



The true and inspiring story of Charlotte Mason—the courageous young girl who changed the face of education in the United Kingdom and beyond. In this fictionalized biography, readers learn from the life of the intelligent young girl who grew to be an author and champion of education.

Interested in the whole book?
Select your preferred book seller:

[MOODY PUBLISHERS](#) [AMAZON](#) [APPLE BOOKS](#) [BARNES & NOBLE](#) [GOOGLE PLAY](#) [CHRISTIANBOOK.COM](#) [WALMART](#) [TARGET](#) 

CONTENTS

Meet Charlotte . . .	9
Chapter 1 — Steamboat Charlotte . . .	11
Chapter 2 — School Days . . .	27
Chapter 3 — Sorrow Like Waves . . .	41
Chapter 4 — A New Chapter in Old London . . .	51
Chapter 5 — Life by the Sea . . .	63
Chapter 6 — From Children to Gentlewomen . . .	79
Chapter 7 — A Writer's Life for Me! . . .	91
Chapter 8 — The Rising Star . . .	103
Chapter 9 — Home by the Lakes . . .	113
Chapter 10 — Go to All the World . . .	127
Chapter 11 — A Radiant Legacy . . .	137
Chapter 12 — Embracing Hope . . .	149
Epilogue . . .	157
Bibliography . . .	161
Notes . . .	163

STEAMBOAT CHARLOTTE

Dublin, Ireland to Birkenhead, England

September 8, 1851

Today is the day. We're moving to England. I feel sad, but Ma says that I'll make new friends, be able to go to school, and that England is just as beautiful as Ireland. We'll see. I have my books, and Ma has made potato cakes for the boat ride. As long as Ma, Father, and I are together, that's all that matters.

FULL STEAM AHEAD

With one hand on the metal railing, and the other clinging to the back of the braces fastened to her father's trousers, nine-year-old Charlotte held on as the Mason family made their way aboard *The Great Republic*, sailing the eight-hour journey for the town of Birkenhead.

As the ship left the harbour, Charlotte's friend shouted, "Slán abhaile!"* in Irish. "Have a safe trip home!"

* Pronounced: [slawn ah-vuh-luh].

The piercing shriek of the steamboat whistle caught Charlotte off guard, and she covered her ears. “That is so loud,” she said to her father, but he couldn’t hear her over the noise.

She watched as the steam released into the air and, following the trail of it with her eyes, she wondered what her new life would look like in England. Nothing was certain, but for weeks she had heard the prayers of her parents late into the night as they’d prepared to leave their home in Dublin. “God help us, God guide us, God bring comfort, provision, and strengthen our faith.”

Now, on the boat, her father’s arm around her shoulder was comforting. The steady rhythm of the waves surrounded them as they stood on the deck. He pointed to the horizon as they lost sight of Irish land, and together they said, “Farewell, dear Ireland!” They waved goodbye, their hands held high, and dreamed of the days ahead.



The journey was long, but the Masons passed the eight hours with conversation among themselves. As they moved about the boat they exchanged stories with fellow passengers, sharing laughs and learning about each other’s lives.

After sitting for a while, Charlotte looked up at her father. “Pleeeeeeease, Father,” she pleaded, tugging at his sleeve. Then, she retrieved the well-worn copy of *Robinson Crusoe* from her bag and handed it to him.

Joshua Mason sighed with a smile and took the book from her. He opened it to their bookmarked page and began to read another chapter, his voice steady and comforting. Charlotte snuggled closer, listening intently as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe unfolded.

Eventually, motion sickness set in, and Joshua's face turned a bit pale. He reluctantly closed the book. "We'll continue once we're settled into our new home," he promised, giving Charlotte a reassuring pat on the back.

Charlotte nodded, a bit disappointed but understanding. She leaned against her father, feeling the gentle rocking of the boat. "One last part, Father," petitioned Charlotte.

"All right, one last paragraph," said Joshua, opening the book again and reading on. "To put those discontented people in mind of it, who cannot enjoy comfortably what God has given them; because they see, and covet something He has not given them. All our discontents for what we want, appeared to me, to spring from want of thankfulness for what we have."¹ He closed the book.

The family moved below deck to enjoy a lunch of cold potato cakes Charlotte's mother, Margaret, had packed and the blackberries they had foraged the night before. The smell that wafted up as Charlotte unwrapped the leftovers reminded her of picnics with her mother. They had spent many hours outdoors together, letting their bodies sink into the grass under the yew tree as Charlotte's mother told stories and recited Wordsworth. Margaret loved the poem "An Evening Walk," and Charlotte delighted in hearing her mother's voice.

Air listens, like the sleeping water, still,
To catch the spiritual music of the hill.²

The excited chatter of *The Great Republic's* passengers became louder as the boat sailed closer to the docks at Birkenhead.

Charlotte and her family moved back upstairs to the top deck as they got closer to land. They could see a mass of people of all ages waving and shouting to catch the attention of families arriving in England for the first time.

Once the boat docked, Charlotte and her parents made their way down the gangway, carrying all their belongings between them. As Charlotte stepped onto the dock, she took a deep breath, feeling the solid ground beneath her feet.

The dock was buzzing with activity—a stark contrast to the quiet, empty shore she had left behind. People moved quickly, their faces showing excitement or determination. The air smelled of salt and fish, mixed with the sweet scent of flowers from a nearby market.

Charlotte hooked her finger into a loop on the bag her father was carrying. With wide eyes and a grumbling tummy, she walked on English soil, a step that would mark her life forever.

“Hello, there, welcome to Birkenhead,” called a friendly voice. It belonged to a man wearing a flat cap and overalls, who stood beside the railings, watching the crowd of passengers walk by. His accent was almost musical; his words were soft, and he smiled as he spoke. The kind man was helpful and chatted with Charlotte’s father about how to find their accommodation.

“According to that friendly chap, it’s about a ten-minute walk from here. Are you ladies all right to walk?” Joshua asked, turning to his wife and daughter.

“Do we have a choice?” Margaret replied with a wry smile.

“I guess not,” Joshua said, smiling. “Let’s go.”

With their belongings balanced between them, including their

small trunk containing Joshua's tools, Margaret's favourite items from their kitchen, and plenty of Irish tea, they wound through the back streets of their new town. Charlotte's chest felt tight. She kept her eyes on her mother and father and tried not to think too much about what she couldn't control.

The streets were narrow and cobbled, lined with tall, old buildings that seemed to lean in towards each other. Charlotte saw other children playing in the alleys, their laughter ringing out like music. A horse-drawn carriage clattered by, the driver tipping his hat as he passed.

As they walked, Charlotte noticed the differences from her old home. The people here seemed busier, more hurried. The streets were livelier, filled with the sounds of commerce and conversation. She felt a pang of homesickness but also excitement. This new place was vibrant and full of life.

After a short walk, they arrived at a small, cosy-looking house with a red door and flower boxes in the windows. It wasn't grand, but it felt welcoming. Joshua fumbled with the key and finally opened the door, letting them inside.

The interior was modest but warm. The living room had a fireplace with a mantel adorned with a few simple ornaments. There was a small kitchen at the back and a staircase leading to the bedrooms upstairs. Charlotte could see that her mother was already imagining how to make this place their home.

"Welcome to our new home," Joshua said, setting down the bags. "It's not much, but it's ours."

Charlotte looked around, her initial anxiety slowly melting away.

She could see the possibilities in this new beginning. She felt her parents' optimism and decided to embrace it too.

As they started unpacking, Charlotte thought about the journey that had brought them here and the adventures that awaited them. She knew that this place, with its bustling docks and busy streets, would become the backdrop of many new memories.

FIRST MORNING IN ENGLAND

Charlotte awoke to the sound of the kettle whistling and her mother brewing the beginnings of the stash of Irish tea they had brought across the water. It was market day in Birkenhead, and Charlotte could hear market stall holders shouting and selling their wares. Joshua had already left for the day. Along with other men and the fathers of the many families pouring into Birkenhead from Ireland,³ he had to look for work to support his family.

Charlotte had been so tired the night before, she had collapsed into bed without unpacking a thing. As the tea was brewing, she opened her small bag and took out a few items of clothing, favourite story books, her Bible, and a few shells and pebbles she'd collected from the beach in Ireland. Charlotte placed the books and treasures next to her bed. She brushed the shape of the periwinkle shell with her finger and smiled, remembering the day she had scoured the seashore with her parents. They had said aloud the words of Psalm 104:25 as their toes sank into the sand: "This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both great and small."

That memory was one of her favourites, a moment of connection and peace with her mother and father.

“Charlotte, there’s a fresh pot of tea brewing down here, are you coming?” Margaret called from the small galley kitchen below.

“I’m coming, Ma,” replied Charlotte. She quickly straightened her bed and grabbed her books. She finally made her way downstairs and met her mother at the small kitchen table.

Margaret pulled out a chair for her. Quietly but gratefully, they ate eggs together, sipped tea, and listened to the sounds of the market day through the open window.

“Ma, do you notice how they talk funny here?”

Margaret chuckled. “Actually, Charlotte, it’s the other way around. We’re the newcomers, and to our new neighbours, we might sound a bit different.”

Charlotte opened her eyes wider and leaned nearer to the window beside the table to see the lively market just down the street. The voices of the vendors reached her ears, a mix of barking, singsong, and repetitive calls.

One man with a thick accent shouted, “Fresh fish! Get your fresh fish here!”

A woman with a loud voice called out, “Apples, sweet apples! Two for a penny!”

Another vendor chanted, “Bread, fresh bread, still warm from the oven!” The scent of the bread made Charlotte’s stomach grumble even more.

She looked away from the window and hurried to help her mother finish the unpacking. But the sounds of the market stayed in her mind. As she opened and emptied the bags, she could still hear the different voices and the lively calls of the vendors. “This place is so different from

home,” she said to her mother as they set up their new space with their simple belongings.

“It is, love,” her mother replied, “but we’ll get used to it. And soon, it’ll feel like home.”

A PLACE TO LEARN

The topic of school had been a prominent conversation in the Mason household both before their move to England and for many evenings afterwards.

One morning, Charlotte and her mother walked to the market. Charlotte held tightly to her mother’s hand, her eyes wide with curiosity as they passed bustling stalls filled with fresh produce, homemade goods, a variety of trinkets, and an amazing clock tower in the marketplace that had Latin writing on it. Children her age, dressed in neat uniforms, chattered and laughed on their way to school. A pang of longing hit her—she wondered what it would be like to be among them.

After completing their errands, they returned home. As they settled by the fire, Margaret took out her sewing while Charlotte opened a book.

“Is that Latin, Charlotte?” her mother asked

“Yes,” replied Charlotte. “I’m trying to find out what the writing on the clock from the marketplace means.”

“Oh, sounds interesting. Do let me know, my clever almost-ten-year-old,” Margaret teased.

After some page flicking and a little frustration, Charlotte declared, “I have it! The clock’s words are *Ubi Fides Lux et Robur*,*

* Pronounced: [OO-bee FEE-days LOOX et ROH-boor].

which is Latin for, ‘Where there is faith, there is light and strength.’”

Margaret looked up. “You know, Charlotte, your father and I have been discussing the best school for you.”

Charlotte’s eyes reflected the flickering flames of the nearby fire. “I saw some children going to school today, Ma.”

Margaret smiled softly, threading her needle. “Yes, we hope that for you. Your father also hopes you’ll grow up to follow the family Quaker tradition of teaching,” she said. “But I do love our days together, reading and walking in the fresh air. Even sewing, though I know it’s not your favourite.”

Charlotte grinned, glancing at her unfinished sewing project in the sewing basket. “I prefer pages to fabric, Ma. I’m just better at reading and studying.”

Margaret sighed. “I know. I hope those pages will help you in life and learning, Charlotte.”

Charlotte nodded thoughtfully, feeling the weight of her father’s expectations but also the warmth of her mother’s understanding. She found comfort in her mother’s support, especially when her mother was present and feeling well. Her parents were the most important people in her life, and their guidance meant everything to her.

TURNING TEN

Charlotte held her beautiful birthday copy of *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott to her chest—she couldn’t have wanted for anything more!

Charlotte’s mother had arranged winter wildflowers in a glass bud jar to admire as she and her parents ate soda bread and jam for breakfast and drank their tea.

THE ANGEL ORPHAN



“Come, Charlotte, it’s time,” Margaret said after breakfast, and patted the narrow space next to her on the armchair.

“Oh, Ma, do we have to do this every year?” Charlotte asked with a slight grin.

It was their annual birthday tradition. Charlotte was ten—double figures—and she was trying to sound grown up, but she knew her

mother would have none of it. Birthday story time it was.

Charlotte snuggled next to her mother on the small chair as her father stoked the fire to keep them warm.

“Now, where shall I start?” asked Margaret.

“At the beginning,” answered Charlotte, leaning into her mother as Margaret began telling the story of the day Charlotte was born.

“It was New Year’s Day in Garth Village. Usually, on a Saturday, the marketplace would bustle with activity, noise, and the pungent scent of cheese, fruit, and the fishmongers’ specials. But today was a holiday, and all was quiet.

“I knew you would be born soon. I could barely squeeze into my clothes anymore, and the waistlines of my dresses were rising above my growing belly. There was so much good food over Christmas, but I couldn’t eat like I used to. I was a bag of nerves, and the lingering sickness that never seemed to leave kept my appetite small, but I was so grateful and hopeful.

“Aunt Hulda and Uncle Peter”—Charlotte wasn’t sure how they were related but always knew them as aunt and uncle—“had been so kind and took me in while your father was making his way back from Australia.”

“Father, when are you going to tell me what you were doing on a boat to Australia?” Charlotte exclaimed.

“Now, Lottie, darling, that’s a story for another night,” her father replied with a wink. “Go on, Margaret, I love this story.”

“Well, Hulda and Peter’s little Welsh townhouse was full to the brim with the sounds of children, cooking, and chatter.” Margaret looked down at Charlotte. “I was so glad you were going to be born in a lovely home, a place full of love.”

“Me too, Ma, me too,” Charlotte responded.

“I woke up very early, even though the noise of villagers celebrating the New Year into the wee hours of Saturday morning had kept me awake. I felt different, slightly uneasy, but I needed to move. The rest of the house still slept, which was a miracle considering young Benjamin was usually in that cosy kitchen at the crack of dawn waiting for his milky porridge.”

“This is the part where you go outside for a walk, isn’t it, Ma?” asked Charlotte, excitedly.

“Yes, yes. So, I slipped on my shoes without properly tying them, draped a shawl over my shoulders and over my long nightdress, and I ventured out into the damp morning for a deep breath.”

“But wasn’t it cold, Ma?” Charlotte asked with a concerned look.

“No, the winter was mild, much like the year before. There was no frost to be seen, and the cosy scarves and mittens we had knitted throughout late summer and autumn hadn’t been used at all,” Margaret answered patiently before continuing her story.

“I walked slowly through the early morning air, heading towards the Menai Strait. I wanted to watch the sailboats starting their daily journeys along the ribbon of water stretching between Anglesey Island and the Welsh mainland. The sound of the ships echoed all around on that morning in Bangor. It was comforting. I loved watching the billowing sails and the rhythmic splash of oars in the water. I tried to sit on the ground, but it was very uncomfortable. Instead, I found a sturdy rock facing the suspension bridge.”

Margaret reenacted the scene with theatrical flair. Rising to her feet, she began to waddle humorously, hands cradling an imaginary preg-

nant belly. She moved slowly and exaggeratedly, getting a smile from Charlotte. Finally, Margaret eased herself down with a dramatic groan, leaning against the chair where Charlotte still sat. With a final, playful sigh, she slid onto the floor, causing Charlotte to burst into giggles.

“I watched as smoke spiralled from the cottages. The rest of Bangor was waking up. I remember focusing on the up and down motion of the bridge and realising I was breathing slowly and deeply as my eyes moved with the shapes in front of me. For a while, I froze right there.”

“Were you afraid, Ma?”

“I was a little, my love, but at the same time, I felt comforted by the Scripture verses I knew by heart, especially Isaiah 41.”

Joshua, Margaret, and Charlotte began to recite the verse in unison: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you.”

As they spoke, they could see their breath in the cold of the January evening. They gathered closer to the fire as Margaret continued the story from the floor.

“I felt my belly tighten.”

“It’s time!” shouted Charlotte.

“Shhh,” said Joshua. “She’s getting to the good part.”

“I started to walk from the strait back to the house. It wasn’t that far, but with labour pains getting stronger, it felt like the most grueling hike I had ever undertaken. As I retraced my steps back towards the house, your Aunt Hulda met me halfway and started speaking fast and loudly, asking, ‘Margaret, where have you been? We’ve been frantic with worry and nearly organised a search party for you. You’re pregnant, and the air is damp. What possessed you to come out here

in your nightdress?’ I tried to smile through the pain, but it was undeniable—the moment had arrived. The long-anticipated event was unfolding. Charlotte, you were truly on your way.”

“Eager to join our family, Ma,” Charlotte said.

“We got back to the house,” Margaret continued, “and the green front door swung open with a thud as Hulda flung it wide and called for Thomas, the mariner who also lived at their house. ‘Thomas, hurry, get the midwife! Margaret is going to have her baby!’”

Margaret had jumped onto the nearest seat and scooted to the edge. “Thomas dashed out the door with his hair askew, shirttails flapping, and his wife trailing behind, shouting ‘Take your coat!’”

Charlotte and her parents laughed loudly.

“Every member of the household was on high alert, boiling water in kettles, gathering stacks of cloth and blankets they had stored, and they got the upstairs room ready for me. Mrs. Jones, the midwife, hurried over as quickly as she could, along with her eldest daughter, Deleth, to lend a hand. Mrs. Jones was a mother of seven, well-respected in the community. A no-nonsense, diligent Welsh woman, she arrived with her bag in hand. In a hushed, yet strong tone, she whispered in Welsh, ‘Shh plentyn, bydd popeth yn iawn,’* which means ‘Shh child, all will be well.’

“We threw the men out of the house into a gorgeous January day. The labour was long and hard.”

“Sorry, Ma,” Charlotte said to her mother.

“You were born at 4:15 p.m. Mrs. Jones recited the Lord’s Prayer over you, our New Year’s Day gift of a child, and through tears of

* Pronounced: [SHH PLEHN-tin, bidd POPE-eth un YA-oon].

utter exhaustion, I murmured—”

And in unison the whole family said, “Charlotte.”

Charlotte sighed, stood up, and started to clear away the birthday cake crumbs. “I love our origin story, Ma. I know it will always be special to me.”

Margaret stood up and hugged Charlotte. “Happy birthday, my love.”

Interested in the whole book?
Select your preferred book seller:

[MOODY PUBLISHERS](#)[AMAZON](#)[APPLE BOOKS](#)[BARNES & NOBLE](#)[GOOGLE PLAY](#)[CHRISTIANBOOK.COM](#)[WALMART](#)[TARGET](#)