

# Agnes Grey

Agnes Grey by Anne Brontë is a semi-autobiographical novel that tells the story of a young governess's struggles with the cruelty and mistreatment she faces from her employers, while exploring themes of social class, independence, and personal growth.

## CHAPTER I - THE PARSONAGE

"Agnes Grey" begins with the titular character reflecting on the potential value of her own story, comparing it to a nut that, despite its hard exterior, might contain a worthy kernel for some readers. She then delves into the background of her family. Agnes's father, a clergyman, and her mother, a spirited squire's daughter, fell in love against the wishes of her mother's family. Despite losing her fortune for marrying him, Agnes's mother chose love and a humble life in a parsonage over wealth. Agnes describes a childhood marked by love and protection, albeit in relative isolation and devoid of luxury. Her parents invested heavily in the education and moral upbringing of Agnes and her sister Mary, sparing them from social ills but perhaps leaving them unprepared for the world's challenges.

The once comfortable life begins to crumble when a risky investment by Agnes's father, encouraged by a seemingly benevolent friend, ends in disaster. The family is thrust into financial hardship, leading to a significant lifestyle shift marked by austerity and resilience, yet bonded by mutual affection and perseverance. The family's sacrifices and Agnes's desire to contribute to their well-being seed in her the idea of becoming a governess, despite her youth and inexperience.

Her proposal is met with skepticism and concern, highlighting the family's closeness and the protective environment in which Agnes has been raised. Despite these doubts, her determination and the family's financial strain eventually lead to agreement. Agnes's optimism about teaching and her belief in her competence contrast with her family's anxieties about her venturing alone into the world. The narrative closes on Agnes preparing for her departure, her mixed feelings about leaving home, and the poignant farewell to her family and familiar surroundings, setting the stage for her entrance into the broader world and the experiences that await her as a governess.

## CHAPTER II - FIRST LESSONS IN THE ART OF INSTRUCTION

As Agnes Grey embarks on her journey as a governess at Wellwood, her apprehensions about her new role are palpable amidst the cold, dreary September weather. Despite her initial optimism, the reality of standing alone for the first time in her life at the threshold of the Bloomfield household is daunting. The expectations and self-doubt she harbors are evident, given her sheltered upbringing.

Upon meeting Mrs. Bloomfield, Agnes is greeted with a polite yet distant welcome, which does nothing to ease her anxieties. Mrs. Bloomfield, described as a tall, stately woman with an imposing presence, briefly introduces Agnes to her new environment, leaving her to settle in and prepare for her duties. Agnes's self-consciousness is heightened by the physical toll of the journey, mirroring her inner turmoil as she braces herself to meet her charges.

Agnes's initial encounter with the Bloomfield children during luncheon is a mix of observation and adaptation. She notes Tom's assertiveness and Mary Ann's need for attention, with little mention of the younger siblings at this stage. The interaction is marked by Agnes's attempts to navigate her new role, balancing discipline with an effort to establish a rapport, particularly challenging given Tom's dominant personality and the hints of his cruel tendencies toward animals.

The exploration of the garden and Tom's domineering approach to both his sister and Agnes provide further insight into the dynamics she will face. His boastful display of his schoolroom and garden, along with his disturbing admission of cruelty to animals, underscores the challenges Agnes faces in molding her pupil's character. Her gentle reproach and attempts to instill empathy highlight her values and the uphill battle she anticipates in fulfilling her role as a moral guide.

Agnes's resolve to influence Tom's behavior, despite his parents' apparent indifference to his cruelty, sets the stage for her tenure at Wellwood. Her introduction to the children and her observations of their interactions shed light on the complexities of her position—not just as an educator but as a moral compass—in a household that seems to undervalue these traits in its youngest members.

## **CHAPTER III - A FEW MORE LESSONS**

Agnes Grey, in Chapter III titled "A Few More Lessons," narrates her struggles and challenges as a governess to the Bloomfield children, Tom and Mary Ann. Despite her initial hope and enthusiasm, she finds her duties far more taxing than anticipated. Dressing and grooming Mary Ann proves to be a laborious task due to the latter's impatience and Agnes's inexperience. Breakfast time introduces a brief moment of civility with Mrs. Bloomfield, but the day quickly reverts to the demanding routine of teaching and managing her pupils.

Agnes discovers that both children are significantly behind in their education: Tom, despite his capabilities, shows a strong aversion to mental effort, while Mary Ann struggles with basic literacy and demonstrates carelessness. Attempting to instill some discipline, Agnes spends the morning striving to make educational progress. The subsequent outdoor recreation only highlights her lack of authority, as the children insist on leading her rather than following, preferring dirty and dismal activities.

A trying incident at a well, involving disobedient play, introduces Agnes to Mr. Bloomfield's harsh and critical demeanor. His reprimand not only emphasizes his stringent expectations regarding cleanliness and decorum but also marks Agnes's first direct interaction with him.

Luncheon with the Bloomfields further diminishes Mr. Bloomfield's image in Agnes's eyes, revealing his petty and critical nature. His complaints about the overcooked mutton and improperly sliced beef, coupled with a condescending critique of Mrs. Bloomfield's household management, paint a picture of a discontent and difficult man.

The rest of the day proceeds with more of the same: challenging educational sessions, attempts at discipline thwarted by the children's obstinacy, and a brief respite in the form of a letter to her family, offering a glimpse into Agnes's persistence in facing her adversities. She remains hopeful that through patience, firmness, and perseverance, she might eventually garner both the Bloomfields' approval and her pupils' improvement. Despite her rigorous efforts and self-imposed discipline, Agnes finds herself confronted with the daunting reality that her charges might be beyond her ability to guide or reform, leaving her to question the effectiveness of her methods and the possibility of achieving her goals in such an unforgiving environment.

## **CHAPTER IV - THE GRANDMAMMA**

"Agnes Grey" Chapter IV, titled "The Grandmamma," describes Agnes's experiences during and after her brief visit home, emphasizing the challenges of her role as a governess upon her return. Despite her initial joy of being with her family, Agnes faces renewed difficulties with her mischievous and defiant charges, the Bloomfield children. Her attempts to manage them are thwarted not only by their unruly behavior but also by the lack of support from their parents and the critical oversight of Mr. Bloomfield and his harsh mother. Agnes struggles with isolation and the disapproval from the household, as her efforts are undermined and unappreciated.

A significant part of the chapter showcases a particularly trying day when the children decide to be deliberately troublesome, leading to a series of incidents that culminate in Agnes being disparaged by Mr. Bloomfield for not maintaining order. This scrutiny is exacerbated by the children's grandmother, whose fluctuating opinion of Agnes is influenced by her own feelings and observations, often resulting in Agnes being misrepresented to the family.

Amid these challenges, Agnes finds a small measure of understanding from the nurse, Betty, who acknowledges the difficulty of handling the children but suggests harsher disciplinary measures, which are contrary to Agnes's principles. The interactions highlight the emotional and professional trials Agnes faces, caught between her responsibilities, her desire to adhere to her values, and the expectations and criticisms of those around her. The chapter underscores the themes of isolation, the struggle of maintaining one's integrity in adverse circumstances, and the complexities of navigating relationships within the strict social hierarchy of the time.

## **CHAPTER V - THE UNCLE**

Agnes Grey deals with the challenges of being a governess to the Bloomfield family, focusing particularly on the problematic behaviors of her charge, Tom Bloomfield, influenced heavily by his uncle, Mr. Robson, and the indulgent nature of his parents. Tom is taught to value excessive drinking and to cruelly mistreat animals, a behavior encouraged by both his father, who prefers gin and water, attributing to his ill temper, and his uncle, who not only abuses his own dogs but also takes pleasure in birds' nest-robbing with the children. Agnes, deeply disturbed by this, attempts to instill a sense of morality in the children, particularly aiming to deter them from birds' nest-robbing, an effort that is often undone by Mr. Robson's influence.

A significant incident occurs when Tom brings a nest of callow nestlings, intending to torture them for sport, a plan that Agnes staunchly opposes. Faced with the dilemma between allowing the cruelty to proceed or taking a drastic step to end it, she chooses to crush the birds with a stone to spare them from further suffering, an act that leads to severe backlash from Tom, Mr. Robson, and subsequently, the Bloomfield parents. Despite the harsh criticism and the strained relationship with Mrs. Bloomfield that ensues, Agnes stands by her decision, grounded in her moral convictions and the teachings of mercy and kindness.

The presence of guests exacerbates her challenges, as she struggles to maintain discipline among her pupils in the face of their rude and disruptive behaviors, which the parents fail to address adequately. Agnes's efforts to correct these behaviors are undermined by the parents' and guests' indulgence, leaving her feeling isolated and ineffectual in her role as a governess. The chapter concludes with Agnes contemplating the end of her tenure with the Bloomfields, reflecting on her struggles to make meaningful progress with the children amidst the undermining influences of their family environment.

## **CHAPTER VII - HORTON LODGE**

For spending the best part of my youth in so complete a thralldom to the capricious beck and call of these thoughtless, unappreciative people. Yet, when I looked back to the dreary solitude of my old home, I still shuddered at the prospect of returning to it, and clung to the slavery I had come to loath, rather than embrace that desolate freedom. In these dismal reflections, I had no comforter, no adviser, no one to whom I could confide my troubles, for I was too well acquainted with the characters of the servants to make any of them my friends, and as for my pupils, the idea of taking any of them into my confidence was not to be thought of for a moment.

Horton Lodge presented itself as a grand, yet oppressive, establishment where conventional societal norms dictated the behaviors within, imposing sharp disparities between the inhabitants and their roles. The household was characterized by a lack of discipline among the children, a casual disregard for the well-being and respect of the governess, and an overall indifference toward the value of education and moral development. Mrs. Murray, while obsessed with the superficial accomplishments of her children, displayed a stark indifference to the intellectual and moral growth of her charges, focusing instead on their societal debut and appearance.

Agnes, amidst these trials, demonstrates a resilience and adherence to her principles, striving to enlighten and educate her pupils despite the numerous challenges. Her life at Horton Lodge oscillates between her commitment to her duties and the realization of her diminished state, viewed more as a tool than a person of worth in the eyes of her employers. This environment not only hampers her professional satisfaction but also stifles her personal growth, leaving her to ponder the worth and direction of her life.

The portrayal of the Murray family serves as a critique of the upper classes' frivolity, their neglect of genuine education, and their disregard for the development of character in their offspring. It highlights a preoccupation with external appearances at the expense of substantive human values. The superficiality of their pursuits, the emphasis on accomplishments as means to display rather than sources of enrichment, and the cultivation of an environment where servitude is undervalued and exploited, reflect broader societal issues of class disparity, the value of education, and the dignity of work.

## **CHAPTER VIII - THE 'COMING OUT'**

Agnes Grey Chapter VIII - The 'Coming Out' offers a glimpse into the excitement and anticipation surrounding Miss Murray's debut into the high society. At eighteen, leaving the quiet schoolroom life behind, she is set to make a grand entrance at a magnificent ball hosted by her parents, aiming to draw the nobility and gentry from around and beyond O- for a twenty-mile radius. Her eagerness for this event is palpable, seeing it as a major milestone in her life.

In a conversation with Agnes, Miss Murray reveals her impatience and high expectations for the ball, while displaying a casual disregard for Agnes's personal correspondence, teasing her about the mundane nature of her family's letters versus the importance of social gatherings. Agnes, absorbed in a letter from her sister, faces an interruption that leads to a discussion about her planned holiday and a request from Miss Murray to postpone her departure in order to witness the grandeur of the ball preparations and, particularly, Miss Murray's splendid appearance.

Despite Miss Murray's attempts to tempt Agnes with the allure of the ball, Agnes remains adamant about her desire to return home for Christmas and to be part of her sister's wedding preparations. The dialogue then shifts to Agnes's sister's engagement, revealing a stark contrast between the worlds of the two young women: one revels in the superficial excitement of social prestige, while the other values family ties and simple joys. The conversation between Agnes and Miss Murray serves as a critique of societal priorities and the value placed on material wealth and appearances over genuine relationships and contentment.

## **CHAPTER IX - THE BALL**

In Chapter IX of "Agnes Grey" titled "The Ball," the reader is immediately thrust into a lively argument between Miss Murray and her sister, Miss Matilda, each eager to relate their recent experiences to Miss Grey. Miss Matilda, with boisterous enthusiasm, details her new acquisition, a splendid mare, boasting of her equestrian skills and the excitement of an upcoming hunt, despite her sister's plea for decorum. This dynamic sets the stage for an insight into the character of each sister, where Matilda embodies a rebellious spirit, challenging societal expectations with her candid speech and masculine interests, while Rosalie plays the role of an archetypal coquette, obsessed with her societal image and romantic conquests.

Rosalie eventually takes her turn, painting a vivid picture of the grandeur of the ball she attended, emphasizing the opulence of the event, the nobility present, and notably, her own success in captivating the guests. Her vanity shines through as she recounts the admiration she received, attributing it to both her personal allure and the contributions of her dress and accessories. The conversation, rich with Rosalie's self-praise and detailing of her numerous admirers, including Lord G-, Lord F-, and Sir Thomas Ashby among others, illustrates her deep engagement with the superficial aspects of her social world. Her interactions reflect a strategic approach to social mobility and marriage, underpinned by a starkly pragmatic, if not cynical, view on romantic involvement.

Rosalie's narrative is punctuated by expressions of competitive satisfaction derived from the envy and vexation she induces in others, particularly in the wives of her admirers, revealing a darker layer to her relentless pursuit of attention and admiration. This is contrasted by her condescension toward those she deems beneath her notice, like the new curate, Weston, whom she dismissively criticizes.

The conversation between Agnes and Rosalie pivots to an exploration of Rosalie's future prospects and her philosophy on marriage and happiness. Rosalie's ambition to marry wealth and status, exemplified by her preference for Sir Thomas Ashby despite acknowledging his character flaws, exhibits a pragmatic yet mercenary attitude towards marriage. Her vivid fantasy of eternal youth and perpetual coquetry exposes a deep-seated aversion to aging and the societal scorn associated with spinsterhood. This chapter, through lively dialogue and contrasting personalities, delves into themes of vanity, social ambition, and the complex interplay of gender roles and expectations in the pursuit of marital and personal satisfaction.

## **CHAPTER X - THE CHURCH**

In Chapter X of "Agnes Grey," titled "The Church," Anne Brontë delves into the observations and reactions of Agnes Grey and the Murray sisters regarding the new curate. The narrative unfolds with Miss Murray

inquiring Agnes about her thoughts on the new curate, a conversation that occurs after their Sunday service. Agnes, cautious and reflective, admits to not having formed a clear opinion yet, emphasizing her preference for forming judgments based on more than just superficial observations. Her attention during the service was caught by the new curate's earnest and effective way of reading the lessons and his sincere approach to prayers, contrasting sharply with Mr. Hatfield's showy and insincere mannerisms.

The discussion about the curate between Agnes and the Murray sisters reveals differing priorities and perceptions. Miss Murray criticizes the curate for his lack of social grace and perceived narrow-mindedness, focusing on his physical appearance and mannerisms rather than his spiritual or intellectual qualities. Agnes, on the other hand, finds value in his solemn approach to his religious duties, appreciating the depth and sincerity of his sermon, which starkly contrasts with Mr. Hatfield's superfluous and egotistical delivery.

Agnes also reflects on the superficiality and insincerity of Mr. Hatfield, who is more concerned with appearances and societal status than genuine faith or pastoral care. This comparison between the curate and Mr. Hatfield highlights Agnes's disdain for pretentiousness and her yearning for genuine piety and humility.

Meanwhile, the Murray sisters, particularly concerned with social appearances and entertainment, view church and its attendees through a lens of social engagement and potential romantic interests. Their frivolous attitude towards religion and churchgoing contrasts with Agnes's more dedicated and earnest approach. Despite their differing views, the chapter closes with a light-hearted exchange between the sisters regarding their interest in the new curate, underscoring their youthful priorities and the social dynamics of their environment.

Through these interactions and reflections, Brontë paints a vivid picture of the varying attitudes toward religion, social status, and clerical duties amongst the characters, while subtly critiquing societal norms and expectations of the time. Agnes Grey's perspective serves as a moral compass within the narrative, offering insights into the virtues of sincerity, humility, and the true essence of faith.

## **CHAPTER XI - THE COTTAGERS**

Anne Brontë's "Agnes Grey," in its eleventh chapter titled "The Cottagers," delves into Agnes Grey's further experiences and musings as a governess. Having only one pupil, she finds additional time for personal pursuits, including visiting the poor cottagers on the estate. These endeavors, however, expose the stark differences in attitude and behavior between Agnes and the Misses Murray, her charges, towards the less fortunate. Agnes is pained by the sisters' careless and mocking demeanor towards the villagers, a trait she attributes to their faulty education and inherent superiority complex.

Agnes's solitary ventures bring her closer to the cottagers, offering her a respite from her loneliness and an opportunity to contribute positively to their lives. During these visits, the narrative focuses significantly on her interaction with Nancy Brown, a widow with inflamed eyes, preventing her from reading. Agnes reads to her, sparking discussions on religion, righteousness, and the essence of love towards God and neighbors. These discussions not only provide comfort and enlightenment to Nancy but also reinvigorate Agnes's spirit, offering her a sense of purpose and companionship.

The chapter contrasts the approaches of Mr. Hatfield, the former rector, and Mr. Weston, the new parson, towards parishioners and their afflictions. While Mr. Hatfield is depicted as dismissive and unempathetic, Mr. Weston is presented as compassionate, caring, and genuinely interested in the welfare of his flock. His actions and demeanor greatly impress both Agnes and the villagers, marking him as a positive force of change and a man of genuine faith and kindness.

Amidst her duties and these new relationships, Agnes confronts her fears of intellectual and moral decline due to her isolating job. She worries that constant exposure to less stimulating environments might dull her

sensibilities. However, her interactions with the cottagers, especially under the influence of the virtuous Mr. Weston, provide a glimmer of hope and a sense of moral and spiritual rejuvenation.

In summary, Chapter XI of "Agnes Grey" highlights Agnes's growing disaffection with her immediate environment and her yearning for meaningful connections and moral growth. Her bond with the cottagers, particularly Nancy Brown, alongside her admiration for Mr. Weston's pastoral care, showcases her deep-seated values and the internal conflict wrought by her station in life. Through these experiences, Bronte explores themes of empathy, social inequality, and the quest for personal and spiritual fulfillment in a rigid Victorian society.

## **CHAPTER XII - THE SHOWER**

In Chapter XII titled "The Shower" of "Agnes Grey," Agnes details a visit to Nancy Brown, an elderly widow, in early March. Agnes, serving as a governess to Miss Matilda and her sister, finds rare moments of leisure due to the unpredictable demands of her charges and their mother. On this day, both sisters are preoccupied, granting Agnes the opportunity to visit Nancy, who is concerned about her missing cat. Agnes comforts Nancy and offers to help with sewing a shirt for Nancy's son, given her eyesight issues.

Their quiet companionship is interrupted by Mr. Weston, the local curate, arriving with the lost cat. He reveals he saved it from being shot by Mr. Murray's gamekeeper near the rabbit-warren. Nancy's gratitude is abundant, and although Agnes attempts to excuse herself due to the rain, Nancy insists they both stay until it ceases. Mr. Weston's presence and the ensuing conversation provide a glimpse into the warmth and minuscule joys of rural life, contrasting with the strictures of Agnes's employment.

Mr. Weston discusses a slight disagreement with Mr. Murray, who was upset at the rescue of Nancy's cat, showcasing his character and principles. Despite the potential for conflict, Mr. Weston displays humor and resilience. The chapter gently delves into community interactions, revealing subtleties of class and duty. Agnes's willingness to assist Nancy and her polite engagement with Mr. Weston underscore her compassionate nature and her discomfort with her lower status as a governess, despite her education and upbringing.

Agnes returns to Horton Lodge as dusk falls, reflecting on the simple but meaningful exchange at Nancy's cottage. This visit illustrates the stark contrasts in Agnes's life, between her responsibilities and the brief respites she finds in such acts of kindness, and her growing association with Mr. Weston, hinting at deeper layers of character and potential developments in their relationship.

## **CHAPTER XIII - THE PRIMROSES**

In Chapter XIII of "Agnes Grey," titled "The Primroses," the narrative unfolds around Miss Murray's relentless pursuit of admiration, evident in her regular church attendance and preference for walking over carriage rides for the chance encounters they provide with potential admirers. Agnes Grey, the governess, delineates her position within this social setting—alternating between participating in walks and being relegated to carriage rides based on the whims of her charges. The walks, however, present a challenge for Agnes, as she grapples with feelings of invisibility and inferiority within the company of the young ladies and their acquaintances. Despite her internal assertion of worth, Agnes struggles with the awkwardness of her position, desiring neither to impose upon the group nor to appear as a subordinate spectator.

The narrative takes a turn towards personal introspection when Agnes, trailing behind the group, engages in botanizing. Her solitude allows for a moment of poignant reflection on her longing for a connection to her home and its natural beauty. This solitude is interrupted by Mr. Weston, who kindly assists her in gathering

primroses, an act that leaves a significant impression on Agnes, highlighting her gratitude and the rarity of such kindness in her current circumstances. The ensuing conversation between Agnes and Mr. Weston reveals a shared appreciation for nature and a deeper insight into Mr. Weston's character, his loss, and philosophical outlook on life, resilience, and the human capacity for enduring and overcoming hardship.

The chapter culminates in a misunderstanding wherein Miss Murray teases Agnes about an assumed romantic interest in Mr. Weston, based on their observed interaction. Despite Agnes's attempts to clarify the situation, the teasing persists, casting a momentary shadow over her previously uplifted spirits. Yet, the unpleasantness of this encounter soon dissipates as Agnes focuses inward, contemplating the future and her own heartfelt desires, culminating in a personal moment of prayer and reflection.

This chapter masterfully captures the intricate dynamics of social interaction, the contrast between superficial societal engagements and the profound personal moments of individual characters, and the tender unfolding of Agnes's inner life amidst the challenges of her governess role.

## **CHAPTER XIV - THE RECTOR**

Chapter XIV of "Agnes Grey" by Anne Brontë unfolds a day filled with typical countryside genteel activities, underpinned by nuanced interpersonal tensions and aspirations of the novel's characters. Miss Matilda engages in her usual careless amusements, while Miss Murray ventures out with a novel, leaving Agnes to her artistic endeavors. Agnes ponders over the fate of Snap, Miss Matilda's neglected terrier, symbolizing Agnes' own overlooked yet steadfast loyalty. Mrs. Murray's intrusion signals the beginning of a series of events that shed light on the complex social fabric and personal ambitions within.

As Agnes contemplates her own efforts and the little dog's situation, her routine is disrupted by Mrs. Murray, setting in motion a day of subtle rebellions and unspoken desires. Mrs. Murray, oblivious to Agnes' true intentions, naively expresses her concerns over Miss Murray's solitary wanderings, unknowingly entrusting Agnes with a task that aligns with her own unacknowledged yearnings for acknowledgment and change.

Miss Murray's encounters with Mr. Hatfield, marked by flirtation and societal gameplay, highlight the period's stringent social conventions and the personal maneuvering required to navigate them. Agnes, positioned as both observer and unwilling participant, offers a critique of these social practices through her reflective narrative and moral standpoint.

The chapter intricately weaves together Agnes' silent observations, Miss Murray's strategic interactions with Mr. Hatfield, and the unspoken social codes governing their lives. Agnes' internal reflections provide a sober counterpoint to Miss Murray's outwardly carefree but inwardly calculated demeanor, offering insights into the conflicting desires for love, independence, and social standing that define the human condition.

Ultimately, the chapter serves as a microcosm of the broader societal and personal dynamics at play in "Agnes Grey," showcasing Brontë's ability to dissect and convey the complexities of Victorian social etiquette, personal ambition, and the enduring quest for genuine connection and respect. Through Agnes Grey's perspective, Brontë critiques the superficiality and constraints of her society, while also affirming the value of integrity, empathy, and resilience.

## **CHAPTER XV - THE WALK**

Chapter XV of "Agnes Grey," titled "The Walk," unfolds a day after Rosalie's dismissal of Mr. Hatfield, leaving her with a sense of boredom and longing for excitement. Rosalie, speaking to Matilda, expresses regret over losing Hatfield and anticipates the dullness of coming days without social engagements. Despite



Matilda's suggestions that Rosalie might have had genuine feelings for Hatfield, Rosalie dismisses the idea, holding out for someone superior. The narrative proceeds to examine Mr. Hatfield's professional demeanor following his rejection, noting a perceived change in his usual bravado during Sunday services, possibly indicating his internal strife.

Agnes and Rosalie's walk to the village becomes the central event, as Rosalie, likely in pursuit of chance encounters with potential suitors, engages in speculative conversation about various gentlemen, including Mr. Hatfield and others within their social realm. Despite the casual nature of their outing, it's apparent Rosalie's thoughts linger on Hatfield, indicating her affected indifference might mask a deeper concern. During their venture, Agnes observes Rosalie's lively interaction with others, feeling isolated herself, until unexpectedly joined by Mr. Weston. Their conversation quickly evolves into a significant exchange, revealing Agnes's inclination for intellectual and emotional companionship, contrasted against her modest social ambitions.

The encounter with Mr. Weston becomes a pivotal moment for Agnes, offering rare personal engagement outside her duties, which is interrupted as Rosalie seeks to captivate Mr. Weston's attention upon their reunion. Rosalie's strategic interaction with Mr. Weston, aimed at securing his admiration, stirs a mix of emotions in Agnes, who fears the potential implications of Rosalie's flirtations for Mr. Weston's affection. The chapter closes with Agnes's turmoil, as she grapples with the unfolding dynamics, hinting at her concealed affection for Mr. Weston and her apprehensions about Rosalie's influence over him.

Throughout "The Walk," themes of social expectation, personal longing, and the complexities of human emotion are explored against the backdrop of Victorian societal norms, illustrating the constrained and often covert channels through which individuals navigate their desires and relational aspirations.

## **CHAPTER XVI - THE SUBSTITUTION**

On a particularly gloomy April Sunday, with the Murrays disinclined to attend afternoon church except Rosalie, the narrator, Agnes Grey, accompanies Rosalie to service. Agnes views church as a refuge where she can admire Mr. Weston without judgement, wrestling with her conscience over her affections. She rationalizes her feelings by equating her love for Weston not as personal desire, but appreciation for his virtue, aligning it with Biblical encouragement to ponder on things pure and lovely.

Post-service, they encounter Mr. Weston, whom Rosalie quickly engages with a request to visit an ill girl. Surprisingly considerate, she inquires about an appropriate time for his visit, displaying an unusual level of concern for the impressions made on humble cottages by "decent people." Despite the rain, Agnes declines Weston's offer of sharing his umbrella, a refusal she second-guesses but ultimately accepts, interpreting his manners as a sign of potential mutual affection.

Rosalie critiques Agnes for using Weston's umbrella, revealing her irritation in a manner that betrays her jealousy and competitiveness. She declares her intention to shift her flirtatious efforts from Mr. Hatfield to Mr. Weston, aiming to add him to her list of admirers without serious intention. Agnes, deeply hurt but silent, wishes Weston could overhear Rosalie's manipulative plotting.

The following morning, Rosalie expresses a wish to take her sister for a walk, likely as part of her schemes involving Weston. Through this chapter, the complexities of Agnes's feelings for Weston deepen against the backdrop of Rosalie's superficial and strategic social maneuvers, setting a stark contrast between genuine affection and calculated attraction.

## **CHAPTER XVII - CONFESSIONS**

In Chapter XVII of "Agnes Grey" titled "Confessions," the narrative deepens into Agnes's introspective journey, addressing themes of appearance, self-worth, and the complexities of human emotions, particularly love and envy. Agnes admits to a heightened awareness of her appearance, provoking a contemplation on beauty's value and its superficial judgment by society. Despite the acknowledged folly of valuing physical beauty over virtue and intellect, Agnes notes the undeniable human inclination to be drawn towards what pleases the eye, reflecting upon her own loneliness and the seemingly trivial barriers that obstruct companionship and love.

The chapter juxtaposes Agnes's inner turmoil with the outer world, particularly through her involvement with the Murray family, highlighting Rosalie's engagement to Sir Thomas. Agnes critiques Rosalie's manipulative behavior, her shallow attraction to Sir Thomas, and her continued efforts to captivate other men, including Mr. Weston, whom Agnes secretly adores. This situation places Agnes in a painful position, forced to listen to Rosalie's flirtations and strategic pursuits of Mr. Weston, amplifying her feelings of invisibility and worthlessness.

As Rosalie's wedding approaches, Agnes's despair intensifies, feeling further isolated by the Murrays' actions that prevent her from attending church or socializing, effectively segregating her from any opportunities to see Mr. Weston. The narrative also briefly touches on Agnes's distanced relationship with the villagers, including Nancy Brown, hinting at the broader implications of her isolation.

Interestingly, Agnes finds solace in poetry, implying its power to provide comfort and a voice to her suppressed emotions. This creative outlet serves as a silent rebellion against her circumstances, allowing her a semblance of freedom and expression.

The chapter ends on a note of melancholy resignation, with Agnes wrestling with the ethics of her unrequited affections for Mr. Weston, questioning the harm in cherishing someone from afar. Her emotional turmoil is compounded by the loss of her pet, Snap, showcasing her profound sense of loss and helplessness, not just in love, but in her life's circumstances, underscoring the chapter's themes of yearning, loss, and the search for meaning amidst adversity.

## **CHAPTER XVIII - MIRTH AND MOURNING**

Chapter XVIII of "Agnes Grey," titled "Mirth and Mourning," captures a significant transition in Rosalie Murray's life as she becomes Lady Ashby, and the emotional and societal ripples her marriage sends through those around her. Agnes, our protagonist, is caught in a whirlwind of conflicted feelings—happy for her charge on her wedding day, yet deeply apprehensive about the future that awaits Rosalie as she steps into a life tied with someone she doesn't love for the sake of wealth and status.

This chapter sharply contrasts the fleeting, superficial joy of Rosalie's wedding celebrations with the underlying themes of regret, missed connections, and future uncertainties. Rosalie's laughter, mixed with desperation, as she reveals her new title and her imminent travels, paints a picture of a young woman who seeks to mask her true feelings with mirth. Her farewell to Agnes is both tender and sad, hinting at a complex inner world beneath her carefree exterior.

Meanwhile, Agnes grapples with her own restrained life, reflecting on the emptiness of her day and her yearning for something beyond her role as a governess. Her encounters with Mr. Weston provide brief moments of connection and hope, symbolizing a desire for deeper understanding and companionship. This connection is highlighted in their discussions about Rosalie's marriage, their shared concerns hinting at a mutual respect and potential future affection.

The chapter also delves into the societal pressures and expectations placed on women during the period, showcasing the limited choices available to them and the emphasis on marriage as the ultimate goal. Rosalie's pursuit of wealth and status through marriage, Agnes's struggle with her professional limitations as a governess, and Matilda's rebellious behavior against her prescribed feminine role all reflect the novel's critique of Victorian society's constraints on women's freedoms and desires.

As Agnes learns of her father's grave illness, the chapter closes on a somber, introspective note, emphasizing life's fragilities and the personal trials that test our character and resolve. The juxtaposition of public celebrations and private sorrows serves as a poignant reminder of the unpredictable ebbs and flows of life, marking this chapter as a turning point in Agnes's journey towards self-discovery and eventual fulfillment.

## **CHAPTER XIX - THE LETTER**

In Chapter XIX of "Agnes Grey," titled "The Letter," the Grey family faces hardship after the loss of Agnes' father. As they navigate their new reality, Mary, Agnes' sister, suggests that their mother should live with her and Mr. Richardson at the vicarage, assuring that her husband wants this as much as she does. They believe it would be beneficial for all, with the mother's experience valuable to the young couple, while they in turn could provide her with happiness and comfort.

However, their mother staunchly refuses, valuing her independence and unwilling to become a burden to anyone, even her own children. She declares her intention to remain self-sufficient so long as she is able, rejecting the idea of living at the vicarage just on the merit of being family. She proposes an alternative plan to make a living by setting up a small establishment where they could board and educate young ladies, leaning on her still-remembered accomplishments and the possible support of her late husband's relations for recommendations.

Agnes exhibits willingness to support this venture with her savings, and while Mary also offers financial assistance, their mother insists on starting economically, hopeful that their combined efforts would sustain them until they could establish a stable income from their new venture. The chapter reflects a poignant mix of grief, determination, and the familial bonding over shared goals.

Amid these discussions, a letter arrives from the mother's estranged father, causing a stir of emotions. The content, which criticizes her past choices and offers reconciliation only if she admits her 'mistakes,' is met with scorn by her. This letter, instead of offering comfort, serves to further highlight the mother's resolve and independence.

This chapter underlines themes of resilience, independence, and the refusal to succumb to societal expectations at the cost of one's dignity. It delves into the family's emotional dynamics, showcasing their grief, mutual support, and unwavering determination to forge a new path in the wake of loss.

## **CHAPTER XX - THE FAREWELL**

Chapter XX of "Agnes Grey," titled "The Farewell," marks a poignant juncture in Agnes's life, embodying themes of loss, hope, and the transient nature of human connections. Agnes returns to Horton Lodge parting from her previous abode, reflecting on the labor and cares as a means to endure sorrow, emphasizing the notion that active engagement provides solace during grief. This chapter intricately portrays Agnes's internal battle between holding onto hope and acknowledging the harsh realities of her circumstances, specifically in the context of her affection for Edward Weston.

The narrative meticulously illustrates Agnes's contemplation of her family's reduced circumstances following her father's death. She ponders over the societal lamentation of their fall from grace, proposing that active work and the ensuing necessity to focus on immediate tasks might offer a better reprieve than the leisure to mourn. Agnes highlights her mother's resilience in facing their altered reality, suggesting that the busyness of setting up a new life is a distraction from their loss.

Upon her return to Horton Lodge, Agnes is confronted with the painful duality of her existence there—caught between the joys of being in Weston's presence and the sorrow of her unreciprocated feelings. The narrative delves deep into Agnes's introspective analysis of her sentiments towards Weston, juxtaposing her longing for connection with the stark solitude of her reality.

In a notable encounter with Weston, Agnes grapples with the complexity of their relationship, underscored by his seemingly mundane inquiries about her future and her mother's well-being. These interactions, while outwardly trivial, are laden with unspoken emotion and the profound human desire for understanding and companionship. Weston's questions stir a mix of hope and despair in Agnes, as she navigates the delicate balance between holding onto her feelings for him and preparing for a future apart.

As the chapter culminates, Agnes's reflections veer towards a broader meditation on happiness, belonging, and the human condition—pondering the possibility of a life fulfilled despite adversity. Through Agnes's eyes, the reader is led to question the fairness of life's distribution of joy and suffering, and whether hope is a sustainer or a tormentor in the quest for personal contentment.

This chapter, therefore, stands as a microcosm of Agnes Grey's larger journey, weaving together the threads of individual resilience, the pursuit of love, and the relentless march towards an uncertain future. It encapsulates the essence of human longing for connection and the bitter sweetness of farewells, leaving the reader with a lingering contemplation of the simplicity and complexity of Agnes's life and relationships.

## **CHAPTER XXI - THE SCHOOL**

Chapter XXI of "Agnes Grey," titled "The School," finds Agnes transitioning from her employment at Horton Lodge to a more hopeful and autonomous phase of her life, as she embarks on a new venture with her mother in A-. Together, they open a small school, starting modestly with three boarders and half a dozen day pupils. Agnes approaches this new challenge with determination and finds a semblance of contentment, starkly contrasted with her previous experiences of disrespect and disillusionment while working as a governess.

The chapter delves into Agnes's internal struggle, as she clings to the hope of reuniting with Mr. Weston, her unspoken affection serving as a secret source of consolation. Despite her attempts to dismiss these hopeful thoughts as fanciful, their persistent presence underscores her deep-seated longing and the profound impact of their connection. This emotional turmoil is further exacerbated by moments of anticipation and disappointment, particularly highlighted through incidents such as an expected visit from Mr. Weston that turns out to be a music master and the excitement over a letter that ends up being from her sister Mary.

Agnes's introspection leads her to chastise herself for harboring hopeful thoughts about Mr. Weston, given her perceived lack of attractiveness and charm. As time passes without any news from him, she gradually relinquishes her hopes but continues to cherish his memory privately. This period of self-reflection and resigned acceptance is interrupted by her mother's concern over Agnes's waning health and spirits, prompting her to reevaluate her priorities and rediscover her resolve to fulfill her duties and find contentment in service to others and in her work at the school.

The chapter closes with an unexpected letter from Lady Ashby (formerly Miss Murray), inviting Agnes to visit her at Ashby Park. Despite the stark differences in their circumstances and the superficiality of Rosalie's

life as revealed in the letter, Agnes sees this as an opportunity to possibly make a positive impact on her former pupil's life and, perhaps, find a new sense of purpose. This invitation marks a potential turning point, offering Agnes a break from her routine and a glimpse into the world she once observed from the periphery, but with a renewed sense of agency and hope for the future.

## **CHAPTER XXII - THE VISIT**

Chapter 22 of "Agnes Grey" takes the reader on a visit to Ashby Park, the luxurious residence that remains an emblem of social status and personal ambition in the novel. Ashby Park, with its grand mansion, extensive parklands, and ancient woods, represents everything Rosalie Murray yearned to possess, even if it meant sacrificing personal happiness for social gains. Agnes Grey, the narrative voice, delivers an insightful and subtly critical commentary on the life of the wealthy through her visit to Rosalie, now Lady Ashby, who exhibits both the materialistic grandeur of her surroundings and the personal dissatisfaction she faces within her marriage.

Agnes observes the changes in Rosalie, noting the impact of her lifestyle on her physical and emotional well-being, suggesting a critique of societal values that prioritize wealth and status over personal contentment. Rosalie, in her turn, vacillates between showcasing her new life's opulence and revealing her unhappiness, providing a juxtaposition that highlights the emptiness that often accompanies material success. Her attitude towards her servants, the subtle disagreements with her husband, and her relationship with her overbearing mother-in-law further depict the complexities and compromises of her married life.

Furthermore, the chapter explores themes of social mobility and the role of marriage in achieving or obstructing personal fulfillment. Agnes's discreet observations and inquiries into the well-being of others she knew, including Mr. Weston, add depth to the narrative, showcasing her constant concern for the welfare of people in her former life. The reader sees through Agnes's eyes the stark difference between her value system, centered on kindness, duty, and genuine human connection, and Rosalie's, which is deeply entwined with social standing and material possessions.

In sum, Chapter 22 serves as a critical lens on Victorian society, using Ashby Park as a symbol of both aspiration and confinement. Through Agnes's visit, Anne Brontë dissects the social fabric of the time, exposing the brittleness of relationships founded on superficial values and questioning the true cost of societal approval and luxurious living.

## **CHAPTER XXIII - THE PARK**

In Chapter XXIII of "Agnes Grey," titled "The Park," the narrative unfolds with the protagonist, Agnes Grey, experiencing an idle and somewhat uncomfortable start to her day, lacking access to breakfast and the library. She soon learns that Lady Ashby, formerly Miss Murray, desires her company for a morning walk in the park. During this walk, an encounter with Sir Thomas Ashby showcases the discord and regret underlying the Ashbys' marriage, revealing feelings of contempt and despair from Lady Ashby towards her husband.

Lady Ashby's lamentations highlight a profound sense of disillusionment and entrapment within her marriage, coupled with a yearning for her past freedoms and identity as Miss Murray. Despite Agnes's attempts to provide comfort and counsel, focusing on themes of duty, integrity, and the potential joys of motherhood, Lady Ashby struggles to resonate with these consolations, revealing a deeper conflict between youthful desires for freedom and the reality of her marital and social constraints.

The chapter intricately explores the complexities of relationships, particularly the dissonance between expected roles and personal fulfillment within the confines of marriage and societal expectations. Agnes's advice to Lady Ashby not only serves as a moral compass, aiming to guide her towards finding peace and

purpose beyond her immediate grievances, but also as a reflection on the broader themes of duty, morality, and the pursuit of happiness in the face of adversity. The narrative thus presents a poignant examination of the struggles for identity, autonomy, and contentment within the structured norms of 19th-century British society.

## **CHAPTER XXIV - THE SANDS**

In "The Sands," Agnes Grey describes an invigorating early morning walk to the sea, which lies beyond the labyrinthine streets of her town. Living in a respectable house, distanced from the ocean, she and her mother run a small school for young ladies. Despite this separation, Agnes cherishes the sea and often ventures towards it for solace and the sheer pleasure of being near its boundless energy.

On this particular morning, after returning from Ashby Park, Agnes awakes with a yearning to experience the tranquil dawn by the sea. Silently leaving the house to not disturb her mother, she finds herself alone on the sands at a quarter to six, enraptured by the sea's grace and the refreshing air. Agnes's solitude on the beach is a source of joy, allowing her a momentary escape from her responsibilities and the chance to revel in nature's beauty.

Her peace is eventually shared with early horse-riders and a water-cart driver, but more significantly, by the unexpected appearance of her dog, Snap, and subsequently, Mr. Weston. Their meeting is marked by a friendly and familiar interaction, indicating a past acquaintance and suggesting an intimate connection. Weston's presence ignites a flurry of emotions in Agnes, who struggles to maintain composure.

Mr. Weston reveals his reason for being in A-; he now has a parish close by, which surprises Agnes due to her disconnect with local news. Their conversation meanders from professional achievements to personal longing, subtly indicating Weston's search for companionship. His aspiration for a "companion for life" and his reluctance to find one among the locals or visitors in A- sparks a conversation filled with mutual understanding and unspoken emotions.

The chapter culminates in their walk back through the town, with Agnes unintentionally accepting Weston's arm for support. Despite her initial intention to part ways upon reaching the town, Weston's subtle insistence leads her to accept his company further. This act, alongside their dialogues, symbolizes a deepening of their relationship and hints at a mutual affection yet to be fully acknowledged.

Their journey through the streets becomes a metaphor for their evolving relationship, suggesting a path to deeper connection beyond the professional or casual acquaintance. Despite Agnes's modest feedback and attempt to divert personal implications of their conversation, there's an unspoken acknowledgment of the special bond forming between them, foregrounded by a serene morning by the sea that promises new beginnings.

## **CHAPTER XXV - CONCLUSION**

In the concluding chapter of "Agnes Grey," the narrative unfolds with Agnes discussing everyday concerns with her mother, focusing on the minutiae of her well-being, which sets a domestic and intimate tone. This tranquility is disrupted by the introduction of Mr. Weston's anticipated visit, causing Agnes significant anxiety over how to inform her mother, pointing to the importance of his presence in her life.

Agnes recounts a casual encounter with Mr. Weston and Snap, a dog, on the sands, which she narrates to her mother, ultimately revealing his visit intention. This seemingly mundane recount of meeting a friend is charged with undercurrents of anticipation and significant emotional underpinning for Agnes, as it sets the

stage for Mr. Weston's integration into her and her mother's life. The reaction of Agnes' mother, initially indifferent due to not remembering Mr. Weston, turns supportive upon understanding his role and respectability, highlighting the strong bond and trust within their family dynamic.

The narrative tension escalates with Mr. Weston's visits becoming more frequent, indicating a deepening relationship punctuated by domestic scenes of conversation and companionship, illustrating the Victorian ideal of social and moral propriety. Agnes' feelings of envy towards her mother's conversational ease juxtapose her own quiet admiration and satisfaction in observing the rapport between her mother and Mr. Weston, underscoring the depth of her feelings for him.

A pivotal moment occurs with Mr. Weston's straightforward proposal, stepping away from Victorian era's often circumlocutory courtship rituals, showcasing his forthrightness and the depth of his feelings. Agnes' concerns about leaving her mother and their subsequent discussion reflect the era's emphasis on family consent and blessings for marital decisions.

The chapter closes with Agnes reflecting on her marriage's success, the fulfillment of her roles as a wife and mother, and her optimistic outlook on future challenges. The narrative encapsulates the Victorian belief in the sanctity of marriage, the importance of family, and a life enriched by modesty, diligence, and a strong moral compass.

This chapter, while detailing the culmination of Agnes and Mr. Weston's relationship and their subsequent life, retains a consistent tone with the rest of the novel—focused on moral values, the simplicity of domestic happiness, and the endurance of love through trials, epitomizing the Victorian novel's essence.