy Brown but Rosalie keeps her busy by having her copy a piece of music for her. The next day Rosalie tells Agnes that Sir Thomas did, indeed, propose to her during the ball. Agnes first hopes the wedding will be stalled so that Rosalie will have time to think about the situation into which she is getting herself, but then later comes to believe that it is better off that Rosalie be married so she will not be able to hurt and deceive other men. Rosalie answers not only the letters that Sir Thomas writes to her but also those that Mr. Green writes to her. Rosalie plays him along, also, choosing not to tell him that she is engaged. Meanwhile, Rosalie continues to go after Mr. Weston even to the point that Agnes believes is completely unbelievable. In her perusal of Mr. Weston, Rosalie has begun to visit the cottagers more often and pretend to be charitable toward them with the hopes of her actions making their way back to Mr. Weston. Rosalie has even taken over Agnes' spot on the family's pew so that Agnes must sit with her back to the pulpit and not be able to see Mr. Weston. The girls seems to limit Agnes' exposure to Mr. Weston and even tell him on days that she does not go to church that she just didn't want to come. Agnes knows that even after Rosalie is married, there will be little change for she fears that Mr. Weston will have moved on to another position since he and the rector have been unable to agree on the way the church should be run. To make matters worse, Matilda has sold Snap, Agnes' little terrier companion, to the rat catcher. Letters from home also indicate that Agnes' father's health has gotten worse.

In Chapter XVIII, Rosalie is married and off to her honeymoon trip. Before she leaves, Rosalie hugs Agnes with tears in her eyes and Agnes is able to forgive her of all her transgressions. That evening Rosalie takes advantage of her liberty to visit Nancy Brown. On Sunday, Agnes is able to return to her spot in the family pew. She sees no difference in Mr. Weston's behavior since Rosalie is married, but does notice that he does not join them on their way home. Matilda is in a sorrowful mood because she is not old enough to be admitted into society but her mother has prohibited her from going to the stables, or talking to any of the grooms or hunters. Mrs. Murray also reprimands Agnes for not doing her duties as a governess properly since she cannot tame Matilda as Mrs. Murray wishes.

During one of her walks with Matilda, Mr. Weston happens to meet up with Matilda and Agnes. He and Agnes speak briefly of Rosalie. Mr. Weston voices the opinion that he believes that it is shameful that Rosalie is thrown away on Sir Thomas. In another meeting on the same day, Mr. Weston presents Agnes with a handful of bluebells, showing that he remembered their conversation about the flowers. Although this encounter puts Agnes in a good mood for one evening, her hope is killed when she receives a letter from her mother warning her that there is little hope that her father will recover from his progressing illness. Agnes begs Mrs. Murray to let her leave for her vacation early, but by the time she returns home, her father has already died.



Chapter XVII and XVIII Analysis

Beauty is one of the topics that is addressed in this section of the novel. Agnes has admitted in her diary that she has started paying more attention to her dressing and preparation than she even has before. She notes that although she has always been taught not to worry about possessing beauty, but instead the cultivation of her mind, she wonders about the practicality of this teaching. People, Agnes realizes, are just naturally attracted to people, animals and things that are beautiful. She realizes that women are generally judged mainly by their appearance. Women who are beautiful are praised for this beauty first and foremost. Similarly, an unattractive woman is judged primarily by her unattractiveness. She realizes that even if the unattractive woman is a good person, she will be judged as a bad person simply by her looks. Similarly, Rosalie has judged Mr. Weston based primarily on his looks. She has decided that since she believes the man is ugly, he is not smart and is not interesting.



Chapter XIX and XX

Chapter XIX and XX Summary

In Chapter XIX, after her husband's death, Agnes' mother receives a letter from her father. The letter offers to remit her to the family and include Agnes and Mary in his will if she will admit that she was wrong in marrying and going against her father's wishes and that she has regretted that decision. Mary and Agnes support their mother in denouncing their grandfather's wishes and telling him that the past thirty years have not been regrettable. They hear nothing else from him until they see an obituary in the paper announcing his death.

In Chapter XX, Agnes' mother finds a house that will work for a school and even lines up a few pupils. Meanwhile, Agnes goes back to Horton Lodge until July when she will end her job there and join her mother teaching in the day school.

Agnes is nearly two weeks into her return to Horton Lodge when she finally sees Mr. Weston. He asks about her mother and their plans. Agnes feels happy after their conversation. She does not see Mr. Weston again until the last Sunday she is to be at Horton Lodge. She feels this will be the last time she will see him. He speaks to her after church, asking if she would be displeased to see him again.

Chapter XIX and XX Analysis

In this section of the novel, Agnes' life is punctuated by two losses. The first is the death of her father. The second is the loss of communication with Mr. Weston. Both of these losses seem to affect Agnes deeply. Though Mr. Weston is not dead, she fears that she will not see him again. She believes that a relationship with him is the one chance that she had for happiness. She is almost at the point of losing hope and questioning her own faith when she wonders why she, who has been steadfast in her faith, is not allowed access to the one good thing that she desires, while others who neither ask for blessings, nor give thanks when they receive blessings, continue to reap benefits.

Even though Agnes knows that Rosalie must have lied to Mr. Weston about her and portrayed her to be something less than desirable, notice that Agnes is kind in her words about Rosalie to Mr. Weston. Although she has every right to call the girl a liar and a tramp, she instead chooses to describe the girl as "artful," a term that indicates the girl is creative in her stories, but not necessarily bad. When Mr. Weston agrees with Agnes' description of Rosalie as artful, it can be understood that he realizes just how "artful" she really was. He adds to Agnes' description of Rosalie that she is giddy and vain. He tells Agnes the idea of Rosalie being artful clears up some issues that he had concerns about.



Chapter XXI and XXII

Chapter XXI and XXII Summary

In Chapter XXI, as Agnes starts her new job, she is not unhappy for the first several weeks. She holds out hope that she might see Mr. Weston again. Even long past the time has come that she thought he might come, Agnes still remembers him fondly. Agnes' mother notices how thin Agnes has gotten and how worried she appears. Although Agnes admits to herself that she is depressed from wishing Mr. Weston would come, she is not right to not like the work that God has given her just because it is not what she had thought she wanted. After her decision to be content in her position, Agnes begins to look and feel better.

In June, Agnes gets a letter from Rosalie, requesting that Agnes come to visit her. She requests a long visit and promises that Agnes will get to see her baby. She notes that she is not required to nurse the child and that Sir Thomas has not forgiven her for not having a boy. She promises Agnes that she will be the child's governess as soon as it is able to speak and will be allowed to bring it up in the way it should be raised. Agnes' mother advises her to visit Rosalie. Agnes goes, but only for a few days and with the thought that she might get to see Mr. Weston.

In Chapter XXII, Rosalie, as Lady Ashby, greets Agnes kindly and even takes pains to make her visit pleasant. Agnes notes only that Rosalie made her self-conscious by continuing to tell her how she was not to feel overawed or underdressed in the house. Agnes is surprised how much Rosalie has aged during the last year. Rosalie tells Agnes during their time together that she had spent quite a bit of time with Harry Meltham, an activity that has gotten her in trouble with her husband. She admits that it was when Sir Thomas caught her flirting with Meltham that he made her move to Ashby Park permanently. Agnes also learns that Mr. Weston has moved on from Horton. Rosalie also tells Agnes that she is sorry she did not ask her mother-in-law to move out of the main house at Ashby Park when she was married, but allowed the older lady to stay and take care of the business of the house for her.

Chapter XXI and XXII Analysis

In Chapter XXI, Agnes begins her job helping her mother teach in the school. She adequately describes herself as being "not unhappy" with this job. Agnes admits that running a school with the help of her mother is much different from being a governess. She mourns over the loss of Mr. Weston and continually hopes to see him again. One of the ideas that she contemplates often is whether or not he was really making a promise to her that they would see one another again or if he was just speaking to her as he might to anyone else. She seems unsure of his intentions. She is equally as unsure if she would be the proper person to be his partner or catch his eye. She patterns her idea for their marriage together after the example that she saw in her parents' marriage. She



wants to be Mr. Weston's helper and encourager. She only wonders if she is worthy of this type of relationship.

Agnes is invited to visit Rosalie at Ashby Park. Through her visit, Agnes is able to learn a little bit about how Rosalie's marriage is going. She has had a baby, but her husband is unhappy because the child is a girl. Because Sir Thomas had caught Rosalie flirting with Harry Meltham, he has sequestered her in their country house, Ashby Park, which she once coveted. Rosalie describes her mother-in-law as tyrannical and a spy. The older lady gives Rosalie advice on how to be a better wife, advice that Rosalie resents. When Agnes suggests to Rosalie that she try to impress some change in her husband by using her powers of persuasion, Rosalie tells Agnes that it is not her job as a wife to make her husband happy, but instead his job to make her happy. Agnes also sees that Rosalie's opinions of her servants has not improved as she talks badly about her mother-in-law in front of the footman, whom she describes to Agnes as an automaton who offers her no fear that he will tell anyone what she has said about the older Mrs. Ashby.



Chapter XXIII and XXIV

Chapter XXIII and XXIV Summary

In Chapter XXIII, Agnes is forced to wait for Lady Ashby the following morning. Although Agnes asks her to show her to the library, Rosalie instead insists that they take a walk in the park. As they are walking, Agnes gets a glimpse of Sir Thomas. Rosalie admits to Agnes that she detests him. Rosalie tells Agnes she wishes she had listened to Agnes when she warned her against marrying the man. She adds that she believes that her mother, knowing what she knew, should not have let her marry him. Agnes tries to convince Rosalie that her life is not over and that she should concentrate on pouring her energy into raising her daughter. Agnes leaves a few days later, feeling as if Rosalie has only called on her because she could have no one else.

In Chapter XXIV, Agnes takes an early morning walk by the sea. After Agnes has walked for quite awhile she is joined on the beach by several men exercising horses as well as one man walking with a dog. She hears a sniffing sound behind her and looks around to see Snap, the terrier who was her friend at Horton Lodge. As she looks around, she sees Mr. Weston. He asks her where she lives, since he was never able to find out. He asks permission to visit and meet her mother, as well as permission to look in on her from time to time. He tells her that he now has his own parish in a town about two miles away from the town in which Agnes lives. He admits he has nothing but loneliness to complain of and nothing but a wife to wish for. Agnes feels herself blush at this statement. She suggests there must be someone among the people of his town who could be a companion for him.

On their way back through town, Mr. Weston offers her his arm which she takes. He mentions that he has not seen her before in town even though he has looked for her and even asked about her school. Agnes notices that he is going out of his way to walk her home and notes this. He tells her that he will come to see her mother on the following day. When they do part, Snap seems uncertain if he should go with Agnes or stay with Mr. Weston. He goes with his master when Mr. Weston calls. Mr. Weston tells Agnes that he has no plans to give the dog back to her since he likes him. Agnes replies she is happy the dog has a good master.

Chapter XXIII and XXIV Analysis

In these chapters, Agnes learns the sad truth about Rosalie's married life. Because of her habit of flirting, Rosalie has caused a rift between herself and her husband. Rosalie believes the problem is in no way her fault, and that Sir Thomas should allow her to flirt. Rosalie also believes that her husband hates her because their first baby is a girl. Although Agnes suggests to Rosalie she should dedicate her life to her child, Rosalie doesn't seem to care anything for the child. Rosalie seems to be more happy with her pedigreed dog, artwork and watch than her child.



Also notice how Rosalie treats Agnes during her visit. Agnes is aware that Sir Thomas probably won't let Rosalie have any other guests, so she feels that Rosalie has only asked her to come to keep from being alone. Agnes also notices that Rosalie seems to be wanting to keep her away from her husband and mother-in-law. Although Agnes does not view herself as being insubordinate in any way to the Ashbys, Rosalie has the ability to make her feel self-conscious. She feels that Rosalie is relieved when Agnes tells her that she would rather eat her meals alone than with the family. Although Agnes feels sorry for Rosalie and the position into which she has gotten herself, she is not sad to leave her former student when it is time for her to go.



Chapter XXV

Chapter XXV Summary

In Chapter XXV, Agnes' mother worries about her daughter when she returns from her walk looking feverish and tired. After breakfast, Agnes mentions to her mother she met her old dog and Mr. Weston on the sands. She tells her mother that Mr. Weston plans to come visit the following day. Agnes is pleased when the visit between Mr. Weston and her mother goes well. From that point on, Mr. Weston comes to visit the ladies several times a week. The two soon become comfortable with one another.

One evening at the end of Agnes' summer vacation, Mr. Weston pays an unexpected visit. He requests Agnes take a walk with him. As they walk through the town, Agnes notes that Mr. Weston walks quickly and appears distracted. She is afraid something is wrong. Once they leave the town, however, Mr. Weston apologizes for his speed. He explains to Agnes that he now knows all the ladies in his town and has still found no one that he wishes to make his companion. He tells Agnes that she is the only one that he wants for his wife. Agnes mentions she does not want to leave her mother, but Mr. Weston says he has already made arrangements with her mother. Agnes tells Mr. Weston "yes" when he asks if she loves him. A few weeks later, Agnes and Mr. Weston are married.

Chapter XXV Analysis

The story ends happily as Agnes and Mr. Weston happen to meet up with each other on the beach near Agnes and her mother's school. It appears that Mr. Weston has been looking for Agnes since he left the church in Horton for his own church. He now lives in a town just two miles from the place where Agnes' school is located. Mr. Weston's adoption of the dog that Agnes took care of while at the Murrays' home may be a clue that he has gotten the dog because of some affection that he felt for its mistress. In this final chapter, Mr. Weston and Agnes are finally able to get to know one another in comfortable settings. In Horton, it is sure that Mr. Weston had been uncomfortable as a result of his disagreements with Mr. Hatfield over the way that the church should be properly run. Agnes, in her turn, had been uncomfortable because of Rosalie and Matilda's behavior as well as their treatment of her as an inferior person. In the home of her mother, however, Agnes is comfortable getting to know Mr. Weston and is proud that her mother and suitor have become close friends.



Characters

Agnes Grey

Agnes Grey is the main character of this novel. The novel is the diary that she keeps over the course of several years between the time when she is nineteen and several years later when she is married. Agnes decides to become a governess after her father loses what little wealth that he has when he tries to invest this money. Agnes hopes to use the money that she earns through her job to help her family. Her family, however, will not take the money from her but instead insists that she save this money.

Because Agnes grew up in such a sheltered household, she is completely unprepared for the spoiled, undisciplined students that she will encounter in her teaching career. In her first job, the students realize that Agnes has no control over them and that their parents will not support Agnes in any punishment she might decide to dole out. Agnes tries to persevere in patience and firmness with these children, but feels that her virtues don't take her far when the other adults in the children's lives seem to encourage them to act badly. Agnes' job with the Bloomfields ends soon after she kills a nest of baby birds to keep Tom from torturing them.

The children in Agnes' next job are not much better than the Bloomfields, but Agnes does form a relationship of sorts with the oldest girl in the family. The girls' mother seems more interested in making her daughters marriageable, and marriageable to rich men, than anything else. It is during this job that Agnes meets and falls in love with Mr. Edward Weston. Agnes is barely able to admit to her own diary how much she admires the man, but she writes in a way so that the reader understands what is going on in her mind. Agnes continues to wrestle with her own thoughts and emotions about Mr. Weston during the time that she is working with the Murrays. During the time that she is working with the Murrays, Agnes' father passes away. She goes home to be with her family. It is during this time that Agnes and her mother decide that Agnes will not return to work with the Murrays, but will instead help her mother open a day school.

Agnes is afraid she has lost all contact with Mr. Weston and will never see him again. One day as she is taking a walk on a beach near her home, she happens upon a dog she used to care for while at the Murrays. Mr. Weston is walking this dog. He asks permission to meet Agnes' mother. The two get to know one another as Mr. Weston visits their house regularly. He asks Agnes to marry him and she agrees.

Mr. Hatfield

Mr. Hatfield is the rector at the church the Murrays attend. Rosalie considers Mr. Hatfield as one of her suitors though she never intends to marry him. Agnes does not like Mr. Hatfield because he is showy, and does not seem to have the true compassion that a Christian priest should have. Agnes believes that Mr. Hatfield's manner of



pursuing Rosalie in the way that he does is inappropriate. Agnes actually notes a time that the rector closed her out of the family carriage simply because he was not paying attention to her. In fact, Agnes indicates that Mr. Hatfield never speaks to her nor pays her any attention at all.

Nancy tells Agnes how Mr. Hatfield actually made her feel worse about her spiritual condition than ever when he insisted her problems were caused by hanging out with Methodists and not going to the physical church building to attend services. Mr. Hatfield is also overheard by Nancy when he refers to Mr. Weston as a "canting old fool." Another sick person whom the minister has visited has told others that Mr. Hatfield asked them to keep the door of the sick person's home open so the minister could get fresh air even though this air made the sick person feel worse.

Mr. Hatfield has been arranging secret visits with Rosalie in a field near her home. Agnes learns of these visits when Rosalie's mother sends her to spy on the girl because she suspects she is up to something. Through Rosalie's secret meetings with Mr. Hatfield, she manipulates him into believing that she is interested in a marriage proposal from him. When he does finally propose, Rosalie is cruel and merciless with her denial that she ever gave him any idea she was interested in a relationship. At the conclusion of the novel, Mr. Hatfield marries an elderly, but rich, spinster.

Mr. Edward Weston

Mr. Edward Weston replaces the elderly curate Mr. Bligh at the church which the Murrays attend while Agnes is working for the family as governess. Although Rosalie believes the man is ugly and dumb, Agnes disagrees with her. She enjoys the truth of his sermons and simplicity of his manner. Nancy Brown, one of the cottagers whom Mr. Weston visits regularly agrees with Agnes' opinion of Mr. Weston. Mr. Weston helps Nancy through a bad spot in her spiritual life where Mr. Hatfield had only made her feel worse. During one of Agnes' visits to Nancy's home, Mr. Weston shows up there also to return Nancy's lost cat. Nancy seems interested in making Mr. Weston and Agnes notice one another.

Mr. Weston is one of the few people that Agnes finds in her life as a governess who actually challenges her to be a better person. Although Agnes does not say so directly, it soon becomes obvious in her writing that she is in love with Mr. Weston and desires to be his wife. Although Agnes is not quite sure how to interpret the attention, Mr. Weston seems to be giving her a certain amount of special attention as well. For several days, Agnes lives in misery as Rosalie tries to flirt with and influence Mr. Weston. She is unable to make an impact on him, however.

At the conclusion of the novel, Mr. Weston finds Agnes as she is walking on a beach near the school that she and her mother have opened. He has with him the little dog that Agnes cared for while she was staying with the Murrays. Mr. Weston meets Agnes' mother on the following day, then spends several weeks getting to know the family better. Mr. Weston proposes to Agnes at the close of the novel and the two are married.



Alice Grey

Alice Grey is the wife of Richard Grey and mother of Agnes and Mary. She was part of a wealthy family growing up, but her family disowned her when she decided to marry Richard, a relatively poor pastor. Although Alice had to give up the conveniences of having maids and assistants, she appears to have never regretted her decision. It is her mother's stories of her childhood that make Agnes want to go out and experience the world.

When Agnes' father dies, Agnes' mother is understandably mournful, but is kept busy enough that she does not let her loss depress her. She refuses to let Mary, her oldest daughter who is already married, take on the burden of caring for her the rest of her life. Instead, she decides to open a school and earn her own living.

Shortly after her husband's death, Agnes' mother receives a letter in the mail from her father telling her that she can be readmitted into the family if she will admit that her marriage to Richard Grey was a mistake and that she has been unhappy in her marriage. Agnes' mother refuses to do so even though this admission would make her life easier. When she asks her daughters what they would have her do in this position, they encourage her not to admit that any mistake was made. They would rather their mother be honest than lie and disgrace their father's memory, even if it means their lives would be more comfortable in terms of finances.

Rosalie Murray

Rosalie Murray is the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Murray. It is to Rosalie that Agnes is perhaps closest even though the two have little in common in their beliefs or their ways of life. Rosalie is a flirt. She seems to be interested only in wooing men even if these men are married or they are ones which she does not like. For instance, she flirts with Mr. Hatfield, meets him in secret and makes him believe that she wants to marry him. When Mr. Hatfield proposes to her, however, Rosalie takes a cruel joy in turning the man down. She even brags to Agnes how she broke his heart. Just before she is to be married to Sir Thomas, Rosalie tries to woo Mr. Weston but is not successful. Even after she is married, Rosalie continues to flirt with men, an action that gets her sequestered at Ashby Park by her jealous husband. It is during this time that Rosalie asks Agnes to visit her. Agnes gets the feeling that the only reason that Rosalie has invited her is because her husband will allow no one else to come. Agnes also realizes that Rosalie forgot her while she was having the time of her life.

Nancy Brown

Nancy Brown is a widow who suffers with rheumatism and an inflammation in her eyes. Agnes visits her often in order to read to her because Nancy can no longer read. It is during one of their visits that Nancy tells Agnes about her experience both with Mr. Hatfield and with Mr. Weston. She speaks of how Mr. Hatfield made her feel worse



about her spiritual condition while Mr. Weston comforted her in practical ways. Nancy also tells Agnes that Mr. Weston comes and visits her more often than the former rector.

It is during one of Agnes' visits to Nancy's house that Mr. Weston also visits Nancy. Although Agnes and Mr. Weston may not realize it at the time, Nancy seems to be trying to draw the two together. Mr. Weston has just rescued Nancy's cat from Mr. Murray. It is raining and Nancy requests that Mr. Weston and Agnes both stay until the rain shower is over. Nancy tries to encourage the two to sit together by her fire, but Agnes insists on sitting by the window to finish sewing a shirt for Nancy.

Richard Grey

Richard Grey is Agnes' father. He is a clergyman in northern England. He is the husband of Alice Grey and father to Agnes and Mary. Although Richard is not rich, he has provided his family a comfortable life and lots of love. He is not well in the beginning of the novel and is concerned about what his family's life would be like if he were to pass away. For this reason, he sends what little money he has with a friend who plans to invest this money for him. Unfortunately, the ship on which the man is sailing crashes and both the man and the money are lost. Agnes' father's health is even worse after the shock of this loss. He does consent to allow Agnes to work as a governess, but will not take any of the money that she earns through the job. When Agnes' father does pass away, Agnes and her mother make their living by opening a day school.

The Senior Mrs. Bloomfield

When the senior Mrs. Bloomfield first comes to visit the Bloomfields, Agnes believes she has finally found a person who will side with her in her troubles with the children. This lady seems to understand that the children act badly and that Agnes is hard pressed to take care of them. After the children escape from the schoolroom and run outside to play in the snow, Agnes hears this elder asking the children's mother if Agnes is really an appropriate teacher for the kids. After this Agnes is no longer comfortable in the older lady's presence. Agnes believes the lady is hypocritical and insincere. The elder Mrs. Bloomfield also seems to have a great deal of influence over her son. Agnes feels that after this lady visits, Mr. Bloomfield seems to pay an unusual amount of attention to her teaching.

Mrs. Bloomfield

Mrs. Bloomfield is the mother of the first set of children that Agnes takes care of. This woman will not allow Agnes to punish the children if they act badly because she does not seem to believe her children act badly. She describes these children to Agnes in terms that Agnes does not believe fit the children. Even when Mrs. Bloomfield sees the children misbehaving, Agnes thinks that Mrs. Bloomfield believes these actions are somehow Agnes' fault. It is after Agnes kills a nest of baby birds that Tom is about to



torture that Agnes first stands up to Mrs. Bloomfield for her actions. It is also after this incident that the Bloomfields seem to be looking for additional reasons to let Agnes go.

Tom Bloomfield

Tom Bloomfield is the eldest of the Bloomfield children at seven years old. He is cruel and enjoys torturing small animals and birds. Although his mother characterizes him as highly intelligent, Agnes fails to see this characteristic in the obstinate boy. He seems to be talented only in finding ways to get out of his studies. Agnes tries to be patient with the boy, but sometimes finds herself holding his hand with the pencil to make him write his lessons. She tries to convince Tom that being mean to his sisters, animals and even Agnes, is not a proper way to behave, but is not able to make any headway with the boy because the other adults in his life coddle him and act like his actions are cute.

Mary Ann Bloomfield

Mary Ann Bloomfield is six years old. She is the second oldest of the Bloomfield children. She is no better as a student than her brother. Instead of doing her lessons, she will lie on the floor and refuse to do anything. Agnes is also in charge of Mary Ann's dress, another aspect of life in which the girl is uncooperative. She refuses to let Agnes wash her, or refuses to wear the clothes Agnes has prepared for her. She also fidgets while Agnes tries to fix her hair, making the process take longer than necessary. As with Tom, the Bloomfields believe that Agnes should be able to make Mary Ann do as she is told, even without being allowed to punish the child.

Mary

Mary is Agnes' only surviving sibling. She is six years older than Agnes. Shortly after the family's misfortune, Mary and Agnes' parents ask her to do some drawings that they can sell for money for the family. It is at this point that Agnes decides that she, too, would like to help the family financially, and suggests that she could be a governess. Mary tries to discourage Agnes from this idea, telling her that she would not be able to handle life in a strange house taking care of another family's children. It is soon after Agnes begins working for the Murrays that Mary gets married to a pastor.

Fanny Bloomfield

Fanny Bloomfield is the third Bloomfield child. This four-year-old moves up to the school room soon after Agnes begins working for the Bloomfields. Although she had hoped that Fanny would be easier to teach since her mother had described the girl as shy, Agnes finds she is as disrespectful as the other two children. Fanny is mischievous and enjoys playing tricks on his teacher. When the three students gang up against her, Agnes is able to get almost nothing done with them.



Uncle Robson

Uncle Robson is one of the visitors to the Bloomfields' home that Agnes does not like. Robson does not like Robson because he encourages Tom's enjoyment of torturing animals and birds. Robson also pets and fusses over Mary Ann, making her feel as if she deserves to be petted because she is pretty. It is these traits in both the children that Agnes has tried to squelch during the time she has spent with them.

Mr. Murray

Mr. Murray is the father of Rosalie and Matilda. Agnes has very little to do with this man. He is very rough. He likes to hunt and curses often when he speaks. When Mr. Weston rescues Nancy Brown's cat from Mr. Murray, he tells Agnes to apologize to Mr. Murray for him because he feels he might have spoken too roughly to the man. Agnes indicates that she never has the opportunity to speak to the man.

Matilda Murray

Matilda Murray is the younger daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Murray. Matilda has picked up the habit of cursing and using rough language from the hunters and other men with whom she likes to spend her time. Matilda prefers to spend her time riding horses, hunting and playing with the dogs more than she likes the idea of becoming a lady. She gets pouty when her mother insists that she stop spending her time in the stables and kennels.

Sir Thomas Ashby

Sir Thomas Ashby is the man whom Rosalie marries. Although he is ugly, Sir Thomas is also rich, a quality which Rosalie's mother believes is most important in a suitor for her daughter. After the two are married, Rosalie admits to Agnes that the man is even worse than she first realized him to be. He sequesters her at Ashby Park because she flirts with an old friend but continues to have his own mistresses and girlfriends.

Harry Meltham

Harry Meltham is the younger son of Sir Hugh Meltham. Rosalie tells Agnes this boy is good-looking and fun to flirt with, but not of marriageable material because he will not inherit money from his father. Even after Rosalie marries Sir Thomas Ashby, she continues to flirt with Meltham. When Ashby sees Meltham and his wife flirting, he sends Rosalie to live permanently at Ashby Park.



Mr. Bloomfield

Mr. Bloomfield is the husband of Mrs. Bloomfield and the father of Tom, Mary Ann, Fanny and Harriet. Agnes is not impressed with this man because he is hateful to his children and wife. Mr. Bloomfield is the only person who can make the children behave, but they only behave for their father because they are afraid of him.

Mrs. Murray

Mrs. Murray is the mother of Matilda and Rosalie. She seems most interested in the marriageability of her daughters. Agnes is unhappy with Mrs. Murray because the woman wants Rosalie to marry Sir Thomas Ashby even though she knows of the man's reputation and that her daughter will not have a good marriage.

Harriet Bloomfield

Harriet Bloomfield is the youngest of the Bloomfield children. Although Agnes would rather take care of this younger child, she is told this girl will be kept in the nursery and Agnes will have nothing to do with her.



Objects/Places

Twenty-five Pounds

Twenty-five pounds is the amount of money that Agnes is paid to teach the Bloomfield children.

Mansion of Wellwood

The mansion of Wellwood is the house in which the Bloomfields live.

A Well

It is in this forbidden well that the children are playing when Agnes first meets Mr. Bloomfield.

A Nest of Baby Birds

Tom and his uncle Robson find these baby birds in the woods. Tom intends to torture the birds but Agnes drops a stone on them and kills them to keep him from doing so.

Horton Lodge

Horton Lodge is the name of the house where the second family for which Agnes works as governess lives.

Seventy Miles

Seventy miles is the distance that the Murray's home is from Agnes' home.

Valpy's Delectus

Valpy's Delectus is a book of Latin written by Richard Valpy. This is one thing that Mrs. Murray wants Agnes to teach her two sons.

A Long and Interesting Letter from Mary

It is a letter from her sister Mary that Agnes is trying to read when Rosalie asks her to put it away, indicating that her talk about her coming out ball will be more interesting.



Primroses

Primroses remind Agnes of her home. When Mr. Weston sees that she is unable to reach these flowers, he gets them for her. Agnes keeps the petals of one of the flowers pressed in her Bible.

Nancy Brown's Cottage

Nancy Brown's cottage is the place where Agnes and Mr. Weston first speak to one another.

A Sprig of Myrtle

A sprig of myrtle is the favor that Mr. Hatfield begs of Rosalie when Agnes sees them together in the field.

The Sands

The sands is the place where Snap and Mr. Weston catch up with Agnes as she is walking one morning.

Ashby Park

Ashby Park is the estate over which Rosalie will become mistress when she marries Sir Thomas Ashby. She soon regards the place as a prison meant to keep her away from society.

A—

A— is the town in which Mrs. Grey and Agnes' school is located.

F—

F— is the town in which Mr. Weston has gotten his own church and now seeks a companion. It is about two miles from the town in which Agnes and her mother live.



Themes

Perseverance

One of the main character traits of Agnes is her perseverance. She uses this perseverance to try to influence the Bloomfield children but feels that she has little effect on them. This is not the first time that Agnes has shown perseverance in this novel. She first perseveres in her desire to be a governess and help her family. Although her family does not want her to have to get a job, she is finally able to convince them that she is capable of being a teacher. Although her first job does not work out well, Agnes insists on getting another job. This, again, shows her ability to persevere. Although her first experience as a governess was not a good one, she goes back and tries again.

In her second job, Agnes is again forced to call upon her ability to persevere. Although she still feels that she makes little impact on the girls that she teaches, Agnes stays strong with her morals and her beliefs in the way she should live her life. Agnes admits at one point in the novel that when a person is constantly surrounded by people with lower morals and lower standards they can be influenced to act in that same way. It is only through her association with Mr. Weston that Agnes feels that she does not slip into the same way of thinking as Rosalie.

Although it may seem that perseverance has not served Agnes well since she has not seemed to make any impact on any of her students through its use, it does work in her favor in one relationship. Although Agnes is not trying to persuade Mr. Weston to act in any particular way, her perseverance makes an impact on him. Mr. Weston watches as Agnes continues to live as her parents have taught her even though she is treated badly by and even provoked by the Murray sisters. Mr. Weston recognizes and appreciates Agnes' ability to persevere in her beliefs.

Marriage and Family Relations

One topic with which the novel *Agnes Grey* deals strongly is the differing types of marriages and family relations. Agnes comes from a family that differs greatly from the types of families she experiences in her job as a governess. Agnes' family is built on love and mutual respect. Her mother turned down the riches that her family could offer her because she preferred to be with Richard Grey, a man whom she loved. This relationship differs greatly from the Murray's idea of marriage which seems to be based only on the material benefits of a union. Rosalie does not want to marry Sir Thomas Ashby because she loves him. She wants to marry him for the title, the estate and the esteem she will receive from being Mrs. Ashby.

The duties of a married couple are also a topic that is disputed in this novel. Rosalie feels that it is not her responsibility to try to please her husband. She believes that all of this work is the husband's job. Rosalie feels she should have to do nothing as a wife



than look pretty and produce male heirs. She believes that it is because she had a girl and not a boy that her husband hates her. There is also a double standard present in the Ashby's marriage. Rosalie believes that since her husband carries on with other women, she should be able to flirt and carry on with other men. When her husband catches her flirting, however, he sequesters her at Ashby Park as a form of punishment.

Even before Rosalie is married, she indicates to Agnes how boring she believes a happy marriage would be. Agnes speaks of her sister getting married to a plain man who is a minister. Rosalie is beside herself with sorrow about how unhappy Agnes' sister must be to marry a man who is poor, live in a small house and do most of the work herself. At the conclusion of the novel, however, Rosalie herself is unhappy even though she has married a rich man and has to do nothing for herself. Meanwhile, Agnes and her sister are quite happy with their plain, comparatively poor husbands.

Religious Insincerity

Religious insincerity is another topic that is touched on in Anne Bronte's novel. This distinction between the religiously sincere and insincere is seen most obviously in the comparison of Mr. Weston and Mr. Hatfield. Agnes describes Mr. Hatfield as being showy and concerned only with the members of his congregation who are rich or have good names. From Agnes' descriptions of the man's treatment of the poor and sick in his congregation, he appears thoughtless and self-centered. Agnes also expresses surprise that a minister would attend Rosalie's coming out party, as Mr. Hatfield did. Mr. Hatfield even goes to the extent of making himself a fool over Rosalie, rushing to greet her at the end of services and closing Agnes out of the family carriage in his haste to take care of Rosalie.

Agnes paints a completely opposite picture of Mr. Weston, however. Mr. Weston is genuinely concerned with helping the people of his congregation. He goes out of his way to find out what the people need and to meet these needs. According to parishioner Nancy Brown, he gives her practical advice to help her feel better about her spiritual struggles. Mr. Hatfield had made Nancy feel as if her troubles were her own fault, and that she was wasting her time bothering him with them.

Although Mr. Weston does not agree with the way that Mr. Hatfield runs his church and treats the poor in his congregation, Mr. Weston never speaks badly of the man. For instance, after Nancy tries to talk to Mr. Hatfield at the church, he calls her a "canting old fool" when he thinks she is out of hearing range. Nancy knows that Mr. Weston was with Mr. Hatfield when the comment was made, so she mentions this comment to Mr. Weston the next time that she sees him. Instead of indicating that Mr. Hatfield was out of line with his comment or saying anything derogatory about the man, Mr. Weston calms Nancy by telling her that Mr. Hatfield was out of humor. He reminds Nancy that no one is perfect.



Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the first person point of view in the form of a diary. Agnes Grey is the main character and writer of the diary. As she is writing her diary, Agnes is able to tell the story only from her own point of view. The thoughts and emotions that she puts into her diary are her own personal feelings about what is happening to her and those around her. Since the majority of the novel focuses on Agnes' view of the world based on her own sheltered childhood, this first person point of view is the one that works best. Any other point of view would have not demonstrated the feelings that Agnes has when she sees how differently some people live and the beliefs that these people have about life.

This novel includes both exposition and dialogue, as well as dialogue embedded in exposition. Because this is a diary, Agnes will often include snatches of dialogue in her descriptions of what is happening. Sometimes, Agnes will include conversations as a whole in her descriptions of what is going on with the people around her. Other times, Agnes describes what is happening to her in straight exposition.

Setting

The majority of this novel is set in the northern part of England. The only notation of the place where Agnes' father worked as a clergyman is that his church was in the northern part of England. Similarly, Agnes first job is at the Bloomfields' house, the mansion of Wellwood. Agnes never tells where this house is as compared to her own home. In her next job, Agnes teaches the Murray children at Horton Lodge. It appears that the name of this town is Horton. Nearby to this town is Ashby Park, the place where Rosalie moves when she marries Sir Thomas Ashby. In the end of the novel, Agnes and her mother open a school in the town of A—. Mr. Weston has taken a job as a priest in the nearby town of F—. Since this is intended to be a diary, Bronte does not intend to share the true identities of the people of whom she writes. She also does not use or does not reveal the identities of the places where she works and where she lives in order to keep the anonymity of the story intact.

One of the most significant settings of this novel is the sands, the place where Mr. Weston and Agnes are reunited. Other settings include the parsonage in which Agnes grew up with her family. The schoolrooms at both Horton Lodge and the mansion of Wellwood are other important settings in the story. Nancy Brown's cottage and the church in Horton are other settings that are visited often in the story.



Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is very much like that of a story one might tell to a friend. The wording and language are those of a well-educated young lady, one who would be very capable of being a governess. Agnes does a very good job of describing what is going on around her and the differences between people whom she meets. In most cases, Agnes does not seem to try to mimic speech patterns of those around her but instead talks for them in her own voice. The only exception to this generalization is Agnes' handling of her conversations with Nancy Brown. In these conversations, Agnes copies Nancy's words as she probably would have said them, with poor pronunciation and diction. This shows that Nancy, like most of the cottagers, was not well schooled.

Structure

This book is written in the form of a history, or a diary, of Agnes Grey. The narrative starts when Agnes' family begins to have financial troubles. It ends several years later after Agnes meets and marries her husband, Mr. Edward Weston. The narrative details Agnes' decision to become a governess and the experience that she has with the first students that she teaches. Agnes indicates that she includes much of the experience that she has with the Bloomfield children because she hopes to help future governesses and parents work with one another as well as with the children.

The story is told in a linear form with no flashbacks. Agnes tells her story from one point straight through to the ending. She begins her story with a great deal of optimism about becoming a governess. In the next section where Agnes describes her first job working with the Bloomfields, Agnes becomes much less optimistic but tries to continue to persevere with the children. Agnes' second experience as a governess is not much more positive, but the presence of Mr. Weston gives Agnes a positive point of focus. Agnes again becomes depressed when she loses touch with Mr. Weston. The novel ends on a positive note when Mr. Weston and Agnes are reunited, get better acquainted and get married.

The book has 24 chapters each of which is notated with a Roman numeral as well as a one or two word description of the main area of focus of that chapter. The average length of these chapters is eight pages. The longest chapter is 16 pages while the shortest is three pages.



Quotes

"Shielded by my own obscurity, and by the lapse of years, and a few fictitious names, I do not fear to venture; and will candidly lay before the public what I would not disclose to the most intimate friend."

Chapter 1, pg. 1

"Of six children, my sister Mary and myself were the only two that survived the perils of infancy and early childhood."

Chapter 1, pg. 3

"Disappointed he was; and bitterly, too. It came like a thunder-clap on us all, that the vessel which contained our fortune had been wrecked, and gone to the bottom with all its stores, together with several of the crew, and the unfortunate merchant himself."

Chapter 1, pg. 7

"Though riches had charms, poverty had no terrors for an inexperienced girl like me."

Chapter 1, pg. 7

"I should like to be a governess."

Chapter 1, pg. 14

"And, perhaps, when I did these things again it would be with different feelings: circumstances might be changed, and this house might never be my settled home again."

Chapter 1, pg. 19

"I found they had no notion of going with me: I must go with them, wherever they chose to lead me. I must run, walk, or stand, exactly as it suited their fancy."

Chapter 3, pg. 38

"Patience, Firmness, and Perseverance were my only weapons; and these I resolved to use to the utmost."

Chapter 3, pg. 45

"I knew the difficulties I had to contend with were great; but I knew (at least I believed) unremitting patience and perseverance could overcome them; and night and morning I implored Divine assistance to this end. But either the children were so incorrigible, the parents so unreasonable, or myself so mistaken in my views, or so unable to carry them out, that my best intentions and most strenuous efforts seemed productive of no better result than sport to the children, dissatisfaction to their parents, and torment to myself."

Chapter 3, pg. 46-47

"I returned, however, with unabated vigour to my work—a more arduous task than anyone can imagine, who has not felt something like the misery of being charged with



the care and direction of a set of mischievous, turbulent rebels, whom his utmost exertions cannot bind to their duty; while, at the same time, he is responsible for their conduct to a higher power, who exacts from him what cannot be achieved without the aid of the superior's more potent authority; which, either from indolence, or the fear of becoming unpopular with the said rebellious gang, the latter refuses to give."
Chapter 4, pg. 58

"Thus, the reader will see that I had no claim to be regarded as a martyr to filial piety, going forth to sacrifice peace and liberty for the sole purpose of laying up stores for the comfort and support of my parents: though certainly the comfort of my father, and the future support of my mother, had a large share in my calculations; and fifty pounds appeared to me no ordinary sum."
Chapter 6, pg. 96

"He read the Lessons as if he were bent on giving full effect to every passage; it seemed as if the most careless person could not have helped attending, nor the most ignorant have failed to understand; and the prayers he read as if he were not reading at all, but praying earnestly and sincerely from his own heart."
Chapter 10, pg. 140-141

"I did hear him preach, and was decidedly pleased with the evangelical truth of his doctrine, as well as the earnest simplicity of his manner, and the clearness and force of his style."
Chapter 10, pg. 143

"I could see that the people were often hurt and annoyed by such conduct, though their fear of the 'grand ladies' prevented them from testifying any resentment; but they never perceived it."
Chapter 11, pg. 152

"Those whose actions are for ever before our eyes, whose words are ever in our ears, will naturally lead us, albeit against our will, slowly, gradually, imperceptibly, perhaps, to act and speak as they do."
Chapter 11, pg. 173

"I liked walking better, but a sense of reluctance to obtrude my presence on anyone who did not desire it, always kept me passive on these and similar occasions; and I never inquired into the causes of their varying whims."
Chapter 13, pg. 186

"'The best of happiness,' replied he, 'is mine already—the power and the will to be useful.'"
Chapter 13, pg. 193

"God grant the partner of that home may be worthy of his choice, and make it a happy one—such a home as he deserves to have! And how delightful it would be to—' But no matter what I thought."
Chapter 13, pg. 194



"I cannot say that I implicitly obeyed my own injunctions: but such reasoning as this became more and more effective as time wore on, and nothing was seen or heard of Mr. Weston; until, at last, I gave up hoping, for even my heart acknowledged it was all in vain."

Chapter 21, pg. 301

"The end of Religion is not to teach us how to die, but how to live; and the earlier you become wise and good, the more of happiness you secure."

Chapter 23, pg. 327

"I expect to like my parish better a year or two hence, when I have worked certain reforms I have set my heart upon—or, at least, progressed some steps towards such an achievement."

Chapter 24, pg. 336

"I almost envied the unfettered, vigorous fluency of her discourse, and the strong sense evinced by everything she said—and yet, I did not; for, though I occasionally regretted my own deficiencies for his sake, it gave me very great pleasure to sit and hear the two beings I loved and honoured above every one else in the world, discoursing together so amicably, so wisely, and so well. I was not always silent, however; nor was I at all neglected."

Chapter 24, pg. 344-345

"A few weeks after that, when my mother had supplied herself with an assistant, I became the wife of Edward Weston; and never have found cause to repent it, and am certain that I never shall."

Chapter 25, pg. 350



Topics for Discussion

Why does Agnes believe that she will be a good governess?

What are Agnes' motivations for wanting to become a governess?

Compare and contrast Mr. Weston and Mr. Hatfield.

Why is Agnes not able to make any progress with the Bloomfield children?

Describe Rosalie Murray's personality.

Do you believe that Agnes has any affect on any of the children she teaches? Why or why not?

How do the parents of the children whom Agnes is supposed to be teaching interfere with their instruction?

Compare and contrast Rosalie and Agnes' opinions of dating and marriage.

Discuss the idea of religious hypocrisy as it is presented in the novel.