# Villette Study Guide

## Villette by Charlotte Brontë

BOOKRAGS

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# Plot Summary

Charlotte Bronte's 1853 novel *Villette* chronicles the journey of Lucy Snowe as she grows from a sheltered girl to a lonely young woman, until she finds her own place in the world. The novel opens with Lucy's visits to her godmother, Mrs. Bretton, as a child. On Lucy's last visit a child Paulina Home also comes to stay at the Brettons' home and develops a close relationship with Mrs. Bretton's son, Graham, before she is called back to her father's side.

In the time that passes after Lucy's final visit with the Brettons, Lucy is left on her own in the world. She does not reveal much about her past, but the friends and family she had as a child, represented by her visits to the Brettons, are gone. Lucy is left to wander in search of a home, and she travels first to London and then on to Villette. This journey demonstrates how napve and unprepared Lucy is for life on her own. She arrives in the city of Villette, France, with no baggage and little money. Lost and frightened, she wanders the streets and chances upon Madame Beck's school in Rue Fossette, where she is given a job as a governess. Madame Beck sees Lucy's potential and pushes her to take over the English classes at the school. Although this position gives Lucy a respectable means of providing for herself, she is lonely at the school and feels there is nothing for her to look forward to. Lucy becomes depressed, and when she is left alone over the vacation she begins wandering the city. After visiting a church, where she confides in Pire Silas, a priest, Lucy faints in a strange neighborhood.

Lucy wakes to find herself in an oddly familiar room. She realizes that she is in the company of her old friends, the Brettons. After their happy reunion, the Brettons become friends with Lucy and care for her as she recovers from her illness. The prospect of a friendship with the Brettons, particularly Graham Bretton, is important to Lucy, since it adds companionship and variety to her stifled life. This friendship improves Lucy's life and her health, but she is worried that she will be forgotten and that the friendship will only be temporary. Graham begins to confide in Lucy, particularly about his feelings for Ginevra Fanshawe, a beautiful but vain girl from Lucy's school. Over time, the Brettons take Lucy to concerts, museums and even a play. One night Lucy accompanies Dr. Bretton to the theater, and a fire breaks out. Dr. Bretton rescues a young lady who is nearly trampled by the crowd, and this young lady turns out to be their old friend, Paulina Home de Bassompierre. While Paulina becomes a valued friend of Lucy's, her arrival also ends Lucy's friendship with Graham, as he becomes more interested in Paulina.

As Lucy sees Paulina and Graham becoming closer, she begins to focus her attention elsewhere and cultivates a friendship with M. Paul Emanuel, the strange, egotistical literature professor. At first, Lucy does not like M. Paul, but he helps her with her studies, leaves her little gifts and books and teases her about her flirty manners and materialism, characteristics that only he sees. Eventually, Lucy learns about his goodness and his generosity. When he was young, M. Paul was engaged to a young lady, Justine Marie, but they were forbidden to marry. She died in a convent, and although her family disapproved of the marriage, M. Paul provided for the family when

they had financial problems. Although Lucy secretly harbors hope for Graham, she can see that he and Paulina de Bassompierre have fallen in love and will be married. Lucy feels that she has found a firm and devoted friend in M. Paul, and she grows to love him deeply. He leaves Europe, though, to take care of an estate in the West Indies. Before he leaves, he reveals that he has prepared a home and school for Lucy. In his absence, Lucy cares for the school, and it prospers. She looks forward to a future with M. Paul upon his return, but there is a strong indication that he dies on the return trip.

# Chapter 1, Bretton

## Chapter 1, Bretton Summary

Lucy Snowe visits her godmother, Mrs. Bretton, in the village of Bretton twice a year. Mrs. Bretton is a widow with a son, who is away visiting friends, and she always makes Lucy feel welcome in her home. One day, Lucy arrives home from a walk to discover that an additional bed and chest of drawers have been added to her room. Mrs. Bretton is expecting the young daughter of a distant relative to stay with them a while. The child's mother recently died, and even though she and her husband were separated by mutual consent, he is a sensitive man who blames himself for her death. Mr. Home, the child's father, will be traveling to France to stay with relatives.

The child arrives on a stormy night. She is a tiny, doll-like girl, who speaks carefully for such a young child. Mrs. Bretton greets her warmly and asks her name. Her real name is Paulina Mary, but she is usually called Missy or Polly. After a few moments of sitting on Mrs. Bretton's lap, she leaves to sit on a stool, and Lucy can hear her weeping. After a while, she asks that Harriet, her nursemaid, be summoned, and Harriet escorts her to bed. When Lucy goes up to bed, Polly is still awake. Lucy advises her to lie down so that she does not take cold, but the little girl does not. Lucy believes she weeps all night. The next morning, the child prepares herself for breakfast, a task she is not used to. She prays, and as she and her maid leave the room, Lucy hears her say that she aches from missing her papa. Mrs. Bretton remarks that she is worried about the little girl, but she may do better if she becomes attached to someone.

## Chapter 1, Bretton Analysis

Lucy is introduced to the reader with little backstory. Nothing is revealed about her family or home, except for a brief mention that bad times are coming. She is quiet and enjoys peace and solitude, so the arrival of the strange little girl is a bit disturbing to her. Lucy and Paulina do not seem to like each other much. Lucy does not get out of bed to help the little girl, and the little girl is almost rude to Lucy, telling her that they do not need to say goodnight, since they share a room, and telling her maid not to wake her.

Polly is a strange, doll-like girl, who looks young but speaks in an adult manner and seems to feel truly deep, wrenching emotions about her father leaving her. Mrs. Bretton is worried because the little girl seems to feel such pain for her father, and yet she seems to feel nothing toward the ladies in the house. Her hopes that Polly will become attached to someone seem unlikely to be fulfilled, but her comments do foreshadow the friendship that Paulina will develop with her son.

# Chapter 2, Paulina

## Chapter 2, Paulina Summary

Paulina does not seem inclined to take a liking to anyone in the house, and Lucy is a bit uncomfortable with her attitude and grief. She seems to sit up all night, praying with single-minded passion and wishing for her father. One day, as Paulina stares out the window, her expression suddenly changes, and she jumps up and runs from the house. Lucy is about to call to Mrs. Bretton when she sees a man scoop up the child and bring her back to the house. He brings her upstairs and explains to Mrs. Bretton that he could not leave the country without seeing that his daughter was settled comfortably first. Paulina insists on waiting on her father, pouring his tea, fixing his plate and constantly sitting at his side, even though it is quite difficult for her to manage the pouring of tea or the sugar tongs, due to her tiny size. Lucy believes the child is a particular little busybody, but Mr. Home sees her as a great comfort.

Toward the evening, Graham Bretton arrives home. As the adults sit talking, Paulina sits at her father's side, acting like a miniature lady. She attempts to hem a handkerchief but catches herself with the needle many times. When Mr. Home leaves the room for a few moments, Graham, a handsome and spirited young man, teasingly asks his mother why he has not been introduced to the young lady. He addresses her as Miss Home and treats her respectfully, if teasingly, as an adult. As he leaves to go to bed, he playfully tosses her in the air, like a child, but she insists on being put down, her dignity offended.

## Chapter 2, Paulina Analysis

Paulina continues to intrigue and annoy Lucy by being a strange little child. She is distraught at the beginning of the chapter, but the moment her father appears, she is joyful. His feelings for his daughter are just as intense, and he endures her attentions happily, while Lucy thinks that the little girl's behavior is ridiculous. Instead of acting like the small child she is, little Polly acts as though she is a miniature woman or even a wife. While Paulina is working on her handkerchief, Lucy sees her repeatedly stab her finger with the needle, but the little girl continues to proceed patiently. The handkerchief is a symbol of Paulina's devotion to her father. When Graham introduces himself, Paulina gets off her stool to bow, but she is still so little that she cannot get back on the stool with dignity. These little scenes illustrate how odd it is that the child acts so old for her age and yet is so tiny.

# Chapter 3, The Playmates

## Chapter 3, The Playmates Summary

Mr. Home stays with the Brettons for two days, and Paulina is always at his side. She is still upset with Graham for his teasing on the first evening. He attempts to lure her by letting her see the interesting items he has collected. He offers her a picture if she gives him a kiss. Paulina tells him that he must first give her the picture, and he does. Then, she runs away and hides by her father. Graham comes over to collect his kiss, and she hits him. He pretends to be hurt and goes to lie on the couch. Little Paulina is worried that she really has hurt him and goes over to check on him. He once again snatches her up, and this time she pulls his hair.

When Mr. Home leaves, Paulina is distraught, but she does not cry. For several days she is depressed, but eventually she permits Graham to pick her up and sit with her. Then, she falls asleep. After this, she and Graham are good friends. She greets him when he arrives home from school and is animated and cheerful around him, even though she is still solemn and ladylike when he is gone. They do not fight, but there is one instance when Graham hurts Polly's feelings terribly. On his birthday, he has some school friends over. Paulina has heard of these friends, and she is anxious to see them in reality. She asks Lucy if she might go into the room where the boys are, and Lucy, seeing no harm, tells her to ask. Graham, however, dismisses her and says he does not want her there. She is upset and will not talk to him for days afterwards. Eventually they make up, but she never again approaches him for attention.

Soon after this, a letter arrives from Mr. Home. He is settled with his family on the Continent and has no intention of returning to England, so he wants his daughter sent to him. Mrs. Bretton and Lucy wonder how the little girl will take this news, now that she is so attached to Graham, and Lucy takes it upon herself to tell Polly. When Graham comes home, Polly asks Lucy to share the news with Graham. Graham dismisses the news and retreats to his study, where Paulina stays at his side, ignored for the most part, until she obediently rises to go to bed.

Lucy explains to Polly that she should not mind so much that Graham does not care as much about her as she does about him. It is natural for a boy of sixteen to be busier with other things than a girl of six. She comforts Paulina by telling her that she is sure Polly is Graham's favorite little child, and Paulina is reassured that Graham is not disturbed by her attachment. Finally, Paulina comes to Lucy's bed to get warm. As Paulina sleeps, Lucy worries about how the child will make it in the world when she seems to take everything so seriously and so much to heart.

# Chapter 3, The Playmates Analysis

Paulina seems to need someone to take care of and wait on, and since her father is not present, Graham becomes her new pet. Graham enjoys the attention and likes the little girl, but it bothers Lucy to see how noisy and fidgety Polly becomes around him. After the incident with the party, when Paulina is no longer so eager to seek Graham's attention, Lucy is forced to act as a go-between. Paulina will no longer tell Graham what she wants. Up until this point, Lucy is an observer, almost as though she is not there, but suddenly it is Lucy who tells Graham that Paulina wants to ride his pony. Lucy tells Paulina about the letter, and Lucy breaks the news to Graham about Paulina's departure. Although Lucy is suddenly interacting with both Graham and Paulina, the relationship still centers on them, and Lucy is a mere communicator until the last scene, when Paulina crawls into her bed. This image of Lucy as an outsider, who only observes the action or takes part in a drama between others, becomes a prevalent theme in the novel and foreshadows Lucy's relationship with Paulina and Graham as adults.

# Chapter 4, Miss Marchmont

## Chapter 4, Miss Marchmont Summary

A few months after Paulina leaves the Brettons' home, Lucy leaves as well, to return to her family. Although Lucy does not tell the reader what happens to her family, she describes the next few years as a passage on the barge, sometimes a calm passage and sometimes a storm-tossed passage. While the reader does not know what exactly happens, Lucy reveals that she is left alone in the world. She dresses in mourning, and the years separate her from the Brettons, who have moved to London due to a change in their fortunes.

In a lonely state, Lucy is approached by Miss Marchmont. She has never met Miss Marchmont, an elderly lady who has been ill and invalid for many years, but Miss Marchmont has heard of her troubles and invites her to come work for her as a companion and caretaker. Although Lucy does not have other prospects, she is reluctant to take a position where she will be confined to the sick room of a stranger, at the mercy of the woman's wants and temper. Miss Marchmont has an attack of pain during the visit, and Lucy nurses her. Over the next few days Miss Marchmont sends for her regularly, and Lucy finally agrees to take the position. During her time in Miss Marchmont's home, Lucy is confined to the two rooms of the sick woman's dwelling, and yet she is busy and faithful to her mistress and finds that she does not miss the outside world. Although it can be hard to bear Miss Marchmont's temper and pain, Lucy discovers that the woman is virtuous, honest in her feelings and not unkind to Lucy.

One night, as Miss Marchmont sleeps, Lucy hears a wailing cry of wind in the windows and remarks that at three times in her life she has heard such a wind. It always brings bad things to her life. Later, the wind dies down, and Miss Marchmont awakens. She feels well and talks to Lucy about happy times in her life. Mostly she talks of Frank, a young man she was engaged to thirty years before. She considers herself rare in having loved such a good and true man. He was killed when his horse dragged him to her home one night, on Christmas. Since then her life has been filled with affliction and pain. Miss Marchmont remarks that she has not made the best use of her life. She believes she has been selfish and woe-struck, and she tells Lucy that she must put herself in a better state of mind and try to make the world an easier place for others, in order to prepare herself for her reunion with Frank. She tells Lucy that she will try to do something for her, to make Lucy's life easier. Lucy leaves her to go return to her bed. When she awakes in the morning, she finds that Miss Marchmont has calmly and peacefully died in the night.

## Chapter 4, Miss Marchmont Analysis

Lucy's history and childhood is cut off from the reader. The ship metaphor, which can be considered foreshadowing of the last chapter of the book, is the only description of

Lucy's childhood the reader receives. Aside from what is said of her visits to her godmother, there is nothing of her past. She emerges from a family tragedy alone, and that is how the reader sees her. She has no connection to anything, and she must find a way to survive in the world. In spite of these circumstances, Lucy is reluctant to take the position with Miss Marchmont because she fears tying herself to a situation where she will have no freedom.

When Lucy does take the position, she shows herself to be a loyal servant to her mistress. She respects Miss Marchmont and is fond of the woman, even though illness has made her alternatively cranky and temperamental. Lucy can see the good that Miss Marchmont has done for others, and she can see that any harshness in her is caused by her pain, not her personality.

The story of Frank, and Miss Marchmont's words that she must do more for others, show that she is a person who feels that acts of charity must be done without regard to self-interest. This is a theme that appears often in the novel, and it provides a striking contrast between Miss Marchmont and Lucy's next employer, Madame Beck. Miss Marchmont's promise to take care of Lucy shows promise for Lucy's future and shows Miss Marchmont as a kind and generous woman.

# Chapter 5, Turning a New Leaf

## Chapter 5, Turning a New Leaf Summary

With Miss Marchmont's death, Lucy is again left with nowhere to live. While she is not completely destitute, she does not have the means to keep herself for long, and she will need to leave the house soon. Miss Marchmont's nephew pays her last wages, but since he is not generous and since Miss Marchmont had not yet made arrangements for Lucy, this is all Lucy has. Lucy speaks of having fraying nerves and worn health. She is not well, and yet she is not doing badly either. She visits her old nurse, who has become the housekeeper at a large hall nearby. Mrs. Barrett has little advice to offer her, but as Lucy walks home that night, the shimmering Aurora Borealis seems to speak to her. She decides that she should go to London. The next day, she visits Mrs. Barrett again, and the little boy of the house comes in to see her. Lucy knows the lady of the house from school days, but Mrs. Leigh does not remember her. With Mrs. Leigh is a French nurse for the baby. The nurse is treated as well as a governess, and Mrs. Barrett tells Lucy that there are many English girls who have found similar positions on the continent.

Soon afterwards, Lucy leaves for London. It is a rainy and cold February night, and Lucy is overcome by the strange accents and different character of the city. She stumbles a little in her transactions. She is cheated by a porter, and the maid and waiter speak down to her and mistake her for a servant. That night, as Lucy retreats to her room, she is overcome by despair. She does not know what she will do in the city, and as she kneels in prayer, she hears the tolling of church bells and realizes that she lies in the shadow of St. Paul's.

## Chapter 5, Turning a New Leaf Analysis

In this chapter, the timeline for the narration is revealed. The month is February, and Lucy is twenty-three when she is once again left on her own after Miss Marchmont's death. It has been ten years since she has seen the Brettons, and in that time, Lucy has passed from childhood to adulthood. Lucy comments that as she writes this story, her hair is white, although it remained dark for many years. The reader learns that Lucy is narrating this story while looking back across the years.

When Lucy decides to go to London, she is releasing herself from the past and pushing it further into the distance. No one in London knows her, but instead of a new start, Lucy simply finds new confusion. She is alone. She is taken advantage of, and she is not treated respectfully. Although there is some foreshadowing that Lucy might find a position on the continent, as seen in the mention of the foreign nurse, she must still rely on herself and her intuition if she is going to make it, because the world will not help her.

# Chapter 6, London

## Chapter 6, London Summary

Lucy awakens the next morning and looks out her window to see the city spread beneath her and the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral before her, a sight which lifts her spirits. At breakfast, she speaks to the waiter and discovers that he knew her uncles. She sets out for a day on her own and walks around London, enjoying the sights of the city, including the view from the dome of St. Paul's. She finally returns to the inn and enjoys a good meal and a pleasant nap. Lucy's changed state of mind helps her to come up with a plan. She has nothing to lose by leaving England, so she decides to go to France to find work. She asks the waiter for help, and he finds her a ship that is crossing the channel early the next morning. Lucy immediately departs for the ship, and her naivety is revealed when she is left in the middle of a group of watermen, a dangerous situation for a lone woman. She saves herself by getting on a boat and making an ally of the owner, and he takes her to find her ship, The Vivid. When they find the ship, she is once again overcharged for the service, and the steward and stewardess are rude to her. The stewardess and her son talk all night, disclosing personal business in front of Lucy as though she were not there.

The next morning, the other passengers arrive. The Watsons are a wealthy group but showy and frivolous. Lucy does not approve of them and tries to avoid them. The other passenger is a seventeen-year-old lady, Ginevra Fanshawe, who is escorted to the ship by her father but left to cross the channel alone. Her family is not wealthy, as her father is a captain, but she has a wealthy godfather who is paying for her education. She is on her way to school in Villette, but school is of little concern to her. Ginevra is appalled to learn that Lucy is looking for work and feels bad for her, although she does not care beyond mere curiosity.

At first Lucy enjoys the voyage and feels that the world is before her, but then she becomes seasick and must go down to lie in the berth. The two Watson ladies and Ginevra are also ill. The stewardess is dedicated to the care of the Watsons because of their wealth, leaving Lucy alone with Ginevra's prattle. When they arrive in the Port of Boue-Marine, the other passengers are greeted by friends and family, while Lucy is alone. She gives the stewardess a large tip and asks to be directed to an inn. The stewardess responds to the unexpected generosity by sending someone to escort her to a hotel. Lucy is ill, but she changes her money and goes to sleep.

## Chapter 6, London Analysis

Although Lucy's arrival in London has left her anxious, she wakes with a sense of optimism. Instead of worry, she simply enjoys the morning and the newness of being in London. This break from worry allows her to think in an adventurous state of mind. The truth of Lucy's situation is that she has nowhere to go and nothing to lose. Going back to

where she came from would get her nowhere. She must look forward, and so she decides on an unusually bold plan of action.

Once Lucy's plan is in action, she begins to worry again. She is taken advantage of by numerous people, which shows that she is not worldly, and even when she knows she is being overcharged, she fails to fight back. Weariness overtakes her after her brief bout of confidence, and being on the ship is a relief. She is trapped there, and for a short time, she will not have to worry about what to do next because she can do nothing until she arrives at the port.

Ginevra stands as a sharp contrast to Lucy's character, serving as a literary foil. Although the Watsons are flashy and coarse, they are the company that receives the attention from the crew, while Lucy receives attention from Ginevra. Ginevra is pretty and talkative, but she is also self-centered and materialistic. There is no substance to her speech, which makes her different from the serious and thoughtful Lucy. Nonetheless, Lucy is the person she seeks out, and even when Lucy snaps at her to be quiet, it seems to be well-received by the girl.

# Chapter 7, Villette

## Chapter 7, Villette Summary

Lucy dresses herself in the morning and is interrupted by a man from the custom house, who snatches her keys and leaves to get her trunk. She eats a small breakfast in the coffee room, embarrassed to be the only woman present, and eventually she finds someone to help her find passage to Villette. Ginevra Fanshawe off-handedly remarked that she should come to Madame Beck's school in Villette for work, since Madame Beck has been looking for an English teacher.

Although Lucy does not know where Madame Beck's pensionnat, or school, is, she boards a coach with her luggage and makes her way to Villette. When she disembarks at Villette, she is astonished to find that her luggage is not on the coach. She asks an English gentleman for help, and he discovers that the coach was overloaded. Her trunk was left behind. When he learns that she has no friends in the city, he directs her to a nearby inn and escorts her part of the way. Shortly after he leaves her, with clear directions on how to get to the inn, Lucy finds herself being followed by two strange men. She is frightened and runs away, soon getting lost in the streets of the strange city. A group of people coming down the street scares the men away, and Lucy tries to find her way to the inn. She comes across a flight of stairs, which leads to Madame Beck's school, and heedless of the late hour, Lucy knocks on the door.

Madame Beck is sent for, and the two women attempt to converse, although one speaks no English and the other no French. Eventually, Lucy is able to communicate that she is looking for work. Madame Beck tries to get her to come back the next day, but her cousin, M. Paul, a teacher at the school, is passing in the hall. Madame Beck asks him to take a look at Lucy. M. Paul says that she looks fair enough, and if they need someone they might as well hire her. Madame Beck hires Lucy, and Lucy is spared having to go out into the strange streets of the city in the night.

## Chapter 7, Villette Analysis

Fate seems to be leading Lucy to a position of security. She has no plans beyond the port, but her fellow passenger happens to mention a possible position. Her trunk is left behind, but a stranger who speaks English is there to assist her. Her journey through the streets of Villette is frightening, but it leads her to the place she is seeking. Lucy's actions are out of character, and yet her willingness to take risks proves to work in her favor.

During the journey, Lucy remarks that she enjoys the long period of travel, because once again she does not have to worry. The day-to-day concerns of survival have taken over her life. Instead of thinking of long term goals, such as what she might want to do or where she might want to go, Lucy is reduced to wondering whether or not she will

find a place to sleep that night and whether or not she will run out of money before she finds work. Although Lucy is not distraught, these real, immediate concerns are wearying, and this is why she is willing to take such journeys.

# Chapter 8, Madame Beck

## Chapter 8, Madame Beck Summary

Lucy is given some food to eat, and then Madame Beck escorts her through the dormitories to the nursery where her three children live, attended by a woman dressed in showy silks that do not fit properly. The woman is asleep in her chair, and the air reeks of whisky. Madame Beck ignores it, though, and simply points Lucy toward a bed. Lucy thanks God for leading her to this place, and she soon falls asleep. In the middle of the night, Lucy awakens to find Madame Beck in the room. She checks on her children and then stares at Lucy a long time, while Lucy pretends to sleep. Madame Beck even goes so far as to glance through Lucy's things. She takes the keys to Lucy's trunk and writing desk and makes impressions of them in the soap in her room, and then she neatly returns everything to its place. Lucy thinks this behavior is strange and foreign, not to mention unfair, but she can see that it is just business to Madame Beck.

The next morning, Lucy becomes acquainted with Madame Svini, or Mrs. Sweeny, the children's present nursemaid. She came to the school and presented herself as an educated Englishwoman from Middlesex, but in reality she is an Irish woman, probably a household servant. Only her fine clothes helped her to retain the position in spite of her poor English and drinking. Mrs. Sweeny rages when she discovers that Lucy will be filling her position, but Madame Beck is calm. Lucy is not afraid. A few moments later, the police arrive and remove Mrs. Sweeny.

Madame Beck runs her school efficiently, primarily through surveillance, and while she does not scold or punish her staff, the teachers and masters often change. Madame Beck has a high esteem for English women and thinks they are well mannered and intelligent. While Madame believes that the freedoms granted to English girls help them to grow into modest, honest women, she does not believe that she can allow that degree of freedom to her girls in the school. Nonetheless, she runs the school with a mild hand. Lessons are easy, and the girls get plenty of food, rest and exercise. Lucy thinks that English schools might do well to adopt some of her practices.

One day, as Lucy is giving the children an English lesson, Madame Beck comes to the nursery and asks if Lucy has ever taught before. Lucy tells her she has not, but Madame Beck asks if she could give a lesson to the second division, since the English instructor is not at the school. Lucy is terrified at the idea of teaching sixty students, and she almost lets the chance slip by. Madame Beck, though, insists and escorts Lucy to the classroom. Lucy is shaking and crying, and Madame asks her if she really believes she is that weak. Lucy decides she must take a chance and be strong and enters the classroom. Madame asks her if she thinks she can handle it, and Lucy responds that even though her French is hesitant, she wants to try.

The French girls do not like the idea of a children's nursemaid teaching them English. They begin whispering and giggling, and soon the entire room is filled with noise. Lucy

feels she has a strong voice and could gain control of them in English, but in French it is more difficult. She takes one student's essay and begins to read it aloud to the class. She finds it rather stupid and tears it in two, which silences most of the room. The one exception is Dolores, an unpopular Catalonian girl. Lucy walks up the aisle toward her and quickly pushes her into a book closet and locks the door. There is suddenly silence and order in the room. The rest of the class passes peaceably, and when Lucy leaves the room, Madame Beck, who was spying, says that it will do. Lucy then becomes an English teacher.

## Chapter 8, Madame Beck Analysis

When Lucy describes Madame Beck, she never says anything disrespectful or states that there is anything dislikable about the woman, but the reader can see that Madame Beck is rather heartless and self-serving. Her behavior is governed by her own self-interest. She will be honest and charitable for as long as it benefits her, but when it does not, she has no sympathy. While she will give to the poor in general, she does not feel mercy for the individual, which makes her a very different person from Miss Marchmont. Lucy states that she takes no offence at Madame Beck's looking through her belongings or spying on the staff and students in general, because it is simply the way Madame Beck runs her business.

Lucy explains that she does not receive this insight into the school or Madame Beck quickly, but it comes over time, as she observes from the nursery. The school seems pleasant. The students and teachers are a little rough but happy, and Madame Beck seems to excel at running her pensionnat. It takes a great deal of time for Lucy to see past this fazade and understand the true character of her boss and the business, but Lucy is well positioned to be an observer. In fact, Lucy remarks that she is so relieved to be saved from the anxiety of worrying about herself and her keep that she might have been content to stay in the distanced, nursery-bound position forever. She would not have been happy as a children's nurse, but she would have been content to not have to wonder where she would sleep the next night.

Lucy likes to be an observer, and her position as an outside observer is both a key element of her character and a theme to her narrative. She enjoys her quiet time with her thoughts, and she almost fears wishing for more because she thinks she is likely to be disappointed or forced into a dire situation again. In her isolated position, Lucy has the time and means to learn the character of the school. Madame Beck forces her out her seclusion by convincing her to take on the English class and in doing so gives Lucy further means to support herself. In this new position, Lucy is part of the scene, acting instead of watching from the sidelines.

# Chapter 9, Isidore

## Chapter 9, Isidore Summary

Lucy finds that her time is filled with profitable tasks. Between teaching and studying French, she is always pleasantly occupied. Eventually, she is able to win over several of the girls. One obstacle that remains between Lucy and her students is Lucy's Protestantism. The students and teachers are Catholics, and Lucy's Protestant beliefs are a cause for concern. One day Lucy is walking with several students, and in an attempt to improve their morality, she mentions that she believes lying is worse than a lapse in church attendance. This minor but thoroughly Protestant remark makes its way back to Madame Beck, and from that point on, Lucy never walks alone with students, as there is always someone there to monitor the conversation.

Ginevra Fanshawe, the young lady that Lucy met on the boat, is a student at Madame Beck's school. While Ginevra is enthusiastic in her singing, dancing and music lessons, she does not care much about any of her other classes. She is dependent on others for help with most menial tasks necessary to get by. Lucy does help her with the mending at first but eventually tells Ginevra that she must do her own work. Ginevra is displeased but gets over it quickly. She enjoys telling Lucy about her suitor, whom she calls Isidore. Lucy is at first suspicious of their relationship, since Ginevra accepts many favors from him yet does not seem to return his affection and has not agreed to marry him. In time, Lucy grows to feel that Isidore is acting in a noble and polite manner, and she even goes so far as to tell Ginevra that he is too good for her.

Ginevra's father wishes her to get out and see the world while she is in school. Her chaperone is a Mrs. Cholmondeley, and her primary patron is her uncle M. de Bassompierre, who pays for her schooling and most of her supplies. Mrs. Cholmondeley is tired of supporting Ginevra, and yet Ginevra continues to have new dresses. One night, she stops by Lucy's room to show off her new dress. Lucy asks about the dress and accessories, and Ginevra reveals that Isidore bought her many fine things, while her uncle will be getting the bill for the dresses. Lucy is appalled by Ginevra's selfishness. She points out that if Ginevra does not love Isidore, then it is wrong to accept his gifts. Ginevra simply laughs and says that right now she is interested in a different man, Colonel Alfred de Hamal, and she cares little for Isidore. She believes her business is her youth and enjoying herself. Disgusted, Lucy asks her to leave, which she does, laughing.

## Chapter 9, Isidore Analysis

Ginevra's pettiness and vivacity are a complete opposite of Lucy's simple, direct and calm manner. Ginevra is silly and vain but not too proud to have Lucy as a friend. The friendship is surprising, though, because the two women seem to have nothing in common. Ginevra is obsessed with wealth and material things. She is a consummate

flirt and has no thoughts for propriety. Lucy, on the other hand, is reserved and never wants to make a spectacle of herself. She even goes so far as to tell Ginevra that she does not approve of her behavior. She will not assist her with her mending, but Ginevra continues to seek her out.

While Lucy was content to stay in her position as a children's nurse, Ginevra continues to seek out more and more for herself. She wants more social engagements, more clothes, more jewelry and more flirtations. Although Lucy does not approve of the way Ginevra speaks of her conquests, she can tell from Ginevra's stories that Isidore has behaved in a respectable and even admirable manner toward Ginevra. Even though she does not know the man, Lucy takes his side against Ginevra, telling the girl that she does not deserve him. This early respect foreshadows the friendship and esteem that Lucy will later develop with the gentleman. Ginevra's uncaring attitude illustrates the coarseness in her that Lucy find so unappealing.

# Chapter 10, Dr. John

## Chapter 10, Dr. John Summary

Madame Beck shows little affection for her children. While she cares for them and looks toward their interest and future, she seems to have no inclination to cuddle them. Dysirye, the eldest, is a terror of a child. She constantly sneaks into other people's belonging and steals or ruins things. Madame Beck's response is that the girl needs closer surveillance. She never tells her daughter that she is doing wrong, and instead she simply takes back her belongings. One day Fifine, the middle child, falls down a flight of stairs and breaks her arm. Madame Beck calmly scoops her up and leaves her in the care of Lucy and the servants, while she leaves to find the surgeon.

The surgeon is not at home, but Madame Beck returns with a young doctor to attend Fifine. Fifine is in pain from the broken arm and does not want the stranger to touch her, but he gives her some sugar water and speaks to her in English. She calms down. The doctor requires some assistance in setting the arm. While the others flee, Lucy offers to help, but she is turned down. Madame Beck stoically assists in the operation because Lucy is trembling and frightened. Lucy notices that the doctor is young and good-looking. There is something in his smile and aspect that she does not like, but he seems to be a kind, well-mannered young man. As he is leaving, she realizes that he was the man who directed her to the hotel her first night in Villette.

Dr. Pillule, the family's normal doctor, is called away to travel with a patient, and Dr. John becomes the family's doctor. He visits Fifine regularly, and she recovers quickly under his care. Shortly after Fifine recovers fully, Dysirye decides that she should be ill. The attention is appealing to her, and Madame Beck indulges her, since this plan keeps the little girl in bed and out of trouble. Lucy is often called on to watch the children, and she observes the interactions between the doctor and Madame Beck. She cannot determine why the doctor is going along with the pretend illness, and she observes him looking shrewdly at Madame Beck and loitering around the school. One day, Lucy is observing the doctor and has a sudden realization. It so startles her that the doctor notices her staring and asks what she is looking at. Rather than telling the doctor, or the reader, Lucy simply goes back to her work, somewhat pleased with her secret discovery.

## Chapter 10, Dr. John Analysis

Lucy considers Madame Beck's relationship with her children to be unnatural. While Madame looks out for her children's welfare, she shows them no affection. Though her children may want her attention, she turns them over to Lucy instead. When the children are sick or injured, Lucy is the one who cares for them. When the doctor needs help to set Fifine's arm, Lucy reacts in a motherly manner, and though she tries to help because

the child needs her, she is too emotional. Madame Beck, the true mother, is not in the least bit emotional, and Dr. John admires her calm demeanor as she assists him.

Dr. John usually seems to ignore Lucy's presence, just as many others do. Lucy tells the reader that her external appearance does not warrant much attention, and she is accustomed to being ignored. The doctor, on the other hand, is not ignored, but instead encouraged in his visits to the school. Although he is not really needed, he is at the school almost constantly. Madame Beck and the others in the school are attracted to him for his good looks and pleasant manner. While Lucy does not directly say so, she hints that although he is always courteous and appropriate, there is flirtiness, even roguishness, beneath the surface that makes her uncomfortable.

At the end of the chapter, Lucy seems to discover a secret about the doctor. This discovery foreshadows her reunion with the Brettons in later chapters and her feelings about the doctor. Dr. John is a bit annoyed to find her staring at him, and she remarks that it is one of the only times that he has noticed her presence, although she observes him frequently. Whatever the secret is, Lucy does not reveal it to the reader or to Dr. John, but instead she just smiles to herself. Perhaps it is because Dr. John ignores her or because having a secret gives her a sense of power, but Lucy is satisfied with the insight she has gained.

# Chapter 11, The Portresse's Cabinet

## Chapter 11, The Portresse's Cabinet Summary

During the hot summer, Georgette, the youngest of Madame Beck's children, comes down with a fever. Madame sends Dysirye and Fifine off to the country, and Dr. John is in regular attendance on Georgette. Soon, several of the students complain of headaches, and Dr. John comes to treat them. Lucy is surprised that Madame Beck would allow a young stranger to attend to her students, and soon Madame Beck receives letters from upset parents. Madame Beck merely laughs off any alarm and tells the parents that since Dr. John has taken such good care of her own children, of course she wants him for her students. The parents are satisfied with this explanation, and Madame Beck's reputation is better than ever.

One day, Georgette is very ill, and Lucy is anxiously awaiting the doctor's visit. She hears him arrive, but he does not come up the stairs. Lucy makes her way downstairs to look for him. She hears him say, "For God's sake!" and then he comes out the door and makes his way upstairs. Lucy is standing behind the open door. He does not see her, but he seems upset. Peeking around the corner, Lucy sees that Rosine, the portresse, is the only person in the little room. While Rosine is pretty and dressy, she is also vain and far below the doctor's station. Lucy is surprised that the doctor is involved with her and wishes that she were able to speak to him about it.

When Lucy goes upstairs, both she and to Madame Beck see that the doctor is bothered by something. Madame thinks he is ill, but Lucy remarks that it is probably due to a temporary cause. When Lucy responds to Georgette in English, Dr. John is startled, and Lucy realizes that he probably believed that she was a foreigner. His manner indicates that he is not interested in Madame Beck's admiration, and when he leaves, Madame Beck seems a bit morose. She plucks a single white hair from her head and leaves. Lucy feels bad that Madame Beck is disappointed, but she can see that Madame Beck has plenty of activities to keep her occupied and does not have tender enough feelings to be pained by Dr. John's lack of interest.

## Chapter 11, The Portresse's Cabinet Analysis

Lucy is rather attached to Georgette, Madame Beck's youngest child, and the little girl seems to be fond of her as well. For Lucy, this is the only expression of love that she gives or receives, and Georgette is a symbol of the life that Lucy might have had. Lucy is alone in the world, with no children, no little nieces or nephews, and she does not even seem to have any friends. Lucy expects to remain single, and so her relationship with Georgette may be the only relationship like this she may ever know.

Lucy continues in her role as an observer, and she watches the situation with Madame Beck and Dr. John with great interest. Lucy is surprised that Madame Beck would take

risks to benefit Dr. John's career. Everyone in the house seems to think that Madame Beck will marry the young doctor. Although she is fourteen years older than the doctor, Madame Beck is a young-looking woman. At the end of chapter, when it is apparent that Madame Beck's wishes will not come to fruition, Lucy witnesses a rare moment of disappointment for the older woman. When Madame Beck plucks out the white hair, the symbol of her age and disappointment, Lucy is tempted to feel pity for her for a moment, but then she realizes that Madame Beck is not a sensitive person, but rather someone who views marriage as a business deal.

Lucy is a bit disappointed and concerned about Dr. John's behavior. Dr. John seems to be amused, if not pleased, by Madame Beck's attention. Lucy is perturbed by his reaction, but she thinks that he is probably a bit tickled to be so admired. She is worried that receiving the attention without a thought of returning it implies a weakness in his character, and this foreshadows Lucy's personal relationship with the doctor. Later, when she sees him emerge from the cabinet and thinks he may be involves with Rosine, she wishes that she were in a position to speak to him and point him toward the proper course of action. Lucy's interest in his flirtations hints that she has an interest in him, although she may not admit it, even to herself.

# Chapter 12, The Casket

## Chapter 12, The Casket Summary

Lucy enjoys spending time in the large garden behind the school. While this garden is crowded and noisy during the day, when all the school children enjoy it, it is a quiet sanctuary for Lucy during the early morning and evening hours. There are old stories that back in the days when the school was a convent, a nun was buried alive beneath a tree for breaking her vow, and her ghost is said to haunt the area. Lucy particularly likes the "forbidden alley," a dark and overgrown area that borders the boys' college. It allows her a space to be alone and think. Sitting in the alley one evening, while the rest of the school is at evening prayers, she listens to the sounds of the city. Suddenly a window above her is opened, and a small casket is thrown out. The box has no name or address on it, but inside Lucy finds some violets and a note. It appears to be a billet-doux, or love letter, but Lucy does not think it is meant for her.

While other teachers and many students think of the opposite sex, and many expect to marry or are already engaged, Lucy does not believe anyone has paid any attention to her - not even the flirty young doctor. Although she knows the casket is not meant for her, Lucy opens the letter and reads it. Inside, the writer thanks his intended for going outside to meet him. He describes the lady as wearing a gray dress, and Lucy realizes that she has been mistaken for the intended recipient. The writer goes on to say that he was worried that the English teacher, Lucy, would be in the alley and refers to Lucy as a monster, a nun and several other unflattering terms. The writer says he is in a master's chamber at the boys' college, visiting his ill nephew, and he is taking advantage of the doctor's visit to deliver his note. The straw hat and gray dress references do not help Lucy figure out who the note is for, but she hopes that it is for one of the engaged students, because then there will not be a scandal.

Dr. John runs into the garden, and Lucy tells him that she has the note. He is relieved and asks that she not tell on the student. Lucy informs him that she does not know who the note is for, and as he reads it, he remarks that it is very bad. At first, Lucy does not believe that Dr. John wrote the note, but then she notices that Rosine is wearing a gray dress. She tells Dr. John that if he can assure her that the note was not meant for a student, she will let him take the casket and forget about the incident. Madame Beck finds Lucy in the garden, and Lucy is worried that she is in trouble for staying out late. However, Madame simply strolls around the garden with her and then bids her good night. Lucy does not doubt that Madame Beck knows something of what has happened and that she will use Lucy to find out exactly what is going on.

## Chapter 12, The Casket Analysis

The melancholy side of Lucy becomes more apparent in this chapter. She seeks out the dark alley that others avoid, enjoying its solitude. While the rest of the school sleeps

uneasily, Lucy is standing outside her window, enjoying the drama of a dark thunderstorm. The darker, more depressed side of Lucy's character is emerging, symbolized by the darkness of the alley and the action of the storm. She has the position of English teacher, but she has no friends, no family and no one to share her life with. Lucy is becoming more concerned that the rest of her life, the present and the future, will be empty. She would like something to look forward to and wishes for a change that would make her life better. While Lucy is a naturally solitary person, she would like to go to a ball or opera, just to see something new. She does not see any opportunity for such a change, so she is becoming depressed.

Lucy has always considered herself peaceful and unobtrusive, and she is shocked when she sees the harsh words used to refer to her. She is not particularly hurt, but she is bewildered, both by the language and by the idea that she was mistaken for someone's object of affection. The love letter seems to further symbolize the life that Lucy does not have, while the terms used to describe her represent the way she fears she is viewed by the world. When Dr. John reads the note, he says nothing specifically about the terms used to describe Lucy. He merely mentions that the note is bad, and he asks her to be silent. Lucy seems uncertain whether or not she believes he wrote the note. While at first she does not, when she sees Rosine, she begins to think that he may have thrown the note down for her. She does not seem to wonder why the doctor would write about her in such a way, which might be a sign that Lucy is jealous and not thinking clearly about the note. Also, the note says that the doctor was with the sick nephew at the college, and that clue is a strong indication that he did not throw the casket.

# Chapter 13, A Sneeze Out of Season

## Chapter 13, A Sneeze Out of Season Summary

The climate in Villette is variable, and the day after the events in the garden is dark and windy. Lucy does not take her normal walk in the garden, and instead she retreats to the "Etude de soir," or evening study. Usually this means a silent study time, when Lucy can work on her German before then a pious lecture is read from an old book. Lucy hates the book, since it is filled with stories of hypocritical saints and faulty morality that offend her Protestant upbringing. The lectures anger her so much that she once broke the tips off her scissors by stabbing them into the table.

This evening, the book is fetched, and Lucy leaves the room. She makes her way in the darkness to her dormitory, and there she finds Madame Beck going through her things. Madame Beck has a silent and efficient manner of tackling such tasks, and because Lucy does not want a confrontation, she backs away and leaves before Madame Beck notices her. Lucy does not want to leave the school, and since she has nothing to hide and Madame Beck does not so much as crease an item of clothing, she is able to live with the spying. Secretly, Lucy is amused that Madame Beck thinks it is worthwhile to spy on her. Since she has no lover and no expectation that she will find one, there is little for Madame to find.

Georgette is nearly better, and a visit from the doctor is not necessary. However, one evening Madame Beck declares that Georgette has a fever and that the doctor should be fetched. Madame Beck, who has always been home to receive the doctor, decides to run errands instead of staying home, leaving Lucy in charge of Georgette. When Dr. John arrives, Rosine comments that there is nothing wrong with the child and asks how Dr. John knew about the package. He responds that he was attending a patient at the boys' college and saw it dropped. Lucy is relieved to hear this explanation, but Rosine is disappointed that it is not more intriguing. She leaves. Lucy looks out the window and sees a package drop. Dr. John tells Lucy to run and get it before anyone notices. She does so, and when she returns, he rips it up.

Dr. John tells Lucy that it is not the girl's fault, but Lucy tells him that she does not know who the notes are for. He is surprised and says that if he knew Lucy better, he would ask her to look after the girl. Lucy eagerly offers to assist him. He is about to tell her which girl the letters are for when there is a sneeze behind the door. Madame Beck hurries in and pretends to sneeze again. She has been listening at the door. Although Dr. John is surprised, he and Lucy go along with the pretence that Madame Beck has just returned home from her errands.

# Chapter 13, A Sneeze Out of Season Analysis

Lucy has particularly strong and negative feelings about Catholicism, and these feeling are a source of conflict between her and several characters throughout the novel. She seems to feel it is a hypocritical religion, where people who lived sinful lives are still rewarded and even become saints if they die as martyrs or have a sudden conversion. Lucy feels that more emphasis should be placed on living a pure life free from sin, rather than on a sudden forgiveness. The wealthy trappings of the church anger her, since she feels that they get in the way of true religion. For this reason, Lucy becomes annoyed whenever the book is brought out, because the book is a symbol of all the faults she sees in the Catholic Church.

When Lucy finds Madame Beck rifling through her belongings, she is at first silent and thoughtful. She does not want to lose her place at the school or cause a rift in her relationship with Madame Beck, so she backs away. Lucy is amused, simply because she catches Madame Beck, and Madame does not even know that she, for once, is being watched. Then Lucy realizes how foolish it is for Madame Beck to waste her time spying on Lucy. Lucy has nothing to hide, and she thinks that it is obvious that she has nothing to hide. After a little laugh, Lucy is stricken with grief for a moment, not because Madame does not trust her but because she realizes her life is so empty that there is nothing to find. Lucy rarely says what is bothering her, and here she just describes the moment of intense grief that strikes her. The reader can clearly see, though, how this unspoken realization changes her self-perception.

# Chapter 14, The Fete

## Chapter 14, The Fete Summary

The summer is a pleasant time at Rue Fossette. Many classes are held outdoors, and there are many saints' days to celebrate. The most important fete, or party, of the season is Madame Beck's birthday. Zylie St. Pierre is in charge of planning the party. The fete involves the presentation of the gift, a feast, a play and a dance and supper. The play is the most important part of the evening, and both teachers and students take roles. M. Paul Emanuel, the professor of literature, is the director of the play. Lucy does not know M. Paul, but she has seen him. The students often talk about him. He is intimidating, plain looking and demanding of his students.

The morning of the party begins slowly, with students and teachers eating breakfast in their dressing gowns and curlers, and later that morning, the hairdresser arrives and sets up in the oratory, which Lucy thinks is sacrilegious. Nevertheless, when her hair is done, she admires his work, thinking that he has made the most of her plain hair. All of the students and most of the teachers spend a great deal of time dressing themselves in white muslin dresses. Lucy quickly dons her new purple-gray "dun-colored" dress. It is a neat, well-made dress, but Lucy observes that it is hard to be plain when the occasion calls for beauty. Since Lucy is ready early, she makes her way downstairs and decides to read a book. M. Paul finds her in the classroom and remarks to himself that he will make the prudish English teacher do what he wants. Lucy politely asks him what she can do, and he tells her that she must take a part in the play. The student who was to have the role is reportedly ill, and without that role, the play cannot proceed. Normally, he does not like English women, but he needs to ask the favor of her. Lucy wants to say no, but the look on his face prompts her to say yes.

M. Paul has her read the part and is not satisfied with her performance. He leads her up to the attic, where he leaves her, telling her to practice. The attic is dirty, hot and full of rats, roaches and beetles. Lucy is frightened but settles herself near a window and practices. Hours pass, and M. Paul does not return for her. She misses the feast and grows hungry. Lucy continues to practice, and M. Paul returns in time to hear her rehearsal. He is about to leave her to practice some more, but she tells him that she is hungry. He feels terrible that he left her up there and brings her to the kitchen to eat. When she is full, he leads her to the party.

Zylie St. Pierre offers to dress Lucy for her part, but Lucy does not want to change out of her dress. Lucy is determined to dress herself and simply redoes her hair and adds some men's garments over her dress. When she returns, M. Paul remarks that it will do, while Zylie sneers. Lucy loses her temper and remarks that if Zylie were not a lady and Lucy were not a gentleman, she would call her out.

Lucy and the others take their places on stage. The crowd and the idea of speaking French in front of that many foreigners make her nervous, but Lucy blunders her way

through her first lines. Then, she notices that Ginevra, who plays the lead, seems to be playing to someone in the audience. Lucy looks out and sees Dr. John. From that point on, Lucy's performance improves, as she plays up to Ginevra's acting. After the play, Lucy watches the ball. Ginevra is the belle, and she runs up to Lucy and gives her a hug. Ginevra remarks that she would not be Lucy for a kingdom. Lucy returns that she would rather not be Ginevra either, which Ginevra finds ridiculous. Ginevra is young, pretty and well admired. Lucy has no family, no connections and at twenty-three is no longer considered young. She is not pretty and has no admirers. Lucy merely responds that there must be good in Ginevra, if she can be so honest.

Ginevra confesses that both Isidore and Alfred de Hamal are at the party, and she points them out to Lucy. Alfred de Hamal is good looking and finely dressed, but he seems almost doll-like in his perfection. Lucy sarcastically says that she is falling in love with him as well. Ginevra does not want to reveal Isidore, because he is not good looking and has a red beard. At this point, they turn to see Dr. John approaching them. He scolds Ginevra for being in a draught without a shawl and remarks that she is delicate and must take special care. Ginevra is rude to him, but Lucy sees that his feelings are hurt and runs to fetch a shawl for Ginevra. Lucy is angry to see that Ginevra prefers a fop like the colonel to the doctor. She cannot understand how Ginevra can have the power to play with the emotions of such a fine man. Ginevra runs back to the ball, and Lucy finds Dr. John standing alone. Dr. John is still under the impression that Ginevra is a fine, well-mannered young lady. He believes that Lucy should look after the younger girl as an older sister would, but Lucy remarks that she cannot respect a girl who would prefer de Hamal. Lucy tells him that if Ginevra is at all worthy, she will return his feeling, a comment that surprises him.

## Chapter 14, The Fete Analysis

While Lucy enjoys the easy pace of the school in the summer, she does not appreciate the moral theory behind the many saints' days and celebrations. The Catholic Church seems to encourage the parties, acting with the idea that it is better for the parishioners to concentrate on their health and happiness and simply leave their souls to the Church. Lucy thinks this is a lazy approach to Christianity and thinks the Church should take a more active role in the morality of its people and discourage the wasteful laziness of the holidays.

While the other students and teachers are getting dressed up in the airy, youthful clothes of summer, Lucy puts on a practical dress. It is a quiet color, and the dress allows her to blend into the background. She feels comfortable in her dress, a symbol of her desire to remain unnoticed. Madame Beck approves of Lucy's appearance and comments on how silly it is when grown women dress as though they were girls. Although Lucy may secretly want to wear a white muslin dress, she does not believe she is pretty enough and thinks that not drawing attention to herself is the way to make the best appearance.

Lucy is trying not to be noticed, but she draws the attention of several people throughout the day. M. Paul says that she is prudish, while Zylie makes sarcastic remarks about her beauty. Lucy does not want to take off the dress. She is safe in the dress, and she knows who she is while wearing it. Being called to act on a stage, in a foreign language, is frightening for Lucy, but the idea of changing her dress and the taunting she gets from Zylie almost moves her to violence. Once she is on the stage and acting towards Ginevra, Lucy changes. She is acting the role of Dr. John, and her respect and admiration for him is channeled into her portrayal of the fop, changing that role. When she leaves the stage, Lucy realizes that she likes dramatic expression. It is exciting and offers her the chance to do something new and be someone else. However, Lucy decides that she must not pursue drama, because it would not suit her real life role as an onlooker. She cannot go on pretending to be someone else, and she cannot observe if the attention is on her.

Ginevra, on the other hand, loves having attention directed toward her and loves pretending to be someone else. She is determined to drive both her admirers insane and flirts with them, playing a part. Lucy has always been able to see right through Ginevra's appearance, but Dr. John believes she is an innocent, artless young girl. Lucy does not speak out about Ginevra's flaws, but she does remark that she wishes the girl would respect the doctor's friendship more. Dr. John is disheartened by this remark, and he believes that Lucy is a bit severe in her opinion of Ginevra.

# Chapter 15, The Long Vacation

## Chapter 15, The Long Vacation Summary

Following the party, the students and teachers at the Rue Fossette study hard for the end-of-the-year examinations. M. Paul is administering all of the examinations except for English, which he cannot master. The fact that Lucy must administer the English examination is annoying to him. He confronts Lucy in the garden and says she must look forward to the authority she will wield the next day, but Lucy is dreading the examinations. She finds M. Paul interesting when he is angry and jealous, but she admits to him that she would rather not give the exam. Because he does not speak English, he cannot. Finally he softens and declares that they should be friends instead of rivals. He assists her with the exam, and it goes well.

Immediately following the exam, all the students and teachers leave for vacation. Everyone else has family or friends to visit, but Lucy is left at the school with one servant and a deformed and mentally ill student. The days are long and lonely. Lucy's spirits have been gradually sinking, but it is not until she is left alone that she falls into despair. She cares for the student until an aunt comes to fetch her. With the student gone, Lucy is able to leave the school. She spends long hours wandering the countryside, imagining what the people she knows are doing. Ginevra in particular occupies her thoughts. In her mind, Lucy nearly turns her into a heroine, one who begins to love the hero in a coy, quiet way. At this point, Lucy realizes that her thoughts are running away with her, and she must keep herself well. She is unable to sleep, and when she does, she has nightmares. She wails in despair, missing her dead loved ones terribly. Goton, the servant, tells her to call for a doctor, but Lucy does not believe she can be cured.

One evening, Lucy is feeling sane but weak. She dresses and begins to walk into the countryside. The bells of a church attract her, and she goes inside. Sitting in the church, she is mistaken for a Catholic, and when she is told to take her turn at confession, she rises and obeys. She tells the priest that she is a Protestant, but she needs some advice or assistance. He is kind and listens as she tells him of her past and the depression that has overcome her. He tells her that he must think over her situation because her case is not typical. He believes that she should become a Catholic and that she was drawn into the church for a reason, and he tells her to come to his house so they can talk at a later date. He does not want her to return to the church because she has been ill.

Lucy begins to walk home. She is preoccupied with thinking about the priest, and looking back as she narrates the tale, she remarks that he was kind and did her good. Although Lucy does not like Catholicism or its creed, she is grateful that she met the kind priest who helped her so much. As she is walking, it begins to storm, and Lucy finds herself lost in the old part of the city. She grows confused, feeling colder and weaker than she had before, and she finally faints.

# Chapter 15, The Long Vacation Analysis

As the long vacation drags on and Lucy's nerves begin to fray, she becomes preoccupied by daydreams involving Ginevra and nightmares that keep her awake. Lucy herself thinks that it is odd that she is thinking about the other girl so much, but Ginevra is a symbol of the life that Lucy will never have. Ginevra's vacation is filled with social events. She is admired for her beauty, and she has the attention of a man that Lucy thinks is both handsome and gentlemanly. In contrast, Lucy has been abandoned. Her loved ones are gone, and she has been left at the school, forgotten and alone. The nightmares that plague her are a result of this loneliness, and it is the lack of sleep and constant stress of caring for the student that finally drives Lucy out to walk.

Lucy's confession to Pire Silas is an act of desperation. She remarks that the church bells seemed to call her, but they are the only things that have called to her for some time. She has been ignored, and when finally there is someone to listen to her, Lucy's heart opens. She pours out all the things that have been making her miserable. The priest listens carefully and responds kindly. While he may merely want her to become a Catholic, the care he expresses when he speaks to her and his act of reaching out to her distress makes her believe that he is a good man. Lucy needs kindness more than anything and is grateful to receive it from any source.

# Chapter 16, Auld Lang Syne

## Chapter 16, Auld Lang Syne Summary

Lucy does not recall her swoon. She awakens in a strange room. It takes her a few moments to realize that she is not at the Rue Fossette. Looking around, she is startled to see familiar objects in the room. Lucy asks where she is, and a maid, Martha, comes forward. She does not speak English or French, but she gestures for Lucy to lie down again and gives her a sleeping draught.

When Lucy awakens again, she is in a small bedchamber. This room is not familiar, but the furniture is. Lucy gets up and looks at a pincushion on a vanity. She realizes that it is something that she made for her godmother many years ago. She is confused and gets back into bed, turning her face to the wall. Looking up, she sees a portrait on the wall. This portrait once hung in the Bretton's breakfast room, and seeing the portrait, Lucy says aloud "Graham." A woman has entered the room behind Lucy and asks if she knows Graham. Lucy asserts that she does, and she instantly recognizes her godmother. Lucy does not reveal her discovery but asks where she is. Mrs. Bretton reassures her that she is safe and tells her to rest some more.

Later, Lucy rises and dresses. Mrs. Bretton is pleased to see that she is feeling better and escorts her downstairs to the sitting room. Lucy sees a familiar tea service and the food that Graham preferred as boy waiting for tea. Mrs. Bretton reads while they wait for Graham to return. When he does, she greets him cheerfully, and Lucy thanks Dr. John for his assistance. She has recognized Dr. John as Graham Bretton since the day he caught her staring at him, but she still does not reveal her relationship to the Brettons. While Lucy was surprised and pleased to see him, she never expected that he would recognize her or that it would matter much to him if he did. He had never heard her full name, so he naturally made no connection.

After tea, Lucy and the Brettons relax in the sitting room, and Lucy notices Mrs. Bretton looking at her. Mrs. Bretton remarks to Graham that Lucy bears a strong resemblance to someone they know. While Graham is unable to say who, Lucy realizes that her secret is about to be out. She tells Mrs. Bretton that while she recognized Graham Bretton, she did not expect him to recognize Lucy Snowe. Graham must think she is a little odd for keeping it a secret, but he kindly says nothing. Mrs. Bretton is happy to see her goddaughter, and she makes Lucy fill her in on the hard events that have effected her life over the last few years. The Brettons have not had an easy time either, losing most of their money and moving to a new country. Nonetheless, Graham is successful in his profession, and they have recently taken the house they are presently staying in. Graham says that Lucy must go to bed, and the next day they will discuss what led to her illness.

# Chapter 16, Auld Lang Syne Analysis

Lucy believes that her soul may have tried to leave her body when she passed out. She thinks that she was too tired, and because there was nothing to look forward to, her soul tried to flee but was called back. When Lucy wakes, she has been delivered to the Brettons. Suddenly her situation has changed. Instead of being on her own, Lucy now has a tether to her past. She has friends.

When Lucy sees the items in the room, she is disturbed. The portrait of Graham, in particular, troubles her. While Graham was, and is, a handsome and charming person, there is something about him that stirs intense feeling in Lucy that frighten her. This portrait is a symbol of those feelings that Lucy fears. She turns away, rather than facing those feelings. Lucy is frightened of being hurt. She is used to her position as an outsider, and she fears gaining the security of friends only to lose it again. Yet some part of Lucy enjoys being in her near-invisible position, since it enables her to observe so much about others. For this reason, she still does not reveal who she is to the Brettons, until Mrs. Bretton has obviously recognized her.

As Lucy goes to bed, she is happy that she has friends. She realizes that they are not very attached to her, and she is not as important to them as they are to her. Still, she has someone in the world. This changes everything for her. It somewhat frightening that she may belong to something and then run the risk of being hurt by losing it. This foreshadows the route that her friendship with the Brettons does take and shows what an accurate judge of character Lucy is. Lucy tells herself not to think too much of the Brettons or regard them too fondly but to be satisfied with the occasional tranquil encounter. Although Lucy has found a little hope and comfort in this reunion, she knows that they do not need her, and she cries herself to sleep.

# Chapter 17, La Terrasse

## Chapter 17, La Terrasse Summary

Lucy rises in the morning and attempts to dress, but Mrs. Bretton arrives and orders her back to bed. Mrs. Bretton sits with her while she eats breakfast, and Lucy enjoys her company. Then, Mrs. Bretton leaves to run her errands, and Lucy rests. When evening comes, she finally rises and proceeds downstairs. Mrs. Bretton is asleep on the sofa, but Dr. John is home already. He tells Lucy about their house, La Terrasse, and they admire the scenery. Lucy can tell that he is depressed about Ginevra, but before she can broach the subject he tells her that he visited the Rue Fossette and was astonished to learn that Goton had not realized Lucy was gone. Lucy assures him that the servant had attended to her the best that she could, but Dr. John is angry that Madame Beck left Lucy alone at the school. He asks Lucy what made her ill, and she says that she was dreadfully low-spirited, which is not something he can help with.

Dr. John asks her if she is Catholic and recounts how she came to be placed in his care. He was coming home from attending to a patient when he came across Pire Silas, the priest Lucy had talked to at confession. The priest had been worried about Lucy because of her illness and her complaints, and he was determined to make sure she got home safely. When she collapsed, he picked her up, and fortunately the doctor came along. They took her to La Terrasse. The priest would have stayed at her side, but both doctor and priest were called away to attend to a dying patient. Lucy tells Dr. John to thank the priest but asks him to keep her home a secret, since she does not want to be converted. Dr. John tells her that in her wanderings, she had actually been going in the opposite direction from Rue Fossette and warns her that she must take better care of herself. He advises that more company and travel would be good for her.

## Chapter 17, La Terrasse Analysis

When Lucy wakes up the next morning, she is feeling strong and positive. Her internal turmoil over how much she should value this friendship with the Brettons has left her calm, and she believes that this type of struggle is sometimes helpful. Now that she has thought it over, she can turn a calm face to the world, and only God can judge her inner character. Lucy secret inner life is part of the theme of Lucy as an observer, a silent character who sees much but rarely acts.

Lucy enjoys the company of the Brettons. She likes that Mrs. Bretton does not pester her or require her to talk or listen too much. This allows Lucy the opportunity to simply think or just enjoy being in the company of the good woman. The lighthearted teasing between mother and son is also fun for Lucy. Although she is not nearly as close to either of them, she can watch them and feel as though she were part of their family. She feels close to them and understands them, even though they may not understand her.

# Chapter 18, We Quarrel

## Chapter 18, We Quarrel Summary

A few days pass before Graham asks Lucy about Ginevra, but when he finally asks if Lucy has heard from her, Lucy responds that she is not that intimate with Miss Fanshawe. Graham believes that Lucy is jealous of Ginevra's friends, the Cholmondeleys. He assures Lucy that the Cholmondeleys are empty people, and eventually Ginevra will realize this and return to Lucy as a friend. Lucy is not happy that Graham thinks she is jealous, since she does not care about Ginevra, but she says nothing. Graham goes on to say that he believes de Hamal is worthless, but Ginevra is deluded about him. Lucy loses her temper and says that Graham is a good, clear-sighted man, but he is the one who is deluded in regard to Miss Fanshawe. He does not have Lucy's respect on that point. She leaves the room and spends the rest of the day worried that she has offended him and ruined their friendship.

Finally, after dinner, Lucy asks Graham to forgive her for her harsh words. He assures her that they are still friends, and from that point on Lucy notices that where they used to be reserved with each other, there is now open and frank discussion. Graham speaks to her often about Ginevra, and Lucy usually refrains from speaking her mind, although she does say that Ginevra should accept him and comes to believe Ginevra will accept him. Graham says that Ginevra is napve and unassuming and does not care for his presents, but Lucy knows that Ginevra has assessed the value of everything he gives her. She sighs and says, "Love is blind," but a look in Graham's eye makes her think that he may have more insight into Ginevra's true character than he is letting on.

## Chapter 18, We Quarrel Analysis

Graham Bretton's idealized view of Ginevra is very trying for Lucy to endure. When Lucy finally loses her temper, it is partially out of jealousy and partially out of impatience. She is upset that Graham, a normally rational man, is so blinded by looks that he cannot see character. This is frustrating for Lucy because it shows how important beauty is to him, just as Lucy has already seen how important it is to the world. Lucy is not a beautiful woman, and she does not have Ginevra's connections. If Graham Bretton's love is born out of these material things, then love is something that Lucy will never have. Ginevra is a symbol of hollow beauty, and it is infuriating for Lucy to see a selfish, empty person so beloved, based solely on appearance.

Lucy believes that Graham is a good man, and because she cares about him, she wants to respect him. At first, when she loses her temper, she says that she cannot respect him if he can be so wrong. Graham's friendship is so important to Lucy that she quickly sets aside this resolution and asks his forgiveness. Because she wants to respect Graham, Lucy begins to convince herself that the woman he speaks of, his idealized Ginevra, really exists. This is reminiscent of the daydreams that Lucy has over

the summer. Graham describes Ginevra as they would both like her to be, but Lucy cannot be convinced. The look that Graham gives her at the end of the chapter shows that Graham is not able to convince himself that his perfect Ginevra exists either.

# Chapter 19, The Cleopatra

## Chapter 19, The Cleopatra Summary

Dr. John tells his mother that Lucy is not well enough to return to the school, and Mrs. Bretton goes to the school to make arrangements with Madame Beck. Madame Beck comes to visit Lucy at the Bretton's house and is flattering and amusing during the visit, but she is stern the moment she returns to her carriage. Dr. John and Mrs. Bretton have such pleasant personalities that being around them makes Lucy feel much better. They arrange outings and amusements for her, and with them, she sees more of Villette in a fortnight than she has in the eight months she has lived there. She sees that the Brettons are kind people, and she visits poor sections of the city with Dr. John when he visits as part of his job. Lucy does remark that while she can see what a good, reasonable man Dr. John is, she is aware of his faults, his vanity and his self-absorption. Even with these faults, she believes that on the whole, he is a good man.

Dr. Graham frequently drops Lucy off at a museum while he is working and returns for her a while later. On one visit to an art museum, Lucy wanders around on her own and finds herself in a gallery, empty of people, with a large portrait of a robust, voluptuous Cleopatra taking up most of the wall. Lucy sits on the bench before the painting and observes some of the other paintings in the room. Suddenly, someone taps her on the shoulder, and she turns to find M. Paul, who has returned from Rome, standing behind her. He demands to know what she is doing, looking at that painting, and he escorts her to the other end of the room. Lucy's presence, without a female companion, is a bit scandalous to him.

M. Paul asks Lucy about her illness and if she was left alone at the school. She tells him that she was left with Marie Bloc, the "cretin." She tells him she did the best she could to look after the girl, but it was difficult. She was glad when the aunt came to take her. He chides her for being weak and uncharitable and further criticizes her over her nervous illness. Mr. Paul seats her in front of some depressing and gloomy paintings that depict a woman's life and tells her not to turn around. Then, he leaves her. Lucy does turn around from time to time and sees him looking at the Cleopatra himself. He returns and scolds her a little more. Lucy is distracted when she sees Colonel de Hamal in the crowd, and when she turns back, M. Paul is gone. Soon she sees Dr. John and joins him for a walk around the floor. They both laugh at M. Paul's admonitions and comment on how dour the little paintings he told her to look at are.

## Chapter 19, The Cleopatra Analysis

Dr. John's friendship is important to Lucy, and she seems to almost idolize him. Lucy, as a narrator, goes out of her way to say that she can see his flaws as well, because it is apparent that she adores him from her descriptions. His interest in her is innocent and even business-like, but her interest in him is that of a close friend. She has a practical

nature and knows that he will never be more than a friend. She also knows that she should never love him, but at this time in her life, he is the only person reaching out to her. His presence is vital to her well being. In spite of this dependency, Lucy is still realistic enough to see that he is a flawed person. The objective observer in her is able to see his flaws, even though they are the flaws of her rescuer.

Lucy likes the art museum because it gives her the opportunity to examine her own opinions. While Lucy values originality and truth in art, she often finds that her opinions are not shared by society. The Cleopatra is an example of this. While the painting seems to occupy a place of honor in the gallery and gathers a crowd of admirers, Lucy does not think that Cleopatra is representing a truth or an original concept. She is a symbol of the empty sexuality that Lucy sees entrancing the men around her, such as Dr. John with Ginevra. There is an external allure, but there is no real emotion or depth.

M. Paul does not believe a painting so decadent should be viewed by a young, unmarried woman such as Lucy. Although he describes Lucy as prudish when he sees her before Madame Beck's fete, in the museum, he is scandalized by her presence. He considers her too bold and untamed to look at the painting, but once he has her on the other side of the gallery, he berates her for her illness and tells her she is weak for suffering because she had to care for another. M. Paul speaks as though he is looking out for Lucy, and yet he is trying to assert his dominance over her. She will not submit to his reasoning and continues to look at the painting, and her refusal to cooperate makes him even more annoyed with her.

# Chapter 20, The Concert

## Chapter 20, The Concert Summary

Mrs. Bretton buys Lucy a new pink dress. Lucy is mortified because she would much prefer to wear subdued colors, but she does not want to refuse the gift. Dr. John and Mrs. Bretton are taking her to a concert, and since she has never been to one before, she is happy for the opportunity. The company and the idea of something new are more pleasant to her than the idea of showing off in public, and she marvels at the beauty of the concert hall. As they sit, they have an excellent view of the hall and all the people within it. Dr. John and Mrs. Bretton tease each other about Dr. John's future marital possibilities, while Lucy observes M. Paul chaperoning the girls of the conservatory, along with his half-brother, Josef. Lucy finds M. Paul amusing. She feels he is there because he loves display and authority. The Court of Labassecour arrives next. Lucy is disappointed that the king and queen look so normal, but she observes that the king seems a melancholy man and pities his affliction. Lucy can see that the queen is sympathetic by the way she acts toward her husband. Ginevra, who is with the court, is a marked contrast to these individuals. Lucy sees her spot the Brettons and make a laughing comment to her friend.

Lucy enjoys the concert, but she is not particularly moved by it. She is more interested in Dr. John's reaction to Ginevra's presence. In time, he mentions that he has seen her and that he witnessed her making fun of him and his mother to her companion, Lady Sara. This behavior has changed his opinion of Ginevra considerably. He would tolerate her making fun of him but not his mother. Lucy reassures him that there is nothing bad to be said about Mrs. Bretton, and Mrs. Bretton herself, who saw the laughter, is not in the least bothered by it. Dr. John, however, now feels scorn and anger toward Ginevra and remarks that his mother is better than ten wives.

Between the concert and the lottery that follows, Dr. John and Lucy walk outside. Lucy is concerned about Dr. John's feelings, but he is glad that he saw the real Ginevra and resolves that she will not make him miserable. Lucy sees M. Paul, but since she does not want to talk to him, she pretends she has not seen him. She cannot help but look at him again, and when she sees that he has been watching her, she bows. Dr. John notices that M. Paul is staring, and Lucy responds that he is an angry little professor from Madame Beck's and that he thinks she was rude. Dr. John thinks that M. Paul is being rude and is about to call him a name when M. Paul rudely shoves his way through the crowd and out of the room.

Lucy and Dr. John resume their seats, and both win prizes in the lottery. Lucy wins a cigar case, and Dr. John wins a sky-blue lady's turban, which he tries to trade with Lucy. He is embarrassed about his prize, but she refuses to trade and remarks to the reader that she still has the cigar case. Dr. John says that he might give the turban to Ginevra, since she seems to like gifts so much. When they finally make it home, they find a

pleasant supper waiting for them. It is nearly dawn before they finally retire happily to bed.

## Chapter 20, The Concert Analysis

Lucy is not a superficial or materialistic person. Beauty is not important to her, but she sometimes she feels pained because she knows she lacks it. For one moment, as Lucy and Dr. John pass through the concert hall, she catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror and sees herself as others must see her. While she feels her looks are certainly not flattering, she rationalizes that it might have been worse. Lucy is terrified of being seen, and she feels that the pink dress makes her stand out. When she sees herself, she realizes that while she is plain, she is not standing out as ridiculous in her pink dress. The dress is neat, and Lucy looks suitable.

In contrast, Lucy observes how looks factor into many interactions in the hall. She sees a beautiful woman in a blue dress who is given plenty of attention by her companions and the men around the room, but she seems cold and distant to all who speak to her. It is as though she has no feelings. This woman is another symbol of that unfeeling beauty that Lucy observes. Insensitive women, like this woman and Ginevra, can get away with having bad manners, empty heads or snobby airs, just because they are beautiful.

Lucy and Dr. John seem to reverse their opinions of Ginevra. He becomes scornful of the girl and her behavior, while Lucy defends her. Lucy notes that with Ginevra's upbringing, her unrefined parents, her uneven education and the encouragement she receives to live off the wealth of others, they must allow that there are reasons for her flaws. Lucy thinks that while Ginevra might spend a husband into debt, she would never insult his honor. Dr. John no longer feels that Ginevra is at all napve but now regards her severely.

# Chapter 21, Reaction

## Chapter 21, Reaction Summary

The time has come for Lucy to return to the school. When she arrives at Rue Fossette, Graham tells her not to worry and that they will not forget about her. He promises to write. The next morning, Lucy is up before the rest of the school. She goes downstairs to sit by the warmth of the stove. She looks up and sees M. Paul looking at her through a window, and at the same time, she realizes that she is crying. M. Paul comes in and asks why she is sad. She responds that she has a right to be, and he says that she reminds him of a wild creature. Lucy is angry at his interference, but he infers that she is sad to leave her friends.

At breakfast, Miss Fanshawe joins Lucy and says she is glad to see her. They share some food, and then Lucy retreats to her classroom. Ginevra follows her into the classroom to talk about Isidore. She asks if Lucy knows him, and Lucy responds that she knows John Bretton. Ginevra goes on to say that de Hamal was great company, and she believes that she has made Dr. John jealous. Lucy sarcastically says that he was driven quite mad with jealousy and could not eat or sleep. Ginevra is delighted with this false description of events and wants to hear more, but Lucy sends her out.

A fortnight later, Lucy is adjusted to the patterns of school. One night, she sees Rosine with a letter in her hand, but she does not approach the portress. M. Paul later gives her the letter, which is from Dr. John. Lucy is thrilled to receive it. She takes it up to the dormitory and locks it in her chest to read later. When she returns, she finds that M. Paul has reduced several girls in the class to tears because they were whispering. Lucy sits down to resume her sewing, but M. Paul continues his rant, bringing her to tears as well. When Lucy cries, M. Paul declares that he has been a monster and gives Lucy his handkerchief, which she politely takes. On his way out of the room, he asks if she has read her letter and assumes that it is a love letter. Lucy quickly tells him it is a letter from a friend, and he tells her to return his handkerchief later, so that he can read the contents of her letter in her expression. As he leaves, Lucy playfully tosses his handkerchief in the air, and he snatches it back, saying that she is mocking him.

## Chapter 21, Reaction Analysis

Lucy is excited about the idea of Graham writing to her, but her Reason tells her not to be too excited. Reason is a personification of the logical and rational part of Lucy's personality. Reason appears as a voice in her head, telling her that Graham may write once to be polite, but she should not expect great friendship in her life. She should just expect the activities of her job to fill her time. Lucy has long held her emotions in check due to this reasonable voice in her head, but at times hope overcomes her. She needs to feel that someone cares enough to reach out to her. When she leaves the company of the Brettons, she is filled with loneliness again.

When M. Paul find Lucy crying, he is kind to her. At first, he remarks that she is like a wild thing before it is tamed, which is an odd analysis of Lucy's character and certainly not one that Graham would make. M. Paul thinks she is too passionate and emotional. He softens, though, and says that she is sad to leave her friends. His insight, and his presence itself, shows that he does understand Lucy and may actually understand her better than her friends do. This becomes a theme in the novel, where many people do not have an accurate assessment of Lucy's character, but M. Paul seems instinctively to know her. The rest of the school seems to have a faulty idea of who Lucy is. Because she enjoys the quiet of solitude and has a serious disposition, Lucy spends a great deal of time in the classroom. Usually she uses the time to sit alone and think. The students, the teachers and even Madame Beck think that Lucy is learned and intensely interested in her studies. Lucy likes to learn, but she has no great passion for any of her studies. It is just a way to pass the time.

# Chapter 22, The Letter

## Chapter 22, The Letter Summary

Lucy begs a candle from Goton and goes up to the dormitory to read her note in peace, but she finds Ginevra Fanshawe in the room, pretending to be asleep. Lucy takes her letter up to a cold, dark garret to read it. It is a long, kind letter. Lucy realizes that she is a bit ridiculous to make something so simple into such an important thing, but she never receives any letters. It makes her happy that someone was kind enough to think of her.

In the garret, Lucy suddenly hears a strange noise. She is startled and looks up to see a dark figure, a nun, in the middle of the room. She shrieks and runs from the room. Rather than running to the refectory, where the students are, she runs to Madame Beck's sitting room, where she is sitting with her guests. Lucy is upset and begs them to go to the garret and see the figure. She realizes she has left her letter, and she runs back to the garret, with the others trailing behind. She searches frantically for the letter. Dr. John is there with the guests, and he calmly takes her downstairs out of the cold while the others investigate the garret.

Dr. John is surprised that his simple letter is so important to Lucy. Even though he found the letter, he teasingly withholds it until Lucy begins to cry because she believes it was lost. Once he returns the letter, she calms down. She makes him promise not to laugh, and then she tells him what she saw. Dr. John believes that the nun was a hallucination, brought on by her own nerves. He tells her that she must try to cultivate happiness and a cheerful mind. Lucy does not think happiness is something that can be created by a person themselves, and she asks Dr. John how to do it. He does not know because he has rarely been unhappy. He teases Lucy a bit more about her nun, and then he leaves. The others find no conclusive evidence as to whether or not there was anything in the garret, and Lucy is careful not to say the word "nun" to anyone else. Madame Beck tells her to say nothing on the subject and commends her for going to the sitting room instead of the refectory. After this, the subject is dropped, but Lucy continues to wonder whether the apparition was real or something created by her own mind.

## Chapter 22, The Letter Analysis

The kindness in Dr. John's letter makes him a wonderful person in Lucy's eyes. Even years later, as she tells the story, she feels that she is nearly blind to his flaws. She is able to forgive any harm he might have unintentionally caused her because of this act of kindness. Dr. John is merely following through on his word, but Lucy desperately needs this letter as a connection to something outside the school. It is a symbol of her longing for love and affection.

When Dr. John sees how important the letter is to Lucy, as she scrambles around on the floor of the garret trying to find it, his impulse is not to return it to her but to tease her. He

finds her eagerness to read his letter touching and amusing but strange. When she tells him about the nun she saw, he tells her it was a hallucination and that she needs to cultivate a happy temperament. Lucy does not think that this is something she can do on her own, but Dr. John is convinced. He has a happy disposition naturally, so he cannot understand the loneliness Lucy suffers from or the fear that his comments about her state of mind might raise. Instead, he speaks to her in a condescending manner, but Lucy is so grateful for his kindness she is blind to it.

# Chapter 23, Vashti

## Chapter 23, Vashti Summary

Lucy begins to believe in happiness, mainly because she continues to receive letters and be visited by the Brettons. Dr. John feels that their attentions will help keep the nun away. Lucy usually writes two responses to Graham, one in which she writes freely of her feelings and opinions and another that her reason dictates is appropriate. She always sends the latter. She denies that she ever has "warmer feelings" toward the doctor, since she thinks it would be pointless to love someone that she knows that she could never have.

One evening, Dr. John comes to see Lucy and tells her that Mrs. Bretton has an unexpected visitor and cannot go to the theater with him. She told him to take Lucy instead. Lucy wants to see the actress who is in the play, so she immediately runs to get dressed. Her dun-colored dress has been taken to storage, so she runs to the garret to fetch it. Lucy is in such a hurry that she is not frightened, and when she gets up there, she is too busy looking for her gown to realize that a light is on in the garret. When it goes out, she simply grabs her dress and leaves without investigating. She bribes Rosine to help her dress and runs down stairs to see the doctor. He can see that something has startled her and asks if she has seen the nun, but Lucy truthfully denies it.

Lucy and Dr. John go to the play, and Lucy is thrilled. She thinks the actress, Vashti, is not beautiful but passionate, moving and dramatic. Lucy becomes caught up in the play, but she takes time to check Graham's reaction as well. He does not approve of the actress as a woman and does not remark on her acting ability. Lucy enjoys the plays, but shortly before the final death scene, a fire starts in the hall. Dr. John tells Lucy to be calm and stay seated, and she does so. They see a young lady pulled away from her companion and trampled by the crowd. Dr. John rescues her and carries her outside into the air, with Lucy close behind. The girl's father runs fetch the carriage, while Dr. John and Lucy stay with the girl, a small woman of seventeen. She has a shoulder injury, so Dr. John and Lucy follow them to the Hftel Crycy where he can treat her. Harriet, the girl's maid, is out, so Lucy helps her undress. Then, Dr. John examines her shoulder. The girl is refined and obviously wealthy, with good taste and manners. She sharply reprimands the doctor once or twice when he hurts her, and Lucy notices that she is studying the doctor with a childlike wonder. Both the daughter and father thank Lucy and Dr. John for their assistance.

## Chapter 23, Vashti Analysis

Lucy is thrilled to be asked to the theater. While she wants to see the actress perform and she always enjoys new experiences, Lucy excitement centers around being asked by Dr. John. As she rushes to get ready, assisted by Rosine, Lucy's preparations almost

look like those of a young girl getting ready for a dance or a first date. Lucy has been singled out as the companion for the evening, and it is a rare treat for her.

At the theater, Vashti mesmerizes Lucy. In the actress, she can see so much passion and talent that it truly moves her. Vashti is the opposite of the Cleopatra and the woman in the blue dress. She is a symbol, not of beauty, but of an inner fire and life that Lucy can relate to. Lucy is surprised that Dr. John does not have a similar reaction to the actress, but Dr. John's dismissal shows how different the two of them are and how superficial the young doctor can be.

When the fire breaks out, interrupting Lucy's night out, it throws them into the path of a man and a young girl. Lucy can tell that something has happened, and there is a change in her life from this point on. She is chosen for this one evening to be company for Dr. John, but this night also throws them both into the path of another family. The details of the small size of the young woman and the maid's name, Harriet, remind the reader of a little girl who once idolized Graham and foreshadows the relationship that will develop between Paulina and Graham.

# Chapter 24, M. de Bassompierre

## Chapter 24, M. de Bassompierre Summary

For the next seven weeks, Lucy is alone at the school. The Brettons do not call or write. At first, Lucy is a little worried that something has happened to them, but then she decides that these periods of loneliness are just part of her life. She does not blame the Brettons but instead concentrates on her German and her lace-work. She spends some time rereading the letters.

One night, Ginevra returns from a night out filled with complaints. She has been visiting her Uncle de Bassompierre, and she does not like him or his daughter. Ginevra thinks her cousin is spoiled and cannot stand that they are pampering her because she was injured at the theater a few weeks ago. Lucy realizes that this is the young lady she met. She discovers that Mrs. Bretton and Dr. John have been frequent guests at the hotel and are old friends of the Bassompierres.

On a dark morning in January, a letter finally arrives for Lucy from Louisa Bretton. She asks after Lucy and says that her time has been passing pleasantly. She tells Lucy that they will send a carriage for the next afternoon, since it is a half-holiday, hinting that Lucy may meet some old acquaintances there. The next day, Lucy arrives at the Brettons' home. Mrs. Bretton sends her upstairs to straighten her hair, and in the bedroom Lucy finds the young lady she met the night of the fire at the theater. The young lady says that Lucy is not much changed and reveals that she is Paulina Mary Home de Bassompierre, the little Polly who stayed with the Brettons during Lucy's last visit as a girl. Lucy sees the resemblance and is impressed with how beautiful and composed Paulina has become.

Paulina says that she remembers the time in Bretton perfectly. She was the first to recognize the acquaintanceship because the doctor reminded her of Graham. The others discovered their relationship when Dr. John and M. de Bassompierre exchanged cards during the second visit. Paulina says that she would be surprised if Graham remembers that they were once playmates, but she does not remember Graham being particularly fond of her.

## Chapter 24, M. de Bassompierre Analysis

Mrs. Bretton's letter is a matter-of-fact note, with no mention of her missing Lucy or how long it has been since they've seen her. Lucy has been lonely and worried about the Brettons, but it seems like they have not thought of her at all, since there have been other things to occupy their minds. When Ginevra speaks about the de Bassompierres and the Brettons, Lucy can see how quickly her place in their minds has been usurped and how thoroughly she has been replaced. Although she does not say anything, it must be painful to see how little she matters to them.

When Lucy and Paulina meet again, many of the strains in their earlier relationship are still present. Paulina still has a precise manner of speaking that is almost haughty. She and Lucy are at once familiar with each other but as distant as ever. Lucy admires Paulina, but there is something about her or about Lucy that sets them at odds to each other. Unlike Ginevra, who is beautiful but too talkative and self-centered to be really likable, Paulina is lovely in a quiet, sophisticated way that comes across as nearly cold when she is with other women. Although Paulina is reserved, she is also the character who most represents the balance between outer and inner beauty. Unlike the characters that represent cold outer beauty or inner passion, such as the Cleopatra or Vashti, Paulina is a character who symbolizes perfection, with both a lovely appearance and a kind and polite personality.

# Chapter 25, The Little Countess

## Chapter 25, The Little Countess Summary

Graham and the count arrive at the Terrace and are eagerly greeted by the three women. They stand by the stove in the kitchen to warm up, and Paulina merrily dances around as they talk. As Mr. Home and Mrs. Bretton talk, Graham teases Paulina, offering her a drink of "old October" and telling her that it is sweet. She persists that she wants it until he gives her a sip, and then she discovers that she does not like it. Lucy can see that Graham remembers the child.

The next morning, snow has fallen, and it is cold out. Paulina persuades her father not to go out, and the five of them enjoy breakfast together. Mr. Home teasingly says that he wants to get rid of his daughter and send her to school, and he asks Mrs. Bretton if she knows a place. Mrs. Bretton mentions Lucy's school. Lucy is worried that the count and the young countess will look down on her once they know that she is a teacher, but they continue to treat her kindly. Paulina asks if Lucy likes it, and Lucy honestly answers that she mainly teaches to keep herself from being a burden to anyone else. Mr. Home says that he would hope, if Paulina were ever left in a situation like Lucy's, that she would try to work and not be a burden to family or society.

Later that morning, Graham and Paulina have a nervous conversation, but gradually they become more comfortable with each other. Graham is called out to see patients, and Paulina and Lucy spend a silent afternoon together. Lucy is pleased that Paulina is such quiet company. Mr. Home leaves to attend to business, but Paulina orders him back early and tells him he must pick up Graham because it is too cold to ride. The two men obediently arrive home early that evening, and as they sit together after supper, Lucy notices Graham watching Paulina.

## Chapter 25, The Little Countess Analysis

The grown-up Paulina is serene and lady-like when she is with the women and different from the busybody little girl that she was. She still has a quiet energy an intelligence that Lucy appreciates. Once the men arrive, Paulina becomes charming and almost fairy-like as she dances around the kitchen. The presence of the men, particularly her father, brings out this child-like behavior in her. Her father still adores her, and she exerts a lot of control over him.

Paulina and Lucy are in many ways opposites. Paulina has beauty and connections, while Lucy does not. Paulina is surrounded by love and praise for her looks, intelligence and graceful manners. Lucy is an intelligent woman, but she is not outgoing or charming. She is the forgotten woman, and most think of her as timid, plain and perhaps even prudish. Lucy prefers to stay on the sidelines to watch what is going on. She

values quiet and industry, so when Paulina is able to read her and is simply a quiet companion, Lucy appreciates Paulina's presence.

When Lucy's profession comes up, Lucy is embarrassed. She is worried that they will look down on her for working for a living. Paulina is interested in what Lucy does and why she does it. It has never occurred to Paulina that some women are not lucky enough to be born with an adoring, wealthy father, and extensive family and acquaintances waiting to take care of them. While it is napve of Paulina, it is not self-centered. She does not look down on Lucy, but she feels sorry that life has put her in this position. M. de Bassompierre also feels compassion for Lucy, but he shows her respect, too. He tells his daughter that Lucy sets an excellent example.

# Chapter 26, A Burial

## Chapter 26, A Burial Summary

One day, Lucy discovers that her letters are missing. She waits patiently, and the next day they are returned. Lucy knows that Madame has taken them as part of her surveillance, and she tries not to be offended. A few days later, Lucy sees that someone again has been through her letters. This time she is upset, since she suspects that Madame Beck has shared the letters with M. Paul, who visited with her the day before. She has noticed a change, an increased disapproval, in the way M. Paul looks at her. The letters are precious and somewhat sacred to Lucy. She knows that Graham's attention has shifted elsewhere and that these are likely to be the last letters from him.

Lucy decides to take drastic action. She takes the letters and goes to a broker, where she purchases a bottle. She has the broker seal the letters inside the bottle, and then she takes them back to the Rue Fossette and buries them at night in a hole at the base of the nun's tree. She uses slate and cement to secure the letters. The tree she has chosen is in her dark little alley, and as she takes a moment to mourn what she has buried, a figure appears. It is the nun, and when Lucy tries to touch and speak to it, it glides away and disappears. She tells no one of what she has seen.

M. de Bassompierre offers Lucy a position as Paulina's companion, but Lucy turns it down. Lucy likes Paulina, but she also likes her independence. M. de Bassompierre still regards Paulina as a child and speaks often of what she shall do when she grows up. Paulina never tells him that she is grown up, but Lucy can already see that her company will not be necessary for Paulina much longer, since Paulina is almost a woman. Since Lucy will not be Paulina's companion, Paulina suggests that they take German lessons together. Lucy regularly visits the hotel to take lessons with Frauline Braun. M. Paul is suspicious of her frequent absences and tells Lucy that his cousin, Madame Beck, is too lenient with her. He thinks she is too worldly and goes out too often. Lucy disagrees and says that she has only been going out because she needs the change.

Paulina is shy with Graham Bretton until her father tells her that she should be more outgoing with him. The next time they meet, she makes special efforts to talk to him, which seems to please Graham. One evening, Paulina is reciting a German poem about love, and she remarks that it really is important in life to be loved. Lucy asks what she could know of love, being so young. Paulina does not want to be treated like a baby and tells Lucy that she hears often of love from her cousin Ginevra, whom she does not like. Lucy tells Paulina that she has also heard about Ginevra's conquests, but Paulina should not worry about it. Paulina is upset because Ginevra says unkind things about the Brettons and says that she may marry Graham. This is why Paulina has been so reserved with Graham. Lucy again reassures her and suggests that they test Ginevra's truthfulness. They plan to invite Ginevra to join them at dinner with Paulina's father, Graham and some of their other scientific associates.

# Chapter 26, A Burial Analysis

Lucy knows that she has lost what little hold she had on Graham's attention, and so the letters become even more important to her. The idea that someone else has read them is painful to her, because they are a symbol of her friendship with the doctor and her secret hopes. Lucy still has nothing to hide, but she now feels violated. M. Paul's increased irritability does not strike Lucy as a sign of jealousy, which it is, but as a sign of disapproval. Lucy's letters are entirely innocent, but she cannot stand the thought that someone has read something that is so personal to her. The change in Lucy's attitude toward the snooping indicates that Lucy now has something in her life that she values, but almost as soon as she has it, it is lost. The elaborate ritual of wrapping the letters in silk, sealing them in a bottle and burying them among the roots of the tree is similar to a funeral. Lucy is mourning the loss of a friendship and the loss of possibilities.

Paulina Mary often calls for Lucy to visit her at the hotel. She would like Lucy to come live with her permanently, and her father has even offered Lucy a large salary to come stay with them as Paulina's companion. Lucy, though, knows that a position like that would not suit her. A position that depends so much on another would interfere with her solitude and her independence. One reason that she likes it at Madame Beck's, despite her loneliness, is that Madame Beck respects her freedom. Madame Beck understands Lucy's solitary nature, but she still does not understand Lucy. She sees Lucy as an educated and refined English lady. M. de Bassompierre sees Lucy as a poor woman trying her best to be noble in a difficult situation. Paulina is the one who seems to actually know Lucy. She understands why Lucy likes silence, and she knows when she wants to speak. She trusts Lucy as a confidant and a friend, and in return Lucy treats her almost as a little sister, something she could never do with Ginevra, even when Dr. John requested it. M. Paul is the one who sees the hidden side of Lucy's personality. He is jealous of her relationship with the outsiders, and he regards Lucy suspiciously because of it. Although Lucy is not a worldly or rash person, M. Paul is the only one who sees this potential inside her.

# Chapter 27, The Hotel Crecy

## Chapter 27, The Hotel Crecy Summary

The day of the dinner, a speech is given at the college honoring the birthday of the young prince of the region. Lucy and Ginevra are to attend along with the rest of M. de Bassompierre's party. As they are getting ready to leave, Ginevra remarks that it is funny that she and Lucy are visiting with the same people, and she assumes that Lucy must have a secret identity, because she always assumed that Lucy was a little nobody. Lucy is not offended by these words, since the distinction of class is something that holds little value for her.

Lucy and Ginevra arrive at the hall for the speech, and Lucy is pleased to see that M. Paul is the speaker. He holds the position of Belles Letres at the college, and his students there like his passion and charisma. He gives a rallying speech on patriotism and speaks to the students as young citizens who must move into the future. The speech is well received, and afterwards M. Paul asks what Lucy thinks. She is surprised that he values her opinion. Lucy is only able to stammer out a reply, but M. de Bassompierre and the others praise M. Paul and invite him to come to the dinner that night. He promises to visit with them in the course of the evening.

Paulina conducts herself well at the dinner. She speaks flawless French and is able to contribute intelligently to the conversation. Ginevra looks more beautiful and speaks more often than Paulina, but her conversation is mostly empty prattle. Later, Graham cannot find room to sit near Paulina, so he sits by Lucy instead. Lucy is pleased to see him at first, since he has not spoken to her for several months, something she doubts he even realizes. He remarks that Ginevra is a fine girl, and Lucy agrees that she is the prettiest in the room. He remarks that had Lucy been a boy, they would have been great friends growing up. Lucy is a bit disappointed in Graham. While they are both observant people, their opinions often differ. He persists in calling Lucy his "quiet Lucy" or "silent shadow," and she is tired of being characterized this way.

Graham remarks that he is beginning to remember Paulina as a child and remembers that she was fond of him. He tries to get Lucy to go to Paulina and ask her if she remembers the old days, but Lucy is tired of him misreading her character and refuses. He asks her again, "Do content me, Lucy." M. Paul overhears those last words and misinterprets them. He calls Lucy a coquette, or flirt, and she tartly responds to him. Graham finds the exchange amusing and laughs until Lucy is near tears with embarrassment. He leaves her to take a seat near Paulina.

Lucy realizes that it is time that she and Ginevra return to the school. M. Paul approaches her as she waits for Ginevra to join her, perhaps realizing that she has not enjoyed the evening. She is curt with him, and he realizes that he has offended her. He asks her to forgive him and gently prods her until she does, and then he smiles at her,

which changes his entire appearance. Ginevra has not enjoyed the party and complains all the way home until Lucy shouts at her.

## Chapter 27, The Hotel Crecy Analysis

Graham sees Lucy as a wallflower. He describes her as a silent shadow and never seems to see beyond Lucy's surface to truly understand her as a person or as a friend. Lucy is disappointed in Graham. When he does see her, he does not ask her opinion but merely asks her to agree with him. M. Paul, however, seems to see what Lucy is thinking, more than how she acts or appears. He is jealous when he sees her with Graham and calls her a flirt. Lucy never believed that there was a point in flirting with Graham, and now, when Graham is besotted with Paulina, she is angry of being accused. When M. Paul realizes he has actually angered her, he tries his best to get back on her good side. He wants her to say that she forgives him and call him "mon ami." Lucy forgives him, but she calls him "my friend" instead of "mon ami," because the French phrase indicates a level of intimacy that she does not share with M. Paul. He makes her uncomfortable with this level of intimacy, and yet he is happy when she forgives him.

The point of the party, from Lucy and Paulina's perspective, is to show Graham's reaction to Ginevra. Aside from a superficial comment about Ginevra's appearance, Graham does not seem to notice her presence. His attention is focused on Paulina. Ginevra and Paulina fully show the deep contrast between their characters at this party, and they continue to illustrate the two types of womanhood that are a central theme in the novel. Ginevra looks beautiful in her scarlet dress, but she acts empty-headed and comes across as a show-off. Paulina glows in her white dress, but she has a quieter loveliness to her appearance. The dresses themselves, like so many of Lucy's own dresses, are symbols. Paulina's white dress is a symbol of her purity and goodness, while Ginevra's scarlet dress symbolizes her desire for attention and foreshadows the immoral behavior that later comes to light when she elopes.

# Chapter 28, The Watchguard

## Chapter 28, The Watchguard Summary

M. Paul has a bad temper and hates having his class interrupted. Rosine is the normal victim of his wrath, since she frequently has to call students out of his class for music lessons. He finally loses his temper and shouts that the next person who interrupts his class will be hung, even if it is Madame Beck herself. A message comes from the college Athenye, requesting that M. Paul immediately go to the college. Rosine tells Lucy that Madame Beck has requested that she deliver the message, since Rosine refuses. Lucy is usually amused by M. Paul's temper, but she protests that it is not her job. Rosine is afraid of M. Paul, so Lucy takes the message.

Lucy enters the classroom quickly, prepared for battle. If M. Paul should asks for a noose to hang her, she has made a tiny one out of thread for him. At first he ignores her, but then she delivers the message, with an inflated sense of urgency. He refuses, and she pick up his hat, to try to urge him out the door. Instead, he suggests that she dress like a man and go in his stead. She tries to push the hat toward him, but it knocks his lunettes, or glasses, off the desk, breaking them. M. Paul begins to berate her, but Lucy feels terrible. Seeing how sorry she feels, M. Paul smiles at her, truly forgiving because she is truly sorry. He goes off to the college in good spirits.

In spite of M. Paul's forgiveness, he and Lucy are quarreling by nightfall. M. Paul often surprises the school with a visit at night and reads to the girls and the teachers. This evening, he arrives suddenly, and instead of taking his normal spot, he goes to sit between Lucy and Ginevra. Lucy moves over to make room for him, but he is insulted and says she treats him like a pariah. He makes all the girls get up from the table, seats Lucy at one end and seats himself as far from her as possible at the table. Although it is absurd, no one laughs. He begins to read a play by "William Shackspire," a poor French translation that Lucy does not approve of. Although she makes no sounds, she makes sure that he can see her opinion through her facial expressions.

M. Paul stops to speak to Lucy before he leaves. He tells her that of all the women he knows, she is the best at making herself unpleasant. He is worried that her flighty personality will keep her from being a person of strong character. He remarks that he has noticed a change in her dress and appearance. Where she used to wear subdued, plain clothes, she now wears ribbons, and once he even saw her in a scarlet dress. Lucy quickly says that the dress was pink, but he says that he is concerned about her. She asks if he would disapprove of the watchguard she is making and has been working on all this time, as a gift for a gentleman, since he disapproves of adornment for ladies. He is silent and then asks if she detests him for what he has said. She does not, and he finally says that she can keep some simple adornments, as long as they do not become too lavish.

# Chapter 28, The Watchguard Analysis

Lucy is amazed to receive M. Paul's lecture on worldly vanities. While she has always tried to retire into the background and let others take the spotlight, M. Paul seems to think she craves attention. While M. Paul thinks she is volatile and materialistic, everyone else thinks she is modest and sober. It is new for Lucy to be seen in such a light, and she thinks it is humorous. This new part of Lucy is part of the theme regarding her role as a passive, silent observer. With M. Paul, Lucy ceases to be an observer and becomes a part of the action unfolding.

While everyone else in the school is afraid of M. Paul, Lucy is brave enough to face him, even when he is in a foul mood. She finds his behavior and his analysis of her character amusing. The Lucy in this chapter, who boldly walks into the classroom to face an intimidating man, is a great contrast to the Lucy who could barely walk into the classroom to teach her first English class. M. Paul brings out this boldness in her character, even as she denies to him that she is bold. When she breaks his glasses, she is truly afraid for a moment and feels horrible for what she has done. The glasses symbolize a turning point in their relationship because in this real moment, when she has justifiably earned his anger, he is forgiving and indulgent. Lucy can see that most of his anger is mere bluster, and in reality, he is usually a kind and forgiving man.

# Chapter 29, Monsieur's Fete

## Chapter 29, Monsieur's Fete Summary

The next morning, Lucy rises early to finish her work on the elaborate watchguard that she has been making. She takes the clasp from her own necklace to finish it, and she even decorates the box. M. Paul is the only person in the school who receives the recognition of a fete, like Madame Beck's. While he does not like gifts of value, he gladly receives gifts of sincere feeling. Zylie St. Pierre takes the occasion to dress up. She has been complaining lately that she would like a husband to work for her and relieve her debts, and the rumor is that she has her eye on M. Paul. Lucy has seen M. Paul watching Zylie.

Everyone has brought flowers for M. Paul, except for Lucy. Instead, she has the watchguard. Zylie notices her lack of a bouquet and comments on it. M. Paul arrives in a good mood and greets the assembled teachers and students. Zylie congratulates him, and she and the other students and teachers go to his desk to present him with their bouquets. After the last bouquet is placed, he asks if that is all, and Zylie remarks that Lucy, being English, is unfamiliar with their customs. M. Paul's comic vexation and Zylie's rudeness make Lucy feel rebellious, and she decides not to give him the watch guard at that time.

M. Paul is upset, but he proceeds with his normal morning lecture. Lucy is working on some sewing as he speaks, and she drops her thimble. When she bends to retrieve it she cracks her head on the table loudly. M. Paul launches into an attack on English women, insulting their dress, education, manners, piety and pride. Lucy sits quietly through this attack, but when he attacks English heroes and history in general, she loses her temper and shouts a response. M. Paul laughs at her and says that he intends to take the class out for breakfast in the country, since they are his true friends. Lucy refuses the invitation and marches up to the dormitory.

After laughing a moment at the comical fight, Lucy feels bad that she did not give M. Paul the gift and goes back to the classroom to get it before someone else finds it. Downstairs, she comes upon M. Paul rummaging through her desk. She knows that he has done it before. There have been many occasions when she has opened her desk to find her studies corrected or a new book or pamphlet to read placed inside. Since the items smell like cigars, she has no doubt who left them. She has never caught him in her desk before and is delighted to be able to surprise him. She sneaks up behind him and sees that he is leaving her books that he knows will interest her.

M. Paul sees Lucy but is not embarrassed that she has caught him. He supposes that she rarely reads the materials he leaves because they smell like his cigars. She tells him she reads them in spite of the smell. He tells Lucy that she has spoiled his fete-day and asks if she really did not know the custom. She tells him that she did, and she gives him the watchguard. She says that if he had been patient he would have received it

earlier. M. Paul is pleased with the gift and asks if it was made entirely for him, which she promises it was. He puts it on immediately, prunes a few pages from the books that he feels might be inappropriate for Lucy and bids her good day. That evening, he arrives unexpectedly for his usually reading. He sits next to Lucy, and this time she does not make the mistake of moving away but coughs or yawns as necessary. They say goodnight without a quarrel.

## Chapter 29, Monsieur's Fete Analysis

One thing that Lucy has noticed about M. Paul is that he will forgive every flaw that is honestly revealed, but he dislikes those that are hidden and disguised. When she sees him observing Zylie St. Pierre, she wonders if he sees her flaws or if he is overwhelmed by her flattery. Since M. Paul is a good observer, like Lucy, it is probably the former. Zelie is another symbol of the cold, selfish side of womanhood that many men are taken in by because of women's beauty and men's vanity.

Lucy spends a great deal of time making the watchguard for M. Paul, and she uses the best of her supplies, even taking apart her own jewelry to complete it. M. Paul has been quietly kind to her over the last few months. He has taken an interest in her, corrects her studies and leaves her books that are sure to interest her. Instead of being her antagonist, as he has been, he is now her friend. It has been a one-sided friendship, and the watchguard is Lucy's opportunity to return his kindness by giving him a gift that he will like and that he will value because he knows she spent time making it. It is a symbol that Lucy has given up on her friendship with Dr. John and is ready to devote herself to being a good friend to M. Paul.

# Chapter 30, M. Paul

## Chapter 30, M. Paul Summary

Lucy assures the reader that M. Paul does not change after this confrontation on his birthday. He continues to be as tyrannical as Napoleon. When a teacher, Madame Panache, will not change her methods to match what M. Paul would like, he storms and fusses until she leaves the school. Lucy hints that this was not right, since the woman was not a bad teacher or person. Later, when he hears that Madame Panache is not able to find a position, M. Paul works hard to find one for her, but he does not react well when she comes by to thank him.

When M. Paul learns that Lucy has an educational deficiency in arithmetic, he takes it on himself to instruct her. When she is frustrated and struggling to learn, he is kind and encouraging, but once she learns and begins to attack her studies with relish, he is no longer pleased with her. He accuses her of having pride of intellect. Finally, Lucy loses her temper, returns his books and refuses to speak to him for several days.

One day, Mrs. Bretton sends a message with Dr. John that she would like Lucy to attend a lecture with her. Rosine delivers the message and comments on how handsome the young doctor is. M. Paul gives a difficult lesson afterwards and asks Lucy to stay in the room during lunch. M. Paul suspects that Lucy secretly knows Latin and Greek and attempts at times to startle an admission of this knowledge out of her. She does not know either language, but she begins to wish that she did. M. Paul allows Lucy to fetch some baked apples, and when she returns, he foils her plan to escape and suggests that she take the next public exam with the first class students. Lucy is horrified by the idea of a public examination, especially in French, and she does not want to fail. M. Paul thinks she is too proud and failure would be good for her. He argues that she should do it for the sake of their friendship. She refuses, and when he goes to fetch some water, she escapes.

## Chapter 30, M. Paul Analysis

M. Paul wants to help Lucy improve her education, and at first he is a patient teacher. Yet, when Lucy begins to do well and enjoy her studies, M. Paul becomes confrontational. He is so rude that Lucy stops speaking to him. He does not like it when Lucy begins to excel. He enjoys helping Lucy, and he wants her to need him and to look up to him. When she begins to reach the point where she no longer needs his help with her studies, he is disappointed.

After the message from Dr. John is delivered, M. Paul forces Lucy to have lunch with him and foils her attempts to escape the heat of the room. The scene is humorous, with Lucy's attempts to leave the apples at the door and her flight when he goes to get her some water. The conversation is making her uncomfortable. M. Paul is bothering her,

pushing her too hard and sitting too close, and she does not want to be by him anymore. M. Paul is aware that he is annoying her, but he is determined not to let her leave. It becomes an issue of control and a battle of wits, and in the end, Lucy runs away.

# Chapter 31, The Dryad

## Chapter 31, The Dryad Summary

The spring brings warmer weather, and Lucy feels fatigued by the change. One day, when she returns from the Protestant church, she falls asleep at her desk and wakes to find a folded shawl beneath her head and another wrapped around her. She does not know who was so kind to her, but she feels refreshed and goes outside to take a walk in the alley. She begins to think again of what changes she can make to her life to bring herself more independence and some sort of future. She thinks that she may be able to save money to start a small school of her own. With a thousand francs, she could probably afford a few rooms, and from there she might be able to grow her school. Lucy does not think that she will ever have anything or anyone else to care about but herself and her own means to survive.

As Lucy walks, she is joined by M. Paul, who asks if she enjoyed her rest. He tells her she looked pale as she slept, and he believes she needs looking after. He tells her he has been keeping a close watch on Madame Beck's school and points to a window over the alley. He has a study at the boy's college and uses it to survey the girl's school. Lucy does not think that this is a worthy way to go about things and tells him so, but he merely says that it lets him see into people's characters. They talk about Zylie St. Pierre, and M. Paul reveals that he knows she wants to marry him but that he is not the marrying type. He says he is too modest to marry, but he is glad that he could observe Zylie and see her true personality, since she is so flattering to him that he might begin to like her otherwise.

Lucy is worried about his dignity, but he is not. M. Paul is aware of his undignified rages and finds it amusing that Lucy is concerned. He asks Lucy if Protestants believe in the supernatural, and she responds that some do and some do not. He tells her that he has seen the nun from the legends on several occasions, and Lucy tells him that she has seen the nun as well. M. Paul cannot figure out where the figure has come from or gone. Just as they are about to go inside, the wind blows. The tree above them moves in a way that Lucy describes as giving birth to a dryad, with a sudden mass appearing in the branches. The figure of the nun approaches them. It draws near, but before Lucy can touch it, it is gone.

## Chapter 31, The Dryad Analysis

When Lucy wakes up from her nap and finds that she has been covered, she cannot think of a person who might have been so kind to her. Later, when she is walking, she realizes that she needs a change in her life. It is empty, and she does not have a true friendship with anyone. Her friendship with Dr. John has slipped away. His kindness and regard for her well being was just part of his personality, and she understood this. Still,

she feels more alone now than before. The shawls signify that someone is looking out for Lucy and cares about her well being.

M. Paul's kind act toward Lucy and his comment that she needs looking after show that he understands what she needs. The two of them are very different. He is bold and temperamental while she is somewhat shy. In spite of these differences, M. Paul and Lucy share the same values and enjoy many of the same things. Although M. Paul is haughty and condescending when he speaks to Lucy, his actions show that he values her presence at the school, and he looks after her, making him an actual friend instead of a superficial friend like Dr. John.

# Chapter 32, The First Letter

## Chapter 32, The First Letter Summary

Lucy has not seen Paulina for awhile because she and her father have been traveling in different parts of France. One day in April, Lucy is walking in the park, and she sees the count, his daughter and Dr. Bretton meet. Graham rides by her without seeing her, but Paulina spies her and is happy to meet her again. The next day, Lucy goes to visit Paulina. Paulina tells her about their travels, and Lucy enjoys listening to her. Gradually, Paulina changes the tone and seems to be waiting to talk intimately with her. Finally, Paulina asks Lucy's opinion of Graham. Lucy tells her that she believes he is a good and devoted son and generally a benevolent and kind man.

Paulina is worried that Lucy will think she is weak or ill-mannered for speaking about a man this way, but Lucy quickly assures her that she is nothing like Ginevra. The two women are fond of each other, and this encourages Paulina to tell Lucy the truth. While traveling, she personally received a letter from Graham. She did not tell her father about the letter, in which Graham tells her that he loves her. She loves him as well, and she wrote him a short note, telling him that his affections were well received and that she would not write him again until she had spoken to her father. Paulina is worried about telling her father, since she does not want to hurt him. She knows it will pain him to realize that she is not a child and that she will leave him. However, Paulina wants to tell her father because she can see that great happiness is before her, and she wants to share that with him.

Lucy tells Paulina that her actions were proper and appropriate, she approves of Paulina's feelings for Graham and her behavior in addressing it. Paulina should not worry about telling her father. In time, the appropriate occasion will arise, and it will be done. Lucy has long known that Graham and Paulina were right for each other. She reassures Paulina that this is right and that it will work out well for them all.

## Chapter 32, The First Letter Analysis

When Paulina describes her feelings for Graham and tells Lucy that she knows she is lucky to have such happiness before her, Paulina also remarks that she does not understand how this can be fair. Paulina knows that life is full of pain for some and that she has been lucky all her life to have a loving father, a secure lifestyle and now this love that she shares with Graham. She does not understand why God would give so many blessings to her and not grant them to other people who are no less deserving. Once again, Paulina is shown to be the symbol of perfection, with her excellent behavior, good looks and her fortunate love for Graham.

Lucy says that she worried, when Paulina was a child, that if life were cruel to her, she would not be able to bear it because she was so sensitive. She believes that Paulina

and Graham were meant for each other. They are good for each other, and Lucy has seen this coming since they were reunited and understood that it was part of God's plan. While some people live their lives in a storm, as Lucy does, God does grant some people lives filled with sunshine. These blessed people live lives of happiness, and while people such as Lucy may not have the same joy, seeing the happiness of good people such as Paulina and Graham gives them hope. The lives of sunshine and storm are metaphors for the peaceful, fortunate life that Paulina leads and the struggles that Lucy faces. The storms also represent the storms in Lucy's life, recalling the earlier metaphor of the barge used to describe Lucy's youth and the wind that howled the night Miss Marchmont died. The storm also foreshadows the end of the book, which threatens M. Paul on his return voyage.

# Chapter 33, M. Paul Keeps His Promise

## Chapter 33, M. Paul Keeps His Promise Summary

The day has come for M. Paul to keep his promise to take the students and teachers for breakfast in the country. Lucy originally refused the invitation, but M. Paul tells her to invite herself. They all dress up and set out walking into the countryside. M. Paul is in a good mood and takes the time to talk to all the students and the teachers individually. Lucy is wearing her pink dress and worries about what M. Paul will say, so every time he approaches, she switches sides with Ginevra, so that Ginevra is always between them. M. Paul realizes what Lucy is doing and why and teases her about dressing up as a coquette, although Lucy insists that her dress is practical.

When the party of students and teachers reaches the site near their breakfast, they sit down, and M. Paul tells them a story. He is a great storyteller, and Lucy loves to listen to him. Afterwards he comes to her and asks her opinion of the story. She tells him she enjoyed it, and he asks her to write his stories down for him. Secretly, Lucy thinks that it would be wonderful have his words on hand, but she tells him that she would write too slowly, and he would lose patience with her.

The students and teachers go inside and enjoy a good farm breakfast. After the breakfast, the children play outside, and M. Paul and Lucy sit under a tree while Lucy reads to him. She does not enjoy the book. He does, though, and she enjoys his company. He asks her if she were his sister, whether she would enjoy staying with him this way, and she says she would. He calls her little sister and asks how long she would remember him if he went away, to which she answers that she cannot know how long she will remember the world. He asks if she would welcome him back if he went away for a number of years. The idea upsets Lucy so much that she begins to cry. She hides her head in the book and does not answer. M. Paul changes the subject, and soon the day is cheerful again.

M. Paul has arranged transportation home, and the ride is pleasant. The day was entirely enjoyable to Lucy, except for the conversation with M. Paul. In the evening, she sees him talking with Madame Beck, and Madame Beck seems surprised. Madame Beck leaves, and Lucy is tempted to go talk to him, as a sister would. When he enters the school, though, Lucy's courage leaves her, and she hides. When M. Paul hears that she has gone to bed, he is sent home by Madame Beck. Lucy does not understand why she did not talk to him, even though she greatly wanted to meet him and find out what was going on. Instead she is worried and troubled.

## Chapter 33, M. Paul Keeps His Promise Analysis

A shift has occurred in the relationship between M. Paul and Lucy. His companionship has become valuable to her, and they are now important friends to one another. M. Paul

is surprised that Lucy values him so much, since he admits that he was hard on her when they first began to know one another. While Lucy dreads his teasing, she enjoys his company and admires his storytelling and his sense of humor. He is interesting and original, and those are traits she values. She likes that she can understand his motives, such as his enjoying the company of women and children because he is in charge.

When M. Paul asks Lucy the hypothetical questions about his going away, Lucy begins to cry, although she hides it from him. She finally has a friendship again, and this time she knows that her friend understands her. He realizes she is upset, and he is overly nice to her the rest of the afternoon, which she finds suspicious. If he had gone back to his normal behavior, she would have brushed aside his earlier questions, but now she believes something is going on. Later, when she knows that he is looking for her, she hides. She is afraid of what he will tell her, but at the same time, she wants to know and is angry with herself for hiding. Her fear of closeness returns, because she is afraid that once again she has gained a friend only to lose him.

# Chapter 34, Malevola

## Chapter 34, Malevola Summary

Madame Beck asks Lucy to do some errands for her and to drop off a basket for Madame Walravens. Lucy agrees and sets out. A storm is approaching as Lucy reaches the square where Madame Walravens lives. The square looks as though it had once been grand but is now home to those with little money. She sees an elderly priest leaving the house, and he turns to look back at her. The door is opened by an old and crabby maid, who does not want to let her in to deliver the basket. The priest reappears and allows her to go up to see Madame Walravens. Lucy is left in a gloomy salon upstairs. She begins to study a picture on the wall when it suddenly rolls away and reveals a passage. Out of the passage comes Madame Walravens. She is very short and grandly dressed, but she is also frightening, like an evil sorceress. She demands to know what Lucy is doing there, and when Lucy tells her, she refuses the gift. She orders Lucy to take it back and tell Madame Beck that she scorned her greetings. Then, she turns her back on Lucy and leaves.

Outside, the rain is falling heavily, so Lucy waits in the house. The old priest approaches her and entreats her to return to the salon. They sit, and after a while her gaze returns to the portrait she was looking at before, a pale young woman. The priest tells her the story of the woman, Justine Marie. Once she was engaged to a young man of equal fortune, but his father died and left him with debts. The match was no longer possible, and Justine Marie went to a convent and died soon after. The younger man who loved her was anguished. Years later, her family was ruined also. Her father had disastrous financial problems that also shamed the family. His death would have left his mother and wife destitute, if it were not for the charity of Justine Marie's suitor. He sheltered them and eventually had Madame Walravens, the grandmother of Justine Marie, brought to the house, along with Agnes, the servant, and the priest, the suitor's old tutor. The priest says that the man gives most of his salary to these charities and is almost a priest himself.

Lucy suspects that a connection exists between her errand and this story, a reason that she was sent to this place. The priest asks if she knows his old student, M. Paul, and Lucy tells him that she does. She learns that he has been speaking of M. Paul, and the priest is none other than Pire Silas, who heard her confession the night she fainted. He tells her that it has been twenty years since Justine Marie died, but M. Paul still cares for those she loved. The priest says he is still devoted to her. Lucy realizes what a kind, sacrificial task M. Paul has undertaken. When Lucy arrives back at the school, Madame Beck shrugs off the rejected gift and says that Madame Walravens does not like her because she believes Madame Beck wants to marry M. Paul. Madame Beck laughs and says that M. Paul is still in love with Justine Marie, and it is best to forget professors.

# Chapter 34, Malevola Analysis

Madame Beck, Pire Silas and Madame Walravens seem to be entwined in a plot to keep Lucy from M. Paul. Madame Beck's sudden errand is suspicious, as is her comment to forget professors. Madame Walravens is an absurd and selfish old woman, who keeps her jewelry in spite of the fact that she is living off charity. She does not seem to know who Lucy is or why she was sent there, but Pire Silas obviously does. He wants Lucy to stay away from M. Paul because she is a heretic, and so he tells her a story that portrays M. Paul in a saintly, monkish light. In his opinion, M. Paul is almost married or a priest.

The story of Justine Marie has many gothic elements. It has a great tragedy, thwarted love and the death of a young innocent woman. The nun element reminds the reader of the nun story at Rue Fossette and of the ghostly nun that Lucy and M. Paul have both seen. The story also serves to show a devoted and gentle side to M. Paul that has not been evident in his blustering, proud everyday appearance. While earlier stories of M. Paul's interactions with Lucy have shown him to be a self-centered, somewhat vain man, the story of Justine Marie shows him in a more compassionate light. He is generous, self-sacrificing and loyal. If Pire Silas and Madame Beck are attempting to scare Lucy away by indicating that M. Paul is spiritually unavailable to her, they also show her what a great man he is.

# Chapter 35, Fraternity

## Chapter 35, Fraternity Summary

When Madame Beck tells Lucy to forget professors, she makes a mistake. Her plan with Pire Silas makes Lucy aware of the goodness and kindness of M. Paul. She has learned that he can love devotedly, and Lucy wonders what Pire Silas and Madame Beck are trying to warn her about with this story. Lucy would like to speak to M. Paul about what she has learned. The next night, she is at the evening study, and he appears, snatches up her pencils and desk and directs her into the large hall next door. In the room are two associates from the college, Messieurs Boissec and Rochemorte, who are there to examine Lucy. They do not believe that she has written an essay M. Paul showed them. They believe he is trying to pass off his own work as that of his students. They test her on many subjects that she has little knowledge of, and her stammering French does not help her answer. She hears them ask if she is an idiot, and she begins to cry because she has disappointed M. Paul. Lucy does not understand how they could mistake her essay for one of a scholar. When she writes, it takes her a great deal of time and effort. She struggles to produce a decent essay, and she cannot respond quickly verbally. Her mind and memory do not work that way. She is frustrated, and they make her write an essay on "Human Justice." Lucy recognizes that these two men are the same two men who frightened her on the first night she was in Villette, and she is suddenly moved to write a passionate allegory on Human Justice.

Later that day, Lucy encounters M. Paul again. He half apologizes for the earlier events and says that since she does not know his position, he can make no excuse. Lucy tells him that indeed, she knows nothing of him and that she sees he has no ties, treats his students like machines and needs no home. He responds that her opinion is exactly as he thought and then angrily tells her that he has two small rooms in the college next door and that he has no servants. He goes on to rant that he cares for himself with few to love him. Lucy tells him that she has visited the house in Basse-Ville, and he is surprised. She mockingly tells him that she has learned he deserves no pity, is not charitable and is full of vengeance.

M. Paul sees that Lucy knows his entire story and asks her to trust him. He tells her that he would like to be her good and true friend, like a brother, and asks her if she would like this friendship, knowing of his obligations and personality. Lucy would very much like this friendship, but she hesitates because she has suffered through a friendship forgotten and withdrawn before. M. Paul reassures her, and she is happy about their pledge. He asks her if she saw the painting at the house and if it reminded her of the nun. Lucy tells him it did, but she thinks they will find an explanation for the nun eventually. He agrees but adds that it is doubtful that a woman who was good on earth would be troubled by their happiness now.

# Chapter 35, Fraternity Analysis

M. Paul shows Lucy's essay to his colleagues, which shows that he is proud of Lucy's work and that Lucy's work may be stronger than she realizes. When the interview goes badly, he apologizes, thinking he has upset Lucy. He does not believe that Lucy can understand him, since she does not know his situation. Lucy's sarcastic remark that yes, he is a stranger, followed by her revelation that she knows his past, opens the doors to a closer friendship. He held himself at a distance before and would not admit his situation out of pride and fear that Lucy would reject him because his interests are tied to so many people. He is poor and must do everything for himself, but Lucy sees that as noble, not lowly.

Although Lucy and M. Paul both want to be good friends, both of them are insecure and need reassurance. Lucy is afraid that she will again have a friend who will lose interest in her and forget her, and M. Paul is worried that Lucy will get tired of his moods and no longer wish to see him. As they reassure each other, Lucy is very happy. M. Paul cannot marry, so she will not have to share him with a wife. She cannot be a wife, but she can be his close friend and confidante. This makes her so happy that she believes it is enough to be thought of as a sister. Although she dismisses the idea of being his wife, her rationalization foreshadows Lucy's growing feelings for M. Paul. As they walk, hand and hand in the alley, he asks her about the trip to his house, and she tells him that she saw the painting. While they both believe that the nun they saw bears a resemblance to Justine Marie, Lucy takes the practical stance. M. Paul implies that the apparition might be something sinister, but that would not make sense, given Justine Marie's disposition.

# Chapter 36, The Apple of Discord

## Chapter 36, The Apple of Discord Summary

Lucy is happy to be friends with M. Paul. Though they have long been friends, to have it clearly said is reassuring. Lucy is eager to speak to him again. The next day he gives a quiet lesson and hurries away with only a passing nod. Soon after is the day that Lucy normally receives her lesson from him, but he moves from talking to the students to working in the garden to playing with the dog, Sylvie. Though Lucy waits, he leaves without speaking to her.

The next day, Lucy opens her desk and finds a new lilac pamphlet. It is a religious article on Romanism, and Lucy finds it well written and interesting. Although she disagrees with much of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, the pamphlet addresses those aspects of the Church that she does find appealing, and she believes it was written by a good person. Lucy, however, will never be a Catholic, because she does not believe in the extravagant trappings of the Mass. She does not believe in purgatory, and she is devoted to her own simple communion directly with God. Initials on the pamphlet let her know that Paul Emmanuel has been to his confession with the priest, and Pire Silas does not approve of his relationship with a Protestant.

That evening, Lucy can see M. Paul digging in the garden. Sylvie the dog rushes in to greet Lucy, and M. Paul must come to call her off. He asks if Lucy has read the brochure, and she tells him she has. She begins sharpening her pens, cutting herself in the process. He takes them away and sharpens them himself. Lucy is upset, and he can see that she is disappointed in him. He tells her that he cares about her, but others have pointed out that she is dangerous because she is of a different religion. Lucy tells him that she respects his gift, but she is not a heathen. She believes in God and Christ and the Bible, and so does he. She does not like Catholicism, and she explains why, as he listens. Pire Silas has said some harsh things about Protestants, and Lucy does her best to correct these misconceptions. They end the conversation calmly, and he believes that Heaven will lead her to the correct path. Lucy finds it odd that she feels no need to convert him.

Soon after Lucy's conversation with M. Paul, Pire Silas becomes a frequent visitor at Rue Fossette, charged with taking care of Lucy's religious education. He gives her many books to read, but she cannot make herself read them all. She likes Pire Silas and feels he is a good man, but she does not want to be a Catholic. Lucy does not tell Pire Silas why she does not like Catholicism, but she does tell M. Paul that she has her own way of seeing God and that at times she is moved to declare her faith by saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." M. Paul says that they are not too different, for often he says the same prayer. Since their fundamental beliefs are the same, M. Paul and Lucy feel this difference of opinion is adequately resolved.

# Chapter 36, The Apple of Discord Analysis

Although Lucy and M. Paul have declared themselves firm friends, M. Paul avoids her for several days. This hurts Lucy because she has no explanation until she sees the little book he leaves her. When he finally does see her and asks her what she has thought of him the last few days, he can see that he has hurt her, although she does not answer. He says that he thinks of her, and he does not know what to call her, a friend or a sister. In any case, he is concerned about her. His friends are worried about him because they can see how deeply he cares for her, and to them she is dangerous because she is a Protestant. Here, the reader can see the theme of religious differences finally becoming a conflict and keeping the friends apart.

Lucy has a deep-rooted dislike of the Catholic Church. She believes that it is pompous and does not give correct guidance to the souls of its people. While she likes and respects M. Paul and Pire Silas, their attempts to convert her only make her cling to her own beliefs. She can see the corruption and sin in the word, and she can see how she fits into that vice. Lucy believes she needs the help of God to guide her and to help her stay true to her faith. M. Paul finally comes to understand this and seems to agree. He can see that Lucy is good, and in her heart, she believes in the same core values that he believes in.

# Chapter 37, Sunshine

## Chapter 37, Sunshine Summary

Paulina and Graham continue to develop their relationship, unbeknownst to her father. Lucy witnesses many of their interactions, and she can see how his desire to please Paulina is making Graham a better man. Paulina speaks of him often to Lucy and even lets her read his letters. Paulina worries that Lucy will always be alone, but Lucy says that there are worse things than the sadness of solitude. Paulina wants to tell her father, but she is afraid.

One evening, after Graham has dined with them, Paulina goes upstairs to write a letter and leaves Lucy in the library. M. de Bassompierre soon joins her and says that he has discovered that his daughter is now eighteen. Lucy can see that M. de Bassompierre has figured things out, and when he asks her where Paulina is, she tells him that Graham and Paulina have wanted to talk to him. They will not be engaged without her father's permission, but he is not inclined to give it because he does not want to lose her. Lucy tells him that everyone thinks Paulina is beautiful and knows that she is an heiress. If she is not pursued by Graham, it will be someone else. Lucy asks Paulina's father if it would not be easier to give Paulina to a friend, rather than a stranger.

Paulina comes in with her letter, unaware that her father is in the room. He asks what she is doing and if she is posting strange letters. Paulina blushes and tells him that they are only notes, but then she says that she must tell him the truth. She tells her father that she loves him more than anyone but God, but she also loves Graham. She does not want to make her father unhappy, and she will give Graham up if he tells her to. Her father criticizes Graham, but he tells Paulina to leave him and go be a wife. Paulina is upset and tells her father that she will never leave him.

When Graham arrives, Lucy greets him. He asks if M. de Bassompierre is angry, and she responds that his daughter is very devoted. Graham enters the room, and M. de Bassompierre confronts him, accusing him of trying to take his most precious thing. Graham agrees that he has but says that he cannot be sorry. Paulina makes them shake hands, and they withdraw into the study to discuss the business of the engagement. When they return, M. de Bassompierre tells him, "Take her, John Bretton: and may God deal with you as you deal with her!" A fortnight later, Lucy sees the three of them in the park. Paulina is braiding locks that she has cut from the head of each man, and she puts the braid in her locket, saying that as long as she has it they must be friends.

Lucy tells the reader that Graham Bretton and Paulina de Bassompierre do marry and that they are the type of people that truly show God's kindness. Graham Bretton improves further with age, and his wife is always part of that happiness. They are prosperous and good to others. While they do know disappointments and trials in life, and once even lose a child, they are blessed. Their parents each live well into old age,

and Paulina and Graham have many fine, healthy children. Lucy says that they are blessed, for God sees that it is good.

## Chapter 37, Sunshine Analysis

Lucy fully approves of Paulina and Graham's relationship, but sometimes it is difficult for her to hear Paulina speak of Graham. When Paulina mentions that her beloved is handsome, she wants Lucy to agree. However, Lucy says that she does not look at him for fear she would be struck blind. There is something about Graham's good looks that has always made Lucy uncomfortable. He is too handsome, and he stirs the type of feelings in Lucy that she fears. She says something strong to Paulina, and Paulina drops the subject.

Paulina is put in the difficult position of having to choose between her father and the man she loves. She wants to marry Graham, but she has been devoted to her father for many years. While M. de Bassompierre is astonished to realize his little daughter is not a child anymore, Paulina has been acting almost as a wife for her father for years. Even when she is small, she pours his tea and sews his handkerchiefs, tasks that normally fall to wives, not daughters. M. de Bassompierre cannot deny his daughter the happiness she seeks, so he relents. Paulina seems to negotiate a deal where she does not have to choose between the two men, but instead she gets to live with both of them. She never has to relinquish her role as a daughter or a wife but instead can be both at once. The locks of hair she braids together symbolize how their lives are joined now.

Lucy tells the reader about the futures of Graham and Paulina. They live happy lives and are greatly blessed. Paulina's words foreshadow the story Lucy tells of their later lives. Paulina and Graham live in the symbolic sunshine that she and Lucy discuss when she receives the first letter from Graham. They are both blessed and giving, and they represent a perfectly harmonious life.

# Chapter 38, Cloud

## Chapter 38, Cloud Summary

One morning, Madame Beck comes to tell the first classe that lessons are suspended until she finds a replacement for M. Paul, who is leaving Europe. She tells Lucy to read to them in English instead. The students are upset, and several begin to cry. Lucy has no patience for the crying students and scolds one severely. She later gives the student a hug and a kiss, which brings the student to tears again. Lucy keeps herself busy, but the gossip of M. Paul's departure is all around her. She hears that he is going to Guadalupe and will be leaving in a week.

Since M. Paul and Lucy resolved their argument over religion a month ago, their relationship has been peaceful and pleasant. They talk more often than before, and Lucy has even told M. Paul about her idea to open her own school one day. Their lessons are also peaceful, and instead of being jealous, he is kind and helpful. One evening ten days before, M. Paul found her in the garden and took her hand. He called her his good friend and sweet consolation, and for a moment she saw an expression on his face that makes her wonder if he is more than a friend and brother. He seemed about to speak, but at that time Madame Beck and Pire Silas arrived. Pire Silas looked sternly at M. Paul when the priest saw that the teacher was holding Lucy's hand.

The day of M. Paul's departure arrives, and Lucy does not know if he will come to say goodbye. Madame Beck puts Lucy to work translating a letter. She seems determined to keep Lucy upstairs, but finally Lucy escapes. She sees M. Paul taking his leave of the students, but he does not see her. Madame Beck whisks him out the door before she can speak to him. Lucy feels desolate and hopeless until a child comes to her with a note from M. Paul. In the note, he says that he will see her before he goes, but he is very busy with secret business in the meantime.

Lucy believes that M. Paul will come that evening, since he is leaving the next day. He does not come, and Lucy paces in the classroom long after everyone else has gone to bed. Madame Beck tries to get her to go to bed, but Lucy demands that she be left alone. Finally, Madame Beck tells Lucy that M. Paul cannot marry. Lucy responds that she knows Madame Beck has always wanted him herself, not because she loves him but because it would be advantageous. For a moment, Lucy holds the power in the relationship. Then, Madame Beck leaves her and goes to bed. They never mention that moment again, and it does not change their relationship at all.

Lucy stays up all night, and the next morning she looks ill. She fears that everyone will know why she is distressed, but everyone believes she has a headache. Although Lucy has spent a great deal of time with M. Paul over the last six months, and he has sent for her, taught her and frequently spent time with her, no one has noticed or gossiped. The next night Lucy is pacing the schoolroom again, but this time Madame Beck sends

Ginevra to fetch her. Simply to get away from her, Lucy goes to her bed. Goton gives her something to drink, and it turns out to be a sedative.

The sedative does not have the desired effect, and Lucy finds herself energized. She dresses and puts on her garden hat and shawl to disguise herself. She makes her way out into the street and follows the road toward Haute-Ville. Soon she sees a crowd of people and blazing lights. It is a fete-night. A carriage bearing the Brettons and Bassompierres passes her, and she follows them. Lucy loses track of her friends in the crowd, but she finds an out-of-the-way place to listen to the music. She is soon approached by a man, M. Miret, who recognizes her in spite of her disguise. He is the bookseller who supplies the school and a friend of M. Paul. Lucy likes him, but she is surprised that he recognizes her. He finds her a better seat and leaves her alone.

After a few moments, Lucy realizes that she is sitting close to her friends. She hears Mrs. Bretton tell M. de Bassompierre that she wishes they had invited Lucy. Lucy is touched that they would think of her, but when Graham turns and looks in her direction, she warns him with a gesture not to come near her. She does not know for sure that he recognizes her with her hat, but the look he gives her assures her that he does hold a small place in his heart for her.

Lucy does not want to risk being discovered, so she begins to wander again. She travels to the edge of the crowd, where families and children are, and she sees the familiar figures of Dysirye and Madame Beck standing with a group of people that includes Pire Silas and Madame Walravens. The sight of Pire Silas, Madame Beck and Madame Walravens strengthens Lucy. They have hurt her, but she is still alive.

## Chapter 38, Cloud Analysis

Madame Beck goes out of her way not to speak to Lucy about M. Paul's departure, and Lucy is afraid to ask for details or seek him out herself. When Madame Beck finally does confront Lucy and tries to make her go to bed, the truth comes out for each of them. Madame Beck can clearly see why Lucy is distraught and how much M. Paul means to her, and Lucy can see why Madame Beck wants to keep him away from Lucy. Although Madame Beck is a cold woman, she wants M. Paul for herself because he is useful to her. Although he has always shown himself to be loyal, the idea of Lucy gaining any sort of control over him is not acceptable to Madame Beck. The moment when Lucy has control of their relationship is also not acceptable to Madame Beck, and she seems to block it from her memory. Lucy even remarks that if Madame Beck took revenge for that moment, Lucy does not know what it was.

When Lucy sees the Brettons and Bassompierres, their lives stand out in sharp contrast to hers. They are beautiful, happy and together, while Lucy is wandering the streets alone in despair. When Lucy hears Mrs. Bretton and M. de Bassompierre speak of her, they say that they wish they had brought her, and she is touched. Lucy has feared being forgotten, and it is a rational fear. Here, though, she is remembered. Although neither M. de Bassompierre or Mrs. Bretton truly knows Lucy, the fact that they think of her at this

moment, when she fears she is forgotten and forsaken by the man she loves, is a comfort to her.

When Graham seems to recognize Lucy, she manages to hold him back with a gesture. He does not approach her, but she senses that he recognizes her. Lucy believes that Graham does value her as a friend. She describes the little room that she thinks she holds in his heart. It is not room that can be compared with his male friends or with his wife, but there is a little place for her. She has a place in her heart for him, but she knows that the place in her heart might have grown infinitely if it had ever been encouraged. These rooms she describes are symbols for the amount of feeling invested in their relationship, and while Lucy knows that her room is small, its existence means a lot to her. She could have loved him but fortunately was wise enough to know she should not.

# Chapter 39, Old and New Acquaintance

## Chapter 39, Old and New Acquaintance Summary

Lucy watches the three figures for awhile. She has heard rumors about M. Paul's departure, and she knows of their involvement. Before her marriage, Madame Walravens was given a dowry of an estate in the West Indies. It was held over during her family's troubles, but it is now ready to be useful again, and she wants her money back. Madame Beck is interested in the estate because Madame Walravens has no family, and Madame Beck is courting to become her heir. Pire Silas is also interested in the estate because it could be an opportunity to expand the influence of the Catholic Church. The three of them need a devoted man to help them rebuild the estate. M. Paul will go and then when he returns, if he returns, he can live his own life.

Lucy sits and listens to her three adversaries talking for a while. She hears Madame Walravens ask where Justine Marie is, and someone answers that she is coming. Lucy is confused, because Justine Marie is the dead nun. Lucy hears them mention marriage. Soon Justine Marie arrives with her aunt, her uncle and M. Paul. He has changed his travel plans, against the advice of his friends, and he will sail on the Paul et Virginie in a fortnight instead of his original ship, the Antigua. He is in good spirits and says that he has work to do before he goes and that Justine Marie will help him. Lucy sees that Justine Marie is beautiful. She is a wealthy orphan, M. Paul's ward, and Lucy has seen her before. She can see that M. Paul is very fond of her and comes to believe that M. Paul will marry Justine Marie on his return. This might be an unreasonable conclusion to jump to, but Lucy sees how that plan would benefit everyone.

Lucy does not feel tired, but she knows it is time for her to return to the dormitory before Madame Beck does. On her way back to the Rue Fossette, a carriage thunders past her, and a white handkerchief waves out the window. Lucy is bewildered, but she does not know who is inside. In the dormitory, on her bed, she finds the clothing of the nun with a note, "The nun of the attic bequeaths to Lucy Snowe her wardrobe. She will be seen in the Rue Fossette no more." Lucy is confused but exhausted, and relieved that the nun was not a ghost, she sleeps.

## Chapter 39, Old and New Acquaintance Analysis

As Lucy observes M. Paul with his ward, she knows that she is not being rational and that there might be many other explanations for what she has heard. In fact, the likelihood of M. Paul, a poor, generous forty-year-old man, marrying his wealthy ward are slim, but Lucy is jealous and cannot be rational. This jealousy seems to free her from her love, and she is angry instead of despairing.

Lucy is furious over what she sees as her loss of M. Paul. It is difficult for her to endure the affections and romance of Paulina and Graham, but she knows that Graham's

affections could never be for her. Paulina and Graham's relationship is a love born out of beauty, and Lucy can appreciate it in an almost detached manner. For Lucy, it is a symbol of hope and beauty. Seeing the young Justine Marie with M. Paul hurts Lucy. She has grown to love M. Paul over a long time. She knows his faults, and she understands his mind. She respects him completely. This type of love, that grows over time and is born out of a deep friendship, is the type that Lucy feels. She is angry that it is gone and that someone else will be receiving that love. In spite of this irrational jealousy and anger, Lucy is somewhat rejuvenated, and she is able to return to the school and finally sleep.

# Chapter 40, The Happy Pair

## Chapter 40, The Happy Pair Summary

The morning after the festival, Ginevra Fanshawe has disappeared. Madame Beck is astounded but able to cast the blame towards Madame Cholmondeley. Lucy is the only one with a clue as to what happened, since she knows about the unlocked door and the waving handkerchief. It seems that Ginevra has eloped, and her uncle confirms the news.

Ginevra sends Lucy a letter and tells her that de Hamal was the nun that she saw. He had access to the college that bordered the garden because his nephews attend school there, and he is a good climber. He would scale the walls and come down the tree. Then, he would enter the school through a skylight and meet Ginevra. Ginevra says that he had several close calls and was startled by Lucy herself on more than one occasion. Ginevra is amazed that Lucy never told anyone of seeing the nun, since she herself would have caused a fuss.

Lucy sees Ginevra again toward the close of her honeymoon. Ginevra looks beautiful and happy. She is proud of her new name and her husband, who apologizes to Lucy for the ghost incident. Over the years, Ginevra surprisingly continues to correspond with Lucy. M. de Hamal leaves the army, and they live abroad. Lucy hears rumors of debts and dishonor. Ginevra has a son and writes incessantly about him, making every illness sound like death and praising every small accomplishment as though it were a miracle. Ginevra may face difficulties in her life, but she always calls out for aid and refuses to face them alone. Ultimately, she suffers very little in her life.

## Chapter 40, The Happy Pair Analysis

Earlier in the novel, Lucy remarks to Dr. John that while she feels Ginevra would spend a husband in to debt, she would never dishonor him. This chapter shows that Lucy has underestimated Ginevra's ability to ignore proper behavior in order to get what she wants. Aside from the scandal of her affair with M. de Hamal and her elopement, there are additional complications due to Ginevra's age and her husband's debts that make their situation even more unacceptable. Ginevra has to beg her uncle to prevent Alfred from being charged with abduction of a minor, and it turns out that they are not even legally married, due to Ginevra's age. Alfred's debt must be terrible, since M. de Bassompierre considers withholding a dowry and not allowing them to marry unless he agrees not to gamble. Allowing Ginevra to remain single after her attempted elopement would ruin her socially forever.

Ginevra proves that she is just as shallow, vain and self-centered as ever when she mentions that her marriage is partially to spite Dr. John and Paulina. She is immature enough to make a bad decision based on her jealousy of her cousin. Ginevra sees her

marriage as a triumph. She is proud of her title, since she is now a countess, and she is self-centered enough to believe that her actions have somehow hurt Dr. John and Paulina, who really do not care what she has done.

# Chapter 41, Faubourg Clotilde

## Chapter 41, Faubourg Clotilde Summary

Lucy's resolution to look toward freedom instead of love does not last. She still worries that M. Paul will not come to say goodbye, and she still loves him. On a holiday, when the students are all at Mass, she hears footsteps approach and turns to find him in the room. She is happy to see him, even if this will be the last time. He is dismayed to see that she has been ill and unhappy.

Madame Beck bursts into the room and tells M. Paul that she needs to talk to him. She tries to pull him away, but Lucy cries out that her heart will break and begins to cry. Madame Beck tells M. Paul that it is just nerves and that she will take care of Lucy. M. Paul tells her to leave. She refuses and reminds him of his duties, but he assures her that he knows them and that he can be trusted. He is troubled by Lucy's distress, though, and they must comfort each other. He shouts at Madame Beck again and finally slaps her. She leaves.

M. Paul calms Lucy, and she tells him that she was worried she was forgotten. He says that he will prove to her that he is a firm friend. He tells her they must walk, and Lucy is ready to go. They walk a long time, but M. Paul makes sure that they rest often. He is worried about Lucy and assures her that during all the long days they were apart he thought of her constantly. Lucy is happy now, but he is still concerned that she is so pale. When he says so, she is worried because she knows she is plain looking. He tells her differently, and she says that from this point on she never cares what anyone else thinks of her appearance, as long as it pleases him.

M. Paul tells Lucy that he is worried about leaving her at the Rue Fossette. She might miss him too much, and he is not sure that she will get his letters. She tells him that she must have his letters, and he assures her that he has a plan. They come to a new neighborhood, the Faubourg Clotilde, and he leads her to a door. They look around the pretty building, and Lucy is surprised that M. Paul would take so much freedom in someone else's house. Then, he opens the door to a small classroom. He tells Lucy that his friend has opened the school, and he hands her a prospectus with her own name on it. Lucy is shocked, and M. Paul laughs at her and teases that while she thought he forgot her, he has been working hard on her school and preparing for her future. He did not want to see her because he was certain he would ruin the surprise. He tells her that she must be happy and healthy and mind the school while he is away, and she promises to do so.

Lucy and M. Paul enjoy a dinner on her balcony, and he tells her about the house and situation. M. Miret, who found her a seat in the park, is her landlord, and his daughters will be her first students. M. Paul tells her that he would also like Justine Marie to be a student, but Lucy's reaction startles him. He asks her to tell him what is the matter, and Lucy tells him all about her wanderings in the park and what she saw. She is jealous,

and he can see it. She does not want Justine Marie to enter her school. He smiles and takes her hands. She knows that he should scold her, but instead he gathers her close and tells her that he loves her. "Lucy, take my love. One day share my life. Be my dearest, first on earth." Justine Marie is engaged to a young German, and they will be married within the year. Others in the family may have wished M. Paul to marry her, but he looks on her like a daughter. They walk back to the Rue Fossette in the moonlight, gloriously happy. M. Paul gives her his pledge, and they say farewell.

## Chapter 41, Faubourg Clotilde Analysis

M. Paul reveals that while Lucy has been sick with the idea that he has forgotten her and left without saying goodbye, he has been doing nothing but thinking of her. Even though his friends object to their relationship and have argued against his delayed departure, M. Paul is determined to make sure Lucy is cared for in his absence. He is dismayed when he sees how tortured she has been by his absence. He never thought that she would miss him so much or doubt that he would say goodbye. He is sorry that she was hurt by his absence but thrilled to make her happy.

Lucy is beginning to see that her and M. Paul's minds and lives are becoming united. She has no reason to doubt his love, except for the fact that he has not told her that he loves her. She can see that he has gone to much trouble and expense to make sure that she will happy in his absence, and this is an indication that she is the most important thing to him. Yet, when the name "Justine Marie" comes up, Lucy is taken over by jealousy. She knows that she has no evidence to back her feelings and that everything he has done for her shows that M. Paul has been thinking of her, but she is still uncertain enough of his affections that she is jealous. Her jealousy pleases him, because it finally shows how Lucy feels about him. Her jealousy gives him security, and for once, he is not the jealous one in their relationship. He finally tells her he loves her, at the moment when she is being all the things he has scolded her for in the past. She is being rash, passionate, irrational and more, but he takes this moment to give her the peace and happiness she needs.

Lucy finally has happiness. She has a future to look forward to because of M. Paul. When Lucy first meets him, when he reads her skull that first night at Rue Fossette, she does not know him. She does not like him for a long time and is put off by his appearance and personality. He once tells her that she was born under his star, and now she sees what he means. That star is a symbol of Lucy's hope for her own life. It lights their future together, and she is happy loving him.

# Chapter 42, Finis

## Chapter 42, Finis Summary

While Lucy has dreaded the years of separation, her anticipation proves to be the worse part. M. Paul is away for three years, and she says they are the happiest of her life. She works hard to improve her school, and she builds a library for M. Paul and grows the plants he loves. Her school prospers. During the second year, she receives one hundred pounds from the nephew of the late Miss Marchmont. Lucy does not know what prompts him to send the money, but she is grateful and turns her day school into a boarding school by leasing the building next door.

Lucy works hard because she has been given hope for the future, and she is not working for herself so much as for something else. M. Paul frequently sends her long letters, because he loves her and has much to say to her. He is a true and tender friend, and Lucy feels that she must be grateful to be remembered and treated so well. M. Paul tells her that she should remain a Protestant and that it is part of what he loves about her. In spite of his being a Catholic, Lucy sees that none of the negatives of the religion reach him, only the good.

Autumn approaches, and M. Paul has been away three years. Lucy loves him even more than before because now she trusts that he is hers. His ship is due in November, but Lucy can see that the skies are darkening. She asks God to watch over his ship. She tells of storms that sunk many ships in the Atlantic and of thousands of weepers for whom day never came. Lucy will say no more. She does not want to trouble the kind reader. She wants to leave the readers with hope. They can imagine a happy reunion and the joy that comes from escaping terror and a happy union and life. She concludes by quickly saying that Madame Beck prospers, as does Pire Silas, and that Madame Walravens lives to be ninety.

## Chapter 42, Finis Analysis

The three years that M. Paul is away find Lucy cultivating a happiness she never thought was possible. She has much to look forward to, and she considers it her duty to take care of what M. Paul has given her. She keeps herself busy and works hard to make sure he will be proud of her when he returns. A long time ago, when Dr. John told her she needed to cultivate happiness, Lucy did not think it was possible to do it by herself. Now she knows that she needed someone to give her something to grow. M. Paul gives her what she needs and regularly sustains her faith in him and her happiness through his letters. Having something to look forward to changes Lucy's life. While M. Paul writes her, she never believes that he will brush her aside or forget her. He remembers her always, and she feels she has been given a great gift in his love.

The storms of Lucy's life appear again in the final chapter. While the reader realizes that M. Paul does die, because Lucy says that the three years he is away are the happiest of her life and because the omen of the storms themselves indicates that Lucy is suffering a great loss, it is never directly said that he dies. Instead, Lucy says she will stop there, with the storm, and allow sunny-minded readers to hope for a happy reunion and life together. It is an act of kindness to the reader, to not give them pain at the close of the story. Lucy does not end her story with her life or M. Paul's death, just as she did not begin with the story of her youth. Instead, the reader is left with information on the lives of the three people who worked to send M. Paul away, who all live long prosperous lives. All the reader knows of Lucy's life is the story she has told here. The past and what happens after M. Paul's death remain a mystery.

# Characters

## Lucy Snowe

Lucy Snowe is the narrator of the novel, a young woman with no family or connections who finds a teaching position in a small city in France to support herself. Lucy is shy and lonely and does not believe she will ever find true friends or a future to look forward to. She occasionally suffers from nerves, nightmares and headaches, particularly when she is especially alone. Lucy is also an intelligent, observant woman, who uses her position as an outsider to learn about those around her. She can see past the superficial traits of most people to see their flaws and weaknesses, as well as strengths that might be hidden. Lucy is not a beautiful woman and regrets it slightly, but she is not superficial and would rather have a relationship built out of friendship and respect than materialism and vanity. Lucy's past and future remain a blank to the reader. She begins the story when she is still an adolescent, but the reader learns nothing about her family or her past. She is bold enough to follow her instinct to Villette, but when she is first approached to teach, her terror nearly prevents her from taking the chance. Over the course of the novel, Lucy becomes bolder, eventually opening her own school. Lucy spends much of the novel torn between her affection for her "god-brother," Dr. John, a man she greatly admires but knows she will never have, and M. Paul, the temperamental, passionate literature professor. Lucy develops a close friendship with M. Paul that leaves her braver, better educated and more confident in herself. When M. Paul reveals that he loves her and gives her the means to run her own school and support herself independently, Lucy finally has something to look forward to in her life, and she builds a better life for herself out of that hope.

## Mrs. Louisa Bretton

Mrs. Louisa Bretton is Lucy Snowe's godmother. She is a kind, intelligent, spirited woman, with good looks and a respectable background. She shows that she is generous and kind by having both Lucy and Paulina stay with her when they are children. While she is a busy woman, with plenty to keep her occupied, she is also always dignified and respectable. Mrs. Bretton has a wonderful, teasing relationship with her son. She is especially close to him because of the early death of her husband, and her son is the most important thing in the world to her. Although she values him, she also raised him to be intelligent and independent. Mrs. Bretton is kind to Lucy again when she meets her as an adult. She always treats Lucy with kindness and with regard toward her feelings. Although Lucy is at times forgotten by the Brettons, she is never once faced with unkindness from them, and she always regards Mrs. Bretton as a pleasant, happy woman.

## Dr. John Graham Bretton

Dr. John, or Graham as he is often called, is a young, handsome doctor. He is Mrs. Bretton's only son, and he enjoys a close relationship with her. As a boy, he had the advantages of education and wealth, but much of his money was lost before he became an adult. In spite of this loss, he conducts himself well and is well respected in his profession, establishing himself both socially and financially in Villette society. Dr. John is a handsome man and a bit of a flirt. All the women at the Rue Fossette admire him, and Lucy harbors a secret attraction to him, although she never acknowledges it. Dr. John is a good man, giving and patient, but he has a bit of a blind spot where women are concerned. At first, he is blinded by Ginevra Fanshawe's beauty and unable to see her many flaws. Once he does, he turns his attention to the lovely and worthy Paulina Home. Dr. John is also blind to Lucy's true personality. While he always treats Lucy with kindness, his regard for her is just an extension of his own friendly personality. Because she is a woman and because she is not beautiful, she never seems to grab his attention as he holds hers. In time, their friendship fades away, and he does not seem to notice. Dr. John is still a good man, however, and the happiness that life brings him, in both his marriage and his profession, is determined by Lucy to be well deserved. His marriage to Paulina improves him tremendously, and his goodness makes him worthy of the happiness he receives.

## Paulina Mary Home de Bassompierre

Paulina first appears in the novel as a precocious little girl, deeply attached to her father and then to Graham Bretton. She behaves like a miniature woman, acting almost in a wifely manner toward her father and toward Graham. Graham finds her attention amusing and is pleased to be admired by her, even though she is just a child. When Paulina reenters the lives of the Brettons and Lucy Snowe, she is now a young woman. She has grown up to be beautiful, intelligent and elegant, and she is just as devoted to her father as before. While Paulina grows up surrounded by love and attention, she still shows herself to be a compassionate person. She cares about Lucy, and when she finds love, she worries that Lucy will always be alone. While her husband, Graham Bretton, has no comprehension of Lucy's personality or taste, Paulina can read Lucy and knows what she likes. While Paulina spends a long time worrying about telling her father that she is an adult, she manages to create a solution where she never has to leave either her father or her husband but can continue to be devoted to both. Paulina, as a character, represents the opposite of both Lucy Snowe and Ginevra Fanshawe. Paulina's blessed life, with a devoted father, handsome husband, wealth, education, beauty and charm, stands in sharp contrast to Lucy's plain looks, absent family and lonely, hardworking life. While Ginevra also has beauty and money at her disposal, her self-centered nature and materialism makes her very different from the generous and caring Paulina. Paulina represents the happy, blessed life that Lucy will never know, but Lucy cannot be jealous of Paulina, since Paulina is good enough to deserve it.

## Mr. Home de Bassompierre

M. de Bassompierre is the devoted father of Paulina and the generous uncle of Ginevra. He is a kind and giving man. His interest in science seems to occupy all the time that is not shared with his daughter. He dotes on his daughter to the point that he never realizes that she has grown up until she is ready to leave him to marry John Bretton. He is well thought of throughout Villette because he respects those who merit respect, such as M. Paul, and he is kind to those who need kindness, such as Lucy. This is demonstrated in the company he keeps and his conversation.

## Ginevra Fanshawe

Ginevra Fanshawe is a beautiful, talkative, self-centered girl, who Lucy first encounters on the ship to France. Ginevra's off-hand remark about an opening at her school changes Lucy's life, and from that point on, they are almost friends. Lucy does not like Ginevra because she is vain, materialistic, selfish, ignorant and self-serving. Ginevra is also bluntly honest, which Lucy believes indicates that there is good in her. Ginevra always seeks Lucy out, and for some reason Lucy always sits beside her, shares her food, helps her with her mending and listens to her endless dialogue. While Lucy is quick to scold or correct Ginevra, Ginevra never seems to mind. She refers to Lucy by many different names, mostly alluding to her as a stern beast or monster, and yet she clings to her relationship with Lucy even after her marriage. Lucy is the one person who may give her the indulgence of her extra food or drink, but who will not indulge her faulty character. Lucy's sarcastic replies and sharp rebuttals seem to be lost on Ginevra, who constantly seeks her out, leans on her when walking and elbows her when sitting beside her. Ginevra's scandalous elopement reveals how far she is willing to go to act out in a childishly spiteful manner and how much titles, wealth and beauty mean to her.

## Madame Beck

Madame Beck is the directress of the school at Rue Fossette. She is a good-looking, intelligent and polite woman, but she is a woman with a hard heart. She shows affection for no one, not even her children, and she is entirely governed by her own self-interest. Madame Beck uses surveillance to keep track of her students and her teachers, and by these somewhat inappropriate means she rules the school with a firm hand. Outwardly, she is always polite and kind. She never causes undue stress to children or teachers, and she always makes sure that everyone is well cared for and happy. Yet, Madame Beck is a determined woman and feels pity for no one. While she might be generous to causes in general, she feels nothing toward individuals. She has no sense of compassion or sympathy but only acts in a manner to benefit her school, her reputation, her children and her interest. For these reasons, Lucy both admires and despises her. Madame Beck gives Lucy a chance to better her future. She allows Lucy to teach, and she grants Lucy the freedom that she knows she values. When Madame Beck realizes that M. Paul is becoming fond of Lucy, she conspires to keep them apart because she wants to tie M. Paul to her own interest. Lucy is interfering with her plans. She is never

cruel or impolite to Lucy, but she does want to control her, in order to benefit herself. In spite of all the good things Madame Beck does for Lucy, Lucy can never truly like or trust her because she knows that Madame Beck is only looking out for herself and will cast anyone aside who interferes with her wants and needs.

## M. Paul Carl David Emanuel

M. Paul is the demanding, passionate and egotistical little professor that Lucy becomes friends with and grows to love. He is a brilliant professor who works at both the university and the Rue Fossette and is respected in both locations. He particularly likes his work at the Rue Fossette, because there is has a large degree of control over the students and the other teachers. At first, Lucy does not like him because he is so bossy and domineering. He taunts her about her intellect and prudishness and scolds her for her rash and whimsical behavior. M. Paul's early assessments of Lucy are not quite accurate, since she is cautious and determined to stay in the background and not be noticed. His insight into her personality is on a deeper level, and over the course of the novel, both Lucy and the reader learn that she can indeed be rash, irrational, jealous and haughty. M. Paul is jealous of Lucy's relationship with Dr. John, and he resents that he cannot gain the control over Lucy that he has over the other teachers. Over time, M. Paul and Lucy develop a deep and meaningful friendship, although they often quarrel. He teases her about her studies and worries about her Protestant background. M. Paul is eventually revealed to be a self-sacrificing and generous man, who gives up everything to provide for others. Learning of his devotion and good heart, Lucy comes to respect and admire him even more than before. M. Paul eventually shows that he can give himself fully to others and goes to drastic lengths to make sure that Lucy will be secure and happy when he leaves Europe. It is his generosity and his love that changes Lucy's life and gives her a happiness that she can sustain.

## Pire Silas

Pire Silas is the kind but misguided priest who attempts to convert Lucy and warns M. Paul away from her. Lucy believes he is a good man because when she first meets him, as she is wandering Villette alone and sick, he listens to her and tries to advise her, even though she is not Catholic. Pire Silas looks out for her. He firmly believes that Catholicism is the only true religion, and his attempts to steer M. Paul away from Lucy and to convert her are his ways of trying to protect their souls. Although his involvement in the conspiracy to send M. Paul away is part of the voyage that leads to M. Paul's death, Lucy always speaks of Pire Silas as a good man.

## Madame Walravens

Madame Walravens is one of the conspirators who sends M. Paul to Guadeloupe. She is only three feet tall, but she dresses elaborately in turbans and jewels. She was once wealthy but has become poor and is completely dependent on M. Paul's generosity for

her survival. She is cranky and rude, but M. Paul still provides for her because she is the grandmother of the woman he once loved, Justine Marie. While Madame Walravens never shows any regard for M. Paul or Justine Marie, she is still regarded with pity by others.

## Rosine

Rosine is the flirty portress who minds the door at the Rue Fossette. In addition to answering doors and delivering messages, Rosine also acts as a lady's maid and a spy over the course of the novel. She is nosy and a gossip, which works to both Lucy's benefit and detriment.

## Goton

Goton is the maid who stays with Lucy during the long vacation when Lucy is ill. Although she is a minor character, she does show affection for Lucy that is consistently kind.

## Colonel Alfred de Hamal

Alfred de Hamal is Ginevra Fanshawe's admirer and later her husband. He is also the nun in the garret. He is very handsome, in a perfect, almost doll-like manner, and Lucy does not seem to trust him because of these good looks. He is a dandy and shows himself to be an irresponsible man through his gambling, his rendezvous with Ginevra and their scandalous elopement. He is vain, self-centered and materialistic. While his behavior to Lucy when he meets her, after he marries Ginevra, is smooth and polite, over the years Lucy learns that he never changes but continues to create trouble.

## Justine Marie Sauveur

Justine Marie Sauveur is the niece of the young Justine Marie that M. Paul was going to marry. She is also M. Paul's ward. She is a wealthy, good-looking young woman, and she seems to be fondly regarded by her extended family, which includes Madame Walravens and Madame Beck. Lucy sees her in the park with her family and begins to believe that M. Paul will marry her.

## Mrs. Cholmondeley

Mrs. Cholmondeley is a friend of Ginevra Fanshawe's family. She is a well-connected woman with frequent social outings, and she often takes Ginevra with her. Her materialism and low manner are poor influences on Ginevra, and Dr. John does not have a good opinion of her, although she seems to be highly regarded by Villette society.

## Miss Marchmont

Miss Marchmont is the eccentric and wealthy old lady that Lucy works for when she is originally left without family or friends. Although she is sick and in pain, she tries to be kind to Lucy and gives generously to the poor. The night before she dies, she tells Lucy that she realizes she has been selfish because while she has given to the poor, she has neglected many of those she can help, such as Lucy. She thinks that she should help those individuals whose lives she can improve, such as Lucy, and she promises to help Lucy but dies before she can fulfill her promise.

## Zylie St. Pierre

Zylie St. Pierre is the Parisian teacher who initially tries to befriend Lucy but then becomes her enemy. She is amoral and filled with greed. She is looking for a husband and believes that M. Paul may marry her. When Lucy refuses to change for the play, she and Zylie exchange heated words, and Zylie dislikes her from that point on and goes out of her way to embarrass her.

## Mrs. Sweeny

Mrs. Sweeny, or Madame Svini, is the drunken Irish nursemaid that watches Madame Beck's children the night that Lucy arrives at Rue Fossette. Lucy is hired as her replacement.

## Dysirye, Fifine and Georgette Beck

Dysirye, Fifine and Georgette are Madame Beck's three daughters. Dysirye is sneaky and troublesome, while Fifine is honest but mischievous and prone to trouble. Fifine's broken arm summons Dr. John to the Rue Fossette for the first time. Georgette is the youngest child and Lucy's favorite. During the girl's illness, Lucy is her caretaker, and Lucy grows to love the child.

# Objects/Places

## Rue Fossette

Rue Fossette is where Madame Beck's pensionnat is located. It is on the outskirts of Villette, but the city has grown to reach its walls. When the building was first erected, it was a convent, and the origin of the building can still be seen in many of the rooms of the building, which resemble nuns' cells. There are several classrooms downstairs and a series of dormitories and garrets upstairs. The building is well appointed and comfortable.

## Bretton

Bretton is the town where Lucy visits her godmother when she is a child. Though the Brettons live there, they do not know if there is a connection between the town's name and their own.

## La Terrasse

La Terrasse is the small, comfortable house that Dr. John Bretton buys outside Villette. Lucy enjoys several weeks there as she recovers from her illness.

## Hftel Crycy

The Hftel Crycy is the grand hotel where M. de Bassompierre and Paulina live while they are in Villette. It is elegant and regal, and the de Bassompierres have a large apartment inside of it.

## The Park

The park outside of Madame Beck's school is part of the school itself. The students enjoy class outside when the weather is nice, and Madame Beck encourages them to exercise out there often.

## The Forbidden Alley

The forbidden alley is a dark little pathway that borders the park. It is called forbidden because it is a little eerie, but Lucy likes it because it allows her to enjoy quiet and solitude. It is also one of the places where she sees the nun while she is with M. Paul, who often walks there with her.

## The Garrets

The garrets are cold and dark. One attic garret is where M. Paul locks Lucy in so that she can rehearse for the play. In another garret, Lucy sees the nun while she is trying to read Dr. John's letter. She visits the garret on another occasion to fetch her dress and is surprised to see a light on. Alfred de Hamal uses this garret when he sneaks into the school to visit Ginevra.

## The Theater

Dr. John invites Lucy to the theater to see the actress Vashti. While they are there a fire breaks out, and in the chaos that follows, the crowd crushes Paulina de Bassompierre, reuniting the Homes and the Brettons.

## Faubourg Clotilde

M. Paul leases a small house for Lucy in the Faubourg Clotilde. There, she opens the school that he prepared for her, and it grows successful in his absence. It is cheaper than buildings closer to the city. She has a kind landlord in M. Miret, though, and the building itself is perfect for her school.

## The Cleopatra

Lucy sees the painting of Cleopatra at the museum as she waits for Dr. John to fetch her. M. Paul finds her in the gallery and admonishes her for looking at the scandalous painting. Instead, he steers her across the gallery to look at a series of dreary paintings depicting the life of a woman.

## The Nun

The ghost of a nun who was buried alive supposedly haunts the Rue Fossette. On several occasions, Lucy and M. Paul see a nun in the garret and in the forbidden alley. This nun turns out to be Alfred de Hamal, who disguises himself to sneak into the school and visit Ginevra.

## The First Classe

The first classe is the largest classroom, where the highest ranked students have their lessons and where the students and teachers gather during their free time or evening study. Lucy often walks there alone when the students and other teachers are occupied somewhere else.

## The Pink Dress

Mrs. Bretton buys Lucy a pink dress to wear to the concert with her and her son. Lucy is nervous about the color, but it is plainly made, which calms her a little. M. Paul teases her about the dress and says it is scarlet, which embarrasses her.

## The Watchguard

Lucy spends a great deal of time making a watchguard for M. Paul for his fete day. She embellishes the chain elaborately and even decorates the box. When he is impatient about his gifts on the fete day, she withholds the gift, but when she does give it to him, he is pleased.

# Social Sensitivity

This, the darkest, gloomiest of Charlotte Bronte's novels, takes up again the subject of the subjugation of women by society. While there is no real objective statement of the problem, the subjective perceptions of the heroine (many current readers might prefer to refer to her as a non- or anti-heroine), Lucy Snowe, sharply underline the fact that women are considered to be an inferior order to men and should act accordingly.

Lucy has little money, no family to which to turn, and no personal attractiveness (some readers believe that she also possesses absolutely no charm); she must attempt to "get along" as best she can under those circumstances and with the awareness that she can expect no help from any social institutions.

In Villette, the subjection of women is presented in a more intense fashion than in Bronte's earlier works: The book is set primarily in a Catholic country, and most of the major characters (except Lucy) are Catholic. The doctrines of the Church about the place of women in society exacerbate Lucy's already humble condition. Even the man she comes to love in the end, Emanuel Paul, "believed in his soul that lovely, placid, and passive feminine mediocrity was the only pillow on which manly thought and sense could find rest for its aching temples; and as to work, male minds alone could work to any practical result." This view fairly well sums up what Lucy and the somewhat self-effacing Polly (later Paulina) Home are up against. In Villette, Lucy, unlike Jane Eyre, is almost universally unsuccessful.

That many critics believe her failures are largely (or even entirely) her own fault does not alter the fact that, if she had been a man, she would have been given more respect and opportunity. This assignment of blame by many readers relates to another concern that is strikingly modern. Almost all modern critics believe Lucy to be mentally and emotionally disturbed. The ways in which the characters react to her fits of depression, fears of hallucinations, and general erratic behavior reveal a profound ignorance of such phenomena—even Dr. John, an otherwise successful physician, believes her problems to be essentially physical (although he does admit that "nerves" are involved). Since Lucy accepts her disorder as an integral part of her "philosophy," insofar as she has one, the reader may accept the lack of understanding by society. Lucy has learned to accept her "problem;" so others do, too.

# Techniques

The main critical complaint that has been leveled against Vilette is an unusually heavy dependence on coincidence, which some scholars believe damages the integrity of the plot. It seems impossible to many readers that Lucy, when she arrives in France, should encounter John Bretton whom she had known as a child; that she should meet up again with Ginevra Fanshawe; that she should again run into Polly Home, now Paulina Mary de Bassompierre—thus, all the major characters whom Lucy knew when she was fourteen are reassembled in Villette. This device gives the plot a somewhat circular effect, but it strains credulity.

As in Jane Eyre (1847; see separate entry), with which Villette is often compared, the author employs the first-person narration of a young woman (at first a girl) whose activities and thoughts and emotions are detailed at great length by herself. Thus, Villette is a very subjective novel, quite unlike Shirley (1849; see separate entry). In this psychological study, the technique works well, since the reader must see inside Lucy Snowe's mind to appreciate her motives and experiences.

The foreign setting and characters are fashioned from Bronte's personal experience. Mme. Beck's school is a close copy of the Pensionnat Heger, where Charlotte worked in her youth. M. Emanuel Paul is based on Constantin Heger and Mme.

Beck on Madame Heger. In her customary fashion, Bronte forms several other characters on real people: John Graham Bretton and his mother derive from George Smith (of Charlotte's publishing house, Smith, Elder) and his mother— Smith recognized the "portrait" and was rather pleased with it. Also, Ginevra Fanshawe had a basis in a girl whom Charlotte knew in Brussels.

Even the most momentous event of the plot may well have been created from a real-life experience. The brother of Charlotte's friend Mary Taylor had proposed to Charlotte and then gone to India for five years, after which Bronte was unsure of his return. These happenings are most likely the reason for the proposal, departure, and uncertainty of the return of Emanuel Paul (who Charlotte believed to be lost at sea). So Charlotte Bronte mined her own experience for characters and events with which to build a long and moving story.

# Themes

## Themes

Lucy Snowe's (the name may be viewed as symbolic of the lack of warmth in her nature) problems have been "diagnosed" in various ways by expert readers—in fact, until depth psychology became established, Villette, while meeting with popular success, underwent severe criticism for its unrelieved grimness. Two of the most vocal denigrators were Bronte's contemporaries, Harriet Martineau (an erstwhile friend of Charlotte Bronte), who said the work was "too painful" to read; and the renowned critic, Matthew Arnold, who found it "hideous," "disagreeable," and "convulsed." Today, however, with the advantage of current psychological insights, a number of literary scholars judge the book as Bronte's finest work.

Whatever one's evaluation, there is no question about the profoundly realized image of a pessimistic, unhappy personality. One flaw that has been discovered in the text is the absence of any substantial explanation of how Lucy became so negative in her vision of the world, particularly in regard to personal relationships: "I disclaim, with the utmost scorn, every sneaking suspicion of what are called 'warmer feelings'; women do not entertain these 'warmer feelings' where, from the commencement, through the whole progress of an acquaintance, they have never been cheated of the conviction that to do so would be to commit a mortal absurdity."

The text almost bristles with such pejorative statements about human association (along with numerous others decrying destiny). It has been suggested that Lucy Snowe is a sort of Existentialist.

If, as Heraclitus wrote, "man's character is his fate," then a thoughtful reader might declare that Lucy's troubles (perhaps most notably, her relations with John Graham Bretton and Emanuel Paul) emanate chiefly from her belief that the worst will happen. Since she has "no beauty," and since men (Dr. John being the most obvious example) tend to be influenced by appearance—as Graham is overcome by the looks of the shallow Ginevra Fanshawe—Lucy is all too ready to believe that she cannot attract a man romantically.

Another thematic suggestion claims that Lucy suffers from a sort of divided nature: One could term it Reason in opposition to Emotion. When, in Chapter 21, Lucy really wishes to forgive Paul for a cutting comment, instead of doing so, she tells him "a neat frosty falsehood," which delays their reconciliation.

She writes a pleasant, warm letter to John Graham Bretton and then tears it up and pens a brief, curt note. When she asks herself if she dare to express some of her affection for Dr. John, her "reasoning" is indicative of her psychological problems.

She thinks that to hope for a continuation of his kindness is "insane . . . credulity." It seems that Lucy fears affection (or perhaps the rejection of it) so much that she cannot let it escape her own troubled soul. At one point she applies to the power of Reason and asks, "But if I feel, may I never express?" Reason's reply is, "Never!"

Inasmuch as the reader is never given any sort of detailed background on Lucy's family and upbringing, it is difficult to generate a great deal of sympathy for her—some readers find her something of a case study. However, she does have redeeming qualities. She has a fairly solid faith in God (upon which she may rely too heavily at times, causing her stoic acceptance often to be self-defeating); and, she is not stupid nor lazy—she teaches well and learns quickly. Lucy also displays considerable courage, near the opening of the main plot when she leaves England, which offers no immediate means of gainful or satisfying employment, for France, where she hopes to find a suitable position. She makes the journey to this foreign land, with whose language she has almost no familiarity, carrying very little money and no connections. Her success in winning a position at Mme. Beck's school is largely due to good luck (a rare instance of it in this book) but also due to her diligence, honesty, and intelligence. This last quality is, perhaps, a bit exaggerated, given the relative speed with which she masters the French language—which leads to a cautionary note: A serious reader of Villette should possess a fair reading knowledge of French, or have ready access to someone who has. Much of the dialogue is in French; and, the passages are not, as in many other English novels, incidental remarks that do not need to be understood—for instance, when M. Paul tells Lucy, "Je vois bien que vous vous moquez de moi," it is important for the reader to know that he is accusing Miss Snowe of making fun of him.

All in all, Villette is an absorbing psychological study. Even Lucy's antipathy to the Catholic Church can be studied as a part of her seemingly inbred suspicion of so many aspects of life. The almost happy ending, where Lucy and Emanuel become betrothed, only to be separated for three years because of a term of family duty (originated by the jealous Madame Beck) overseas, seems too good to be true—as is the additional positive fact that Paul has arranged for Lucy to have a school of her own. Charlotte Bronte's original intention was to retain the unhappy tone of the novel by having Paul be lost at sea on his way home. Patrick Bronte urged his daughter not to close the plot on such a bitter note. So, Charlotte finished the story by having Lucy tell of how happy she has been for these three years and how she looks forward to greeting Emanuel on his return—then, Lucy learns of the terrible storm both in France and over the Atlantic, a gale that did not ease until "the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks." After this seven-day tempest, it seems impossible that Paul has survived. Bronte leaves the question open, although many readers believe that Emanuel has perished. Lucy simply states, "Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delights of joy born afresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life." But, Lucy does not say that hers is a "sunny imagination" (the use of the latter word also casts doubt on Paul's survival). Thus, this melancholy novel closes with an uncertain ending and the philosophically murmured "Farewell."

## Religion

Lucy's Protestant background clashes with the predominantly Catholic culture of Villette several times. Lucy has difficulty accepting some behavior that is only minimally offensive to the Catholics, such as lying, and she disagrees with them on some fundamental points regarding the extravagance of Mass and relative importance of church attendance. These differences alienate her from the community, and she is discouraged from talking alone with the students.

When M. Paul and Lucy become close friends, the difference in their religion alarms M. Paul's friends. M. Paul is very religious, but Lucy sees none of the hypocrisy or falseness that makes her dislike Catholicism. Lucy believes that the best of the religion is in M. Paul, but he joins his friends in their attempts to convert her. The separation that is caused by this difference nearly ends their friendship, but finally they sit and discuss it. M. Paul is worried about Lucy's soul and argues and pleads with her. Lucy, however, believes that Catholicism takes a lax approach to caring for the souls of its followers and that it breeds bigotry and contempt. She explains her perspective to M. Paul, and they are able to reconcile their differences.

The debates over Catholicism and Protestantism that occur in the novel are sometimes bitter. Pire Silas tells M. Paul slanderous things about Protestantism in England, while Lucy is very vocal about her dislike of Catholicism. Lucy's belief in simplicity and direct communication with God is not only central to her argument with M. Paul, but it is also central to Lucy's character. Lucy is trying to be honest, faithful, sincere and pure, in order to be true to her faith.

## Education

Education becomes important to Lucy over the course of the novel. While she is a teacher, and eventually opens her own school, Lucy takes her own continuous studies seriously. She wants to be an intelligent person, and her "intellect" is one of the topics that M. Paul frequently harasses her about. Most people who know Lucy believe that she is well educated, but she knows this is not true. Lucy studies to improve herself because she wants to become a learned woman.

Education is a characteristic that can clearly show the faults and virtues of the female characters in the novel. Ginevra's education has been fragmented by the many schools she has attended, and she takes a lazy approach to her studies. The result is an empty-headed young woman who cannot speak reasonably about anything but herself. Paulina, on the other hand, is well educated. She speaks French perfectly, and she is able to converse with highly educated men in an interesting, engaging discourse. She strives to be better at what she does, which results in her taking German classes with Lucy. Paulina is an elegant, truly refined and well-educated lady, and so she earns the admiration for all that meet her.

Lucy's continuing education is one thing that brings her closer to M. Paul. M. Paul studies with her to improve her skills at arithmetic. He wants her to be the best that she can be, so he leaves her books and pamphlets that will interest her and corrects her studies for her. His teaching has a great influence over Lucy, and she becomes more confident in herself as the lessons progress. The lessons themselves mark the different phases in the relationship between M. Paul and Lucy. He is cross and authoritative when he does not know her and believes she is worldly and egotistical, but once he knows Lucy, he corrects her and praises her with a kind, patient manner.

## Friendship

Friendship is something that Lucy often lacks. When she arrives in Villette, she is completely alone, and it is a while before she bonds with anyone in the city. The lack of affection that Lucy feels is part of the despair that she frequently succumbs to in the beginning of the novel. She has no companionship and no one whom she respects, admires and cares about. Ginevra is a frequent companion, but while Ginevra seeks Lucy out, she does not understand or appreciate Lucy. Later, Lucy has a different friendship with Paulina. This friendship is founded on a common acquaintance, but Paulina comes to rely on Lucy as a teacher and a confidant.

Lucy's friendship with the Brettons is at first important to her. They reenter her life at a point when she has no one and nothing to cling to. She is all alone in the world, and she is suffering an illness because of it. Although Lucy is happy to see them and grateful for their attention, she cautions herself from the beginning not to rely on the Brettons. Indeed, Lucy's friendship with Dr. John, while important to her, is simply part of Dr. John's generous personality. He never understands or appreciates Lucy, and when she is not right before him, he tends to forget her.

Lucy's friendship with M. Paul, which is born out of a long acquaintance and grows slowly over time, is a deep and lasting friendship. While M. Paul has many friends and acquaintances, he still needs Lucy's respect and admiration. When he begins to pay attention to Lucy, teasing her, scolding her and leaving her gifts and books, he is giving her the attention that she needs. She is alone in the world, and suddenly, someone takes an interest in her. It is not because she is an old acquaintance, but because he thinks she is interesting, annoying, coquettish and rash that he becomes interested in her. Lucy is a project for M. Paul. He can see her bold spirit, and he wants a bit of dominance over her, just as he has over everyone else. Lucy resists him, but gradually she comes to respect and admire him. When they decide to become good friends, like brother and sister, they each need many reassurances from the other. To them, this is a deep commitment, and yet they continue to doubt each other. When their friendship becomes something more, Lucy still doubts him, but he proves himself to be loyal, true and devoted to her and her happiness.

## Self-Interest versus Generosity

Many characters, such as M. de Bassompierre, Mrs. Bretton and Dr. John, are shown to be generous throughout the novel. It is part of their personalities to give where they have the means and see the need. Others, such as Miss Marchmont, give to the poor, but later they realize that they need to take a deeper interest in relieving the suffering of others. M. Paul shows the true spirit of generosity. He sacrifices his own material gains to help those who have scorned him in the past, simply because they were loved by someone he loved. Although he gets no thanks and the worthiness of the recipients could be argued, he continues to shelter and provide for them. His generosity to Lucy comes out of his love for her, but he gives his thoughts and affections to her so abundantly that it is still generous, even if it is something that makes him happy as well.

Other characters, such as Ginevra and Madame Beck, are only interested in other people when it concerns themselves. Ginevra is a selfish person who cannot stand to have the attention on anyone else for even a moment. She takes from anyone who will give to her, even if it is inappropriate. Her behavior is not ladylike in this regard, but even when Lucy scolds her, she continues to act in the manner that will best benefit herself. Madame Beck is always a perfect lady, and her behavior is rarely reproached. She is constantly moving to guard her own interest, and she is never shown to have any motivation aside from this self-interest. While Madame Beck is always proper, this governing selfishness makes her cold and impersonal. She cannot care about others, so she can never give to anyone with the sincere generosity of M. Paul. Instead, she works for what is best for her, and if someone disrupts her, that person is coldly moved out of her way.

## Hope and Happiness

Lucy often despairs because she feels she has no friends, no family and nothing to look forward to. When she falls ill, and then when she sees the nun for the first time, Dr. John tells her that it is because of her nerves and recommends travel and time with friends for her. For Lucy, this is not an easy prescription to fill. She does not have the means to travel, and she has no friends. Dr. John tells her that she needs to cultivate happiness, but when she asks him how, he does not know because he is a naturally happy person. Dr. John and Paulina are the type of people that happiness flows to naturally. They are good-looking, kind and generous, and Lucy believes they deserve the blessings they receive. Paulina is mature enough to realize how lucky she is and how unfair it is that she, who has not done anything greatly worthwhile, is living a blessed life, while others, who are no less deserving, suffer.

When Lucy develops her friendship with M. Paul, she begins to be happy again. Friendship is important to her, but she is still doubtful at times that he wants to be her friend and that he truly values her. It is only when he declares his love and promises her a future with him that Lucy is able to maintain her happiness. For Lucy, happiness depends on having another person to care about. M. Paul's efforts have made her hope

for a future, and it is planning her future with him that spurs her to action. He has given her happiness, and she is able to maintain that happiness because of him, his attention and his promise for the future.

# Style

## Point of View

Lucy Snowe tells the story in first person. Lucy is an oddly secretive narrator. She withholds any details about what happens to her before or after the novel. By doing this, she becomes a background element in the story of her own life. Lucy is an observer. She strives to be quiet and stay in the background, because this allows her the best perspective from which to study others. She is able to describe details about characters' personalities and motivations that would not be apparent to a casual observer, even one who has known the subject for a long time. This insight provides the reader with clear, honest views of the world that Lucy lives in. Lucy strives to be truthful and always makes an attempt to mention a character's faults as well as virtues.

Lucy's quiet nature makes it easy for her to observe scenes she might otherwise not be present for. Lucy is there to see the interaction between Paulina and Graham as children and as adults, because they seem to forget her presence. At the school, Lucy is in a position to observe from her station in the nursery long before she actually becomes a teacher, and she witnesses many interactions that allow her to understand the school and its staff completely. She witnesses Madame Beck performing surveillance many times without being observed herself, which gives her a unique knowledge of that woman.

Lucy spends a good deal of time watching. When she is at the concert, at the theater, at dinners and even just with her students, she is always alert. She gauges reactions and appearances, and for the most part, Lucy seems to be an objective narrator. The one time that Lucy seems to be unreliable in her narrative is the night she is given the sleeping draught, when she roams through the park in a dream-like state and comes to the conclusion that M. Paul will marry the young Justine Marie. Even then, Lucy admits that she is being irrational and that she is not herself. As a first person narrator, Lucy is surprising honest and objective, but the language of the story itself is tempered with her personality and opinions.

## Setting

The novel opens in Lucy's homeland, England. There is never any mention of Lucy's home itself, though, and her town remains nameless. Instead, the English scenes are in Bretton, at the home of the Brettons, and in London, where Lucy becomes part of an anonymous crowd. The peace and quiet of Bretton and the bustling energy of London provide a great contrast to the town where Lucy lives with Miss Marchmont.

Villette itself is a foreign land for Lucy. When she arrives, she does not speak the language and finds the behavior and attitudes of the people very different from those in England. Even when Lucy has lived in Villette for a number of years, she still speaks

French haltingly, which marks her always as a foreigner. France, from its language to its culture to its religion, is vastly different from the world Lucy knows. When Lucy is in England, she is alone, but in Villette she is not only alone because of her situation. She is also culturally isolated. Her English characteristics become a defining part of her personality to the people around her.

The differences between Protestantism and Catholicism and the noble class and the bourgeoisie also mark the difference between Lucy and her peers. Lucy stands out because of her independent English attitude and religion. The emphasis on supervision and somewhat lax approach to education are both grating to Lucy, who values her freedom and puts most of her efforts into her education. Lucy stands out among the French girls at the school as an alien creature, almost a puritan in comparison to her companions. Her entire personality, her opinions, her self-reliance and her clothing mark her as an English woman.

The school setting is quite a contrast to the cozy, home-like atmosphere at the Bretton's house, La Terrasse, and the grand, elegant apartments of the de Bassompierres at the Hftel Crycy. These settings showcase the individuals who live there and represent their personalities, whether they are comfortable and kind or refined and noble. Lucy is always a guest who never fits into the environment. She merely fades into the background. Only when she is given the gift of a place of her own, the pretty little house that M. Paul furnishes and leases for her school, does Lucy become a truly independent woman. The rooms suit her taste, and she owns them. In this setting, Lucy is finally able to be happy.

## Language and Meaning

The description and the dialogue are modern English, with many French words and pieces of dialogue appearing throughout the text. The subtle differences between meanings in each language are maintained through this method. Lucy, the narrator, points out in one chapter that the French "mon ami" is more intimate and personal than the English phrase, "my friend." By using the French terminology interspersed with the English, Brontl not only takes advantage of the subtle differences in meaning, but she also gives the reader a sense of filtered communication, such as Lucy must have felt, when everyone around her speaks what is to her a foreign language.

The story is told in first person, and the language of the novel is filtered through that character. When characters or scenes are described, the words used to describe them are Lucy's words, and not only her opinion of the character or scene but also her personality becomes apparent. Her choice of words reflects her English upbringing, her Protestantism and her education and independence. For example, Lucy often uses biblical and religious allusions to describe situations or people. She compares Paulina and Graham to Jacob in the Bible, to show how God favors them. She says that Madame Beck should have been called Ignacia, after the founder of the Jesuits, who was a gambler and roustabout before he became a Catholic, indicating Madame Beck's self-serving nature. These descriptions reflect not only Lucy's opinions about the

characters, but also her opinion about Catholics, Protestants and the differences between France and England. Her words show the reader what she values and why.

Lucy has conversations with herself regarding her situation, particularly when she is happy or lonely. On these occasions, abstract concepts, such as Reason or Freedom, are personified and become internal characters who can argue the merits of a decision or emotion that Lucy is facing. Reason appears as a domineering character that tells Lucy not to care too much about the letters or Dr. John, something that Lucy knows she should not do if she does not want to be hurt. Freedom briefly appears to give Lucy something to grasp at when she believes M. Paul will marry Justine Marie. These personified concepts allow Brontl to discuss not only Lucy's state of mind, but also concepts such as friendship, love and hope. Lucy has no real confidant in the novel, and these personified concepts show how Lucy turns to herself for guidance.

## Structure

The novel is broken into three volumes and forty-two chapters. It follows the events of Lucy Snowe's life as she grows from a sheltered adolescent to a lonely young woman to an independent teacher. It also follows the lives of the people who have a tremendous effect on Lucy during her time in Villette.

The first volume of the novel follows Lucy as she moves out of her peaceful childhood and adolescence into a turbulent and lonely adulthood. She loses the family and friends that she had as a child and journeys to a foreign country in search of employment. She does find employment but is left feeling lonely and depressed. The first volume ends with Lucy's illness, as she passes out from exhaustion is a strange place. She has grown from a sheltered girl to a terribly alone and helpless woman.

The second volume chronicles Lucy's rekindled friendship with the Brettons and what this means to her. While Lucy enjoys her reunion with her friends and values their company, she always doubts their sincerity and loyalty and worries that she will be left alone again. In time these fears are realized as Paulina de Bassompierre reappears in the lives of the Brettons. Lucy becomes a friend and confidant to Paulina, only to lose her friendship with Dr. John as he and Paulina grow closer. While Lucy develops relationships in this volume, she is still alone.

The third volume chronicles Lucy's growing friendship with M. Paul. While M. Paul has scolded and harassed Lucy in earlier chapters of the novel and she finds him off-putting, she comes to rely on him. He begins to tutor her, and his teasing and scolding is a method of looking after her and jealously guarding her from others. Gradually, Lucy learns of his past, his personality and his generous kind spirit. They become close friends, and he is the type of friend that Lucy has craved, loyal and honestly interested in her. When he leaves Europe, he generously helps Lucy establish her own school, and they plan to marry when he returns. Although M. Paul does not return to Lucy, the third volume sees Lucy grow, through his friendship and encouragement, to become a happy, accomplished, independent woman.

By separating the novel into these three volumes, Brontl defines three distinct eras in Lucy's life and three turning points for her character development. In the first part, Lucy is passive. She is an observer, and when her family is gone and she is on her own, she simply goes where the wind blows her. She cannot support herself financially or emotionally, and she finally hits a low point when she faints. The second volume chronicles Lucy's failed friendships. While Lucy remains friends with Paulina and Dr. John, those relationships never reach the level of intimacy or loyalty that Lucy needs. Her situation does improve, however, and she begins to think of her future. In the last volume Lucy finally gains those things she needs to be happy with her life. She gains a close friend, and she retains her freedom and independence by opening her own school. By dividing the novel at these points, Brontl is able to emphasis the crucial events of each period in Lucy's journey from a sheltered child to an independent woman.

# Quotes

"Inadventurous, unstirred by impulses of practical ambition, I was capable of sitting twenty years teaching infants the hornbook, turning silk dresses, and making children's frocks. Not that true contentment dignified this infatuated resignation: my work had neither charm for my taste, nor hold on my interest; but it seemed to me a great thing to be without heavy anxiety, and relieved from intimate trial; the negation of severe suffering was the nearest approach to happiness I expected to know." Chapter 8, p. 86

"A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature; to cherish and exercise this new-found faculty might gift me with a world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life: the strength and longing must be put by; and I put them by, and fastened them in with the lock of a resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked." Chapter 14, p. 162

"Methought the well-loved dead, who had loved me well in life, met me elsewhere, alienated: galled was my inmost spirit with an unutterable sense of despair about the future. Motive there was non why I should try to recover or wish to live; and yet quite unendurable was the pitiless and haughty voice in which Death challenged me to engage his unknown terrors." Chapter 15, p. 183

"...I felt that I still had friends. Friends, not professing vehement attachment, not offering the tender solace of well-matched and congenial relationship; on whom, therefore, but moderate demand of affection was to be made, of whom but moderate expectation formed; but towards whom my heart softened instinctively and yearned with an inportunate gratitude, which I entreated Reason betimes to check." Chapter 26, p. 206

"This had, this Reason, would not let me look up, or smile, or hope: she could not rest unless I were altogether crushed, cowed, broken-in, and broken down. According to her, I was born only to work for a piece of bread, to await the pains of death, and steadily through all life to despond. Reason might be right; yet no wonder we are glad at times to defy her, to rush from under her rod and give a truant hour to Imagination - *her* soft, bright foe, *our* sweet Help, our divine Hope." Chapter 21, p. 266

"Providence has protected and cultured you, not only for your sake, but I believe for Graham's. His star, too, was fortunate: to develop fully the best of his nature, a companion like you was needed; there you are, ready. You must be united....I think it is deemed good that you two should live in peace and be happy - not as angels, but as few are happy among mortals. Some lives *are* thus blessed; it is God's will: it is the attesting trace and lingering evidence of Eden." Chapter 32, p. 437

"I kept a place for him, too - a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass: I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banou. All my life long I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand - yet, released from that hold and constriction, I know not but its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified into a tabernacle for a host." Chapter 38, p. 530

"This was an outrage. The love born of beauty was not mine: I had nothing in common with it: I could not dare to meddle with it, but another love, venturing diffidently into life after long acquaintance, furnace-tried by pain, stamped by constancy, consolidated by affection's pure and durable alloy, submitted by intellect to intellect's own tests, and finally wrought up, by his own process, to his own unflawed completeness, this Love that laughed at Passion, his fast frenzies and his hot and hurried extinction, in *this* Love I had a vested interest; and for whatever tended either to its culture or its destruction, I could not view impassibly." Chapter 39, p. 542

"'You know not what I have of steady and resolute in me,' said he, 'but you shall see; the event shall teach you. Modest,' he continued less fiercely, 'be gentle, be pitying, be a woman; look at this poor face, and relent. You know I am your friend, and the friend of your friends; in spite of your taunts, you well and deeply know that I may be trusted. Of sacrificing myself I made no difficulty, but my heart is pained by what I see; it *must* have and give solace. *Leave me*!'" Chapter 41, p. 558

"Once - unknown and unloved, I held him harsh and strange; the low stature, the wiry make, the angles, the darkness, the manner, displeased me. Now, penetrated with his influence, and living by his affection, having his worth by intellect and his goodness by heart - I preferred him before all humanity." Chapter 41, p. 569

"The secret of my success did not lie so much in myself, in any endowment, any power of mine, as in a new state of circumstances, a wonderfully changed life, a relieved heart. The spring which moved my energies lay far away beyond seas, in an Indian isle."

# Key Questions

It would prove useful to review Charlotte Bronte's Belgian experience (and some of the letters she wrote to M. Heger) and compare that with the persons and events in Villette. Some thought should also be given to the coincidental aspects of the plot—do they damage it beyond repair, or do they help to create a sense of completion and reality? A study of what is known about the people who served as the foundations for the central characters in Villette could prove helpful. Also, attention could be devoted to the principles of existential philosophy, to see, as with Sartre's claim that man chooses himself, if the declaration that Lucy is something of an existentialist character has merit.

1. Do the French passages distract from a satisfactory reading of the text, or do they give it an air of realism that aids in the artistic effect?

2. Can Lucy Snowe really be categorized as neurotic? For example, does her "vision" of the nun, which turns out to be de Hamal in disguise, appear to be the result of a disturbed personality?

3. Are the coincidences and extreme events (e. g., Lucy's going alone to a foreign country, with little money and no prospects) simply too "forced" to accept as realistic?

4. Does the absence of any sort of full background for Lucy's early years create a void in understanding her later actions and thoughts and feelings? Should Bronte have made the novel even longer by detailing Lucy's parentage and childhood experiences?

5. Which male character seems the more finely drawn, John Bretton or Emanuel Paul? Which is the more substantial, rounded character?

6. Is it true that Lucy essentially causes her own troubles? Does her gloomy outlook bring on the difficulties that she suffers? Is this pessimistic tenor too heavily emphasized by the author? Does the book have an excessively depressing effect on the reader, as several nineteenth-century figures believed?

7. Does Ginevra Fanshawe form a contrast with Lucy? Is Dr. John's infatuation for her adequately motivated? Does it seem unsuitable?

8. It has been asserted that Bronte's style in this book is direct and straightforward. Making allowances for the era when it was written, does this claim seem valid, given the long sentences, wordy clauses, and poetic figures of speech? Would the novel benefit by a simpler, more down-to-earth mode of expression?

# Topics for Discussion

Lucy encounters a nun several times in the course of the novel. Dr. John believes that the nun is caused by Lucy's nerves, while M. Paul worries that it might be a message from beyond. What does Lucy think of the nun, and how does it affect her state of mind over the course of the novel?

Compare the images of the actress Vashti and the portrait of Cleopatra and how these images, and the events surrounding them, affect Lucy. How do these figures compare to Lucy and the other female characters in the novel?

The ending is left purposefully ambiguous. Why did Brontl do this?

Many times in the novel, Lucy has conversations with abstract concepts such as Reason, Feeling, Freedom and Renovation, which have been personified into characters. How do these personifications work in the story? How do these conversation help Lucy?

Madame Beck, Madame Walravens and Pire Silas conspire to keep M. Paul and Lucy apart. What are their motivations? Does the conspiracy change her opinions of the characters? Why does Brontl end the novel with them?

Compare the figures of Ginevra and Paulina. How do they compare to Lucy? How is Lucy affected by her relationship with each girl?

Compare the life of sunshine to the life of cloud, as described by Paulina and Lucy. Many times in the novel, Lucy describes a wind that occurs at the same time as a great change or tragedy in her life. How does Lucy's outlook of the world differ from Paulina's? How are they similar?

Lucy seeks out dark places like the alley and the garret several times. How does this compare to her facing the storm on the school roof? Sometimes Lucy hides from storms and dark places. What causes these different reactions?

Lucy's clothing is a reflection of who she is. What different effects do the dun-colored dress and the pink dress have on her? What happens when she compares herself to Ginevra at the fete or when she must put on the men's clothes for the play?

# Literary Precedents

As with Jane Eyre, the phenomenon of a woman telling of the vicissitudes and feelings of her past has a long history, with Moll Flanders (by Daniel Defoe, 1722) being the most popular early example.

However, the plot scheme of a relatively helpless woman pitting herself against a hard world became a repeated formula of writers in England and in France (for instance, Zola's Nana, 1880). Two later examples of female novelists who dealt with the problems of women in society are Fanny Burney in Evelina (1778) and, more notably, Jane Austen, whose Mansfield Park (1814) contains the only Austen heroine who is actually poor: Fanny Price must work and must deal with uncomfortable circumstances, yet she is a rounded and resolute (so far as her circumstances permit) character. Echoes of her may be found in Bronte's female characters.

For further discussion, refer to this section in the entry on Jane Eyre.

# Related Titles

Jane Eyre is a kind of companion volume, since it deals with experiences undergone by Charlotte Bronte in her earlier years in England, while Villette is founded on later ones in Belgium. The two works are often contrasted: the relatively positive tone of the first being seen as quite different from the darker atmosphere of the latter. Jane Eyre is still far more popular than Villette, but many scholars today find the later work more substantial and satisfying, from a literary standpoint.

# Copyright Information

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