

Charlotte Temple Study Guide

Charlotte Temple by Susanna Rowson

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Plot Summary

Charlotte Temple is an 18th-century moralistic lesson to young girls, showing how an innocent schoolgirl is deceived into a life of misery and remorse in America.

Charlotte Temple catches the eye of Lt. John Montraville on leave before joining the war effort in America. Under the bad influence of her French teacher, Mlle. La Rue, Charlotte meets Montraville nightly and is convinced to elope to America, knowing this will gravely hurt her beloved parents. Charlotte does not know that John destroys her long, loving letter to them.

During the voyage, Charlotte has a presentiment that John will abandon her in New York, and remorse and shame rule Charlotte's life when they land, La Rue marries Col. Crayton, and John sets her up, alone, in a cottage outside of town. She looks forward to John's every visit, which gradually grow less frequent. Belcour looks for ways to drive a wedge between John and Charlotte, in order to seduce her, entirely for sport. When he arranges to curl up next to a sleeping and ailing Charlotte as John visits, John believes the worst and vows never to see Charlotte again.

Charlotte has a bout of nervous fever, which recurs when Belcour announces that John has married Julia Franklin and gone overseas. Belcour does not tell Charlotte that John has made him her trustee, to see to her necessities. Charlotte is kept from suicide only by knowing Christianity forbids it. Nevertheless, her songs welcoming death are heard by Mrs. Beauchamp next door, who befriends the lonely girl, hears her story, and promises to get a letter through to her parents. Unfortunately, the Beauchamps move away when Charlotte most needs a friend.

When Belcour takes up with a farm girl, Charlotte's rent goes unpaid and in late December, she is summarily evicted. Charlotte trudges, full-term pregnant, through a snow storm to the Crayton mansion. She is turned down for a place to give birth and die, but a servant takes pity. In his hut, Charlotte gives birth, raves for days, and seems to improve when she hears Mrs. Beauchamp's voice. Her father arrives from England just before the end, and Charlotte manages to place her daughter in Henry Temple's hands but not to ask his final blessing. She is buried in the churchyard, where Montraville, returned to New York, makes a scene. He visits her grave for years, feeling guilty for having corrupted her. La Rue/Crayton becomes a street person in London, remorseful for what she has done.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary

Stopping for dinner in Chichester en route to Portsmouth and deployment to America, Lt. John Montraville and fellow officer Belcour admire schoolgirls emerging from church. Montraville recognizes Charlotte Tempe from years before and wonders how to meet her. After pining for three days, he sees Charlotte walking with her French teacher, whom he bribes to bring her out again next day. To Charlotte he slips a note.

Years earlier, Henry Temple, a nobleman of modest means known for generosity, is approached by Lt. Blakeney, a stranger, and introduced to Lt. Eldridge, who is imprisoned for debt. Henry is taken by Eldridge's beautiful daughter, Lucy, as he listens to the pitiful story. Eldridge serves in the navy for many years, marries at 25 and has two children. He borrows money from a Mr. Lewis to buy his son, George, an army commission. The loan has no due date until Eldridge learns that Lewis enjoys Lucy's company with no intention of marrying. Banned from the household, Lewis demands instant repayment and has Eldridge thrown in debtors' prison when he cannot. George learns of this, provokes a duel, and writes his father about his intention. The letter puts Eldridge into a three-week delirium from which he awakes next to Lucy, who has to tell him that his wife and son are both dead.

Henry is surprised that Eldridge owes £500 but, picturing Lucy's gratitude, vows to discharge the debt. Young and impetuous, he mortgages part of his fortune and gains Eldridge's release. His father informs him that he is to forget Lucy and marry wealthy Miss Weatherby. When Henry refuses, he is cut off. His father proposes to take his place and Miss Weatherby is convinced it is a good means of revenge. Henry resolves to live cheaply until his debt is paid, buys a small cottage, marries Lucy, and moves her and her father there. Charlotte is eventually born, an only child, who is now finishing the education her mother abandons, at Mme. Du Pont's school.

Chapters 1-5 Analysis

The novel opens with two clean-cut British Army officers about to ship out to the war in America and probably fall to rebel guns, strolling about on leave, girl-watching. A flock of schoolgirls leaves church and one officer recognizes beautiful Charlotte Temple from time spent together at a ball two years earlier. He weighs the fairness of striking up a friendship or relationship. In the end, he cannot resist and slips her a sealed note.

Charlotte's family history is inserted, breaking the narrative for several chapters. Her grandfather, who figures throughout the novel and in whose arms she finally dies, is languishing in debtors' prison on Ludgate Hill, London. He is said to be a naval captain but wears a threadbare lieutenant's uniform. Whether this is significant is not mentioned. It is clear that he enjoys a certain amount of freedom. He lives in a modestly



furnished apartment, has books to read, and his daughter Lucy comes and goes daily. Debtors' prison remains an institution in Britain and the United States into the 19th century.

Another curiosity is the fact that Capt. Eldridge lands in this predicament by borrowing money to buy his son an army commission. The officer corps in Britain (and in Europe) is considered an upper-class institution, so candidates must demonstrate the wherewithal to participate. They also have to provide their own uniforms, arms, horses, etc. Advancements in rank require new outlays of funds. Military training and experience are optional. Note that dueling, the means whereby George Temple perishes, is also restricted to gentlemen. Henry Temple thus marries into an upright family whose downfall had come at the hands of a villain, and Charlotte, seen only fleetingly at the beginning of the novel is now nearly 16 years old and receiving an education.



Chapters 6-10

Chapters 6-10 Summary

Mlle La Rue, one of Du Pont's teachers, flirts at church, is invited to a "cousin's" house for a party, and brings Charlotte, one of her favorites. On the way out, they run into John Montraville, who hands Charlotte the note. She is disgusted by the lewd evening. La Rue calls Charlotte a prude and insists that she read the note; there is no danger, since John is going to America but she can let him go knowing that he will be missed. La Rue gets evil pleasure from watching Charlotte's emotions change. Meanwhile, the Temples plan a surprise birthday party for grateful, affectionate Charlotte.

Charlotte worries about the meeting but cannot talk to Du Pont for fear of getting La Rue fired. Each time she rereads the note, it sinks deeper into her heart. She wants to get it over with quickly. Charlotte and La Rue sneak out. Belcour, a hedonist, waylays La Rue and convinces her to sail to America with him, sure that this will convince Charlotte to accompany generous, good-natured, impetuous Montraville. When John begs her tenderly to see him again, Charlotte wavers and then gives in. In the wake of his father's warning to marry only for money, John sees no hope of union with Charlotte, who Belcour has learned has none.

Chapters 6-10 Analysis

At La Rue's urging, Charlotte reads Montraville's note requesting a meeting, and La Rue's scolding her for being a "prude" wins out. Charlotte feels safe, however, resolving to meet once only. She cannot seek other advice, for if Mme. Du Pont learns that they have been sneaking out, La Rue will be fired. Author Rowson indulges in several extended asides. First, she warns that young girls never perceive danger until it is too late. Second, uniforms turn young girls' heads.

Rowson does not quote Montraville's note but discusses with the knowing reader the sort of encomiums and vows that love notes invariably contain. Finally, she addresses the "sober matrons" whom she hopes are reading this book in advance of handing it over to their daughters, for whom it is primarily intended. Rowson commiserates with parents whose daughters lose their way. "Romance," she judges, is not safe without "parental approbation." Young girls must pray to be kept from temptation or to have the ability to resist if temptation comes. Parental heartbreak and bearing the consequences of mistakes are constant themes going forward.

Rowson confesses to "rambl[ing] strangely" in Chapter 8 about being "Content." Content's parent is Religion and her siblings are Patience and Hope. Rowson defends the aside on the grounds that she has found the path to happiness in life and cannot imagine withholding it from others.

Declaring that they are important ongoing characters, Rowson sketches the ethics of Montraville and Belcour. They are moral opposites and it is Charlotte's bad luck that Belcour is so persuasive in pushing Montraville into infamy. La Rue's infamy is shown much more slowly, and Montraville recedes behind Belcour as the ultimate villain in the novel. By contrast, the Temples plan an idyllic surprise birthday party for their loyal daughter and her friends, an event that soon proves the counterpoint to her elopement.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary

Charlotte and John meet nightly for a week. He claims to be disappointed that she loves her parents more than she does him, having hoped she would sail with him and hold him as he dies, if that is his fate. Without her, he hopes to die swiftly. Touched, Charlotte weeps about causing her family pain. John assures her that they will get over their grief and accept them when they return. When Belcour and La Rue agree, Charlotte accepts, warning John not to abandon her in America.

In the morning, Du Pont can see that Charlotte has not slept but means to cheer her up with a note from her parents. Surprisingly, Charlotte cries over the news about the party and her grandfather picking her up. Filled with shame and remorse, Charlotte finds La Rue, shows her the letter, and rejoices that she has not ruined her life. La Rue warns what John will do if she reneges, spreading word and ruining her and her parents' reputation. They will be angry. Charlotte decides to go to the meeting to say good-bye to John, sacrificing "love to duty." John repeats every successful argument to break down Charlotte's resolve and she shrieks and faints as they drive off.

Eldridge is happy riding to fetch Charlotte, who has restored joy to his life. No one can find her or La Rue and, hearing the search, Eldridge jumps to the worst conclusion and denounces "that French woman." After hours of fruitless search, Du Pont receives a note saying that Charlotte is alive and well, with La Rue and a man. When her parents are ready to accept this, she will tell them where she is. Du Pont sees La Rue's machinations and recalls Charlotte's agitation when reading her mother's note. Eldridge concludes that Charlotte has eloped and wishes he were dead. Unable to face Lucy, he sets off anyway, filled with anguish and resignation. The Temples and guests are waiting eagerly when Eldridge drives up. Seeing no Charlotte, Lucy assumes she is dead and swoons. Henry tells her to bear it like a Christian as he reads the note and weeps. He explains the elopement and says nothing can be done. Lucy prays that God protect her thoughtless girl and not let her bear a daughter and feel such pain.

Composing herself on the road to Portsmouth, Charlotte writes her parents, asking pardon and blessing and hoping someday to be reunited. John tears it up and throws it overboard while Charlotte hopes the fleet may be detained and her parents can come to see her off. Winds are favorable, however, and they sail. The Temples keep hoping she will show up any day, married, and they, of course, will forgive her. Lucy sustains her spirit only by piety and knowing that she has set Charlotte the best possible example. She resigns herself, innocently, to God's will and vows to cheer up for Henry and her father's sakes.



Chapters 11-15 Analysis

In these chapters, John Montraville gradually breaks down Charlotte's immature defenses, mawkishly playing on her emotions, particularly on the likelihood that he will not survive the war. Meanwhile, Belcour has lined up La Rue to work on Charlotte. She gives in, but prophetically warns John not to abandon her in America, thus showing that she has kept some of her senses. She remains filled with guilt, remorse, and misgivings. La Rue has the temerity to equate her sacrifice of reputation to Charlotte's giving up her whole happy, unblemished life. Having seen La Rue in action flirting with men—and been called a prude for disapproving—Charlotte is a fool to listen to this teacher who has a strong influence on her.

The notice of the surprise birthday party reveals how nervous Charlotte is, but Du Pont understands the reason only in retrospect. At the time, she suspects that Charlotte is ill, and to the reader it appears that the note has merely stirred her emotions, but she sees it as a chance to get out of the trip that has never been fully to her liking. La Rue viciously warns what will happen to her if she backs out, and John lards on all of his tried and proven arguments to make her submit. Bewildered and exhausted, she allows herself to be helped into the carriage. She cries out and faints atop John. When she comes to herself near the seaport, Charlotte writes her parents, but naively gives the letter to John to post. He tears it up and gives it to Neptune to deliver if the god of the sea so wishes. As she hope for a word of blessing before sailing, her parents hope for her to write or shop up with her groom.

The grandfather has the unenviable job of breaking the news of the elopement. He is light on his feet going into Mme. Du Pont's school but walks with the weight of age coming out, carrying a cold-hearted note that says Charlotte is alive and will tell them her whereabouts when they have accepted her husband. There is much fainting and copious tears, men having to leave the room in order to preserve their honor, and much beseeching God. Rowson delivers a stern lecture to young readers about hurting their mothers as Charlotte has done.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

Rich Col. Crayton sails on the same ship. Having a weakness for French women, he becomes enchanted with La Rue, who has seen through the cheating Belcour. Easily duped, Crayton resolves to help her, and before the voyage is over proposes marriage. Charlotte spends her time seasick, tended by John, and hoping to hear from her parents. Knowing that John will not marry her, Belcour determines to move in on her. While Belcour is relieved when Crayton announces the engagement, Charlotte is shocked that La Rue could change her mind so easily, and when John laughs at her naiveté, she bursts into tears, realizing that this is to be her fate.

Landing in New York, Crayton makes introductions to his Parisian-born daughter, wife of Maj. Beauchamp. La Rue is his fiancée, a friend of his late wife; Charlotte is John's mistress. Charlotte considers how low she has already fallen, doubts that she will ever again have a female friend to whom she can unburden herself. John puts her in a small house several miles from New York, hires an attendant, gives her whatever money she wants, but rarely has time to spend with her. She spends time in expectation of a visit, disappointment when this fails, and cannot find comfort in sleep. The wife of an indifferent husband surely knows anguish, but it is less painful than Charlotte's, because she can reflect on having done her duty and knows he will not be unfaithful. Even if he is not affectionate, a husband cannot cast his wife out and people show her compassion. Charlotte knows that she has through thoughtless passion forfeited esteem and has no claim on John. She has no redress. She has lost her parents and self-esteem. She can hope that when she dies some charitable soul will mourn her. Since all sin, all should show mercy.

Julia Franklin is a wealthy, attractive 18-year-old New York socialite living with a dotting uncle, whom John Montraville meets trying to return a box of valuables for the victim of a house fire that the army fights. It contains a picture of a beautiful girl, whom he recognizes and obtains an introduction. Julia tells John that it is her mother's portrait. John realizes that he has merely been infatuated with Charlotte, but fears hurting her, but is unable to sacrifice his own happiness. As he goes to tell Charlotte, she runs out joyfully. He feels like a villain, but she takes it for sickness, puts him to bed, and keeps vigil while pretends to sleep. When Charlotte wakes up, she is happy until she finds a note from John saying he will be away for some time on business and extends "unalterable friendship." At first the word shocks her and she feels forsaken, but eventually hope returns: friend means that he will honorably protect her. Belcour then visits and, finding Charlotte dejected, works to make her jealous and thereby seduce her.

Crayton, meanwhile, discovers after three months of marriage that La Rue is vain, bad-tempered, and power-hungry. His friends pity him and his daughter deplores that this infamous woman has come between them. Disliking the bustle of New York, Mrs.



Beauchamp convinces her husband to move, becoming, by coincidence, Charlotte's neighbor. She recognizes Charlotte, finds her melancholy and solitary, wants to befriend her, but is afraid until one day she and the major hear Charlotte playing the harp and singing about death. Beauchamp encourages his wife to follow the impulses of her heart and let prudes and fools judge her if they will.

Chapters 16-20 Analysis

These chapters introduce a widowed Francophile Colonel Crayton, en route to America, who falls under La Rue's charms. La Rue claims to have been friends with his late wife, the mother of Mrs. Beauchamp, another new character, who is accompanying her husband to New York. By the end of the voyage, Crayton has proposed marriage and announced his plans to the ship's company. Belcour is relieved that someone has taken her off his hands and turns his attention to wooing Charlotte when John drops her, as he knows John will. Charlotte sees the handwriting on the wall when John is not shocked at these whimsical changes. He sets her up modestly in a cottage outside "bustling" New York and largely disappears from her life. Rowson likens La Rue to Cerce, the goddess in Homer's *Odyssey* who turns Odysseus' men into pigs and later gives him directions through the perilous waters between Scylla and Charybdis.

As Charlotte grimly contemplates her fate, accepting it as just, and looking forward only to death, Rowson offers an aside to any hardhearted reader who might frown at the thought of someone dropping a tear on Charlotte's grave when she dies. Rowson does not "extenuate the faults" of those who fall victim to "guilty and folly," but reminds that all have secret faults for which they will be judged. One must pity others' faults. Many fallen women would love to return to virtue if someone would help, but the world is unfeeling. Rowson invokes God, "the benevolent giver of all good," asking how the unmerciful will be able to beg mercy on Judgment Day.

Julia Franklin, Charlotte's opposite physically and temperamentally, is introduced truly accidentally to John, who is, again, instantly enamored but feels responsibility for having seduced poor innocent Charlotte. He goes to deliver the bad news but finds Charlotte so happy to see him that he merely slumps emotionally. Charlotte takes it for illness and puts him to bed. When she falls asleep, he leaves her an ambiguous note. Note that Charlotte's first impulse—that "friendship" is a subtle farewell—is accurate. Her subsequent attempt to put the best face on the situation is doomed. John does for the rest of the novel try to help Charlotte, but is thwarted by Belcour, who has his own plans for the poor girl.

La Rue quickly proves that she is a shrew and Mrs. Beauchamp moves out of the city, coincidentally and luckily next door to Charlotte. It takes Mrs. Beauchamp a long time to work up the courage to talk to Charlotte. She has, in fact, to hear her singing about "friendly death" putting her at peace that she resolves to pay a visit. Beauchamp dismisses anyone who wants to gossip about her helping the poor victim of circumstances. Twenty-first century English has so many more pithy ways of saying

what busybodies can do to themselves, but the sense is clear: both Beauchamps are liberal, courageous humanitarians.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

Mrs. Beauchamp picks some cucumbers as an excuse for visiting and presents herself as a fellow stranger in the country in need of friendship. Charlotte breaks into tears over her own unworthiness, but Mrs. Beauchamp admits to wanting to help her since the first time she sees Charlotte. She urges the girl not to indulge in gloomy thoughts. They will have dinner together and the Charlotte can confide anything in her without fear. As Charlotte tells her repugnant story, Mrs. Beauchamp mourns that her father has married vile La Rue. When Charlotte says that she has often written her parents but never received a response, Mrs. Beauchamp offers to bypass John in posting the next letter and urges Charlotte to keep up her spirits.

Charlotte is too agitated to write clearly, but in the morning makes another try, confessing herself a guilty but repentant child whom she hopes her injured mother has not disowned. She had not wanted to hurt her wonderful parents and will never forgive herself for loving her seducer, listening to La Rue, and following her example. Charlotte had never expected to be abandoned but has been. She is alone, remorseful, and disenchanting about love. She prays for her parents' happiness and dreams of being forgiven, making it misery to awaken and fear they are dead, holding Charlotte responsible for their murder. Worst of all, Charlotte is pregnant. She has written many times asking forgiveness without answer but is sure they cannot withhold help from an innocent baby. Charlotte doubts that she will live to see them again but wants them to raise her baby to avoid her errors.

John convinces Julia that he is not after her money and does not take advantage of her affection, feeling that it would be doubly inhumane to marry her while Charlotte is expecting his baby. Belcour thinks that he is a fool and says that Charlotte was bound to elope with someone. John wishes he had never seen Charlotte or given in to momentary passion; he sees himself loving Julia forever. Belcour claims that Charlotte has made passes at him. He is revealing it only now that John is in love with and loved by Julia. Too agitated to spend the evening with Julia, John decides to confront Charlotte and break up with her, but in the morning is ordered to six weeks' active duty. At his first opportunity, he visits her cottage and finds her asleep in bed beside Belcour. Charlotte pleads innocence and begs for her baby's welfare. He promises that neither Charlotte nor the baby will ever want anything but vows never to see her again. Belcour refuses to clear up the mystery.

In fact, Charlotte had felt tired and gone to bed, Belcour had dropped by as he often does to turn her against John and, when he sees John approaching, maliciously rushes upstairs just in time to incriminate Charlotte. After John stalks out, Belcour offers consolation, but Charlotte suspects what has happened. Unfortunately, she has for three weeks been deprived of Mrs. Beauchamp's advice and company when the major is transferred to Rhode Island. Belcour bribes Charlotte's servant to turn over to him any



letters she might write to John, leaves Charlotte a tender note, and hurries to New York to convince John to concentrate on Julia. Belcour dismisses the idea that Charlotte would be a virgin had she not met John—and claims it matters little. As John curses La Rue's role, Belcour focuses him on Julia. John begins condemning himself as a seducer of innocence, too impure to be with Julia, and too unstable to trust his impulses any longer, when Julia walks by the window on her uncle's arm. Her smile is irresistible. Determined to learn if Julia loves him—and to confess everything if she does—John pursues them. While Belcour distracts the uncle, John walks arm-in-arm with Julia, who senses his distress and pities him for feeling beneath her. John goes to sleep depressed.

As autumn arrives in England, Henry Temple wonders how Charlotte is, friendless in a distant land. Tears of anguish fill Lucy's eyes, thinking how much she must have changed if she has not written to see how they are. As they commiserate about the agony of parenthood, a letter is delivered. They recognize Charlotte's handwriting. Henry breaks into tears as he reads aloud. Lucy vows to take Charlotte back, since she has repented. Eldridge prays to see Charlotte restored to her parents before he dies. Lucy wants to go to America to fetch her, but Henry says she is too frail. They decide that Henry will go and Lucy writes Charlotte a tender letter to expect him soon.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

These chapters give Charlotte a friend and confidant in the person of Mrs. Beauchamp, and then the war deprives her of her at the point Charlotte needs her most: when Belcour sets it up to look like he and Charlotte are lovers. He quickly arranges to cut Charlotte off from the world except through himself, and works to convince confused John Montraville to concentrate on beautiful Julia Franklin. Montraville is in another moral quandary because of Charlotte's pregnancy. He looks about to talk himself out of a relationship with Julia, who truly seems to like him.

That shocking event is first revealed in Charlotte's latest letter to her parents, which Mrs. Beauchamp promises to get onto the next ship home to England. Charlotte hopes and Mrs. Beauchamp believes that the earlier letters have been intercepted and destroyed. In this letter, Charlotte is contrite and angry. She begs not for herself but for her baby, arguing that guilt should not be passed down through the generations. That would be considered quite unorthodox by pious Christians of the time. It is, however, a powerful psychological incentive to be reconciled, particularly since Charlotte believes she will not survive long. She hopes not to have a daughter but if she does wants her to learn enough about her mother to avoid her evil paths. If the baby is a boy, she wants her parents not to name her seducer, lest he seek revenge, as her Uncle George had.

The section ends with the Temples receiving Charlotte's letter and happily forgiving her. Lucy wants to go fetch her daughter, but is too frail. She is tasked with writing to tell her prodigal daughter to expect her father soon to bring her home. The parents had been at a low point in despair about how a daughter could treat them this way.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary

John's sense that Charlotte is untrue deepens as his does relationship with Julia. On the day before his marriage, he makes Belcour the agent for financially supporting Charlotte and the baby. He wishes she could return to her parents, for he hates the idea of her living a "life of infamy" because of him. John lectures Belcour to be kind to her and writes a letter of explanation for Belcour to take to her. He writes that he feels obliged to say how bad he feels for taking her from home but accuses her of betrayal with Belcour. He admits that lust, not love, has prompted him to seduce her, for love never betrays. If Charlotte wants to return to her parents, he will pay her way and will always support her and the baby. Belcour will explain John's plans. In the morning, John gives Belcour the letter to deliver, warning him not to keep her from returning to virtue.

For over three months, Belcour alone drops in on Charlotte, to check her health and say that he is trying to restore John to reason. Charlotte has many times written to John, but Belcour destroys them as he had John's, written on the eve of his marriage. Anguish has left Charlotte sleepless and depressed. Sometimes she hopes that her parents will come to save her and often wishes Mrs. Beauchamp were available for comfort and guidance. One days, as Charlotte is sitting in melancholy, Belcour arrives, still wanting to make her his mistress. Pretending to be tender, Belcour says that no one would dare treat her with contempt. She should move to New York and enjoy society. Charlotte rejects the idea emphatically. She intends to spend her remaining days in obscurity and "die unlamented." She had once thought of going to New York to throw herself at John's feet begging pity for the baby.

This pathetic speech moves Belcour briefly, but as his selfishness reasserts itself, he hints about John's attachment to Julia. When Charlotte accepts her fate as wholly deserved and demands the truth, Belcour tells her about the marriage and move, but not about the provisions that John has left for her upkeep. Charlotte screams, faints, and takes to her bed, praying that she may never arise. She spikes a fever that terrifies Belcour and after days of sitting with her, he grows disgusted, visits less often, meets a farmer's daughter, and leaves Charlotte to die alone in poverty. Mrs. Crayton, meanwhile, enjoys splendor and affluence, and is sought out by men and women as a favorite. Her husband, a domestic man, knows better than to argue with her and retreats. She singles out a low-born, poorly-educated Ensign Corydon to escort her to plays and dances, and attend her at home when she is in a bad mood. Hearing of John Montraville's marriage, she wonders without caring what will happen to Charlotte.

Charlotte slowly recovers but remains depressed at how little money she has and the debt she has incurred on nurse and medicine. She has little hope, four months after writing her parents, of hearing from them and assumes she has broken their hearts and been disowned. She longs to die but as a Christian cannot kill herself. She is sure she will wear out soon enough. At the end of December, Charlotte sits alone when the



farmer's wife, her landlord, bursts in and demands full payment of her rent. Charlotte has never considered the possibility of being homeless or that a female could not be moved to help someone in need. She begs her case: Montraville has placed her here and promised to pay her expenses, and with him gone she has no one to whom she can turn for help. Charlotte begs for charity, which the woman says begins at home with her seven "lawful" children. What happens to a hussy and her bastard is no concern of hers. She intends to talk to her husband and have Charlotte evicted by nightfall. She will sell any valuables she has to make up her loss. Advising that Charlotte go to the army barracks and beg for work, she departs.

Left alone, Charlotte decides that her only hope is to walk to New York and beg before Mrs. Crayton. Before leaving, she writes a brief note to help her formulate her request: having impulsively left England together with the same prospects, Mrs. Crayton has enjoyed the fortune of a good marriage while Charlotte has lost all hope. She has nowhere to sleep and no way to provide for her needs. She begs, therefore, for a room in Mrs. Crayton's mansion where she can die in peace and care for her unfortunate baby. Charlotte is certain that Mrs. Crayton cannot refuse her this protection.

Tying up her few belongings, Charlotte flees into the snow, late in the afternoon. Having fled England as rapidly and having quickly lost John's affections, she has no jewelry or other valuable that she might sell to keep herself in the house until the return of Mrs. Beauchamp, who would certainly help her. Charlotte has a cheap locket holding a lock of her mother's hair, which she refuses to give up. Snow is falling fast and the cold is intense. Charlotte reaches New York soaked through and exhausted. A soldier she meets suggests going to the Franklins' rather than the Craytons', knowing that Julia is far more generous to the poor. Charlotte cannot go begging to Montraville's bride and knocks on Crayton's door, heart pounding.

Chapters 26-30 Analysis

These chapters show Charlotte's continuing decline. Cowardly John Montraville clings to the idea that Charlotte has betrayed him to fortify his intention to marry Julia. Naively, he entrusts the true betrayer, Belcour, to care for Charlotte and her baby, administering funds and channeling communications. His refusal ever to see Charlotte again enables Belcour to utilize the funds for his own selfish purposes.

Charlotte is left totally isolated and dependent on Belcour, as he intends, hoping at some point to seduce her. She despairs of seeing her parents and is held back from suicide only by the conviction that it is a terrible sin. When news of John's marriage throws Charlotte into a physical crisis, Belcour loses interest in seduction and turns to another victim. He, of course, neglects to pay Charlotte's rent as John intends, and her hard-hearted landlady throws her out into the wintry weather, suggesting she hire herself out as seamstress or cook to the Army. "Charity begins at home," which the landlady throws in Charlotte's face, is an aphorism frequent in English literature.



With Mrs. Beauchamp, her only proven friend away, Charlotte has nowhere to turn but to Mrs. Crayton who, unbeknownst, has taken a young lover who occupies all of her time and attention. Her husband has given up on her. She refuses to turn to Julia, who has a reputation for charity.

Most of Chapter 28 is given over to an admonition to the "volatile" young reader to endure patiently the "ahs!" and "ohs!" and "fainting, tears, and distress" of this true story, in order for it to have its effect. Those who are fallen will doubtless throw the book away, but from the pages one can glean more than the superficial: Charlotte becoming an object of terror while La Rue triumphs. No: the wicked are sometimes allowed to prosper temporarily and the innocent suffer, but in the end the former drink of bitterness and the latter are comforted, pardoned, and purified by trial. After describing Mrs. Crayton's lot in life, Rowson introduces the vapid Ensign Corydon and describes him much in terms of the 20th-century "Peter Principle," rising to his own level of incompetence as those who are superior sink into oblivion.

When Charlotte's landlady appears, demanding rent, she is likened to the Gorgon Medusa from Greek mythology who with her two monstrous sisters is said to be so hideous that anyone who looks at them is turned to stone. In another appeal to her readers' sense of charity, Rowson applies this turning to stone to the heart of those who have no pity on the poor.



Chapters 30-35

Chapters 30-35 Summary

A servant tries to turn Charlotte away, but accepts her note and request for an immediate answer. Playing cards with Corydon, Mrs. Crayton claims that she "can't relieve every body." Charlotte asks him to go back and say that she knows her. Sneaking in behind the messenger, Charlotte asks how la Rue could not know the girl she has ruined. Mrs. Crayton orders the terrifying young woman taken away, but Charlotte begs on her knees, recounting their time together in Chichester and on shipboard, and recalling Montraville and Belcour's names. Mrs. Crayton, jealous of her reputation and worrying how much her husband might spend on sheltering Charlotte, orders her sent away. Charlotte begs at least to be allowed to die in the mansion. When Charlotte falls senseless to the floor, the servants carry her out. John the doorman orders her taken to his hovel for the night. A surgeon comes to bleed her, she seems a bit better, and before dawn gives birth to a daughter. Thereafter, Charlotte is rarely coherent.

Mrs. Crayton has always sensed Charlotte's superior sense and virtue and that her fall is entirely Mrs. Crayton's doing. Col. Crayton knows none of this and had been fond of Charlotte on the voyage to America. He would certainly give her asylum and help however he could. Mrs. Crayton would have been wise to take Charlotte in, to get credit for the good deed. The servants spread word of her cruelty and even Corydon is offended but dares not show it.

During three days of raving for John Montraville and her father, Charlotte does not realize that she is a mother and wonders why the crying baby's parents are not shutting it up. Charlotte calls to her own suffering mother, knowing that she will not speak to her. The doctor tries hard to help Charlotte but knows that she is lost. He makes her plight known to some of the officers' wives to take a collection for Charlotte's relief. Mrs. Beauchamp returns from Rhode Island, hears about Charlotte, and rushes to her side. She is overcome by the horror in the hovel and barely recognizes Charlotte, but Charlotte recognizes her voice and addresses her as an "angel of peace and mercy." Holding Charlotte tight, Mrs. Beauchamp weeps over her, which Charlotte finds comforting. She asks if there has been a letter from her father and resolves to be ready to go home shortly. When Charlotte cannot stand and reverts to raving, Mrs. Beauchamp rewards honest John well, hires nurses for Charlotte and the baby, and goes home feeling oppressed but glad to have done something for the less fortunate.

Next morning, Charlotte recognizes and thanks Mrs. Beauchamp, holds her little "offspring of disobedience," and weeps over her. Mrs. Beauchamp hopes this is a good sign, but the doctor says this is just a final rally. Charlotte claims to feel better after sleeping well. She hopes in the mercy of Jesus to blot out her offenses. Her only care is her daughter, upon whom she hopes God will not visit her own offenses. She forgives



those who have convinced her to do wrong. After praying, Charlotte dozes, and then asks for a clergyman to whom she confesses ingratitude to her parents.

A stranger comes to the door asking after his "poor, ruined, but repentant child." Mrs. Beauchamp knows what an agony it will be for Mr. Temple to attend the death of the daughter he had come to fetch home. Hearing her father's voice, Charlotte gives a shriek. They fall into one another's arms. The final moments are too painful to describe, as Charlotte dies committing her daughter to her father's arms and not quite getting out a request for a blessing on herself. Charlotte's face goes serene.

John Montraville returns to New York, visits Charlotte's house and learns how she had fled in poverty to the city. Tortured, John runs to town in the dark, hears a church bell tolling for a funeral, and sees a funeral procession. A soldier tells him about the poor pregnant girl abandoned by a cruel man who marries another, and, turned away by inhuman Mrs. Crayton, goes mad. John orders the burial interrupted until he can take vengeance on Charlotte's murderer. He asks Mr. Temple to kill him, but the old man leaves that to God. He wants John to live with his pain. John races to Belcour's house, finds him drunk, and runs him through with his sword after a brief fight. Slightly wounded himself, John is carried to Julia, raving for Charlotte. He recovers, but lives the rest of his life in melancholy, frequently visiting Charlotte's grave.

After burying his daughter, Temple brings baby Lucy and her nurse home to England. As the initial grief subsides, Grandmother Lucy raises her namesake and feels almost as though she has Charlotte back. Ten years later, having buried her aged father, visit London on business. They stumble over a wretched old woman on the street and take her into a house to receive proper care. The woman confesses that she is the viper who ruins Charlotte. Her husband has left her seven years before, she has narrowly avoided debtor's prison, and her friends have grown tired of her. She feels it just to experience the sufferings she has inflicted on others. Much as he ought to hate Mrs. Crayton, Temple gets her admitted to a hospital, where she lingers a few weeks and dies, proving that vice leads to misery and shame.

Chapters 30-35 Analysis

The novel draws to a rapid close. Mrs. Crayton turns Charlotte away primarily because she is a reminder of her own past, of which her husband is unaware, and he is so soft-hearted that he is sure to take Charlotte in and help her. The doorman, who has faced Mrs. Crayton's wrath three times for interrupting her card game, takes Charlotte to his own impoverished dwelling and calls a doctor. Charlotte gives birth and raves for days. Returning from Rhode Island, Mrs. Beauchamp learns about Charlotte and rushes to her side. The kindness appears to rally Charlotte, who finally holds her baby. All are optimistic except the doctor. Charlotte fulfills her final religious duties and is lying near death when her father arrives. In a chapter entitled "Which People Void of Feeling Need Not Read," Rowson cannot find words and allows readers to imagine the untold horror of a joyous reunion being transformed into a deathwatch.



John Montraville returns to New York, hears himself described as a knave in abandoning the poor you woman whose funeral procession he sees. He begs Temple to kill him at his daughter's grave, but Temple prefers he live with the guilt, which he does, visiting Charlotte often and grieving for her lost potential. The last loose end is La Rue/Crayton. Seven years later, she is found living on the streets in London by the Temples. Temple pays for her hospitalization, which lasts several weeks before she dies. Rowson points out the obvious moral of La Rue/Crayton's fate: apparent success through vice is not lasting.



Characters

Charlotte Temple

The novel's protagonist, Charlotte is a tall, elegant girl of 15, attending Madame Du Pont's school for girls when the novel opens. Two years earlier, she catches the eye of British Army Lt. John Montraville at a ball. As he prepares to ship out to the war in America, Montraville wrestles with whether he should strike up a relationship, and slips Charlotte a note, requesting to see her. Charlotte has fallen under the bad influence of her French teacher, Mlle. La Rue, who attends church services in order to flirt and receive invitations to parties. She takes Charlotte to one, which the girl finds repulsively wanton. For this, she is called a prude. La Rue and John's fellow officer, Belcour, reinforce John's arguments for eloping with him to America, finally breaking her will not to hurt her beloved parents. Still, the ride from school to Portsmouth is traumatic. Charlotte does not know that John destroys her long, loving letter to her parents.

During the voyage, Charlotte is dismayed to see La Rue and Belcour break up and has a presentiment that John will abandon her in New York. Remorse and shame are already ruling Charlotte's life when they land, La Rue marries Col. Crayton, whom she has successfully wooed, and John sets her up, alone, in a cottage outside of town. She looks forward to John's every visit, which gradually grow less frequent. Belcour looks for ways to drive a wedge between John and Charlotte in order to have a chance to seduce her, entirely for sport. When he arranges to curl up next to a sleeping and ailing Charlotte when John arrives, John vows never to see Charlotte again. Charlotte has a bout of nervous fever that lasts for days. This recurs when Belcour announces that John has married Julia Franklin and been assigned overseas. Belcour does not tell Charlotte that John has made him her trustee, to see to her necessities. Charlotte is kept from suicide only by knowing it is forbidden to Christians. Nevertheless, her songs welcoming death are heard by her neighbor, Mrs. Beauchamp, who pays a visit, invites the lonely girl to dinner, hears her heartbreaking story, and promises to get a letter through to her parents. Unfortunately, the Beauchamps move away when Charlotte most needs a friend.

When Belcour grows disgusted, watching the course of Charlotte's illness and takes up with a farm girl, Charlotte's rent goes unpaid and in late December, she is summarily evicted. Charlotte walks, lightly dressed and full-term pregnant, through a snow storm to the edge of New York, where a soldier escorts her to the Crayton mansion. Her entreaties of a place to give birth and die off the street are turned down, but a servant takes her to his hut. There she gives birth, raves for days, and seems to improve when she hears her former neighbor, Mrs. Beauchamp's voice. All hope for recovery, but the doctor knows better. After calling for a clergyman and confessing the ingratitude she has shown her beloved parents, Charlotte rapidly declines. Her father arrives from England just before the end, and Charlotte manages to place her daughter in Henry Temple's hands but not to ask his final blessing. She is buried in the churchyard, where



Montraville, returned to New York, makes a scene. He visits her grave for years, feeling guilty for having corrupted her.

Lt. John Montraville

A British Army officer, generous, liberal, good-natured, and impetuous, Montraville first meets protagonist Charlotte Temple at a ball when she is 13. He remembers her fondly when he sees her again at 15, nicely developed, as he is preparing to ship out to the war in America from which he doubts he will return. John wrestles with whether it would be fair to become involved under these circumstances before deciding to slip her a note, requesting to see her. When she shows up for what she is determined is a one-time courtesy, John continues begging her to see him again, playing on her sympathies and gradually ingratiating himself. John is youngest son in a large family. The girls are educated to marry well and the boys to enter professions in which they can advance by talent. John's father buys him an Army commission but refuses to help him gain promotion except by merit. Just before John meets with Charlotte, his father warns against marrying for anything but money.

Nevertheless, egged on by his fellow officer Belcour, who is his spiritual opposite, John convinces Charlotte to abandon her doting parents and sail with him to America, where they will marry. He sends a terse note explaining the elopement to the school but destroys Charlotte's passionate letter to her parents. In New York, John sets Charlotte up in a small cottage outside of town but soon loses interest in her and his visits dwindle. Knowing that she is pregnant and that he is responsible, John never shirks his duty but falls in love with beautiful Julia Franklin, whom he meets when her house burns down and the Army tries to save it. Despite qualms over having ruined Charlotte, John marries Julia and is soon transferred to Eustatia. Whether she accompanies him is left unclear.

Before leaving, John foolishly makes Belcour Charlotte's trustee. John is convinced that Charlotte has cheated on him with Belcour but believes that Belcour cares for her. He is wrong on both counts. Belcour intercepts all mail between Charlotte and John (and her parents) and stops paying rent with the money entrusted to him. Charlotte is evicted, gives birth, and dies. John returns to New York in time to see the funeral procession and hear himself condemned as a villain. He rushes emotionally to the graveside and begs Charlotte's father to kill him on the spot, but is turned down. Henry Temple wants him to be haunted by guilt for the rest of his life. Learning Belcour's part in the tragedy, John rushes to his house and stabs him to death with a single stroke. He raves about Charlotte for days, but is brought back to his senses by Julia's "tender assiduities." John lives out his life in melancholy, paying frequent visits to weep over Charlotte's grave.

Belcour

Possessing a "genteel fortune" and a liberal education, Belcour is nevertheless immoral, irreligious, extravagant, self-centered, and hedonistic. He is Lt. John Montraville's



companion on leave at the beginning of the novel, awaiting transport to the Revolutionary War in America. Belcour's first name and rank are never divulged. When Montraville takes an interest in protagonist Charlotte Temple, Belcour points out that they are leaving soon, but does his part by diverting her teacher/chaperon, Mlle. La Rue, who has grown bored with teaching and agrees to accompany Belcour to America. Both reinforce Montraville's arguments for eloping, and the four sail. On the voyage, Belcour and La Rue each begin looking for other lovers. Belcour takes news of La Rue's engagement to Col. Crayton with relief and begins scheming how to separate Charlotte from Montraville in order to seduce her for the sport of it.

When Montraville falls in love with beautiful Julia Franklin, Belcour jumps into bed with an already sleeping Charlotte to let his friend "catch" them and vow never to see Charlotte again. Montraville retains a sense of responsibility for Charlotte and the baby she will soon bear, and assigns Belcour to manage the funds that he leaves for her maintenance. Belcour prevents correspondence between Charlotte and Montraville and her parents and uses the funds for his own pleasure. After looking in on Charlotte regularly during an illness, Belcour is repulsed, gives up on seducing her, and moves on to a local farm girl. As a result, Charlotte, near full term, is evicted from her cottage, turned away by La Rue/Mrs. Crayton, gives birth, and dies. Montraville returns to New York in time for the funeral, hears the full story, confronts a drunken Belcour, and kills him with a single sword thrust.

Maj. and Mrs. Beauchamp

A British Army officer and his wife (neither of whose first names is given), the Beauchamps become the only champions of protagonist Charlotte Temple in America. Mrs. Beauchamp is the daughter of Col. Crayton, the fellow passenger on the trans-Atlantic crossing who marries Mlle. La Rue, and a deceased Parisian lady whom La Rue claims to have known. Mrs. Beauchamp is "universally beloved and admired." Note that he is first mentioned as a major but thereafter called a captain.

Escaping New York proper, the Beauchamps move by coincidence next door to Charlotte and after long wondering if and how to talk to the obviously sad and lonely girl, Mrs. Beauchamp picks cucumbers as an excuse for visiting. Feeling unworthy, Charlotte accepts Mrs. Beauchamp's friendship, tells her whole tragic story, and is grateful that Mrs. Beauchamp offers to post a letter to Charlotte's parents. Unfortunately, the major is posted to Rhode Island just as Belcour arranges to make John Montraville jealous, leaving Charlotte in need of help and advice. They return home after Charlotte has been evicted, rejected by evil Mrs. Crayton, and gives birth in a servant's hut. Mrs. Beauchamp orders living conditions improved, hires nurses for Charlotte and her daughter, and pays the servant who rescues Charlotte for his goodness. She is present for Charlotte's last rally, swift decline, and death.



Lt. Blakeney

The officer who invites Henry Temple to meet Capt. Eldridge, as he languishes in debtors' prison, Blakeney is responsible for introducing the future parents of protagonist Charlotte Temple.

Ensign Corydon

A low-born, poorly-educated, unintelligent officer, Corydon becomes Mrs. Crayton's favorite, escorting her to plays and dances, and attending her at home when she is in a bad mood. He disapproves of Mrs. Crayton's cruel treatment of protagonist Charlotte Temple, but dares say nothing that would jeopardize his position.

Col. Crayton

A wealthy senior officer, Crayton sails aboard the same ship as protagonist Charlotte Temple and Mlle. La Rue and their male companions. Crayton is a great Francophile. His grown daughter by an amiable Parisian lady and her husband, a major, are also on the voyage. When the Army officers lose interest in Charlotte and La Rue, Crayton is attracted to the latter and innocently falls for her stories. He proposes marriage during the voyage, announces it to the ships' company, and makes good on his promise when they land in New York. His bride's vices soon surface and Crayton simply retreats from reality. The spouses later separate.

Mlle. La Rue / Mrs. Crayton

A former nun who after eloping to England lives in open wantonness, La Rue teaches French at Mme. Du Pont's school for girls in Chichester and attends church services in order to flirt and gain invitations to parties. She is taking one of her favorite students, protagonist Charlotte Temple, to such a gathering when Lt. John Montraville approaches and hands Charlotte a note. This begins a series of nightly meetings in which Montraville slowly wears down Charlotte's defenses. La Rue allows his fellow officer Belcour's advances because she is tired of the school, which she regards as a prison, and plunges into the "vortex of folly and dissipation" that has earlier caused her misery. Belcour promises her money when they reach Portsmouth, but reneges.

Seeing his unreliability, La Rue sets her sights on Col. Crayton and paints Belcour to him as a villain. Crayton is a naïve soul who proposes marriage during the voyage, announces it to the ship's company, and makes good when they reach New York. Quickly the new Mrs. Crayton tires of domestic life and begins flirting with willing escorts to social events. Ensign Corydon is her pet when Charlotte comes to her door through a snow storm, evicted, poorly dressed, and full-term in her pregnancy. Mrs. Crayton denies knowing her, says she cannot help everyone who comes begging, and orders Charlotte out. A servant has pity on her and takes her to his own poor home. The



servants gossip about Mrs. Crayton's inhuman behavior, which is inspired by her fear that her husband might learn the truth about her background when he would inevitably take Charlotte into his protection.

The Colonel eventually separates from his evil wife, who makes her way back to London. She passes several years "in riot, dissipation, and vice," pawns her valuables, and barely avoids ending her life in debtors' prison; her friends having grown "weary of relieving her," she is living in the streets when Charlotte's parents find her, place her in a hospital, where she dies within weeks.

Mme. Du Pont

The headmistress of a girl's boarding school in Chichester, England, Mme. Du Pont is originally from France. She appears to be diligent about her charges' welfare but hires another French woman, Mlle. La Rue, who has covered up a checkered past. Du Pont is greatly upset when La Rue convinces protagonist Charlotte Temple to elope with an Army officer whom she has helped clandestinely to win over her affections.

Capt. Eldridge

Protagonist Charlotte Temple's grandfather, Eldridge is languishing in debtors' prison on Ludgate Hill, London, in an early flashback that explains Charlotte's heritage. Although addressed as a captain, he wears a threadbare lieutenant's uniform, but lives in some degree of comfort surrounded by books. His beautiful daughter, Lucy, visits every day as she paints to support them. Eldridge's friend, Lt. Blakeney, hears about the generosity of young Henry Temple, and brings him to the cell to hear Eldridge's story of woe: losing his son and wife within hours of each other, being consigned to prison until he can pay off the £500 debt incurred buying the dead son an Army commission.

Being young and impetuous—and picturing Lucy's gratitude—Henry vows to discharge the debt, mortgages part of his fortune, and succeeds. Henry then resists his father's will that he marry a wealthy woman and is cut off. He resolves to live cheaply until his debt is paid, buys a small cottage, marries Lucy, and moves her and Capt. Eldridge there. Charlotte is eventually born, an only child and goes to boarding school at Mme. Du Pont's. Eldridge is sent to fetch Charlotte to a surprise 18th birthday party and thus becomes the first to learn of her sudden elopement. He brings the news and the note home to his daughter and son-in-law. Eldridge never sees his beloved granddaughter again, as she dies in her father's arms, shortly after giving birth in New York. Eldridge dies a few years later, having seen his great granddaughter, Lucy.

George Eldridge

Lucy Temple's older brother, George, chooses to join the British Army rather than follow his father into the Navy. The father borrows the amount needed to purchase George a commission from George's affluent close friend, Lewis. George, intelligent and liberally



educated, is deployed to Ireland when Capt. Eldridge learns that Lewis is attracted to Lucy but uninterested in marriage and bans him from the house. Lewis demands immediate repayment and has Capt. Eldridge thrown in debtors' prison until he can pay in full. George learns of it, incites a duel, and dies in his mother's arms.

Mr. Lewis

George Eldridge's supposed close friend, a man of affluence, Lewis becomes a part of the Eldridge family, provides an open-ended loan to pay for George's commission in the British Army, and professes to love George's sister Lucy. When Lewis is unwilling to marry Lucy because she is beneath his station, George challenges him to a duel and is killed. Lewis goes abroad, leaving orders with his lawyer to get the full loan repaid before letting Capt. Eldridge walk free.

Julia Montraville (née Franklin)

Julia is a lively New York 18-year-old living on £700 a year with a permissive uncle when their house catches fire and the British Army tries unsuccessfully to save it. Her uncle entrusts to Lt. John Montraville a box of valuables, which includes a picture that leads him to Julia. She tells John that it is her mother. John quickly forgets his ostensible fiancée, protagonist Charlotte Temple, although his conscience continues to give him qualms. Julia is the opposite of Charlotte: tall, elegantly shaped, fashionable, with black, sparkling, darting, intelligent eyes. She has "an air of innocent gaiety." John is posted for a while on Eustatia Island in the British Virgin Islands; there is ambiguity whether Julia accompanies him. She is in New York when Charlotte is evicted and comes to town, needing help, and a soldier suggests approaching Julia rather than Mrs. Crayton. John arrives in time for Charlotte's funeral and raves about his transgressions. Julia's "tender assiduities" are said to bring him back to his senses eventually.

Henry and Lucy Temple

Protagonist Charlotte Temple's father, Henry is the younger brother of a nobleman who marries badly. The example makes Henry vow to live within his means (£500 annual) and marry only for love. Still, his generosity with the poor is legendary. In London, Henry is approached by an unknown naval officer who introduces him to a Capt. Eldridge, who is languishing in debtors' prison on Ludgate Hill. Henry is so taken by Eldridge's story—and with his lovely daughter, Lucy—that he mortgages part of his fortune to affect Eldridge's release. Henry is told by his father, the Earl of D——, that he must marry rich Mis Weatherby, but he refuses and is disowned. Henry marries Lucy and with Eldridge in tow moves to a modest country home where Charlotte is born.

The Temples dote on their only child, sending her to Madame Du Pont's boarding school in Chichester to finish the education that Lucy cuts short. They are shocked to learn the Charlotte elopes with a naval officer and many letters between them fail to arrive. When finally a letter reaches the Temples, filled with remorse and the news that they are about



to become grandparents, Lucy wants to sail to America but is deemed too fragile, so Henry goes. He arrives a few days after the birth of Baby Lucy and moments before Charlotte hands her to him and dies. At Charlotte's funeral, Henry refuses to kill John Montraville, the prime cause of Charlotte's fall, saying he prefers him to carry the guilt for the rest of his life. Years later, literally stumbling over the second cause of their grief in London, Henry pays for Mlle. La Rue / Mrs. Crayton's brief hospitalization before she too dies, remorseful.

Miss Weatherby

A woman with an unencumbered estate of £3,000 per year, Miss Weatherby has been offered in marriage by her father to Henry Temple. She is beautiful but uncultured, unfeeling, impetuous, and dissipated. Spurned by Henry, she raves, threatens to establish a Protestant nunnery and to serve as its abbess, but sees instead the value of marrying Henry's father, the Earl of D——, as a means of revenge.



Objects/Places

Chichester

A picturesque town in the south of England near Portsmouth, Chichester provides the opening scene for the novel. Mme. Du Pont is leading the girls of her school out of church when two army officers on leave admire them.

Eustatia

Eustatia is an island of the British Virgin Islands, where Lt. John Montraville is deployed with his New York Army company shortly after marrying Julia Franklin. Whether Julia accompanies John is left ambiguous.

Ireland

Ireland is the site of Lt. George Temple's deployment at the time his supposed friend forecloses on the loan that buys him his army commission.

Ludgate Hill

Ludgate Hill is the site of the famous prison in London in which Capt. Eldridge, protagonist Charlotte Temple's grandfather, is incarcerated for debt.

Madame Du Pont's School

The girl's boarding in which protagonist Charlotte Temple is being educated at the beginning of the novel, Madam Du Pont's is located in Chichester, England. She and her fellow students are shown marching out of church services when two Army officers see them. Mlle. La Rue, a native of France and the only teacher named, conspires to help Lt. John Montraville take Charlotte to America, ostensibly to marry. La Rue also goes to America, escaping the imprisonment of teaching, and for a while fares better than her student. The school appears to be a rather plush multi-storied building from the sketch describing the search for Charlotte and La Rue when they disappear without a word.

New York

New York is the major port in the American colonies to which British Army troop ships sail, bringing protagonist Charlotte Temple to the colonies, thinking she will marry Lt. John Montraville. New York is pictured as having public housing, but Charlotte is settled



outside of the town within walking distance. Maj. and Mrs. Beauchamp become Charlotte's next door neighbors. Abandoned by Montraville and evicted from her cottage for non-payment of rent, Charlotte walks through a snowstorm to the edge of New York, where a kindly soldier takes her to beg help from her former teacher. Refused it, Charlotte gives birth in a servant's hovel, and dies within days. Montraville returns from duty in time to see her burial and returns regularly to mourn what he has done to her.

Paris

The capital of France, Paris is home to Mlle. La Rue, the French teacher at Mme. Du Pont's School and of the unnamed amiable Parisian lady who before the novel begins has a daughter with Col. Crayton. Mrs. Beauchamp becomes protagonist Charlotte Temple's only true friend in New York.

Portsmouth

A major port in the south of England, Portsmouth is seen briefly in the novel. Army officers John Montraville and Belcour have completed leave prior to being shipped to the war in America. They stop in nearby Chichester where they seduce protagonist Charlotte Temple and her teacher, Mlle. La Rue, respectively, and rush them to the waiting ships. Montraville and Charlotte Temple become acquainted two years earlier during a ball in Portsmouth.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island is the American colony to which Maj. Beauchamp is stationed, depriving Charlotte Temple of his wife's compassionate friendship and advice when she most needs it.

Spithead

The straights in the English Channel through which vessels bound for America pass. Protagonist Charlotte Temple hopes that the fleet will get held up at Spithead, giving her father time to respond to her letter about her eloping, but the winds are good and they sail on.



Themes

Love and Lust

Love and lust run through Susanna Rowson's novel, *Charlotte Temple*, and are always sharply distinguished. Love is often mentioned but lust is only characterized, which is consistent with eighteenth-century ethos.

Once engendered in the heart, love is constant and true, while lust is temporary, a "passion" or passivity that overcomes a person for a time but sets no roots. Love can include an appreciation for physical charm and beauty, but then transcends this. The story of Henry Temple and Lucy Eldridge epitomizes love. Henry is captivated by Lucy at first glance and ransoms her father's debt in part because he foresees the gratitude she will show. They live out a perfect marriage of mutual concern and support that transcends all trials. They love their prodigal daughter unconditionally.

During the courtship (if it can be called that), Henry is ordered by his father into a loveless but economically expedient marriage, rejects it, and accepts the consequences of being ostracized. The father then marries the rich woman who in part sees this as an opportunity for revenge. That marriage is not chronicled, but it is hard to see how it could have been loving, given how another marriage based on seeking advantage turns out. Col. Crayton, an overly trusting soul, is taken in by Mlle. La Rue, marries her out of compassion, and is soon betrayed. He retreats and looks the other way but eventually they separate and she is destroyed by riotous living.

When John Montraville sees seventeen-year-old Charlotte at the opening of the novel, he recalls her two years ago from a ball at which they enjoy one another's company and (coily put) appreciates her physical maturation. He inquires about her family's finances, realizes that he will not be allowed by his father to enter into marriage with someone beneath his station, but pushes forward his pursuit of Charlotte. He lies and beguiles her into sex, indicated only by the fact that she becomes pregnant, and then moves on to greener pastures. When he meets and falls for beautiful, wealthy Julia Franklin, he convinces himself that this is true love. Guilt over Charlotte's predicament and his responsibility for it continues to haunt him. Julia appears to rise above it and the marriage survives.

Death

Death haunts *Charlotte Temple* through most of the novel. Her grandmother and uncle expire within hours of one another when George Eldridge fights a duel for the family's honor and dies in his mother's arms and she dies of grief. The grandfather seems close to dying of grief, but is redeemed by the love of his daughter, Lucy, and the generosity of the man who becomes his son-in-law.



The backdrop of the novel is the American Revolutionary War, and the male antagonist, British Army officer John Montraville seems convinced that he will not return from it alive. He begs naïve Charlotte to cross the ocean with him to, if it comes to that, ease his passage into death. She falls for it and pays dearly. On the ship, Charlotte foresees being left at the altar and grows suicidally despondent. Pregnancy intensifies the depression and only fear of the next-world consequences of a Christian committing suicide keeps her from taking her own life. Repeatedly through the novel, however, Charlotte hopes that she will soon be relieved of her burdens through death. Her parents and grandfather, grieving her elopement and failure to communicate with them, also long for death's release. In one of the novel's most striking passages, Charlotte sees them in their graves looking up at her and calling her their murderer.

Charlotte so consistently longs for death—she even sings about it in her garden, which inspires her kindly neighbor finally to overcome her shyness and ask if she can be of any help—that death takes her as her life begins to turn around. That friend, Mrs. Beauchamp, returns to New York, finds Charlotte, pays for nurses for her and her newborn daughter; her father, having finally received a letter from her, crosses the Atlantic and finds her on her deathbed, and receives from her his granddaughter. Charlotte does not manage to complete her request for his blessing before she dies. She dies, however, with a look of bliss on her face. At Charlotte's funeral, Montraville is so filled with remorse that he asks the father to kill him on her grave, but Mr. Eldridge prefers he live with the guilt. Learning how his former friend has betrayed his trust in caring for Charlotte, Montraville goes to his house and runs him through with a sword. Finally, having buried the grieving grandfather in London, the Temples come upon the other agent of their daughter's downfall, Mlle. La Rue/Mrs. Crayton, who has become a street person, and compassionately pay for her hospitalization until she too dies.

Mercy

The novel Charlotte Temple contains merciful characters, although they are by far the minority. Henry and Lucy Temple meet and marry because Henry takes pity on her father, in debtor's prison, and mortgages part of his limited fortune to free him. Abandoned years later by their only daughter, Henry and Lucy Temple consistently agree that if she returns they will accept her. Mrs. Beauchamp in New York befriends the poor, lonely girl, listens to her story, and expedites communication with her parents, which eventually (but too late) results in Henry's coming to fetch her home. An unnamed soldier on picket duty and Mrs. Crayton's servant both take pity on her and show mercy. The soldier tries to steer her away from Mrs. Crayton to Julia Franklin Montraville, but Charlotte cannot bring herself to approach the latter. The doorman three times faces his cruel mistress' anger to present Charlotte's case and then takes her home to his hovel, lest she spend the night in a snowstorm.

The unmerciful characters are legion. The worst is arguable Mrs. Crayton, the former Mlle. La Rue, who starts Charlotte on her downfall and at the end denies knowing her, lest her own reputation might be soiled. John Montraville and Belcour both show cynicism and cruelty toward the hapless girl, Belcour eventually causing her to be



evicted on a snowy night, full-term in her pregnancy. Montraville feels remorse for his deeds and kills Belcour for his betrayal of him and Charlotte. The landlady, a coarse farmer's wife, quotes the aphorism, "charity begins at home," in ordering Charlotte out into the snow. Anything can be justified if one looks hard enough for a method.



Style

Point of View

According to Susanna Rowson's Preface, *Charlotte Temple* is a novel based on true facts, but with the names changed to protect the innocent—although all of the persons involved are said to be deceased. Rowson lives in the colonies during the American Revolution as a loyalist, is imprisoned briefly by the victors, and repatriated to England. Years later, she emigrates to the United States. She writes, therefore, about the times and places she has known well. Her purpose, however, is so narrowly moralistic that she fails to provide much detail about or flavor of those times and places.

Rowson writes explicitly to warn young women to avoid temptation to vice and to point out the inevitability of downfall and retribution. She makes numerous asides to the reader—and, she hopes, to their mothers who have diligently taken the time to read the novel before handing it over to them—imploping them to take to heart the lessons that the characters are learning the hard way. She claims to have avoided such temptations and seen enough others perish that she cannot help herself but share her insights.

Rowson often rebukes readers who might be too hard-hearted to empathize with human suffering. She strongly propounds loyalty towards one's parents and particularly one's mother. In her own voice as narrator, through protagonist Charlotte Temple as her pregnancy comes to term, and through her grief-stricken parents, she points out the pain of parenting should one's offspring prove ungrateful. All are sinners who will face divine judgment and having forgiven others stand a better chance. Rowson does not divulge her or her characters' religious preferences, although they seem to have a nonconformist flavor.

With the exception of the knowing, highly moralistic asides, Rowson writes as an anonymous, detached narrator in the third person omniscient, making frequent use of dialog to advance the story. Characters have frequent bouts of conscience, whose moral logic and deductions are traced through their minds at length. The Preface acknowledges that the novel as a literary form is not yet highly accepted, but she does not write for fame. Rather, she wants to keep people from making dreadful mistakes.

Setting

Charlotte Temple opens in Chichester, England, but pays little attention to the town other than to show a pair of handsome young British Army officers on leave before being shipped to the war in America. Having dined, they go for a stroll past a church and see Madame Du Pont's schoolgirls trooping out. There are vague suggestions about the inside of the school and the quality of the girls' lives.

Once the naïve, young protagonist, Charlotte Temple, is seduced by Lt. John Montraville in nondescript surroundings, there is a quick buggy ride to the near-by port



of Portsmouth, where they board an unnamed naval vessel and proceeds swiftly across the Atlantic to New York. Except that Charlotte is constantly seasick, very little feel is given for the port or the trip.

New York is described as an overgrown port town, garrisoned by the British Army during the Revolutionary War. There are no signs of fighting nearby, but nighttime pickets are maintained. New York sports hotels, a few mansions, and at least one church, but the novel could have been set anywhere in the colonies for the detail provided.

Montraville sets Charlotte up in a cottage somewhere within walking distance, but quickly transfers his affections to a rich woman. Charlotte briefly considers moving back to town but does not want to face ridicule over having been stood up. Instead, pregnant, lonely, and nearly suicidal, she lives alone. For a brief period, her next door neighbor befriends, comforts, and advises her. Unfortunately, that kind woman's husband is reassigned to Rhode Island, so she is not available to Charlotte when she most needs a friend. Rhode Island and Eustatia in the British Virgin Islands are mentioned in passing as British Army garrisons.

The novel returns to New York when Charlotte at full term is evicted for failure to pay rent and walks through a snowstorm to the Crayton mansion, where she is cruelly turned away, and to a kindly servant's hovel, where she gives birth to her illegitimate daughter. Within days, she dies and is buried in the churchyard.

The Conclusion is set in Chichester and London, England, where the Du Pont teacher who talks Charlotte into eloping to America dies repenting of the evil she has caused.

Language and Meaning

Charlotte Temple is told in the flowery, pious language of late eighteenth-century England. For the twenty-first century reader, this idiom imparts a measure of quaint charm, but enough parodies have been produced to offset the charm and create a sense of surreality: could people involved in such life-and-death matters have spoken in such a silly manner? While the idiom detracts from the drama and the power of the novel's message, the grim morality in which a dishonored woman is fit only for death has also passed into history in enlightened society. The anonymous narrator, however, thanks God that she has not fallen into temptation like the protagonist, Charlotte Temple, and feels obliged to share her perspectives with young girls to prepare them to resist. As a result, she moralizes at every turn and the lion's share of some chapters is devoted to theater-like asides to the audience, detailing Rowson's strict but also merciful views.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jane Smiley in her Introduction to the novel discusses the feminist rediscovery of Susanna Rowson and Charlotte Temple. She observes that it must be approached as a "cautionary tale"—or in Rowson's words, "a tale of truth"—rather than a novel to appreciate how it achieves the author's purpose. It explains the sparsity of detail in setting scenes, characters, building suspense, and other



characteristics of the eighteenth-century novel. Like almost all literature of the time, it deals with seduction and rape and concludes that death is the only possible outcome for the fallen.

The story is narrated in British English and the dialog captures contemporary speech with its contractions and idioms. Many of the unfamiliar words when looked up in a modern dictionary are labeled obsolete, but would not have been for contemporary readers, *Charlotte Temple* being first published in England in 1791 and in America in 1794, where it becomes the earliest "bestseller" and is so popular that 200 editions are put into print. When one considers how quickly outmoded much middle- and late-twentieth century novels already sound, *Charlotte Temple* can be seen to have held up well.

Structure

Charlotte Temple by Susanna Rowson consists of thirty-five chapters with no larger divisions of the text. Most of the chapters are given titles, while a few substitute brief epigrams instead. Most chapters are extremely brief (3-5 pages). A useful biographical note about Rowson, a thought-provoking Introduction by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jan Smiley, "A Note on the Text," and Rowson's own Preface precede the text. Rowson declares that she is telling a "Tale of Truth," intended to keep girls like *Charlotte Temple* from falling into her errors and suffering her fate.

The chapters are: 1) "A Boarding School," 2) "Domestic Concerns," 3) "Unexpected Misfortunes," 4) "Change of Fortune," 5) "Such Things Are," 6) "An Intriguing Teacher," 7) "Natural Sens of Propriety Inherent in the Female Bosom," 8) "Domestic Pleasures Planned," 9) "We Know Not What a Day May Bring Forth," 10) "When We Have Excited Curiosity, It Is But an Act of Good Nature to Gratify It," 11) "Conflict of Love and Duty," 12) "Nature's Last, Best Gift," 13) "Cruel Disappointment," 14) "Maternal Sorrow," 15) "Embarkation," 16) "Necessary Digression," 17) "A Wedding," 18) "Reflections," 19) "A Mistake Discovered," 20) "Virtue Never Appears So Amiable as When Reaching Forth Her Hand," 21) "Teach Me to Feel Another's Woe," 22) "Sorrows of the Heart," 23) "A Man May Smile, and Smile, and Be a Villain," 24) "Mystery Developed," 25) "Reception of a Letter," 26) "What Might Be Expected," 27) "Pensive She Mourn'd," 28) "A Trifling Retrospect," 29) "We Go Forward Again," 30) "And What Is Friendship But a Name," 31) "Subject Continued," 32) "Reasons Why and Wherefore," 33) "Which People Void of Feeling Need Not Read," 34) "Retribution," and 35) "Conclusion."

The story generally moves in a lineal, chronological order from Charlotte's first meeting with Lt. John Montraville in England, to her giving birth and dying in New York. The conclusion returns to London to tie up loose ends. After the first chapter, Rowson looks back over several chapters to how the protagonist's parents come together in perfect, ideal marital bliss. It then moves relentlessly forward through the tale of temptation, seduction, concealment, and betrayal. While only one chapter is entitled "Necessary Digression," digressions are frequent and lengthy, for Rowson wants her readers, clearly identified as young women, to take all of Charlotte's sufferings to heart and, like

Charlotte, to recognize that she has sinned against heaven and her parents. She deserves her fate: death. This is a difficult proposition to sell today, but the storyline flows naturally along.



Quotes

"They had gratified their curiosity, and were preparing to return to the inn without honouring any of the belles with particular notice, when Madame Du Pont, at the head of her school, descended from the church. Such an assemblage of youth and innocence naturally attracted the young soldiers: they stopped; and, as the little cavalcade passed, almost involuntarily pulled off their hats. A tall, elegant girl looked at Montraville and blushed: he instantly recollected the features of Charlotte Temple, whom he had once seen and danced with at a ball at Portsmouth. At that time he thought on her only as a very lovely child, she being then only thirteen; but the improvement two years had made in her person, and the blush of recollection which suffused her cheeks as she passed, awakened in his bosom new and pleasing ideas. Vanity led him to think that pleasure at again beholding her might have occasioned the emotion he had witnessed, and the same vanity led him to wish to see her again.

" 'She is the sweetest girl in the world,' said he, as he entered the inn. Belcour stared. 'Did you not notice her?' continued Montraville: 'she had on a blue bonnet, and with a pair of lovely eyes of the same colour, has contrived to make me feel devilish odd about the heart.'

" 'Pho,' said Belcour, 'a musket ball from our friends, the Americans, may in less than two months make you feel worse.'

" 'I never think of the future,' replied Montraville; 'but am determined to make the most of the present, and would willingly compound with any kind Familiar who would inform me who the girl is, and how I might be likely to obtain an interview.'" Chapter 1, "A Boarding School," pgs. 3-4.

"I confess I have rambled strangely from my story: but what of that? if I have been so lucky as to find the road to happiness, why should I be such a niggard as to omit so good an opportunity of pointing out the way to others. The very basis of true peace of mind is a benevolent wish to see all the world as happy as one's Self; and from my soul do I pity the selfish churl, who, remembering the little bickerings of anger, envy, and fifty other disagreeables to which frail mortality is subject, would wish to revenge the affront which pride whispers him he has received. For my own part, I can safely declare, there is not a human being in the universe, whose prosperity I should not rejoice in, and to whose happiness I would not contribute to the utmost limit of my power: and may my offences be no more remembered in the day of general retribution, than as from my soul I forgive every offence or injury received from a fellow creature." Chapter 8, "Domestic Pleasures Planned," pg. 30.

"Belcour and Mademoiselle heard this last speech, and conceiving it a proper time to throw in their advice and persuasions, approached Charlotte, and so well seconded the entreaties of Montraville, that finding Mademoiselle intended going with Belcour, and feeling her own treacherous heart too much inclined to accompany them, the hapless Charlotte, in an evil hour, consented that the next evening they should bring a chaise to the end of the town, and that she would leave her friends, and throw herself entirely on



the protection of Montraville. 'But should you,' said she, looking earnestly at him, her eyes full of tears, 'should you, forgetful of your promises, and repenting the engagements you here voluntarily enter into, forsake and leave me on a foreign shore —'

" 'Judge not so meanly of me,' said he. 'The moment we reach our place of destination, Hymen shall sanctify our love; and when I shall forget your goodness, may heaven forget me.'

" 'Ah,' said Charlotte, leaning on Mademoiselle's arm as they walked up the garden together, 'I have forgot all that I ought to have remembered, in consenting to this intended elopement.'

" 'You are a strange girl,' said Mademoiselle: 'you never know your own mind two minutes at a time. Just now you declared Montraville's happiness was what you prized most in the world; and now I suppose you repent having insured that happiness by agreeing to accompany him abroad.'

" 'Indeed I do repent,' replied Charlotte, 'from my soul: but while discretion points out the impropriety of my conduct, inclination urges me on to ruin.'

" 'Ruin! fiddlestick!' said Mademoiselle; 'am I not going with you? and do I feel any of these qualms?'

" 'You do not renounce a tender father and mother,' said Charlotte.

" 'But I hazard my dear reputation,' replied Mademoiselle, bridling.

" 'True,' replied Charlotte, 'but you do not feel what I do.' She then bade her good night: but sleep was a stranger to her eyes, and the tear of anguish watered her pillow."

Chapter 11, "Conflict of Love and Duty," pgs. 38-39.

"All Charlotte's hopes and wishes were now concentrated in one, namely that the fleet might be detained at Spithead till she could receive a letter from her friends: but in this she was disappointed, for the second morning after she went on board, the signal was made, the fleet weighed anchor, and in a few hours (the wind being favourable) they bid adieu to the white cliffs of Albion.

"In the mean time every inquiry that could be thought of was made by Mr. and Mrs. Temple; for many days did they indulge the fond hope that she was merely gone off to be married, and that when the indissoluble knot was once tied, she would return with the partner she had chosen, and entreat their blessing and forgiveness.

" 'And shall we not forgive her?' said Mr. Temple.

" 'Forgive her!' exclaimed the mother. 'Oh yes, whatever be our errors, is she not our child? and though bowed to the earth even with shame and remorse, is it not our duty to raise the poor penitent, and whisper peace and comfort to her desponding soul? Would she but return, with rapture would I fold her to my heart, and bury every remembrance of her faults in the dear embrace'

"But still day after day passed on, and Charlotte did not appear, nor were any tidings to be heard of her: yet each rising morning was welcomed by some new hope—the evening brought with it disappointment. At length hope was no more; despair usurped her place; and the mansion which was once the mansion of peace, became the habitation of pale, dejected melancholy.

"The cheerful smile that was wont to adorn the face of Mrs. Temple was fled, and had it not been for the support of unaffected piety, and a consciousness of having ever set



before her child the fairest example, she must have sunk under this heavy affliction." Chapter 15, "Embarkation," pg. 51.

"The inexperienced Charlotte was astonished at what she heard. She thought La Rue had, like herself, only been urged by the force of her attachment to Belcour, to quit her friends, and follow him to the feat of war: how wonderful then, that she should resolve to marry another man. It was certainly extremely wrong. It was indelicate. She mentioned her thoughts to Montraville. He laughed at her simplicity, called her a little idiot, and patting her on the cheek, said she knew nothing of the world. 'If the world sanctifies such things, 'tis a very bad world I think,' said Charlotte. 'Why I always understood they were to have been married when they arrived at New-York. I am sure Mademoiselle told me Belcour promised to marry her.'

" 'Well, and suppose he did?'

" 'Why, he should be obliged to keep his word I think.'

" 'Well, but I suppose he has changed his mind,' said Montraville, "and then you know the case is altered.'

"Charlotte looked at him attentively for a moment. A full sense of her own situation rushed upon her mind. She burst into tears, and remained silent. Montraville too well understood the cause of her tears. He kissed her cheek, and bidding her not make herself uneasy, unable to bear the silent but keen remonstrance, hastily left her." Chapter 17, "A Wedding," pg. 57.

"With the benignant aspect of an angel of mercy did Mrs. Beauchamp listen to the artless tale: she was shocked to the soul to find how large a share La Rue had in the seduction of this amiable girl, and a tear fell, when she reflected so vile a woman was now the wife of her father. When Charlotte had finished, she gave her a little time to collect her scattered spirits, and then asked her if she had never written to her friends. " 'Oh yes, Madam,' said she, 'frequently: but I have broke their hearts: they are either dead or have cast me off for ever, for I have never received a single line from them.'

" 'I rather suspect,' said Mrs. Beauchamp, 'they have never had your letters: but suppose you were to hear from them, and they were willing to receive you, would you then leave this cruel Montraville, and return to them?'

" 'Would I!' said Charlotte, clasping her hands; 'would not the poor sailor, tost on a tempestuous ocean, threatened every moment with death, gladly return to the shore he had left to trust to its deceitful calmness? Oh, my dear Madam, I would return, though to do it I were obliged to walk barefoot over a burning desert, and beg a scanty pittance of each traveler to support my existence. I would endure it all cheerfully, could I but once more see my dear, blessed mother, hear her pronounce my pardon, and bless me before I died; but alas! I shall never see her more; she has blotted the ungrateful Charlotte from her remembrance, and I shall sink to the grave loaded with hers and my father's curse.'" Chapter 21, "Teach Me to Feel Another's Woe," pgs. 70-71.

"Mrs. Temple took it from him: she cast her eyes upon the superscription; she knew the writing. " 'Tis Charlotte,' said she, eagerly breaking the seal, 'she has not quite forgot us.'



But before she had half gone through the contents, a sudden sickness seized her; she grew cold and giddy, and puffing it into her husband's hand, she cried—'Read it: I cannot.' Mr. Temple attempted to read it aloud, but frequently paused to give vent to his tears. 'My poor deluded child,' said he, when he had finished.

" 'Oh, shall we not forgive the dear penitent?' said Mrs. Temple. 'We must, we will, my love; she is willing to return, and 'tis our duty to receive her.'

" 'Father of mercy,' said Mr. Eldridge, raising his clasped hands, 'let me but live once more to see the dear wanderer restored to her afflicted parents, and take me from this world of sorrow whenever it seemeth best to thy wisdom.'

" 'Yes, we will receive her,' said Mr. Temple; 'we will endeavour to heal her wounded spirit, and speak peace and comfort to her agitated soul. I will write to her to return immediately.'" Chapter 25 "Reception of a Letter," pg. 83.

" 'Belcour,' said Charlotte, seizing his hand, and gazing at him earnestly, while her pale lips trembled with convulsive agony, 'tell me, and tell me truly, I beseech you, do you think he can be such a villain as to marry another woman, and leave me to die with want and misery in a strange land: tell me what you think; I can bear it very well; I will not shrink from this heaviest stroke of fate; I have deserved my afflictions, and I will endeavour to bear them as I ought.'

" 'I fear,' said Belcour, 'he can be that villain.'

" 'Perhaps,' cried she, eagerly interrupting him, 'perhaps he is married already: come, let me know the worst,' continued she with an affected look of composure: 'you need not be afraid, I shall not send the fortunate lady a bowl of poison.'

" 'Well then, my dear girl,' said he, deceived by her appearance, 'they were married on Thursday, and yesterday morning they sailed for Eustatia.'

" 'Married—gone—say you?' cried she in a distracted accent, 'what without a last farewell, without one thought on my unhappy situation! Oh Montraville, may God forgive your perfidy.' She shrieked, and Belcour sprang forward just in time to prevent her falling to the floor.

"Alarming faintings now succeeded each other, and she was conveyed to her bed, from whence she earnestly prayed she might never more arise. Belcour staid with her that night, and in the morning found her in a high fever. The fits she had been seized with had greatly terrified him; and confined as she now was to a bed of sickness, she was no longer an object of desire: it is true for several days he went constantly to see her, but her pale, emaciated appearance disgusted him: his visits became less frequent; he forgot the solemn charge given him by Montraville; he even forgot the money entrusted to his care; and, the burning blush of indignation and shame tinged my cheek while I write it, this disgrace to humanity and manhood at length forgot even the injured Charlotte; and, attracted by the blooming health of a farmer's daughter, whom he had seen in his frequent excursions to the country, he left the unhappy girl to sink unnoticed to the grave, a prey to sickness, grief, and penury; while he, having triumphed over the virtue of the artless cottager, rioted in all the intemperance of luxury and lawless pleasure." Chapter 27, "Pensive She Mourn'd," pgs. 89-90.

" 'Charity,' cried the woman impatiently interrupting her, 'charity indeed: why, Mistress,



charity begins at home, and I have seven children at home, honest, lawful children, and it is my duty to keep them; and do you think I will give away my property to a nasty, impudent hussey, to maintain her and her bastard; an I was saying to my husband the other day what will this world come to; honest women are nothing now-a-days, while the harlotings are set up for fine ladies, and look upon us no more nor the dirt they walk upon: but let me tell you, my fine spoken Ma'am, I must have my money; so seeing as how you can't pay it, why you must troop, and leave all your fine gimcracks and fal der ralls behind you. I don't ask for no more nor my right, and nobody shall dare for to go for to hinder me of it.'

" ;Oh heavens;; cried Charlotte, clasping her hands, ;what will become of me?'

" Come on ye!' retorted the unfeeling wretch: 'why go to the barracks and work for a morsel of bread; wash and mend the soldiers cloaths, an cook their victuals, and not expect to live in idleness on honest people's means. Oh I wish I could see the day when all such cattle were obliged to work hard and eat little; it's only what they deserve.'

" Father of mercy,' cried Charlotte, 'I acknowledge thy correction just; but prepare me, I beseech thee, for the portion of misery thou may'st please to lay upon me.'

" Well,' said the woman, 'I shall go an tell my husband as how you can't pay; and so d'ye see, Ma'am, get ready to be packing away this very night, for you should not stay another night in this house, though I was sure you would lay in the street.'

"Charlotte bowed her head in silence; but the anguish of her heart was too great to permit her to articulate a single word." Chapter 29, "We Go Forward Again," pg. 96.

" 'I can at least die here,' said Charlotte, 'I feel I cannot long survive this dreadful conflict. Father of mercy, here let me finish my existence.' Her agonizing sensations overpowered her, and she fell senseless on the floor.

" 'Take her away,' said Mrs. Crayton, 'she will really frighten me into hysterics; take her away I say this instant.'

" 'And where must I take the poor creature?' said the servant with a voice and look of compassion.

" 'Any where,' cried she hastily, 'only don't let me ever see her again. I declare she has flurried me so I shan't be myself again this fortnight.'

"John, assisted by his fellow-servant, raised and carried her down stairs. 'Poor soul,' said he, 'you shall not lay in the street this night. I have a bed and a poor little hovel, where my wife and her little ones rest them, but they shall watch to night, and you shall be sheltered from danger.' They placed her in a chair; and the benevolent man, assisted by one of his comrades, carried her to the place where his wife and children lived. A surgeon was sent for: he bled her, she gave signs of returning life, and before the dawn gave birth to a female infant. After this event she lay for some hours in a kind of stupor; and if at any time she spoke, it was with a quickness and incoherence that plainly evinced the total deprivation of her reason." Chapter 31, "Subject Continued," pg. 102.

" 'If thou art the father of Charlotte Temple,' said he, gazing at him with mingled horror and amazement—'if thou art her father—I am Montraville.' Then falling on his knees, he continued—'Here is my bosom. I bare it to receive the stroke I merit. Strike—strike now, and save me from the misery of reflexion.'



'Alas!' said Mr. Temple, 'if thou wert the seducer of my child, thy own reflexions be thy punishment. I wrest not the power from the hand of omnipotence. Look on that little heap of earth, there hast thou buried the only joy of a fond father. Look at it often; and may thy heart feel such true sorrow as shall merit the mercy of heaven.' He turned from him; and Montraville starting up from the ground, where he had thrown himself, and at that instant remembering the perfidy of Belcour, flew like lightning to his lodgings. Belcour was intoxicated; Montraville impetuous: they fought, and the sword of the latter entered the heart of his adversary. He fell, and expired almost instantly. Montraville had received a slight wound; and overcome with the agitation of his mind and loss of blood, was carried in a state of insensibility to his distracted wife. A dangerous illness and obstinate delirium ensued, during which he raved incessantly for Charlotte: but a strong constitution, and the tender assiduities of Julia, in time overcame the disorder. He recovered; but to the end of his life was subject to severe fits of melancholy, and while he remained at New-York frequently retired to the church-yard, where he would weep over the grave, and regret the untimely fate of the lovely Charlotte Temple." Chapter 34, "Retribution," pgs. 111-112.

"She soon recovered; and fixing her eyes on Mrs. Temple, cried—'You know not, Madam, what you do; you know not whom you are relieving, or you would curse me in the bitterness of your heart. Come not near me, Madam, I shall contaminate you. I am the viper that stung your peace. I am the woman who turned the poor Charlotte out to perish in the street. Heaven have mercy! I see her now,' continued she looking at Lucy; 'such, such was the fair bud of innocence that my vile arts blasted ere it was half blown.' "It was in vain that Mr. and Mrs. Temple entreated her to be composed and to take some refreshment. She only drank half a glass of wine; and then told them that she had been separated from her husband seven years, the chief of which she had passed in riot, dissipation, and vice, till, overtaken by poverty and sickness, she had been reduced to part with every valuable, and thought only of ending her life in a prison; when a benevolent friend paid her debts and released her; but that her illness increasing, she had no possible means of supporting herself, and her friends were weary of relieving her. 'I have fasted,' said she, 'two days, and last night lay my aching head on the cold pavement: indeed it was but just that I should experience those miseries myself which I had unfeelingly inflicted on others.'

"Greatly as Mr. Temple had reason to detest Mrs. Crayton, he could not behold her in this distress without some emotions of pity. He gave her shelter that night beneath his hospitable roof, and the next day got her admission into an hospital; where having lingered a few weeks, she died, a striking example that vice, however prosperous in the beginning, in the end leads only to misery and shame." Chapter 35, "Conclusion," pg. 114.



Topics for Discussion

Who is most responsible for Charlotte Temple's fall?

What, if any, positive traits are shown in Lt. John Montraville?

How does Maj. Beauchamp contribute to the story? How does his wife outshine him?

What would "due diligence" on Mlle. La Rue have revealed to preclude her employment at Mme. Du Pont's school?

Who is the most naïve character in the novel and what does naivete cause her/him to suffer?

Who is the most cunning, ruthless character in the novel and what harm does s/he cause?

Does Charlotte will herself to die—and find too late that hope and deliverance are at hand? Might she have made her way in New York and/or London, had she lived? What alternative ending would you write (assuming you are not happy with Rowson's ending)?