Charlotte Temple

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SUSANNA ROWSON

Susanna Rowson was born in Portsmouth, England in 1762. She lived in Boston for 16 years, beginning when she was five years old. She returned to England in 1778 and married a merchant named William Rowson in 1786—the same year that she published her first novel, *Victoria*. Over the next five years, she wrote four novels, including the one she's best known for: *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth*, which was published in London in 1791 and later republished as *Charlotte Temple* in America. The novel became the nation's best-selling novel. In fact, it *remained* the best-selling novel in America until the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe some 61 years later. In addition to writing, Rowson took up acting in the early 1790s. After moving back to America with William and their new adopted daughter (William's half-sister), Rowson appeared on stage in multiple productions, becoming a prominent actor. In 1797, she founded an "Academy for Young Ladies" with the goal of educating young women living in America at the time. She was a prominent voice advocating for female education, and she also published the first educational book in America about geography—a book that touched on the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. She died in Boston in 1824, two years after retiring from her career in education.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Charlotte Temple takes place in the late 1700s, when it was quite common for people to marry for money and status instead of love. Dowries and inheritances were big motivators for some people to get married—for instance, a man from a poor family had every reason to marry a woman from a rich family, since a bride's family was generally expected to give the couple (but mainly the husband) a dowry in the form of land ownership or money. This is why Montraville doesn't want to marry Charlotte in the novel; he doesn't have much money and knows his only hope of becoming wealthy is by marrying a rich woman. On another note, the novel features a scene in a debtors' prison, an institution that was common in England until the mid-19th century. Debtors' prisons were places where people who were unable to repay their debts would be kept until they could finally furnish the necessary money. Unlike standard prisons, debtors' prisons often allowed the debtors to have certain liberties. For instance, London's infamous Fleet Prison—where Captain Eldridge is held in *Charlotte Temple*—allowed debtors to live in locked apartments outside the actual prison, and some debtors even got married in what came to be called "Fleet Marriages." In general, the idea of debtors' prison was to keep people locked up until they repaid their debts, either by doing hard labor while imprisoned or by somehow convincing someone else to give them the money.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Lucy Temple, Susanna Rowson's follow-up to *Charlotte Temple*, was published in 1828. Like its predecessor, the novel concerns itself with marriage and wealth, following Charlotte's daughter, Lucy, as she navigates young adulthood and tries (somewhat unsuccessfully) to find happiness and security through marriage. *Charlotte Temple* can also be read alongside *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster, which was published in 1797 and examines how a widely respected young woman living in Connecticut falls into dishonor and shame. William Hill Brown's 1789 novel *The Power of Sympathy* is also similar to *Charlotte Temple*, since it serves as a warning to its readers about the dangers of succumbing to passion and desire. On a broader level, society's harsh judgment of women living with men out of wedlock in *Charlotte Temple* resembles the intense ostracization of Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, though it's worth noting that *The Scarlet Letter*—published nearly 60 years after *Charlotte Temple*—is set in the 1600s and is a critique of the narrowminded cruelty of American Puritanism. *Charlotte Temple*, on the other hand, doesn't overtly criticize societal customs, though both novels focus on how unkind people are to young women who lead supposedly dishonorable lives.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Charlotte Temple
- **When Published:** 1791
- **Literary Period:** Enlightenment
- **Genre:** Cautionary Tale
- **Setting:** England and America in the late 18th century
- **Climax:** Having been evicted in the middle of a snowstorm, Charlotte treks to New York and asks Mademoiselle La Rue for shelter, but La Rue pretends she doesn't know her. Charlotte then gives birth in the apartment of one of La Rue's servants.
- **Antagonist:** Montraville and Belcour

EXTRA CREDIT

Can't Get Enough. One of America's most prominent best-selling books in the 18th and 19th centuries, *Charlotte Temple* has been printed in more than 200 editions.

Grave. Although Susanna Rowson accomplished many things in her life and was even a prominent stage actor, she's best known for writing *Charlotte Temple*, which was so popular that her gravestone reads "*Author of Charlotte Temple*" beneath her name.

PLOT SUMMARY

While visiting the town of Chichester one day, a British lieutenant named Montraville sees a pretty young woman named Charlotte Temple. Struck by her beauty, Montraville leaves Chichester but can't stop thinking about Charlotte, so he returns three days later and goes to Charlotte's boarding school. He's about to lose his nerve when he sees Charlotte exiting the school grounds with Mademoiselle La Rue, a young teacher at the school. He approaches La Rue, charms her, and slips a letter into Charlotte's hands. He also gives La Rue money to secure her silence. In turn, La Rue agrees to sneak Charlotte out of the school the following evening to spend time with Montraville.

Charlotte comes from a loving family. Her father, Mr. Temple, is a generous person who met his wife, Lucy, while helping lift her family out of ruin. Mr. Temple had a respectable inheritance, but he liked to use it for good. For this reason, his friend introduced him to Lucy's father, Captain Eldridge, who at the time was living in debtor's prison. Eldridge explained to Mr. Temple that he found himself in serious debt after accepting money from his son George's wealthy friend, Mr. Lewis. At first, Mr. Lewis had been extremely generous to the Temple family, but then Eldridge realized the young man was interested in his daughter, Lucy. He also learned that Lewis had no plans to actually marry Lucy—he just wanted her to be his lover. Eldridge refused to give Lewis his permission to pursue a relationship with Lucy, so Lewis responded by saying that Eldridge had to immediately repay his debt. Because Eldridge didn't have the money, Lewis had him imprisoned.

When George heard what Lewis—his own friend—did to his family, he challenged him to a duel. Meanwhile, his mother fell gravely ill from the shock of Eldridge's imprisonment. George ended up dying in the duel, and the news of his death killed his mother, too.

Struck by Eldridge's tragic story, Mr. Temple resolved to help him. He couldn't bear the idea of such a respectable man spending his life in prison, nor could he stomach the idea of Lucy—whom he found attractive—spending her days visiting her father in jail. He therefore decided he didn't need much money to live a happy life, so he dipped into his inheritance and repaid all of Eldridge's debt. His own father didn't approve of this decision, especially since he didn't like the idea of Temple marrying Lucy, since the marriage wouldn't bring the family any wealth. Nonetheless, Temple went through with the plan and eventually married Lucy. Together, they established a happy and frugal life on a small farm, where they raised Charlotte. When she reached the appropriate age, they sent her to boarding school, where she now studies under Madame Du Pont.

Although Madame Du Pont runs a respectable school, she made the mistake of employing Mademoiselle La Rue—a disgraced former nun who ran away from her convent with a man she didn't end up marrying. La Rue lived with multiple different men out of wedlock, but she claims to have reformed herself. However, she's eager to encourage Charlotte to secretly spend time with Montraville. When Montraville first intercepts them, they're on their way to see another group of men—an outing La Rue convinced Charlotte to go on with her. When they return, Charlotte tries to tell La Rue that she won't be doing anything like that again; she didn't like the way La Rue spoke to the men, believing her teacher behaved inappropriately. But La Rue manipulates Charlotte by breaking down and talking about how she (La Rue) deserves whatever punishment Madame Du Pont might heap on her if Charlotte tells her that they snuck out. She knows what it's like to experience shame, so she can take it again—even if that means getting thrown onto the streets. Hearing these dramatic words, Charlotte assures La Rue she won't say anything.

Still, Charlotte says she won't read Montraville's letter and won't meet him the next day, but La Rue makes her feel guilty. She says Montraville will probably die on the battlefield in America, implying that reading his letter is the least Charlotte can do. Charlotte breaks down and reads it, promising herself she won't respond. And yet, it doesn't take much more convincing by La Rue to persuade her to meet Montraville the following evening.

Montraville arrives the next night with his friend Belcour, who takes an interest in La Rue. Charlotte remains hesitant and plans to end things with Montraville, but when he reminds her that he'll soon be leaving for America and might die in battle, she agrees to meet him yet again. Her promise to return pleases Montraville immensely, even though he has no intention of marrying her. In fact, he knows he *can't* marry her, since his family isn't rich and neither is hers—he needs to find a wealthy spouse. Nonetheless, he doesn't think about the future, instead focusing on the immediate pleasure of sneaking around with Charlotte.

Over the next week, Charlotte spends every evening with Montraville. He tries to convince her to accompany him to America, but she says her parents would never approve. Hearing this, Belcour butts in and urges her to make the journey—he will be going to America, too, and La Rue has agreed to come with him. Montraville, Belcour, and even La Rue pressure Charlotte to go to America, and she eventually gives in.

On the day she's set to leave, Charlotte changes her mind.

When she tells La Rue, though, her teacher manipulates her into at least telling Montraville herself that she can't go to America. Inevitably, Montraville once again talks her out of staying, and she ends up jumping into the carriage and going with the others to the harbor, where they board a ship bound for America. The ship stays in the harbor for several days, giving Charlotte time to regret her decision. She writes a letter to her parents explaining where she has gone, but Montraville secretly rips it up and throws it overboard. He doesn't want her parents to know where she has gone. Without any word from her loving parents, Charlotte is distraught.

La Rue meets a rich man named Crayton on the passage to America. Although Belcour said he'd marry her when they reached land, La Rue can already tell he was lying, so she endears herself to Crayton. She tells him Belcour tricked her into traveling abroad. Taking pity, Crayton takes her under his wing, and by the time the ship reaches America, he has promised to marry her himself. None of this bothers Belcour, who has quickly lost interest in La Rue. Instead, he sets his sights on Charlotte, hoping to steal her away from Montraville whenever the chance arises.

Once they reach America, Montraville rents a small house for Charlotte outside New York. However, he often goes away for long periods. She waits desperately for him to return, but his visits never last long—especially after he meets Julia Franklin, a beautiful, wealthy woman whom he begins to court. At one point, he visits Charlotte and tells her that he'll be gone for a long time—news that wracks her with despair. She desperately misses her family and thinks they've disowned her, since they haven't replied to any of her letters.

During this period of sorrow, Belcour sees an opportunity and starts visiting Charlotte quite frequently. Meanwhile, La Rue has become Mrs. Crayton and now lives in New York, where it has become obvious to everyone that she isn't the charming and kind person she pretended to be. Mr. Crayton's daughter, Mrs. Beauchamps, is especially upset about La Rue's marriage to her father, but she can't do anything about it. Instead, she directs her attention to Charlotte; Mrs. Beauchamps has a country house near Charlotte's home, and she often hears her crying. Even though everyone avoids Charlotte, Mrs. Beauchamps visits her one day and asks what's wrong. Charlotte tells her everything, and Mrs. Beauchamps is devastated to learn that her own mother-in-law, La Rue, played such a big role in leading Charlotte astray.

Suspecting that Montraville has intercepted the letters Charlotte has written to her parents, Mrs. Beauchamps offers to mail one herself. Deeply grateful, Charlotte pens a heartfelt note explaining her many regrets and asking her parents to forgive her. In this letter, she reveals that she's pregnant with Montraville's child, begging her parents for help—if they won't forgive her, she hopes they'll forgive her unborn baby, who has done nothing wrong.

Meanwhile, Montraville realizes Julia would accept a marriage proposal from him. But he feels too guilty to abandon Charlotte—until, that is, he visits her one day and finds Belcour sleeping next to her in bed. He assumes Charlotte and Belcour are having an affair, but the truth is simply that Belcour snuck into bed with Charlotte, knowing Montraville would leave her if he saw Charlotte lying with Belcour. Sure enough, Montraville storms off and vows never to speak to Charlotte again. Belcour thinks he has succeeded; he even convinces Montraville to marry Julia Franklin. When he tells Charlotte about Montraville's marriage, though, she's so distraught that she falls ill. Belcour visits her for several days, trying to make her feel better, but he soon loses interest and stops coming.

Around this time, Charlotte's landlady evicts her because she's behind on rent. Charlotte is forced to leave the house that very night in the middle of a snowstorm. She can't even turn to Mrs. Beauchamps, since her friend is away. She thus decides to trek toward New York, and though the journey is hard, she makes it without freezing to death. Hoping La Rue will show compassion, she goes to the Crayton household and begs to be let in, but Mrs. Crayton (La Rue) pretends she doesn't know Charlotte.

Thankfully, a servant takes pity and brings Charlotte home to his cramped apartment, where she goes into labor. After giving birth, Charlotte becomes discombobulated and can only speak nonsense. She stays at the servant's house for many days while a doctor attends to her. At one point, the doctor pays a house visit to Mrs. Beauchamps for an unrelated matter and tells her about Charlotte, though he doesn't use her name. Moved by the story, Mrs. Beauchamps pays a visit and realizes it's Charlotte. She helps put the place in order and pays the kind servant for his good deed, but even though Charlotte comes to her senses, the doctor says she'll soon die. Just before she passes away, Mr. Temple arrives at the door—he and Lucy received Charlotte's letter, and he has come to take her home. Hearing his voice, Charlotte jumps out of bed and jumps into his arms. They both faint from the shock of seeing each other.

Both Charlotte and Mr. Temple regain consciousness, but Charlotte soon dies while looking into her father's eyes. A few days later, Montraville comes to town in search of Charlotte—he feels terrible about what he has done, but he becomes especially upset when he walks by a funeral and realizes that Charlotte is the person being lowered into the ground. He bows to Mr. Temple, reveals his identity, and tells him to kill him, but Mr. Temple refuses: Montraville's guilt will be his punishment.

Sure enough, Montraville lives the rest of his life in a deep depression, though not before seeking out Belcour and murdering him for failing to care for Charlotte in his absence. The Temple family, on the other hand, manages to move on. Mr. Temple brings Charlotte's daughter back to England, where he and his wife raise her as their own child. One day, they find a

destitute old woman shivering on their doorstep. They let her in, only to discover that the old woman is La Rue. Her marriage ended several years ago, and she has spent the intervening time living a life of disgrace, which has led her to extreme poverty. She admits to treating Charlotte poorly, but Mr. Temple still feeds her and checks her into a hospital, where she dies the next day.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Charlotte Temple – The novel's protagonist, Charlotte Temple is a 15-year-old student in Chichester, England. Innocent and kind, Charlotte is easily led astray, often putting too much trust in others and not wanting to let anyone down. Because of this tendency, she agrees to meet up with a young man named Montraville, who approaches her one evening when she's walking with one of her teachers, Mademoiselle La Rue. La Rue has just convinced Charlotte to sneak out to spend time with some local men, but Charlotte isn't so sure about the idea. She ends up disliking the experience of breaking the rules, thinking La Rue's behavior was inappropriate. But when she voices her concerns, La Rue manipulates her, crying about how Charlotte will probably tell Madame Du Pont—the headmistress—about what they did, which would surely lead Du Pont to kick La Rue onto the streets. Feeling bad, Charlotte agrees not to say anything. She also agrees to go through with meeting Montraville the following night. This sort of scene repeats throughout the novel, as Charlotte frequently voices moral reservations but then passively allows others to lead her astray. She ends up in a taboo relationship with Montraville, who convinces her to come with him, his friend Belcour, and La Rue to America. Having run away from home without telling her parents, she feels extremely remorseful, but she can't contact them because Montraville always intercepts her letters. In America, Montraville impregnates Charlotte and then abandons her for another woman. Unable to pay rent, she gets evicted in the middle of a snowstorm and treks to New York in the hopes that La Rue will help her—but La Rue pretends she doesn't know her. Thankfully, one of La Rue's servants takes her into his small apartment, where she gives birth before falling ill and dying. Her utter destitution at the end of the novel is supposed to send a message to the author's young female readers, ultimately issuing a warning about the perils of leading a dishonorable life.

Montraville – Montraville is a lieutenant in the British army who becomes smitten with Charlotte after seeing her one day shortly before he's called to America. He can't stop thinking about her, so he visits her school and bribes her teacher, Mademoiselle La Rue, to sneak her out the following night. Motivated first and foremost by a desire for pleasure, Montraville doesn't dwell on the fact that he can't marry Charlotte. He's not from a wealthy family, so he needs to find a rich wife—and Charlotte isn't rich. But he doesn't care; all he cares about is being with her, and he doesn't even consider how their relationship might ruin her life. His conniving friend Belcour charms Mademoiselle La Rue and invites her to come to America, and when she accepts, she joins forces with both Belcour and Montraville in pressuring Charlotte to go to America, too. Montraville blatantly manipulates Charlotte into coming by saying that he might soon die on the battlefield. Feeling sorry for him, she agrees, but Montraville doesn't seem to care about the great sacrifice Charlotte has made by cutting herself off from her family. He even rips up a letter she writes to her parents, not wanting them to know where she has gone. And yet, he loses interest in her when they reach America. He starts courting a wealthy young woman named Julia Franklin and wishes he could marry her, though he feels bad about the idea of *completely* abandoning Charlotte. Soon enough, though, Belcour—who has taken an interest in Charlotte—tricks him into thinking Charlotte has been cheating on him, so Montraville cuts all ties with her (even though she's pregnant with his child). Believing that Belcour and Charlotte have started a relationship, he gives Belcour money, wanting him to take care of Charlotte, and then he himself marries Julia. Later, though, he feels remorseful and tries to visit Charlotte, only to discover she has died. Overcome with guilt, he takes his anger out on Belcour, murdering him before going on to live a depressing life himself. The author uses his misery to suggest that prioritizing desire over everything else often has diminishing returns.

Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton) – Mademoiselle La Rue is a former nun who fell into dishonor by eloping from her convent and living with a man out of wedlock. Nonetheless, she insists that she has reformed her ways, which is why Madame Du Pont employs her as a teacher at the boarding school that Charlotte attends. In reality, La Rue is still full of mischief and ends up convincing Charlotte to break the rules by sneaking out to spend time with a rowdy group of men. The author suggests that La Rue wants to corrupt Charlotte because she knows the young woman is morally superior to her—she wants, in other words, to bring Charlotte down to her own level. She therefore manipulates Charlotte into traveling to America with Montraville. La Rue herself has already decided to make the journey with Montraville's duplicitous friend, Belcour, and she doesn't want to be the only one running away. Once onboard the boat for America, though, she realizes Belcour has no intention of marrying her, so she ditches him for a wealthy passenger named Crayton, charming him and telling him that Belcour tricked her into eloping. Her plan works, and Crayton marries her when they reach America, at which point she no longer has contact with Charlotte. While La Rue (now Mrs. Crayton) lives in luxury, Charlotte wastes away in misery. Eventually, Charlotte seeks out La Rue's help in the middle of a snowstorm—she's pregnant, has just been evicted, and has

nobody else to turn to. La Rue, however, pretends she doesn't know Charlotte and kicks her out. In the end, though, La Rue's marriage crumbles and she leads a life of vice, leading her to the same destitution Charlotte herself experienced. As luck would have it, Charlotte's parents take La Rue in and give her food before checking her into a hospital, despite the fact that she led their daughter to destruction. She dies the next day, and the author explicitly says that her lonely death is a "striking example that vice [...] leads only to misery and shame."

Belcour – Belcour is a selfish, untrustworthy lieutenant in the British army, and one of Montraville's close friends. While Montraville seduces Charlotte, Belcour endears himself to Mademoiselle La Rue, finding it easy to convince her to travel with him to America. Although he originally promises to marry her in America, he has no intention of actually doing so. La Rue senses that this is the case, so she abandons him for a wealthy man named Crayton. But Belcour doesn't care: instead of fixating on La Rue, he takes an interest in Charlotte, not caring that she's romantically involved with his good friend Montraville. He decides to wait for an opportunity to break them up—an opportunity that presents itself when he realizes, upon reaching America, that Montraville isn't interested in Charlotte anymore. Belcour starts paying her frequent visits when Montraville isn't around, and he even tells Montraville that everybody knows Charlotte is cheating on him. One day, he finds Charlotte sleeping and sees that Montraville is coming down the road, so he jumps into bed and pretends to be asleep next to Charlotte. Montraville enters and flies into a rage, assuming they're having an affair and vowing never to speak to Charlotte again, even though she's now carrying his unborn child. With Montraville out of the picture, Belcour tries to win over Charlotte's affection, but doing so is harder than he thought it'd be. When he tells her that Montraville has married a young woman named Julia Franklin, she loses control and falls into a grave illness. Belcour tries to nurse her back to health, but her feeble state repulses him, so he stops visiting altogether and gives up on the idea of starting a relationship with her. Montraville later blames him for Charlotte's ultimate demise, since he thought Belcour would take care of her in his absence. In the end, Montraville murders Belcour, but even this doesn't assuage his guilt about leading Charlotte into a life of hardship.

Mr. Temple – Mr. Temple is Charlotte's father. A selfless man who cares more about helping others than becoming rich, he meets his future wife, Lucy, while paying a visit to debtor's prison. Because he has a reputation for using his extra wealth for good, a friend told him about Captain Eldridge, who was imprisoned because he couldn't repay debts that were unfairly leveraged against him. It's while Mr. Temple is visiting Eldridge that he first meets Lucy, Eldridge's daughter. He's overcome by her beauty and hates the idea of her wasting her youth visiting her father in a jail cell. Moved by Eldridge's story and by his own attraction to Lucy, he decides that he will pay off Eldridge's considerable debt. Doing so means he won't be able to lead an extravagant life, but he doesn't care: he'll live a modest and rewarding life on a farm. After all, he cares about love more than money, since he has seen how unhappy his siblings are because they married for financial reasons instead of following their hearts. After freeing Eldridge from prison, Mr. Temple marries Lucy and lives with her on a farm. Together, they raise their daughter, Charlotte, with love and support, which is why it's so hard for them when they learn that she has run away from her boarding school as a teenager. Unable to do anything, though, they try to focus on their daily life. Finally, they receive a letter from Charlotte (by way of Mrs. Beauchamp) that explains where she went and that she's pregnant. Even though they have reason to disown her, Mr. Temple and his wife quickly forgive their daughter. Mr. Temple travels to America to bring her home, arriving just in time to embrace her before she dies. He takes his granddaughter back to England, where he and Lucy raise her as their own daughter.

Lucy Temple – Lucy Temple is Charlotte's mother. She meets her husband when he comes to debtor's prison to visit Captain Eldridge, her father. Lucy is very devoted to her father. In fact, seeing her care for him deeply moves Mr. Temple, who finds himself quite attracted to her. After Mr. Temple pays off Eldridge's debts, Lucy marries him and lives with him on a farm, where they raise Charlotte. She's distraught when Charlotte later runs away to America, but she quickly finds it within herself to forgive her daughter after finally receiving a letter from her. She yearns to be reunited with Charlotte, though this never happens because Charlotte dies before she can return to England. Nonetheless, Mr. Temple—who traveled to America to find Charlotte—comes back with Charlotte's daughter, whom he and Lucy raise as their own.

Captain Eldridge – Captain Eldridge is Charlotte's grandfather. An esteemed sailor, he ends up in debtor's prison after accepting a loan from his son George's good friend Mr. Lewis. At first, Mr. Lewis is willing to give the Eldridge family whatever they need, insisting that Captain Eldridge can take however long he wants to repay the debt. But then Captain Eldridge realizes Mr. Lewis wants to start a romantic affair with Lucy, his daughter, so he asks Lewis if he plans to marry her. When Mr. Lewis says he has no intentions of proposing to Lucy, Captain Eldridge forbids him from starting a relationship with her. Enraged, Lewis demands that Eldridge pay his debt back immediately. Because Eldridge doesn't have any money, he ends up in debtor's prison. He loses nearly everything dear to him, since George challenges Lewis to a duel and dies, the news of which kills Eldridge's wife. All Eldridge has left, then, is Lucy, who dutifully visits him in prison every day. But then Mr. Temple comes to the prison and listens to Eldridge's sad tale, and he finds himself so moved that he pays off Eldridge's debt. Eldridge happily gives Temple permission to marry Lucy, and he

therefore eventually becomes Charlotte's proud and doting grandfather.

Mr. Lewis – Mr. Lewis is a friend of Captain Eldridge's son, George. A very wealthy man, he becomes close with the Eldridge family and happily lends Captain Eldridge a large amount of money, saying that he can take however long he needs to repay the debt. But then Captain Eldridge forbids Lewis from starting a romantic relationship with his daughter, Lucy, since Lewis doesn't intend to marry her. Suddenly, Lewis demands that Eldridge must repay the debts immediately, knowing this is impossible. Captain Eldridge goes to debtor's prison, but George tries to take revenge by challenging Lewis to a duel. Lewis ends up killing George in the duel, and the shock of this news kills Eldridge's wife. After hearing this story, Mr. Temple repays Eldridge's debt to Lewis.

Madame Du Pont – Madame Du Pont is the headmistress at the boarding school Charlotte attends. A trusting woman, she employs Mademoiselle La Rue even though she knows La Rue ran away from a convent and led a dishonorable lifestyle before coming to the school. Despite La Rue's background, Du Pont believes the young woman has changed, so she gives her a chance—a mistake that ultimately leads to Charlotte Temple's demise, since La Rue helps Montraville trick the innocent young student into running away to America.

Mrs. Beauchamp – Mrs. Beauchamp is Crayton's daughter. A wealthy woman, she isn't afraid to help those in need, even when this means extending her empathy to social outcasts. This is exactly what she does when she reaches out to Charlotte, who lives in a house near Mrs. Beauchamp's country home. When she asks Charlotte how she came to lead a life full of so much misery, she learns that Mademoiselle La Rue—Mrs. Beauchamp's new mother-in-law—played a big role in leading the young woman astray. She takes pity on Charlotte and offers to send a letter from Charlotte to her parents, since she (correctly) suspects that Montraville hasn't sent the other letters Charlotte has written to her family. Her generous offer alerts Charlotte's parents to her whereabouts, making it possible for Mr. Temple to track her down and eventually bring home her newborn daughter. Mrs. Beauchamp's kindness is the only bright spot in Charlotte's otherwise miserable life in America, suggesting that empathy and compassion are wonderful qualities for a person to have—qualities that many characters in *Charlotte Temple* unfortunately lack.

Crayton – Crayton is a wealthy man aboard the same ship Charlotte and Mademoiselle La Rue take from England to America. During the passage, La Rue identifies him as a rich man and endears herself to him, telling him that Belcour tricked her into leaving home. Crayton believes her and agrees to marry her himself when they reach America. Not long after doing so, though, he realizes she's not the charming, innocent person he thought she was. His daughter, Mrs. Beauchamp, also recognizes this, but she's unable to do anything about it. Eventually, though, Crayton and La Rue's marriage comes to an end because of her debauchery, leaving her with nothing as she continues to lead a life of vice.

The Author (Susanna Rowson) – Susanna Rowson is the author of *Charlotte Temple*. Although she's not one of the novel's characters in a traditional sense, her voice is so prominent throughout the book that she essentially functions as an independent narrator with her own opinions and ideas. She frequently addresses her readers, whom she assumes are young women, making it quite clear that the purpose of the novel is to warn readers about what happens when young women succumb to vice. In particular, she focuses on how having love affairs out of wedlock attracts shame to otherwise respectable young women, ultimately ruining their reputations and, in turn, their lives. Although this message might seem a bit sexist and limiting, it's worth noting that Rowson simply wanted to write a cautionary tale about how harsh and unforgiving 18th-century society was when it came to judging and punishing women—much harsher, it seems, than the way it judged or punished men.

George The son of Captain Eldridge, and brother of Lucy Temple. While in school, George becomes good friends with a wealthy man named Mr. Lewis. When George needs more money to progress in his career than his father has, Lewis gladly lends the family money and says that Eldridge can take as long as he needs to pay the money back. But when Captain Eldridge realizes Mr. Lewis wants to start a romantic affair with Lucy outside of marriage, he forbids it. Lewis then demands that Eldridge pay the debt back immediately. George, in response, challenges Mr. Lewis to a duel. George dies in the duel, which in turn causes his mother to die of shock.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Julia Franklin – Julia Franklin is a wealthy and well-liked young woman in America. Montraville takes a liking to her and eventually marries her. She has no idea that he abandoned another woman—Charlotte—in order to be with her.

Mr. Corydon – Mr. Corydon is a man La Rue takes as a lover after marrying Crayton.

Miss Weatherby – Miss Weatherby is a wealthy woman whom Mr. Temple's father wants him to marry. Despite his father's wishes, Mr. Temple marries Lucy instead. As a way of showing his anger (and as a way of securing her wealth), Mr. Temple's father marries Miss Weatherby himself.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

black and white.

TEMPTATION AND VICE

Charlotte Temple is a cautionary tale about succumbing to temptation. In particular, the novel suggests that embracing "vice" or immorality is a slippery slope, as each mistake leads to another one. Before long, then, it becomes extremely hard for people to find their way back to virtue and innocence. For example, Charlotte Temple discovers the dangerous allure of forbidden love when she first agrees to secretly meet Montraville, whose romantic intentions go against the strict codes of conduct that were prevalent in 18th-century society. Charlotte knows she shouldn't sneak away to meet him, but she does it anyway. She soothes her own misgivings by assuring herself that she'll tell Montraville they can never meet again, but this is really just a way of justifying her actions. In fact, she uses this rationalization several times throughout their courtship, quieting her conscience so that she can pursue her forbidden desires. It isn't long before she finds herself in a seemingly irreversible situation, since Montraville convinces her to come to America with him, thus isolating her from her entire family and any other means of support. She therefore fully commits to a lifestyle considered immoral in the 18th century, since she and Montraville aren't married.

Although Charlotte's "mistakes" might seem trivial to contemporary readers, it's worth noting that 18th-century readers would have frowned on her decision to elope with a man deemed unsuitable for her. The novel's author, Susanna Rowson, takes a moralistic stance and doesn't hesitate to openly condemn Charlotte's behavior. And yet, although her harsh judgment might seem sexist and narrow-minded in contemporary times, her main intention in writing this story is to help other young women avoid the same miserable fate as Charlotte. By the time Charlotte arrives in America and gets pregnant, Montraville has lost interest in her, leaving her destitute and unable to do anything to improve her situation. The implication, then, is that giving in to disingenuous seducers like Montraville can lead to a sense of powerlessness, since Charlotte ends up with no way of regaining happiness. In a way, then, the novel suggests that resisting temptation and vice in the first place is one of the only ways for women in 18th-century society to maintain a modicum of power and control over their lives—after all, if Charlotte had never given into her temptation to spend time with Montraville, she wouldn't have found herself in such terrible circumstances. The novel therefore suggests that the best way for young women to ensure their own continued safety and happiness is by practicing restraint and immediately turning away from temptation.

REGRET, GUILT, AND SHAME

By demonstrating that regret can thoroughly interfere with a person's happiness, *Charlotte Temple* suggests that remorse and guilt often outweigh superficial pleasures. Charlotte experiences the ravaging effects of guilt immediately, as she starts to feel bad about eloping with Montraville before they even set sail for America. In fact, all of her initial interactions with him are tinged with melancholy and unease because she's painfully aware that she's making a mistake. She even hopes that the ship bound for America will be delayed long enough for her parents to send her a letter and offer their forgiveness—a clear indication of the guilt she feels about disappointing and dishonoring her parents. As she pines for their approval, it becomes evident that her remorse about eloping has already short-circuited any happiness or pleasure she might otherwise experience in the throes of young love. Guilt thus emerges as a powerful force capable of turning excitement and satisfaction into regret and shame.

Because Charlotte is initially presented as an innocent and virtuous person, it's not all that surprising that she feels a debilitating sense of guilt when she does something she believes is immoral. What's interesting, though, is that even Montraville—whom the novel presents as selfish and unvirtuous—appears capable of feeling remorse. He doesn't feel bad about his behavior at first, but he *does* feel guilty when he considers marrying Julia Franklin after bringing Charlotte to America and impregnating her. He admits that he's a "mean, ungenerous seducer of unsuspecting innocence," acknowledging the cruel way he took advantage of Charlotte's trust only to turn his back on her. At the same time, his appetite for pleasure overrides his remorse, so his guilt doesn't stop him from marrying Julia and abandoning Charlotte. In the end, though, he realizes that his quest for pleasure at any cost led to Charlotte's ruinous death—something for which he'll never be able to forgive himself. The fact that he lives the rest of his life battling "severe fits of melancholy" implies that carefree pleasures actually *aren't* capable of overriding feelings of guilt. In other words, true guilt can't simply be ignored. Rather, it's a powerful emotion that stays with people until they right their wrongs, which nobody in the novel has the chance to do—perhaps illustrating how hard it is for people to eradicate their own shame.

DECEIT AND MANIPULATION

Although the novel suggests that people are ultimately responsible for their own bad decisions, it also acknowledges that outside influences can corrupt a person's good intentions. Charlotte, for instance, knows she shouldn't elope with Montraville, so the fact that she does it anyway puts her at fault, since she consciously goes against her better judgment. And yet, one of the main reasons

she defies her own moral compass is that her teacher, Mademoiselle La Rue, actively manipulates her into running off with Montraville. Whenever Charlotte decides to put an end to her affair with Montraville, La Rue guilts her into seeing him again. Although La Rue's determination to lure Charlotte into disgrace might seem needlessly evil, the novel implies that she has a very specific reason for corrupting the young woman: namely, she wants to drive Charlotte into vice so that she herself doesn't look bad in comparison, wanting to "bring down innocence and beauty to the shocking level with herself." The idea here is that some people can't stand it when others are more virtuous than they are. In turn, innocent people end up attracting malicious people who hope to destabilize and undercut their goodness.

Unfortunately for Charlotte, she eagerly places her trust in both La Rue and Montraville, failing to recognize that they both have ulterior motives: La Rue wants to debase Charlotte in order to feel better about herself, and Montraville will simply say anything to convince Charlotte to become his unmarried lover. In fact, Montraville even threatens to kill himself when she tells him she can't accompany him to America—a manipulative threat that in retrospect seems pretty empty, considering that he quickly loses interest in her when they reach America (making it clear that he's not as desperate to be with her as he originally claimed). Although the novel insinuates that everyone has their own responsibility to reject temptation, then, it *also* implies that part of avoiding vice means recognizing the corrupting influence that other people might have on them. After all, even the most virtuous people might fall prey to deceit and manipulation if they aren't careful.

KINDNESS, COMPASSION, AND FORGIVENESS

By showing the transformative impact that kindness can have on a person's life, *Charlotte Temple* celebrates people who treat others with compassion—especially when that means extending empathy to those facing hardship. Mrs. Beauchamp embodies this kind of benevolence, since she's the only person in America willing to help Charlotte. Her kindness motivates Charlotte to try one more time to contact her parents, indicating that a little compassion can go a long way toward renewing a dejected person's spirits. To make this point even clearer, the novel's author, Susanna Rowson, explicitly interjects to say that many young women who stray into a life of vice would gladly return to virtue if only they had a conscientious friend to help them do so. Practicing kindness is therefore much more than a way to be polite, since it can genuinely inspire people to improve their lives.

To that end, Mrs. Beauchamp's encouragement and support eventually helps Charlotte reunite with her father, who has the same kind of compassion as Mrs. Beauchamp. Mr. Temple and his wife have every reason to disown Charlotte as their daughter, but they find it in their hearts to forgive her. This decision is somewhat unsurprising, given that Mr. Temple has a history of selflessly helping people in need—a sign that he's too kindhearted to turn away from people who are suffering. Although Charlotte dies shortly after her father embraces her, Mr. Temple ends up adopting Charlotte's newborn daughter, Lucy. Mrs. Beauchamp's initial good deed thus leads to a (more or less) positive outcome, as the Temples are able to give Lucy a better life than she would have otherwise had. There's an implication, then, that good things happen when people behave with kindness. In fact, it's worth noting that the characters who practice compassion are also the only ones in the novel who go on to lead happy, prosperous lives. Indeed, Mrs. Beauchamp and the Temples manage to live happily ever after while everyone else in the book either dies a terrible death or lives in sorrow. The manipulative and deceitful Belcour, for instance, is stabbed to death by Montraville, who in turn spends the rest of his days in a deep depression. Similarly, Mademoiselle La Rue lives in poverty and dies in utter destitution, all the while regretting how terrible she was to Charlotte. And yet, Mr. and Mrs. Temple *still* manage to forgive her and even give her shelter for a night before checking her into a hospital—another testament of their unshakeable capacity for empathy, which the novel implies creates the conditions for a rich and happy life.

HONOR, REPUTATION, AND SOCIAL STATUS

Most of the major plot points in *Charlotte Temple* revolve around the significance of honor and social status in 18th-century society. Charlotte and Montraville only elope because their parents wouldn't approve of their union. But the novel doesn't necessarily cast negative judgment on them for wanting to disobey their parents. Rather, it condemns them for living together out of wedlock, which the book implies is both immoral and dishonorable. Charlotte's father, Mr. Temple, is perhaps the most respectable person in the entire novel, but even he went against his own father's wishes by marrying a woman who was technically beneath his station in society. The book therefore suggests that defying societal norms about status is excusable, especially when people defy these norms in the name of love. What's *inexcusable*, though, is forgoing the entire institution of marriage by living with a lover out of wedlock. Embracing this lifestyle (which people in the 18th century would deem "sinful") completely ruins a woman's reputation, making it all but impossible for her to make a name for herself in society. Yet men aren't subject to the same strict societal codes: whereas Charlotte becomes a social pariah for eloping to America with Montraville, Montraville himself leads a pleasant life in New York and eventually establishes a connection with a wealthy young woman, whom he ends up marrying. Meanwhile, Charlotte's initial agreement to live with

Montraville out of wedlock completely ruins her social status, making it very unlikely that she'll ever be able to find a respectable man to marry her. The novel thus showcases the harsh societal realities of the 18th century, revealing that the stringent rules women faced surrounding honor and morality didn't apply to men in the same way.

WEALTH, POVERTY, AND HAPPINESS

Charlotte Temple shows that wealth—or a lack thereof—often dictates how people lead their lives. The characters in the novel who don't have much money face all kinds of limitations that force them into difficult situations, like when Charlotte has no other choice but to seek help from the wretched La Rue after getting evicted in the middle of a snowstorm. Because life can be so hard for people who don't have much money, many of the characters worry so much about how they'll support themselves that they allow such considerations to influence the most important decisions they make. For example, Montraville doesn't marry Charlotte because neither he nor she come from rich families, so he fears they would struggle to make ends meet. By thinking this way, he allows practical calculations to shape the way he approaches his love life.

And yet, the novel implies that there's something inherently honorable about forgetting about wealth in the name of love. It's certainly true that poverty can place burdensome limitations on people, but it's also the case that marrying in order to become rich is a good way to find oneself in a miserable, loveless relationship. Mr. Temple recognizes this as a young man, as he realizes that all of his siblings are completely unhappy because they got married for financial reasons. To that end, the novel's author, Susanna Rowson, takes a very critical view of marrying solely for wealth, even though doing so was a common practice in the 18th century. As Rowson considers marriages that are based on money, she says that Mr. Temple's sisters were "legally prostituted to old, decrepit men" simply because these men were rich. The implication is that Rowson believes such arrangements are too transactional, especially since marriage is supposedly a sacred bond built on love. The novel therefore casts a favorable light on people who prioritize love and happiness over their concerns about money—people, that is, like Mr. Temple, who gives up a life of financial ease in order to help the destitute Captain Eldridge and his daughter, Lucy, whom Mr. Temple ends up marrying. Together, Mr. Temple and Lucy lead a modest life on a farm, and what they lack in monetary wealth they ultimately make up for in contentment, suggesting that people ought to pursue lasting happiness instead of chasing money.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MONTRAVILLE'S LETTER

Because reading the love letter from Montraville is one of the first compromises Charlotte makes to her sense of what's appropriate, the letter itself symbolizes the idea that embracing temptation is a slippery slope. When she first receives the letter, she tells herself she won't read it because she feels guilty about having snuck out of school and indulged Montraville's attention in the first place. Mademoiselle La Rue, however, skillfully manipulates Charlotte into reading it by making its contents seem irresistible. Having decided that she will, indeed, open the letter, Charlotte promises herself that she'll do more than read it: she won't, for instance, allow herself to meet him the following evening. And yet, that's *exactly* what she ends up doing. Reading the letter is therefore a steppingstone toward more significant transgressions, and the fact that it seems so enticing is a perfect representation of how hard it is to stop chasing desire after having already started to indulge temptation.

THE BOX OF JEWELS

Julia Franklin's family jewels, which Montraville keeps safe after a fire at the Franklin household, signify just how dazzling and irresistible Montraville finds the idea of cheating on Charlotte with Julia. Because he's somebody who always prioritizes pleasure and satisfaction, the prospect of taking Julia as his new lover is incredibly hard for him to resist. After somebody hands him the box of jewels in the midst of the chaotic fire, Montraville spends several days looking at them and fantasizing about Julia, whose picture is also in the box. The mere fact that he becomes so enticed by the contents of a stranger's tiny wooden box is symbolic of his great thirst for any new thing in his life that might bring him happiness. When he first laid eyes on Charlotte in Chichester, for instance, he couldn't stop thinking about her for three days straight. And yet, he now takes her for granted and seems to spend as little time with her as possible. The box of jewels thus comes to symbolize Montraville's grass-is-greener mentality, which drives him to covet and lust after beautiful things he doesn't already have—in this case, the jewels represent Julia and, more specifically, Montraville's belief that she'll make him happier than Charlotte does.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *Charlotte Temple and Lucy Temple* published in 1991.

Chapter 1 Quotes

"'Tis a romantic attempt;" said he; "and should I even succeed in seeing and conversing with her, it can be productive of no good: I must of necessity leave England in a few days, and probably may never return; why then should I endeavor to engage the affections of this lovely girl, only to leave her a prey to a thousand inquietudes, of which at present she has no idea? I will return to Portsmouth and think no more about her."

Related Characters: Montraville (speaker), Charlotte Temple

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

Montraville says this to himself upon returning to Chichester, where he knows Charlotte attends boarding school. He hasn't been able to stop thinking about her since he saw her three days ago, so he hatched a plan to give her a letter professing his love. When he arrives at the boarding school and waits for her to appear, though, he has second thoughts: although the idea certainly seems "romantic," it's also futile, since he will soon be leaving England for America. "No good," then, can come from him establishing a romantic connection with Charlotte.

What's most notable about Montraville's thought process here is that he doesn't just consider what's best for him—he also recognizes that seducing Charlotte—only to leave her behind—will only unsettle her, making her "prey to a thousand inquietudes," which is to say that she'll suddenly become restless and discontent with her current life. The fact that Montraville considers how his actions might impact Charlotte suggests that he's capable of thinking about others, even if his behavior throughout the novel indicates that he tends to prioritize his own interests.

"I will at least see who these are," said he. He overtook them, and giving them the compliments of the evening, begged leave to see them into the more frequented parts of the town: but how was he delighted, when, waiting for an answer, he discovered, under the concealment of a large bonnet, the face of Charlotte Temple.

He soon found means to ingratiate himself with her companion, who was a French teacher at the school, and, at parting, slipped a letter he had purposely written, into Charlotte's hand, and five guineas into that of Mademoiselle, who promised she would endeavour to bring her young charge into the field again the next evening.

Related Characters: Montraville (speaker), Charlotte Temple, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

When Montraville arrives at Charlotte Temple's boarding school, he second-guesses his decision to seek her out and give her a love letter, eventually deciding that the kind, more thoughtful thing to do would be to leave before seeing her. However, it's clear that his desire to make contact with Charlotte is still quite strong. After all, he allows himself to approach two women on the pretense of finding out who they are—a clear compromise to the resolution he just made to leave. It's obvious that he's deceiving himself in this moment, as he tells himself that he'll do the respectable thing by leaving but then indulges his temptation to talk to Charlotte. Sure enough, he ends up speaking to Charlotte and Mademoiselle La Rue, and instead of saying goodnight to them without doing anything misguided, he gives Charlotte the love letter. In fact, he even bribes Mademoiselle La Rue to arrange another meeting the following night. Simply put, he completely abandons his reservations, focusing only on his desire to court Charlotte. By showing how his resolve to do the right thing quickly breaks down, the novel highlights his tendency to indulge temptation.

Chapter 2 Quotes

He saw his elder brother made completely wretched by marrying a disagreeable woman, whose fortune helped to prop the sinking dignity of the house; and he beheld his sisters legally prostituted to old, decrepit men, whose titles gave them consequence in the eyes of the world, and whose affluence rendered them splendidly miserable. "I will not sacrifice internal happiness for outward shew," said he: "I will seek Content; and, if I find her in a cottage, will embrace her with as much cordiality as I should if seated on a throne."

Related Characters: Mr. Temple (speaker), The Author (Susanna Rowson)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

Unlike many of the other characters in *Charlotte Temple*, Mr. Temple is uninterested in marrying for money. His family isn't poor, but they aren't necessarily rich, either, which is why all of his siblings choose to marry for financial reasons: his older brother marries a "disagreeable"—or unlikeable—woman simply because she has so much money, and this makes his life "wretched" and joyless. Similarly, his sisters marry older men for their money, which Rowson—the author—compares to the act of "legally prostitut[ing]" themselves. Although this description is rather insensitive, Rowson's point here is that marrying "decrepit" old men for their fortune turns marriage into little more than a transaction.

Of course, marrying for wealth was extremely common in the 18th century, since many people focused on things like dowries and social status when they considered getting married. But the novel implies that marriage can and should be much more than an emotionless exchange of wealth. Mr. Temple, for instance, believes that genuine happiness and love matter more than superficial concerns surrounding money, so he makes peace with the possibility of leading a frugal, modest life if that's what it takes to find true love.

Chapter 4 Quotes

"[…] 'We are all the world to each other,' said she. 'I thank God, I have health and spirits to improve the talents with which nature has endowed me; and I trust if I employ them in the support of a beloved parent, I shall not be thought an unprofitable servant. While he lives I pray for strength to pursue my employment; and when it pleases heaven to take on of us, may it give the survivor resignation to bear the separation as we ought: till then I will never leave him.'"

Related Characters: Captain Eldridge, Lucy Temple (speaker), Mr. Temple, Charlotte Temple, Montraville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 15-16

Explanation and Analysis

When Captain Eldridge tells Mr. Temple the story of how he wound up in debtors' prison, he explains that a kind woman offered to take his daughter, Lucy, into her own family. However, Lucy refused to leave behind her father, insisting that they are "all the world to each other." Eldridge repeats what Lucy said, outlining her commitment to him and her willingness to use her "talents" to help him slowly pay off his debts by taking on sewing jobs. The novel holds up Lucy as an example of a deeply honorable young woman who recognizes the duty that has fallen to her to care for her father. Her virtuosity stands in stark contrast with Charlotte's eventual decision to elope with Montraville and thus abandon her parents. Truly respectable people, the novel implies, would never to do anything to disgrace their parents, nor would they prioritize their own desires over their parents' well-being.

"Would to heaven I had a fortune that would enable me instantly to discharge his debt: what exquisite transport, to see the expressive eyes of Lucy beaming at once with pleasure for her father's deliverance, and gratitude for her deliverer: but is not my fortune affluence," continued he, "nay superfluous wealth, when compared to the extreme indigence of Eldridge; and what have I done to deserve ease and plenty, while a brave worthy officer starves in prison? Three hundred a year is surely sufficient for all my wants and wishes: at any rate Eldridge must be relieved."

Related Characters: Mr. Temple (speaker), Captain Eldridge, Lucy Temple

Related Themes:

Page Number: 16-17

Explanation and Analysis

After Mr. Temple hears Captain Eldridge's tragic story about winding up in debtors' prison, he finds himself very motivated to help. Wishing he had enough money to easily pay off Eldridge's debt, Mr. Temple fantasizes about how rewarding it would be to help this respectable man—and, of course, how nice it would be to see Lucy's eyes "beaming" with "gratitude" and "pleasure" (a thought that sheds light on his romantic feelings for her).

As he dreams about how nice it would be to come to Captain Eldridge's aid, Mr. Temple begins to see his own wealth as "superfluous," realizing that he doesn't actually need as much money as he previously thought. Having a little extra money won't make a huge impact on his life, at least not compared to the incredible impact it would have on Eldridge's abysmal situation. Mr. Temple's thought process in this moment aligns with his overall values surrounding money and happiness, as it has already been made clear that he cares more about finding genuine, lasting contentment than he cares about being wealthy. Therefore, he slowly talks himself into using his own money to help Eldridge, revealing his tendency to make personal sacrifices and treat others with compassion and kindness.

Chapter 5 Quotes

"Lucy and I have no ambitious notions: we can live on three hundred a year for some little time, till the mortgage is paid off, and then we shall have sufficient not only for the comforts but many of the little elegancies of life. We will purchase a little cottage, my Lucy," said he, "and thither with your reverend father we will retire; we will forget there are such things as splendor, profusion, and dissipation: we will have some cows, and you shall be queen of the dairy; on a morning, while I look after my garden, you shall take a basket on your arm, and sally forth to feed your poultry; and as they flutter round you in token of humble gratitude, your father shall smoke his pipe in a woodbine alcove, and viewing the serenity of your countenance, feel such real pleasure dilate his own heart, as shall make him forget he had ever been unhappy."

Related Characters: Mr. Temple (speaker), Lucy Temple, Captain Eldridge

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Temple outlines his view of the future, which he plans to spend with Lucy as his wife. He has already decided to pay off Captain Eldridge's debt, and though he has enough money to do this, it will drastically change his financial status. Instead of leading a wealthy, prosperous life, he will now have to live frugally. And yet, he doesn't care, since he doesn't have "ambitious" monetary goals when it comes to his life—all he wants, he suggests, is to spend a happy existence with Lucy, the woman he loves.

With this in mind, he goes on at length as he imagines an idyllic life on a small farm, where he and Lucy won't need much money to be happy. As long as they have each other and can sustain themselves by keeping cows and chickens and tending a garden, they'll be perfectly content. In a novel in which so many characters greedily obsess over marrying for money, Mr. Temple's outlook is refreshingly simple, ultimately suggesting that people ought to focus on attaining fundamental things like love and happiness before they start worrying about money or status.

Chapter 6 Quotes

The mind of youth eagerly catches at promised pleasure: pure and innocent by nature, it thinks not of the dangers lurking beneath those pleasures, till too late to avoid them: when Mademoiselle asked Charlotte to go with her, she mentioned the gentleman as a relation, and spoke in such high terms of the elegance of his gardens, the sprightliness of his conversation, and the liberality with which he ever entertained his guests, that Charlotte thought only of the pleasure she should enjoy in the visit,—not on the imprudence of going without her governess's knowledge, or of the danger to which she exposed herself in visiting the house of a gay young man of fashion.

Related Characters: Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), Charlotte Temple, The Author (Susanna Rowson)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

When Mademoiselle La Rue convinces Charlotte to sneak out of the boarding school to spend an evening with some local men, Charlotte doesn't think about the possible consequences of doing such a thing. The author—Susanna Rowson—suggests that Charlotte's failure to consider the downsides of indulging pleasure has to do with the fact that young, innocent people often get swept up in the idea of

immediate gratification. Pleasure, the author warns, is so enticing that it's capable of blotting out all other considerations, even though there are often "dangers lurking beneath those pleasures."

Of course, Rowson's outlook is quite cynical, since she appears to have an inherent distrust of pleasure, but it's helpful to remember that she was writing at a time when doing something as simple as spending unsupervised time with young men was considered taboo and could ruin a woman's reputation. With the stakes so high, then, risking everything just to meet a few strangers hardly seems worth it. The entire point of *Charlotte Temple*, in fact, is to warn young women about the dangers of unquestioningly following pleasure and temptation, since 18th-century society was so strict that even a slight transgression could lead to a person's downfall.

❝ Oh my dear girls—for to such only am I writing—listen not to the voice of love, unless sanctioned by paternal approbation: be assured, it is now past the days of romance: no woman can be run away with contrary to her own inclination: then kneel down each morning, and request kind heaven to keep you free from temptation, or, should it please to suffer you to be tried, pray for fortitude to resist the impulse of inclination when it runs counter to the precepts of religion and virtue.

Related Characters: The Author (Susanna Rowson) (speaker), Charlotte Temple, Montraville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

Susanna Rowson directly addresses her readers, whom she assumes are young girls who might find themselves in Charlotte Temple's exact situation. She makes it clear that *Charlotte Temple* is, above all, a cautionary tale about getting swept up in the idea of running away with a seductive, persuasive man. To that end, she hints at just how convincing some men might seem and, by that same token, how hard it can be to say no to eager suitors who want to whisk young women off into a life of non-"sanctioned" (taboo) love. Because men like Montraville are so persuasive, Rowson tells her readers to pray that they'll be able to stand their ground if an attractive suitor tries to tempt them. The main idea here is that young women in the 18th century had to be prepared to encounter men who didn't have their best interests in mind—men who might try to chip away at their willpower in the hopes of leading them into a life of vice.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ "Nay, Miss," said La Rue, "perhaps your mighty sense of propriety may lead you to tell her yourself: and in order to avoid the censure you would incur, should she hear of it by accident, throw the blame on me: but I confess I deserve it: it will be a very kind return for that partiality which led me to prefer you before any of the rest of the ladies; but perhaps it will give you pleasure," continued she, letting fall some hypocritical tears, "to see me deprived of bread, and for an action which by the most rigid could only be esteemed an inadvertency, lose my place and character, and be driven again into the world, where I have already suffered all the evils attendant on poverty."

Related Characters: Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton) (speaker), Charlotte Temple, Madame Du Pont

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27-28

Explanation and Analysis

After Charlotte returns from her first outing with Mademoiselle La Rue, she expresses how uncomfortable it made her to sneak out and secretly spend unsupervised time with some local men. Not only was she uncomfortable, but she also fears that Madame Du Pont will hear about what happened. Once Charlotte voices these misgivings, La Rue realizes that the young woman might end up telling Madame Du Pont about what they did, so she tries to convince her not to say anything.

However, La Rue doesn't just ask Charlotte to keep quiet. Instead, she manipulates Charlotte by making her feel guilty about the idea of betraying her. La Rue has already led a dishonorable life by 18th-century standards, so she knows what it feels like to deal with society's disapproval. By talking about how she'll surely be thrown onto the streets if Madame Du Pont finds out, though, she makes an appeal to Charlotte's kindness, all but ensuring that the young woman won't bring the matter up, since Charlotte doesn't want La Rue to get in trouble. This is the first time La Rue manipulates Charlotte, but it certainly isn't the last—to the contrary, all of her lies and manipulations can be traced back to this conversation, in which she skillfully takes advantage of Charlotte's innocence.

"Well," said La Rue, "I vow you are an unaccountable girl: have you no curiosity to see the inside now? for my part I could no more let a letter addressed to me lie unopened so long, that I could work miracles: he writes a good hand," continued she, turning the letter, to look at the superscription.

"'Tis well enough," said Charlotte, drawing it towards her.

"He is a genteel young fellow," said La Rue carelessly, folding up her apron at the same time; "but I think he is marked with the small pox."

"Oh you are greatly mistaken," said Charlotte eagerly; "he has a remarkable clear skin and fine complexion."

Related Characters: Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), Charlotte Temple (speaker), Montraville

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

After persuading Charlotte not to say anything to Madame Du Pont about their secret outing, Mademoiselle La Rue pushes the young woman to open Montraville's letter. Charlotte has already told herself that she won't read it, seeming to recognize that doing so would only tempt her to meet Montraville once again—something she has already decided not to do.

Unfortunately for Charlotte, though, Mademoiselle La Rue is extremely skilled at manipulation. Instead of just telling Charlotte to open the letter, she talks about how she herself would be overcome by curiosity if she were in Charlotte's position. When that doesn't work, she praises Montraville's handwriting, thus prompting Charlotte to take a closer look at the letter. Once she has captured Charlotte's attention, though, La Rue switches her tactics and actually starts *insulting* Montraville. She says that he has scars from smallpox, and her comment bothers Charlotte, who suddenly comes to Montraville's defense by saying that he has "a remarkable clear skin and fine complexion."

By speaking critically about Montraville, La Rue tricks Charlotte into saying kind things about him, thus making it that much harder for her to resist opening the letter to see what nice things he might have said about *her*. Given that La Rue is so talented at manipulating people, it's clear from this point on that Charlotte doesn't stand a chance—she's too innocent to resist the temptations that both La Rue and Montraville will dangle before her.

Here let me stop to make one remark, and trust me my very heart aches while I write it; but certain I am, that when once a woman has stifled the sense of shame in her own bosom, when once she has lost sight of the basis on which reputation, honour, every thing that should be dear to the female heart, rests, she grows hardened in guilt, and will spare no pains to bring down innocence and beauty to the shocking level with herself: and this proceeds from that diabolical spirit of envy, which repines at seeing another in the full possession of that respect and esteem which she can no longer hope to enjoy.

Related Characters: The Author (Susanna Rowson) (speaker), Charlotte Temple, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

When Mademoiselle La Rue convinces Charlotte to not only read Montraville's letter but also sneak out to see him a second time, the author—Susanna Rowson—interrupts the narrative to explain why, exactly, La Rue is so intent on corrupting Charlotte's innocence.

At first glance, it might seem like La Rue has no motivation other than to be cruel, but Rowson suggests that her thinking goes deeper. Women who have strayed from an honorable life, Rowson says, are actively interested in bringing other, more virtuous women down to their level. La Rue has become "hardened in guilt" because of her shameful lifestyle, so she wants to ruin Charlotte's purity by manipulating her into leading a similar existence. The idea here is that La Rue will feel better about herself if Charlotte, a virtuous and respectable young woman, behaves in the same way that she herself behaves. In other words, La Rue is jealous of Charlotte's innocence, so she wants to prove that the young woman is just as capable of vice as she is.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ [...] eager in the pursuit of pleasure, he minded not the miseries he inflicted on others, provided his own wishes, however extravagant, were gratified. Self, darling self, was the idol he worshipped, and to that he would have sacrificed the interest and happiness of all mankind. Such was the friend of Montraville: will not the reader be ready to imagine, that the man who could regard such a character, must be actuated by the same feelings, follow the same pursuits, and be equally unworthy with the person to whom he thus gave his confidence?

Related Characters: Belcour, Montraville, Charlotte Temple

Related Themes:

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

This description of Belcour outlines his unapologetically selfish nature, making it clear that he only wants whatever is best for himself. Of course, such a desire isn't all that uncommon, but the difference between Belcour and the average self-interested person is that Belcour doesn't seem to have a sense of morality. He doesn't care if his own happiness or satisfaction comes at the expense of someone else's well-being. Rather, he "worship[s]" himself as if he's the only thing that matters.

The mere fact that Montraville considers Belcour a friend is a good indication that Montraville himself isn't all that respectable—a detail that doesn't bode well for Charlotte, who, despite her reservations about conducting an illicit affair, doesn't seem to recognize Montraville's deceitful ways. But if Montraville is anything like Belcour, it's easy to guess that he'll entice Charlotte, lead her astray, and then abandon her whenever doing so is convenient for him.

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ Montraville therefore concluded it was impossible he should ever marry Charlotte Temple; and what end he proposed to himself by continuing the acquaintance he had commenced with her, he did not at that moment give himself time to enquire.

Related Characters: Montraville, Charlotte Temple, Belcour, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

Montraville's family isn't rich, so his father has always told him that he'll need to find a wealthy wife. If he doesn't marry into money, he will have no chance of leading a prosperous life—this, at least, is what he seems to think, apparently ignoring the fact that he could simply *work* toward accumulating his own wealth. Believing that he must marry for money, Montraville tells Belcour to ask La Rue about Charlotte's family, wanting to know if they're wealthy. This implies that he would most likely marry her if the Temples were rich.

When Montraville finds out that the Temples aren't rich, though, he doesn't do anything. Although it's somewhat counterintuitive, the honorable thing for him to do in this situation would arguably be to break things off with Charlotte, since Montraville has clearly decided that marrying her is out of the question. Instead, though, he simply forces the matter out of his mind, deciding to continue the relationship. He therefore demonstrates his tendency to prioritize his own desires over all else, as he would rather dishonor Charlotte by keeping her as his unwed mistress than break things off with her.

Chapter 11 Quotes

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

Related Characters: Belcour, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), Montraville, Charlotte Temple, Belcour

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43-44

Explanation and Analysis

When Montraville tries to persuade Charlotte to accompany him on his journey to America, she refuses. But then both Belcour and Mademoiselle La Rue join forces

with Montraville, all of them teaming up to convince her that she should run away with them. The fact that La Rue has decided to go to America with Belcour makes it that much harder for Charlotte to resist the temptation to join Montraville, since La Rue is technically her teacher and, in that way, something of a role model (even if she has already proved herself completely unworthy of such a position).

Although Charlotte is ultimately responsible for her own decisions, then, it's obvious that she has been put in an incredibly tough situation—one in which even the most virtuous person would most likely have a hard time standing strong. And yet, the novel suggests that such situations don't just come along out of nowhere. Rather, innocent people like Charlotte gradually work their way toward certain temptations, which is why the novel emphasizes how cautious young women had to be in the 18th century about not giving into even the most seemingly insignificant temptations.

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

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

Related Characters: Charlotte Temple, Montraville (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

After Charlotte agrees to go to America with Montraville, she tries to make sure he won't abandon her. Before she can even finish this thought, Montraville cuts her off and acts as if she's unreasonable to even think such a thing. He insists that he would never leave her alone in a foreign country, making it seem like he couldn't possibly bring himself to behave so cruelly.

Of course, this is *exactly* what he ends up doing when they reach America, but it's not necessarily clear whether or not he's lying in this moment. In fact, it's quite possible that he truly believes everything he says to Charlotte about Hymen—the Ancient Greek god of marriage—"sanctify[ing]" their love. Indeed, he promises to marry Charlotte when they reach America, and though he ends up leaving her for another woman, it has already been made clear that Montraville is the kind of person who gets caught up in his own desires. Therefore, it's probable that he truly intends to devote himself to Charlotte. The problem, however, is that his intentions don't mean very much, since he always follows his passing desires and is thus liable to change his mind.

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ "I cannot go," said she: "cease, dear Montraville, to persuade. I must not: religion, duty, forbid."

"Cruel Charlotte," said he, "if you disappoint my ardent hope by all that is sacred, this hand shall put a period to my existence. I cannot—will not live without you."

"Alas! my torn heart!" said Charlotte, "how shall I act?"

"Let me direct you," said Montraville, lifting her into the chaise.

"Oh! my dear forsaken parents!" cried Charlotte.

The chaise drove off. She shrieked, and fainted into the arms of her betrayer.

Related Characters: Charlotte Temple, Montraville (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

Charlotte's final attempt to preserve her innocence and honor takes place right before she and the others are supposed to go to the harbor to begin their travels. She has already told Montraville that she'll go to America, but she has since decided otherwise, realizing that she couldn't possibly disgrace her parents by eloping. Throughout the novel, Charlotte tries hard to do what she thinks is right. Her problem, then, isn't that she doesn't know how to behave in a way society would deem acceptable, but that she has trouble standing by her own convictions—in other words, she can be convinced rather easily to abandon her morals and intentions.

To be fair, though, Montraville is extremely manipulative in this passage, as he tells Charlotte that he'll take his own life she doesn't accompany him to America. Even if this were true (and it probably isn't), using suicide as a way to control other people is deeply coercive. Because she has no reason to doubt what Montraville says, Charlotte has little choice but to go through with the original plan of going to America.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ Let not the reader imagine Belcour's designs were honourable. Alas! when once a woman has forgot the respect due to herself, by yielding to the solicitations of illicit love, they lose all their consequence, even in the eyes of the man whose art has betrayed them, and for whose sake they have sacrificed every valuable consideration.

Related Characters: Belcour, Charlotte Temple, Montraville, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), The Author (Susanna Rowson)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62-63

Explanation and Analysis

On the passage to America, Mademoiselle La Rue realizes that Belcour has no intention of marrying her, despite the promise he made before they left. She therefore endears herself to a rich man named Crayton, who vows to marry her when they reach land. Meanwhile, Belcour himself recognizes that Montraville most likely won't keep his word about getting married in America. He realizes that this will probably create tension in Charlotte and Montraville's relationship, so he decides to try to steal Charlotte away from his friend.

But Rowson—the author—makes a point of saying that Belcour's plan to steal Charlotte away and marry her himself isn't "honourable." He doesn't want to step in for Montraville because he's worried about Charlotte's well-being. Rather, Rowson suggests, he suddenly takes an interest in Charlotte because he has seen that she's willing to compromise her dignity. According to Rowson, this willingness to dishonor herself is also why Montraville will probably lose interest in her. The novel thus calls attention to unfair lose-lose situation that women in the 18th century might find themselves in: in order to please certain men, young women sometimes compromise their own sense of right and wrong, but doing this frequently attracts harsh judgment from the very same men who seemingly expected them to embrace vice in the first place.

Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ Believe me, many an unfortunate female, who has once strayed into the thorny paths of vice, would gladly return to virtue, was any generous friend to endeavour to raise and re-assure her; but alas! it cannot be, you say; the world would deride and scoff. Then let me tell you, Madam, 'tis a very unfeeling world, and does not deserve half the blessings which a bountiful Providence showers upon it.

Related Characters: The Author (Susanna Rowson) (speaker), Charlotte Temple, Montraville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

After Charlotte reaches America, Montraville starts spending very little time with her. She thus finds herself practically alone in a foreign country, where she has been cut off from her loved ones' guidance and support. Worse, she has dishonored herself by eloping, meaning that the average person in America would most likely avoid her because she has a tarnished reputation.

Although Charlotte's predicament might seem irreversible, Susanna Rowson—the author—suggests that many women who have "strayed" into a life of vice and temptation would be all too happy to return to their previous lives of innocence. The problem, though, is that nobody wants to help them. Rowson, however, believes that people should see beyond petty concerns about social status and reputation in order to help a fellow human being in need. All Charlotte needs, she implies, is a caring friend to restore her to her old life. The idea that doing such a thing would be frowned upon only frustrates Rowson, who believes that people have a duty to show compassion to each other.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ "I have been mistaken," said Montraville. "I imagined I loved Charlotte: but alas! I am now too late convinced my attachment to her was merely the impulse of the moment. I fear I have not only entailed lasting misery on that poor girl, but also thrown a barrier in the way of my own happiness, which it will be impossible to surmount. I feel I love Julia Franklin with ardour and sincerity, yet, when in her presence, I am sensible of my own inability to offer a heart worthy her acceptance, and remain silent."

Related Characters: Montraville (speaker), Charlotte Temple, Julia Franklin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

It's not long after Montraville travels to America that he takes an interest in a young woman named Julia Franklin. Although he promised to marry Charlotte and assured her

that he wouldn't abandon her after making the transatlantic passage, he quickly realizes that keeping these promises will be harder than he thought.

What's interesting about Montraville's thought process here is that he seems capable of engaging in genuine self-reflection, as he recognizes that what he thought was love for Charlotte was actually little more than infatuation. Montraville is the kind of person who gets swept up in his own desires, and he now realizes that this is what happened when he first met Charlotte: he wanted to be with her, and he thought of nothing else until he got what he wanted. Of course, it's quite likely that his feelings for Julia are just as thin as his initial feelings for Charlotte, but he doesn't see things that way. In this way, his ability to engage in self-reflection falls short, since he's unable to see that his feelings for Julia are probably no more meaningful than his feelings for Charlotte.

Chapter 20 Quotes

"Would to heaven I could snatch her from so hard a fate," said she; "but the merciless world has barred the doors of compassion against a poor weak girl, who, perhaps, had she one kind friend to raise and reassure her, would gladly return to peace and virtue; nay, even the woman who dares to pity, and endeavour to recall a wandering sister, incurs the sneer of contempt and ridicule, for an action in which even angels are said to rejoice."

Related Characters: Mrs. Beauchamp (speaker), Charlotte Temple, The Author (Susanna Rowson)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Beauchamp says this to herself while thinking about Charlotte, who lives near her outside New York. She often sees Charlotte and notices how miserable she seems, but she hasn't reached out to her because, as she puts it, "the merciless world has barred the doors of compassion against" poor Charlotte. In other words, Charlotte's reputation has turned her into something of a social pariah—a person nobody wants to interact with, for fear of tarnishing their own reputation by association.

Mrs. Beauchamp, however, thinks that it's tragic for a woman to suffer such sorrow all by herself. Moreover, she suggests that society is hypocritical, since everyone claims to be so virtuous but then turns their back on people in need, which, of course, isn't a very virtuous thing to do. Mrs. Beauchamp's thoughts on this matter echo Susanna Rowson's previous suggestion that most women who have fallen into dishonor would "gladly return to virtue" if someone only helped them. The fact that Mrs. Beauchamp feels this way hints that she herself might come to Charlotte's aid.

Chapter 22 Quotes

"That I loved my seducer is but too true! yet powerful as that passion is when operating in a young heart glowing with sensibility, it never would have conquered my affection to you, my beloved parents, had I not been encouraged, nay, urged to take the fatally imprudent step, by one of my own sex, who, under the mask of friendship, drew me on to ruin.

Related Characters: Charlotte Temple (speaker), Mr. Temple, Lucy Temple, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), Mrs. Beauchamp, Montraville

Related Themes:

Page Number: 84

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Beauchamp decides to help Charlotte by mailing a letter to her parents. This passage comes from that letter, in which Charlotte explains why she left and asks for forgiveness. She acknowledges her own mistakes, but she also makes a point of mentioning that manipulative people heavily influenced her decisions.

Of course, Charlotte's love for Montraville is the main thing that drove her to elope, but she doesn't think she would have actually acted on her desires if Mademoiselle La Rue hadn't actively "encouraged" and "urged" her along. Charlotte even acknowledges that La Rue acted "under the mask of friendship," indicating that she can now see that La Rue didn't have her best interests in mind. Indeed, Charlotte now understands that the older woman preyed on her innocence. Though she doesn't blame her poor decisions entirely on La Rue, she does try to help her parents see that she can hardly be blamed for naively trusting someone who had such wicked intentions.

Chapter 24 Quotes

"I am a seducer, a mean, ungenerous seducer of unsuspecting innocence. I dare not hope that purity like her's [sic] would stoop to unite itself with black, premeditated guilt: yet by heavens I swear, Belcour, I thought I loved the lost, abandoned Charlotte till I saw Julia—I thought I never could forsake her; but the heart is deceitful, and I now can plainly discriminate between the impulse of a youthful passion, and the pure flame of disinterested affection."

Related Characters: Montraville (speaker), Belcour, Charlotte Temple, Julia Franklin, Belcour

Related Themes:

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

When Belcour dupes Montraville into thinking that he and Charlotte are having an affair, Montraville has an interesting reaction. He's angry at first, but then he starts to feel *guilty*. Seeing Charlotte in bed with another man forces him to face the role he played in corrupting her innocence. Before she met Montraville, Charlotte would never have found herself in bed with a man out of wedlock. But now, for all Montraville knows, Charlotte has made a habit of engaging in extramarital affairs. He therefore feels responsible for corrupting her, calling himself a "mean, ungenerous seducer of unsuspecting innocence." Once again, Montraville demonstrates a surprising ability to honestly assess his own behavior.

At the same time, though, the fact remains that Montraville has fallen in love with Julia Franklin and is eager to find a way to marry her instead of staying with Charlotte. Now that Belcour has convinced him that Charlotte has been cheating on him, he has a good excuse to leave her. Although these guilty words might make Montraville seem sympathetic, then, his feelings probably won't keep him from abandoning Charlotte, so his newfound powers of self-reflection don't really amount to much.

Chapter 32 Quotes

She had ever been fully sensible of the superiority of Charlotte's sense and virtue; she was conscious that she had never swerved from rectitude, had it not been for her bad precepts and worse example. These were things as yet unknown to her husband, and she wished not to have that part of her conduct exposed to him, as she had great reason to fear she had already lost considerable part of that power she once maintained over him.

Related Characters: Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), Charlotte Temple, The Author (Susanna Rowson)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

Charlotte visits Mrs. Crayton (formerly known as Mademoiselle La Rue) after getting evicted in the middle of a snowstorm. Mrs. Crayton, however, refuses to let her inside, pretending that she doesn't know Charlotte and turning her away. The reason she behaves so cruelly, Rowson suggests, is that she has always been aware that Charlotte is more virtuous than she is, and she knows that she herself is largely responsible for the path of dishonor Charlotte ended up taking. Because she doesn't want her new husband, Crayton, to know the full extent of her own dishonorable past, Mrs. Crayton tries to distance herself from Charlotte. In doing so, she displays an utter lack of compassion, ultimately worrying more about protecting her newly elevated status than helping a person in dire need.

In fact, even Mrs. Crayton's servant is more empathetic than she is, eventually taking Charlotte into his own home even though she's a complete stranger. What's clear, then, is that Mrs. Crayton has become increasingly selfish throughout the novel—so selfish, it seems, that nothing can stir her compassion. A life of vice and deceit, the novel therefore implies, eats away at a person's sense of humanity.

Chapter 34 Quotes

"Alas!" said Mr. Temple, "if thou wert the seducer of my child, thy own reflexions be thy punishment. I wrest not the power from the hand of omnipotence. Look on that little heap of earth, there hast thou buried the only joy of a fond father. Look at it often; and may thy heart feel such true sorrow as shall merit the mercy of heaven."

Related Characters: Mr. Temple (speaker), Montraville, Charlotte Temple

Related Themes:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Temple says this to Montraville upon meeting him for the first time. They are at Charlotte's funeral, which Montraville interrupts because he has just found out about

her death. When he reveals himself as Charlotte's seducer, he drops to his knees and tells Mr. Temple to kill him as a form of revenge, since he's largely responsible for Charlotte's death. Mr. Temple, however, is a virtuous man. Instead of killing Montraville, he decides to let him struggle with his own guilt. By leaving him to his own devices, he forces Montraville to spend a lifetime reflecting on how he treated Charlotte. Mr. Temple seems to know that guilt is a powerful feeling, and that it is, in a way, worse than death. By letting Montraville live with regret, then, Mr. Temple does the virtuous thing of refusing to murder another human being while still managing to take a small amount of revenge on the man who ruined his daughter's life.

Chapter 35 Quotes

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

Related Characters: Mr. Temple, Lucy Temple, Mademoiselle La Rue (Mrs. Crayton), The Author (Susanna Rowson)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 132

Explanation and Analysis

Years after Charlotte's death, the Temple family (including Charlotte's daughter) come home to their house in England only to find an old woman freezing on their doorstep. The woman is Mrs. Crayton (formerly La Rue), but the Temples don't know this when they take her inside. Upon discovering her identity, though, they don't kick her out. Rowson—the author—notes that they have every "reason to detest" her, but they still treat her with compassion and empathy. In other words, they show her the kindness that she herself refused to show Charlotte when Charlotte was freezing in the streets.

In the end, Crayton winds up dying in a hospital after the Temples do what they can to care for her. Rowson uses her death as a way to communicate what is arguably the novel's central message: namely, that indulging in temptation and vice often pays off handsomely at first, since breaking rules or morals can help people get ahead in life. Before long, though, dishonorable lifestyles catch up with people, ostracizing them from everyone in their lives and leaving them to deal with "misery and shame" on their own.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The author, Susanna Rowson, wrote *Charlotte Temple* in the hopes that young women would read it and learn an important lesson. She herself heard about Charlotte Temple from an old woman who knew Charlotte, and she was shocked by the troubling story. She has changed the names, but she thinks the tale will warn young women about the dangers of venturing out into the world and finding themselves susceptible to manipulative men—or, even worse, to their own potential moral shortcomings. If this novel prevents even one woman from making the same mistakes as Charlotte, then Rowson will be content.

The preface to Charlotte Temple *introduces Susanna Rowson's hope that readers will approach the book as more than an entertaining tale. Rather, she wants young women to read about Charlotte Temple's miserable fate and learn from her mistakes, which seem to have involved letting her guard down around untrustworthy men. By prefacing the novel in this way, Rowson makes it clear that* Charlotte Temple *is first and foremost a cautionary tale about the dangers of temptation and vice.*

CHAPTER 1

Montraville is a lieutenant in the British army. One day, he and his fellow officer, Belcour, visit the town of Chichester to say goodbye to their friends because they'll soon be setting sail for America. After they've visited with their friends, they decide to take a walk before returning to Portsmouth, hoping to run into some local women on their way home from church. On their way back, they see Madame Du Pont leading a group of schoolgirls out of the church. Montraville's gaze falls on Charlotte Temple, a 15-year-old girl he once danced with at a ball. He's suddenly overcome with attraction and desire, desperately hoping he can find a way to talk to her, but the moment passes without an opportunity to approach her.

The mere fact that Montraville and Belcour decide to walk through Chichester in the hopes of glimpsing some local women reveals their lustful motivations. Simply put, they're actively looking for attractive young women to charm. Of course, Montraville is clearly older than Charlotte, who is only 15, but this age difference doesn't deter him, since such things weren't frowned upon in the late 18th century (which is when the novel is set). Rather, their age difference speaks to the power dynamic that will later factor into their relationship, since Montraville eventually exerts his influence as an older man capable of manipulating an innocent younger woman.

For the next three days, Montraville obsesses over Charlotte. Returning to Portsmouth does nothing to push her from his mind, nor does the fact that his soldierly duties will soon take him to America. He therefore comes back to Chichester and waits outside the boarding school. But he quickly loses heart: even if he *does* manage to win her affection, she will just feel tortured by his impending departure. He decides to leave before speaking to her, but then he sees her walking through the garden with a young French woman who works at the school. He makes small talk with them and charms the young teacher, giving Charlotte a note and the teacher five guineas not to say anything. Accepting the bribe, the teacher agrees to sneak Charlotte out of school to see Montraville the following evening.

As Montraville contemplates approaching Charlotte, he stops to consider how his decisions will impact the young woman. This is a noteworthy moment, since he later focuses solely on his own desires. He acknowledges to himself that connecting with Charlotte right before he goes abroad will only make her sad, suggesting that he's capable of thinking about others. And yet, he ends up approaching her anyway—a good indication that he prioritizes his own wants over any other consideration.

CHAPTER 2

The narrative jumps back in time to follow Mr. Temple—Charlotte's father—as a young man. Mr. Temple's father was a wealthy man, though not so wealthy that he deserved to act as proud and vain as he did. All of Mr. Temple's siblings married in order to secure wealth or status, and he saw how this choice brought them no happiness at all. He therefore decided to lead a modest life off of his small inheritance, which would allow him to marry for love instead of money.

A major concern for many of the characters in Charlotte Temple *is whether or not they're wealthy. The men in the novel who don't have much money hope to secure wealth and social status by marrying rich women, whose families will give them a dowry of land or money. Mr. Temple, however, is an exception, since he cares more about happiness and genuine love than money or social status. Of course, he doesn't have to worry too much about money, since he comes from a moderately well-off family. Still, though, his heartfelt ideas about marrying for love instead of money make him stand out among his greedy peers.*

Although he isn't exorbitantly rich, Mr. Temple is an incredibly generous man who likes to help people in need. One day, his friend tells him about Captain Eldridge, a respectable man who needs help. Mr. Temple asks to meet Eldridge right away, so his friend takes him to the Fleet Prison, where Eldridge lives in a depressingly small room. When Mr. Temple enters, he's struck by the sad state of the room, but he also notices right away that Captain Eldridge is a dignified man who doesn't deserve to live in such terrible conditions. He's also struck by the beauty and composure of Eldridge's daughter, Lucy, who sits beside the old man.

The Fleet Prison was a famous prison in London. It included a debtors' prison, where people unable to repay various debts were sent until they came up with the money, either by completing hard labor or by soliciting someone else to repay whatever they owed. Mr. Temple's eager willingness to meet Eldridge in the debtors' prison suggests that he'll gladly help people in need, perhaps by paying off a stranger's debt.

Captain Eldridge says he isn't ashamed to be in the Fleet Prison because he knows he did nothing wrong. Still, he's extremely humbled to receive such respectable visitors. He's in prison because he was unable to repay a hefty debt owed to a cruel creditor, but before he tells Mr. Temple the story, he asks Lucy to leave—he doesn't want to rehash the painful story in front of her, so he tells her to go enjoy the outdoors and that he'll see her at the usual time the following day.

Captain Eldridge is a proud but humble man. Although he's destitute, he isn't ashamed of himself, suggesting that he has an unshakeable sense of integrity—he knows he doesn't deserve to be in the Fleet Prison, so he manages to keep his honor intact even though most people would see him as irreputable because of how far he has fallen. At the same time, he expresses how grateful he is that Mr. Temple has paid him a visit, making it clear that he isn't too proud to accept a stranger's compassion.

CHAPTER 3

Captain Eldridge explains that he made a living as a sailor. When he was 25, his wife gave birth to a son, George. Shortly thereafter, the couple had Lucy. George went to school as a young man and became close friends with a rich student named Mr. Lewis. After school, George and Mr. Lewis continued their friendship, becoming so close that Mr. Lewis developed relationships with everyone in the Eldridge family. Around that time, it became clear to Captain Eldridge that he didn't have enough money to help George advance throughout his profession as a soldier, so he accepted a loan from Mr. Lewis, who was happy to help—he even told Eldridge that he could take as long as needed to pay him back.

At first, Mr. Lewis appears to be a kind man willing to help his friend's family in whatever way he can. Captain Eldridge, for his part, is a respectable figure but is still limited by his meager finances. The fact that he needs to take out a loan to help his son advance through his career underscores just how important money was in 18th-century society. Even dignified, middle-class people like George have very few prospects if they don't turn to wealthy friends for help.

Soon enough, Mr. Lewis took an interest in Lucy. Captain Eldridge noticed, so he spoke frankly with Mr. Lewis and asked him what his intentions were with his daughter. It was clear that Mr. Lewis had no plans of marrying Lucy, so Captain Eldridge refused to grant him permission to pursue a relationship with her. The next day, Mr. Lewis informed Captain Eldridge that he had to pay back his debt that very day. But Captain Eldridge had no way of doing this, so Mr. Lewis sent officers to his house. They seized him and brought him to prison—Captain Eldridge's final memory of leaving his house is the image of his wife (who had been sick for quite some time) fainting.

It was widely frowned upon in 18th-century British society for a young woman to engage in a romantic relationship out of wedlock. Captain Eldridge seems open to the possibility of Mr. Lewis marrying his daughter, but Lewis has no plans of doing so—instead, he simply wants to have Lucy as his lover without marrying her, most likely because he knows her family isn't wealthy and won't be able to provide a dowery. Jilted by Eldridge, Lewis leverages his previous kindness against the older man, trying to collect his loan in a way that is sure to land Eldridge in debtor's prison. In turn, it becomes clear that money—or the lack thereof—can fuel disagreements and lead to a person's downfall.

Eldridge is unable to continue his story because he's crying. He apologizes to Mr. Temple, but Mr. Temple insists that brave people don't turn away from emotion. The two men then briefly discuss the idea that life is always full of suffering, even in moments of happiness. Returning to his tale, Eldridge says that George heard about what happened and went directly to Mr. Lewis's house to demand an explanation. Mr. Lewis told him that he would forgive the family's debt if George and Captain Eldridge agreed to let Lucy live with him as his unwed mistress. Enraged, George hit Mr. Lewis, and the two men agreed to face each other in a duel the following day.

For Mr. Temple, there's no shame in showing emotion. To the contrary, he believes that courageous people embrace their feelings, especially when their sorrows arise from blatantly unjust circumstances. In other words, he recognizes that Eldridge isn't at fault for what happened and thinks it's reasonable for the older man to be upset about how Mr. Lewis wronged him and his family.

After this, George left and wrote a letter to his father. He blamed himself in the letter for pushing his family into debt, and he asked his father not to mourn him too much if he ended up dying in the duel. Captain Eldridge was overcome when he read this letter—so overcome that he plunged into a state of sickness that obscured reality for the next three weeks. When he finally regained lucidity, he was in prison, and Lucy was sitting next to him. She told him that George had died in the duel and that Eldridge's wife (Lucy's mother) had also passed away from the shock of these terrible events.

It becomes obvious that Eldridge lost everything because of Mr. Lewis's greed and cruelty—everything, that is, except Lucy, whose honor and reputation he defended by standing up to Mr. Lewis in the first place. In a way, then, he succeeded in what he originally set out to do: protect his daughter from shame and dishonor. The problem, though, is that doing this cost him not only his personal freedom but also his wife and son's lives.

CHAPTER 4

After both George and Eldridge's wife died, Mr. Lewis seized the family's house and furniture. But even these things weren't enough to repay the debt, and nobody came forward to pay it on Eldridge's behalf. As a result, he has been living in the debtor's prison for a year and a half. Lucy makes some money by sewing, which she does while sitting next to Eldridge throughout the day. She leaves every evening and sleeps in a small room next to a nearby bridge. A kind woman offered to take Lucy into her own family, but Lucy wouldn't abandon her father.

It's evident that Lucy is devoted to her father and wants to do anything she can to alleviate his suffering. Given that Mr. Temple himself is kind and philanthropic, Lucy's selfless affection for her father undoubtedly endears her to Mr. Temple all the more, perhaps giving him an extra motivation to help his new acquaintances.

Mr. Temple demands to know where Mr. Lewis is so that he can confront him, but Eldridge says Lewis has been abroad for a while now. He told his lawyers to collect Eldridge's debt in full—a debt of 500 pounds. The amount is more than Mr. Temple had expected, but he still wants to help; he can't bear to imagine a woman like Lucy wasting her life sitting in a depressing prison with her kind father. He thus tells Eldridge to stay positive and takes his leave, thinking to himself on his way home about how he can help the poor old man. He ultimately decides that although paying off Eldridge's debt will significantly change his own lifestyle, he should do it. His money is "superfluous" compared to Eldridge's great need.

When Mr. Temple thinks about his own wealth as "superfluous," he reveals just how little he cares about leading the lifestyle of a rich man. Instead of basking in his finances, he would rather help Eldridge, since he recognizes that Eldridge needs the money much more than he does. By thinking this way, Temple avoids behaving with the kind of greed that led Mr. Lewis to treat the Eldridge family so poorly in the first place, demonstrating that he's significantly more honorable and compassionate than Lewis.

Mr. Temple takes a mortgage out on his own fortune, making it possible for him to pay off Eldridge's debt. Mr. Temple will now live off of 300 pounds per year instead of 500. Within three days, Eldridge is let out of prison, and Mr. Temple feels repaid simply by seeing the tears of gratitude in Lucy's eyes. His father, however, is unmoved by Temple's charity. He assumes his son only sacrificed his fortune because he wants to marry Lucy, whom he assumes is deceitful and manipulative. But his father wants him to marry Miss Weatherby, a very wealthy woman whose father recently expressed interest in matching with Temple.

Mr. Temple's feeling of repayment upon seeing Lucy's gratitude suggests that helping others is a much better reward than money. It also hints at the romantic feelings Temple clearly has for her, even if he hasn't yet professed his love. Meanwhile, his father tries to marry him off to a wealthy woman, though it's unlikely that Mr. Temple would agree to such an arrangement, considering his desire to marry for love instead of money.

CHAPTER 5

Miss Weatherby is very beautiful but lacks emotional depth and substance. She fixates on Mr. Temple and desperately wants him to be her husband, but he refuses to marry her. He doesn't care about her riches—the only way money would matter to him would be if he could somehow share it with Lucy. In turn, he decides to turn down Miss Weatherby and propose to Lucy. His decision enrages his father, who says he never wants to see him again. Mr. Temple's father also decides to offer *himself* to Miss Weatherby instead, thinking this will be a good way of securing more wealth for himself. Miss Weatherby accepts his offer, wanting to take revenge on Mr. Temple.

Mr. Temple's decision to not marry Miss Weatherby is in keeping with his values. After all, he doesn't believe in getting married for such superficial reasons, since he has seen how unhappy his siblings became after marrying in order to secure wealth and status. Plus, he has strong feelings for Lucy, and though her family doesn't have any money, he has already made his peace with living a modest life on what remains of his inheritance. For him, then, living a frugal life full of love is much better than a loveless life full of money.

Mr. Temple is hurt by his father's decision to marry Miss Weatherby, but he focuses on his relationship with Lucy. They don't need much money—they will be happy with each other as long as they can lead a simple life and sustain themselves by farming. Lucy accepts his marriage proposal, and they lead a happy life in a small cottage, eventually giving birth to Charlotte, whom they love dearly. Because Lucy never got to finish her own education, the Temples send Charlotte to school, where she studies under Madame Du Pont.

The backstory about Charlotte's parents comes to an end here, and the narrative catches up with where it last left off: with Charlotte going to school as a teenager, which is when Montraville starts trying to court her. The background information about Charlotte's parents has revealed that her family doesn't have much money—a detail that will factor into Montraville's selfish approach to his relationship with Charlotte.

CHAPTER 6

Madame Du Pont is very qualified to take good care of young women, but not all of the teachers she employs are quite as responsible. Mademoiselle La Rue is a good example: Madame Du Pont hired her even though she eloped from a convent and lived with multiple different men out of wedlock. Eventually, La Rue found herself in poverty, so she sought the help of a kind older woman, who sent her to Madame Du Pont. Du Pont assumed that La Rue was sorry for what she'd done and ready to make a change, so she agreed to hire her at the school. Soon enough, though, La Rue became restless and started spending time with local men.

Although the Temples undoubtedly think their daughter is in good hands when they send her to Madame Du Pont's school, it becomes clear in this section that Mademoiselle La Rue might become a corrupting influence. She has a history of behaving in ways that 18th-century society deemed dishonorable, since she not only ran away from her convent but also lived with men out of wedlock. Considering that Captain Eldridge went to such great lengths to protect his daughter, Lucy, from living with a man out of wedlock, it's clear that such things were greatly frowned upon at the time. In the world of the novel, then, La Rue emerges as an ominous, untrustworthy character.

One day, Mademoiselle La Rue plans to sneak out to meet a group of men. Charlotte is her favorite student, so she invites her to come along. Although she should know better than to accompany La Rue, Charlotte is enticed by the idea of meeting interesting young men; the author interjects to say that the prospect of "pleasure" often overrides everything else in a young person's mind, which is why Charlotte agrees to sneak out with La Rue. On their way, they encounter Montraville, but Charlotte doesn't read the **letter** he slips into her hand. Still, she's overcome by curiosity, even as she spends the evening with La Rue and the young men. She's shocked by how the young men behave, but she's even *more* shocked by La Rue's uninhibited way of talking to them.

The author's voice becomes prominent in this moment, as she interrupts the story to meditate on the dangers of chasing pleasure. She doesn't necessarily condemn pleasure in and of itself, but rather the tendency people often have of pursuing pleasure over all else. The novel frames desire as deeply irrational, since it can drive people to contradict their own moral convictions, which is what Charlotte does when she agrees to spend time with La Rue and the young men she knows. The author's interjection serves as a reminder that Charlotte Temple *is a cautionary tale that frames giving into vice as a slippery slope. Indeed, it's arguable that all of the misery Charlotte experiences can be traced back to this moment, when she gives into La Rue and goes against her own better judgment.*

Charlotte regrets accepting La Rue's invitation. She also looks forward to reading Montraville's **letter** in private. The author notes that love letters can be very enticing, but she also mocks young women who let themselves be deceived by such grand—but ultimately hollow—romantic gestures. Noting that she's primarily writing this novel for young women, she urges her readers to stand strong against temptation, which can be very hard to resist, especially since men try so hard to seduce otherwise innocent women. She hopes that her readers can avoid temptation altogether and, if they're unable to do this, that they'll have the strength to stand strong when they do come face to face with charming seducers.

Susanna Rowson—the novel's author—once again speaks directly to readers, making her primary message extremely clear: seductive men might seem appealing, but giving into them is dangerous for young, innocent women. The entire novel is intended to illustrate just how *dangerous it can be for a woman to let her guard down, which is what Charlotte does by agreeing to sneak out of school and then by accepting Montraville's letter. Rowson implies that the wheels of Charlotte's troubles have already been set in motion, thus illustrating how careful young women living in the 18th century had to be when it came to dealing with manipulative men.*

CHAPTER 7

Back in her room with Mademoiselle La Rue, Charlotte says she thinks they were wrong to sneak out. She thought she'd enjoy the experience, but she just feels ashamed. She vows to never sneak out again and worries aloud that Madame Du Pont will hear about what they did. La Rue then wonders if Charlotte will end up telling Du Pont as a way of protecting herself from punishment, thinking that maybe Charlotte will frame it as La Rue's fault that she broke the rules. If she does this, though, La Rue claims that she won't hold it against Charlotte: after all, she has already experienced disgrace and shame, so she's better prepared to get kicked onto the streets, where she would surely face great misery.

La Rue is manipulating Charlotte. She acts as if she has made her peace with the idea of getting kicked out by Madame Du Pont, but she underhandedly emphasizes how miserable she would be if this happened. In doing so, she appeals to Charlotte's innocent, impressionable nature, making her young student feel guilty for something she hasn't even done yet. In turn, she decreases the likelihood that Charlotte would feel comfortable telling Madame Du Pont what they did. Considering her subtle skills in manipulation, it's evident that La Rue truly will be a dangerous and corrupting influence on Charlotte.

Charlotte promises La Rue that she would never betray her. She simply wishes she hadn't gone out with her. But La Rue challenges this idea by pointing out that Charlotte must have enjoyed meeting Montraville—surely she's interested in reading the **letter**. Charlotte insists that she won't read the letter, but La Rue makes her feel guilty by talking extensively about how Montraville will probably go to his death on the battlefield without ever hearing a word from Charlotte, whom he clearly feels strongly for. She makes Charlotte's decision not to read the letter seem so coldhearted that Charlotte finally decides to open it, though she promises herself that she won't respond.

La Rue's first manipulation works, as she guilts Charlotte into promising to stay silent about sneaking out. But she doesn't stop there—she continues to manipulate Charlotte, goading her into reading Montraville's letter. The author has already said that Charlotte looked forward to reading the letter in private, but now it seems that Charlotte has resolved not *to read it, perhaps wanting to make up for the fact that she has promised to keep quiet about her outing with La Rue. By telling herself she won't read the letter, she holds onto a small amount of self-control, setting a boundary that makes her feel better about having transgressed. La Rue, however, convinces her young student to read the letter. Step by step, then, Charlotte succumbs to the various temptations that La Rue sets before her.*

The author interrupts the narrative to note that some women who have fallen into disgrace do whatever they can to bring other, more innocent women down to their level. This is exactly what La Rue does when she convinces Charlotte to read the **letter**. What's more, it doesn't take long after Charlotte has read Montraville's words for La Rue to talk her into meeting Montraville again the following evening.

Mademoiselle La Rue doesn't manipulate Charlotte just for the fun of it. Rather, she does so because it's the only way she can feel better about herself as a dishonorable person. Charlotte, after all, is a perfectly innocent young woman, so the contrast between her and La Rue surely makes La Rue feel especially bad about herself. She therefore does whatever she can to spoil Charlotte's innocence, manipulating her and incrementally coaxing her toward a life of vice.

CHAPTER 8

Charlotte's mother, Lucy, decides to throw a party for Charlotte's birthday, which is coming up very soon. She proposes the idea to Mr. Temple, who agrees that it would be nice for them to assemble Charlotte's friends in the garden, decorate the surroundings, and surprise their daughter with a big celebration. The two happy parents then talk about how wonderful Charlotte is, saying that she would certainly never "lose sight of the duty she owes her parents." The author then pauses the story to muse on the nature of temptation, insisting that pleasure is often little more than a "vain illusion" that leads to disappointment and vice. Instead of focusing on pleasure, she says, people ought to practice kindness and empathy, since real happiness comes from selflessly caring about others.

The conversation that Charlotte's parents have about her in this passage only calls attention to how much she has already strayed from her otherwise innocent and virtuous nature. While her parents speak adoringly about how she would never do anything that would dishonor their family name, she's off chasing temptation in the form of Montraville's enticing words. The implication, then, is that even the most virtuous people are subject to the dangerous allure of pleasure and passion if they're not careful.

CHAPTER 9

As her meeting with Montraville approaches, Charlotte has second thoughts. She feels guilty about the plan and wants to come clean to Madame Du Pont. And yet, she feels as if she can't, since doing so would mean revealing Mademoiselle La Rue's misbehavior, which would surely drive Madame Du Pont to kick La Rue onto the streets. As an aside, the author notes that there are always many things stopping people from doing what's right, especially when they've already made a mistake. In the end, Charlotte decides to go through with the original plan, intending to tell Montraville that she can't see him or correspond with him anymore.

Even as Charlotte advances down a path of vice, she tries to stop herself from fully succumbing to temptation. In other words, she knows she shouldn't indulge Montraville's interest in her, even though she finds it hard to resist. In fact, she even yearns to do the right thing (or what the novel implies is the right thing) by telling Madame Du Pont about having snuck out, but she can't bring herself to betray La Rue's trust. It becomes clear, then, that La Rue has quite a bit of power over Charlotte, who might avoid trouble if left to her own devices. To that end, La Rue makes it very hard for Charlotte to shirk temptation, which is already so difficult to resist, since succumbing to vice is a slippery slope.

Montraville brings Belcour to the meeting with Charlotte, knowing that Belcour will distract Mademoiselle La Rue. Belcour is a very selfish man who thinks only about whatever will bring him the most pleasure, no matter how it will affect other people. Montraville is similar, but not necessarily because he's unkind. Rather, Montraville simply gets swept up in his own desires and fails to think things through. He's selfish, but not in the same malicious way as Belcour. He knows he can't marry Charlotte, but he doesn't think about that.

It's noteworthy that the novel doesn't frame Montraville as purposefully malicious. He isn't trying to lead Charlotte astray for the sake of ruining her life or reputation—his motivations are much less sinister than that. Rather, he simply wants to be with her, even if he has no intention of marrying her. Still, though, being romantically involved out of wedlock was very taboo in the 18th century, but Montraville doesn't care—perhaps because he's a man. Indeed, there was a double standard at play in society at that time, since a man's reputation was rarely ruined by having extramarital affairs, whereas women often lost everything for doing the exact same thing.

If Montraville *did* consider how his interest in Charlotte could negatively impact her life, he might not pursue her. Unfortunately, though, he would need a good friend to point this out to him, and Belcour is certainly not the kind of person to do such a thing. Instead, Belcour takes an interest in Mademoiselle La Rue and does whatever he can to convince her to come to America with him and Montraville. In doing so, he makes it that much harder for Charlotte to resist the idea herself. Montraville begs to see her one last time before he goes abroad, but she refuses. And yet, he asks again, saying that he might die on the battlefield soon and would love to spend just one more evening with her. She tries to resist but eventually relents before hurrying away.

Charlotte has no viable lines of defense when it comes to resisting Montraville. The only person in her daily life who might help her stand strong is Madame Du Pont, but she can't seek out the older woman's help because doing so would mean betraying La Rue's trust. Charlotte is therefore left to her own devices, but she has already given into several temptations, so it's that much harder for her to remain true to her original intentions to preserve her innocence. Every time she tries to do what she thinks is the right thing, Montraville or La Rue get her to make an exception, thus slowly chipping away at her resolve.

CHAPTER 10

Montraville's father was quite wealthy. However, he had many children, so he knew he wouldn't be able to provide for all of them. Therefore, he made sure his sons went into respectable professions, deciding that they must learn to fend for themselves in the world. He gave Montraville a respectable amount of money when he became a soldier, but that was all he would ever give him. He told him to rely on himself for the rest of his life, warning him against rushing into marriage with anyone who didn't come from wealth. Many men do this, Montraville's father said, and it's a surefire way to lead an unhappy life.

The way Montraville's father thinks about marriage directly opposes the way Charlotte's father thinks about it. Whereas Mr. Temple thinks unhappiness comes from marrying somebody for superficial reasons having to do with wealth, Montraville's father believes that people can only be happy if they're rich. For Montraville's father, then, love is not enough to sustain a person. If Montraville agrees, then he's unlikely to marry Charlotte, whose family isn't rich.

With his father's advice in mind, Montraville asks Belcour to talk to Mademoiselle La Rue about Charlotte's financial background. Belcour discovers that Charlotte isn't from a rich family, and that her parents have nothing to give her upon her marriage. Upon hearing this news, Montraville doesn't let himself question his intentions when it comes to Charlotte, ultimately failing—or refusing—to think about the future.

Montraville's desire to know if Charlotte is rich suggests that he would potentially be interested in marrying her if she came from money. But when he finds out she isn't rich, he casts the entire matter out of his mind—he now knows he won't marry her, but he doesn't dwell on this thought. Instead, he focuses solely on his desire to be with her in a romantic capacity, thus ignoring the fact that starting an extramarital relationship with her could completely derail her life. Simply put, he prioritizes his own desires over her well-being.

CHAPTER 11

Charlotte spends every evening with Montraville in the week leading up to his departure. One night, he suggests that she should come with him to America, but she says she could never do such a thing—her parents wouldn't approve of them getting married, and she couldn't bear to disobey or disappoint them. Montraville manipulatively acts offended, going on at length about how he thought Charlotte cared about him more than anything in the world. His words have a noticeable effect on her, but she still tries to honor her parents by refusing. And yet, Montraville insists that they would surely accept Charlotte again after she and Montraville returned from America.

At this point, Montraville seems to have committed to the idea of being with Charlotte. The problem, though, is that this commitment is little more than a desire to have an affair with her—it's not a commitment to marry her. As a man in the 18th century, he has the freedom to behave in this way, but Charlotte doesn't. For her, eloping to America with a man who isn't her husband would ruin her honor and reputation, ultimately disgracing her family. Charlotte is quite aware of this dynamic, which is why she tries so hard to resist Montraville. However, she is young and innocent, and there's nobody around to help her stand strong against temptation.

Hearing this conversation, Belcour jumps in and urges Charlotte to come to America, adding that La Rue will be accompanying him. Charlotte finally agrees, but she warns Montraville about making false promises and then abandoning her in a foreign land. Montraville, however, claims that he would never do such a thing, promising that they'll get married when they reach America. Having agreed to come on the journey, Charlotte walks back to the school with Mademoiselle La Rue, already feeling ashamed of what she's about to do.

Not only is there nobody to help Charlotte resist Montraville, but Belcour and La Rue also join forces with him to convince her into coming to America. As Charlotte's teacher, La Rue is supposed to guide her and make sure she avoids trouble, but instead she pushes her young student toward temptation. Of course, Montraville promises to marry her when they reach America, but this is clearly a false promise, since it has already been revealed that he doesn't intend to marry anyone who isn't rich. Charlotte, however, doesn't know this, and since there's nobody sensible around to confirm her reservations, she agrees to elope. Considering that so much is stacked against Charlotte, it's not terribly surprising that she makes this decision, ultimately illustrating just how easy it is to be led astray by temptation and seductive manipulators.

CHAPTER 12

Charlotte can't sleep that night. Madame Du Pont notices the next morning that she looks extremely tired, but Charlotte doesn't tell her why—she just says she couldn't sleep. In response, Du Pont shares something she thinks will cheer up the young woman: a letter from her mother. The letter says that her grandfather will come pick her up on her birthday (which is the following day) and take her home, where they've arranged a surprise for her. Reading the letter throws Charlotte into grief and torment; she insists to Du Pont that she doesn't deserve her parents' love. Du Pont merely praises her for not taking their love for granted.

Finding out that her parents and grandfather have organized a surprise for her birthday doesn't make Charlotte happy—it makes her feel guilty because she has already told Montraville that she'll elope with him to America, thus dishonoring her loving family. Therefore, hearing about how thoughtful they are only makes her feel worse about the decision she's already made, which ultimately feels like a betrayal of their kindness.

Charlotte realizes it's not too late to change her mind. She can still do the honorable thing. When she finds La Rue to tell her she won't be going to America, though, La Rue once again manages to guilt her into changing her mind. She talks about how upset Montraville will be—so upset, she hypothesizes, that he might come to the school to yell at Charlotte. If he did that, everyone would find out that Charlotte had planned to elope. The more adventurous young women will make fun of her for being too cowardly to go through with the plan, while the "prudes" will harshly judge her for considering such a thing in the first place. In the end, Charlotte decides to go with La Rue to at least tell Montraville her decision in person.

La Rue always seems to know just the thing to say when she's manipulating Charlotte. This time, she touches on how harshly society judges women. In the scenario she lays out, there's nothing Charlotte can do to avoid negative judgment: either her classmates will mock her for being a coward or they'll resent her for behaving dishonorably. With this in mind, Charlotte feels like she has no choice but to go through with her original plan, and La Rue once again succeeds in tricking her young student into embracing vice and temptation.

When the time comes to meet Montraville and Belcour, Mademoiselle La Rue packs her valuables and tells Charlotte to do the same. Charlotte, however, refuses, insisting that she will do the right thing by staying behind—a resolution that makes La Rue smile, though she doesn't say anything. Sure enough, though, when Charlotte goes with La Rue to tell Montraville that she isn't coming to America, she finds herself unable to resist his arguments, especially when he suggests that he'll kill himself if she doesn't come. Crying out in shame about how she's betraying her loving parents, Charlotte steps into the horse-drawn carriage and sets off with the others for the port.

La Rue smiles at Charlotte's attempt to assert herself one last time, clearly knowing that the young woman will surely give in and come to America. To Charlotte's credit, though, she tries hard to assert herself, and she only agrees to come when Montraville threatens to take his own life—an incredibly manipulative threat to make, regardless of whether or not it's true.

CHAPTER 13

Captain Eldridge travels to the school to pick up Charlotte and take her home for the birthday surprise. He's in a good mood as he travels, looking forward to seeing his beautiful and virtuous granddaughter. When he arrives, he waits in the parlor for Charlotte to appear, but he soon senses something is wrong. He can hear everyone calling out her name, and whenever he asks if something's amiss, he doesn't get a straight answer. Finally, Madame Du Pont finds a letter explaining what happened. She informs Captain Eldridge that Charlotte is with Mademoiselle La Rue and that she has eloped. Beside himself, Captain Eldridge gets back into his horse-drawn carriage and makes a solemn trip back home, dreading what he'll say to Charlotte's parents.

Captain Eldridge's excitement to see Charlotte—whom he thinks is innocent and honorable—emphasizes the extent to which she has fallen from virtuosity. Everyone in her life seems to think of her as a wonderful person who would never do anything deemed inappropriate or dishonorable. And yet, she eloped with Montraville, suggesting that even seemingly unimpeachable people can find themselves succumbing to vice and temptation.


CHAPTER 14

Everyone has already arrived for the garden party by the time Captain Eldridge returns. Right away, Lucy Temple sees that Charlotte isn't with him and assumes that her daughter has died. Eldridge gives Mr. Temple the letter, unable to explain what happened, and Mr. Temple informs his wife that Charlotte isn't dead. He asks what Mrs. Temple would fear most, other than Charlotte's death, and she immediately guesses what happened: Charlotte has eloped. She then faints into Mr. Temple's arms. At this point, the author contemplates Mrs. Temple's sorrow, urging young female readers to consider just how much pain they might cause their own mothers if they did what Charlotte did.

By showing Mr. and Mrs. Temple's reaction to Charlotte's elopement, the author underscores just how disruptive such behavior was to families in the 18th century. In a certain way, Mrs. Temple acts as if Charlotte really has *died, even though all she has done is run away from home. The scene therefore highlights how scandalous it was for a young woman to abandon her family to live out of wedlock with a man.*


CHAPTER 15

Charlotte boards the ship bound for America, which remains in the harbor for several days before departing. She writes a passionate letter to her parents, explaining the situation and begging for their forgiveness. She gives the letter to Montraville, but he knows mailing it would be a terrible idea, so he secretly rips it up and scatters it on the wind. Meanwhile, Charlotte's parents try desperately to find her, but they have no luck. By the time the ship has set sail, they begin to grasp that their daughter is gone. Lucy Temple is devastated, but she also recognizes that she didn't do anything to deserve this kind of treatment. She therefore resolves to be as optimistic as possible, believing that this cheerfulness is part of her remaining duty as a wife and daughter.

When Montraville rips up Charlotte's letter, he all but ensures that she will have to go through with the original plan to come to America. If the Temples had received Charlotte's letter, it's possible they could have caught up with Charlotte and convinced her to stay, especially since she already seems to regret her decision to elope. To that end, Charlotte has simply needed a voice of reason to help her withstand temptation, but nobody has been there to keep her from going astray. Writing to her parents was her last hope of connecting with people who might protect her, but Montraville secretly makes this impossible.

CHAPTER 16

One of the passengers on the ship to America is a wealthy British man named Crayton. He's well-traveled and obsesses over anything he sees as "foreign," so he's naturally attracted to Mademoiselle La Rue, since she's from France. La Rue, in turn, takes an interest in him, realizing early on that Belcour has no real intention of marrying her when they reach America. She thus endears herself to Crayton and turns him against Belcour, saying that Belcour seduced her and then intended to abandon her. It isn't long before Crayton promises to marry La Rue when they reach New York.

By switching from Belcour to Crayton, La Rue proves that she only cares about one thing: financial security. She clearly never felt romantically intimate with Belcour; she just wanted a way out of Madame Du Pont's school, but she soon realized Belcour wouldn't provide for her in America. The fact that she charms Crayton is a testament to her skill in manipulation, as it's obvious that she only wants him for his money.

Meanwhile, Belcour takes an interest in Charlotte and plans to steal her away from Montraville whenever the chance presents itself. He knows Montraville has no real intention of marrying Charlotte, so he plans to marry her himself. The author notes that women who give in to immoral seductions effectively debase themselves—so much, in fact, that even the men who seduced them in the first place end up losing interest in them.

It's strange that Belcour wants to marry Charlotte, given that he apparently seems so opposed to getting married when it comes to his relationship with La Rue. The author's note sheds some light on what's going on here, implying that Belcour is interested in Charlotte specifically because she has already compromised her morals by eloping with Montraville. Of course, Belcour is supposedly Montraville's good friend, but it's obvious that he doesn't really care about him—all he cares about, it seems, is himself. Because he has seen that Charlotte is willing to break certain societal rules, he starts fantasizing about being with her himself. And yet, the author also implies that women who go against 18th-century societal norms ultimately put themselves in a lose-lose situation: men want to be with them romantically and/or sexually, but the same men also end up judging them if they actually give in to the men's seductions.

CHAPTER 17

Upon arriving in New York, Crayton announces that he will be marrying La Rue. Charlotte is astounded, expressing her surprise to Montraville. She's beside herself because she thought Belcour promised to marry La Rue. But Montraville is unmoved—who cares, he says, if Belcour said he'd marry La Rue?

Montraville's reaction to the news about La Rue and Belcour breaking up isn't surprising. After all, he himself has no intentions of marrying Charlotte, even though he promised he would—just like Belcour promised La Rue. For both Montraville and Belcour, promises like this clearly mean nothing and are little more than a way for them to get what they want.

When Crayton introduces La Rue to his daughter, the well-liked Mrs. Beauchamp, she immediately accepts La Rue, who lied and told Crayton that she used to know his previous wife (Mrs. Beauchamp's mother). Mrs. Beauchamp then sees Charlotte and asks who she is, since she looks so beautiful and innocent. Crayton pulls his daughter aside and says that she's Montraville's mistress. Mrs. Beauchamp is shocked, hardly able to believe that such a virtuous-looking woman could stoop so low. Charlotte hears her say this and is devastated by how far she has already fallen in society. The next day, La Rue marries Crayton, becoming Mrs. Crayton and looking down on Charlotte despite the fact that the young woman is "far less guilty" than her.

Charlotte's transformation from an innocent, respectable young woman to a social outcast is rather immediate. She hasn't even been in America for an hour before her reputation as Montraville's unwed mistress besmirches her name. La Rue, on the other hand, has managed to use her deceitful ways to secure an even higher position in society than she had in England—a development that the author frames as deeply unfair, given that La Rue is even more immoral and dishonorable than Charlotte. After all, she's largely responsible for corrupting the young woman in the first place.

CHAPTER 18

Montraville sets Charlotte up in a small house just outside New York. He gives her a servant and whatever money she needs, but he spends most of his time away from the house—for reasons having to do with both "business and pleasure." Isolated in a new land, she feels completely cut off from everyone important in her life. She also hates how other women look at her, unsure which is worse: their hatred or their pity for her. She passes the time waiting for Montraville's visits. Unlike a "faithful wife" whose husband ignores her, Charlotte can't even take comfort in her own honorable position as a respected wife.

The implication in this section of the book is that, by embracing a life of dishonor, Charlotte has thrown herself into a sad, lonely life. She's now paying for her inability to stand strong against the temptation of eloping with Montraville, realizing that she has become an outcast in this foreign country, where she has nobody to help improve her life. The author hints that her situation wouldn't be all that bad if Montraville had actually married her. Unfortunately for her, though, he simply keeps her as his mistress, thus putting her in a position in which she has no way of avoiding society's harsh judgment.

The author says that many women who have indulged in immorality would surely try to right their wrongs if only they had virtuous friends to encourage them. Unfortunately, though, most women avoid dishonorable people like Charlotte because they fear that associating with them will harm their own reputations. But the author thinks this is wrong: everyone should work to "alleviate the miseries" of their fellow humans.

Charlotte Temple *often seems rather unforgiving, since Susanna Rowson blatantly expresses her disapproval of Charlotte's decisions and implies that she deserves misery because of how she behaves. At the same time, though, Rowson doesn't think Charlotte is incapable of redemption, nor does she think the young woman deserves complete social ostracization. Rather, the author advocates for compassion, saying that people should treat others with empathy regardless of what they've done. In Charlotte's case, the book implies, a little bit of kindness and guidance would go a long way toward helping her put her life back on track.*

CHAPTER 19

It isn't long before Montraville takes interest in a new woman. Her name is Julia Franklin, and she's the daughter of a wealthy man who left her in control of a large fortune when she was just 18. She lives with an uncle in New York, where everyone loves her. Montraville wins her affections after her uncle's house catches on fire one night. In the chaos, somebody runs outside and hands Montraville a box, telling him to hold onto it until he returns. But the man never comes back to retrieve it. At home that night, he opens the box and finds many fine **jewels** and a picture of a beautiful woman. Shortly thereafter, he sees Julia Franklin and recognizes her from the picture. After being introduced to her, he promises to bring the box to her the following day.

The jewels that Montraville finds in the box represent the excitement of his romantic attraction to a new person. There was a time when he couldn't stop thinking about Charlotte, but those days are gone. Now, the allure of Julia Franklin is like the appeal of her family's precious jewels, suggesting that Montraville has a "grass-is-greener" mentality that drives him to yearn for whatever (or, in this case, whomever) he doesn't already have.

Montraville feels guilty about how much he likes Julia Franklin. He knows he can't marry Charlotte, but he also doesn't want to be the kind of man to bring a young woman abroad and then abandon her for someone else. He thus decides to bring Julia the **box of jewels** and then try to forget about her. But when he brings it to her, he's struck by her beauty and charm. After leaving, he realizes he's in love with Julia—not Charlotte. He decides that his initial feelings for Charlotte were nothing more than an impulsive sense of attraction. Julia, however, ignites his heart in a more romantic way.

Montraville isn't particularly kind to Charlotte, but he still has something of a moral conscience—not a terribly active conscience, that is, but one that at least keeps him from immediately running off with Julia Franklin and abandoning Charlotte. Still, he's captivated by the exciting possibility of starting a relationship with Julia, who is not only quite attractive but also rich. Montraville knew his relationship with Charlotte could never be all that serious, since he wants to marry a wealthy woman. Julia, then, is an even more enticing potential match.

When Montraville goes to visit Charlotte, she admits that she thought he'd forgotten about her. He says he'll never forget her, but she still senses that something's wrong. However, she just assumes he's sick and needs to rest, so she puts him in bed. He tells himself that he's a "villain," but he doesn't say anything to Charlotte, instead pretending to sleep while she watches him. Eventually, she lies beside him and falls asleep herself.

In this section of the novel, Montraville comes face to face with his own selfishness. Now that he yearns to be with Julia Franklin, he's forced to recognize that he doesn't actually care about Charlotte as much as he originally let on. And yet, he dragged her to America on the pretense of loving her. It remains to be seen what, exactly, he'll do, but his tendency to prioritize his own desires over all else suggests that he'll probably end up doing whatever he wants, which would mean abandoning Charlotte for Julia.

CHAPTER 20

Charlotte wakes up alone the next morning. Montraville has left a note for her, telling her not to worry but that he will be gone for a little while. The tone of his writing is stilted and cordial, causing Charlotte to worry, though she tries to tell herself that Montraville wouldn't abandon her. Just then, Belcour arrives and, seeing that Charlotte is upset, plans to slowly turn her against Montraville, thinking that he'll be able to make her jealous about Montraville's private life. His main goal is to urge her to take revenge on Montraville by accepting him—Belcour—as a lover.

Montraville's disappearance doesn't bode well for Charlotte, since it's quite likely that he has decided to spend some time away from her in order to court Julia Franklin. Unfortunately for Charlotte, she's surrounded by selfish people who only care about satisfying their own desires. Belcour, for instance, only shows up because he wants to lure Charlotte away from Montraville, not because he actually wants to comfort her.

The author switches tracks to briefly explain that La Rue—who is now Mrs. Crayton—has slowly worn down her new husband's affections. Everyone can see Mrs. Crayton isn't the lovely person she pretended to be when her husband agreed to marry her. Mr. Crayton's daughter, Mrs. Beauchamp, is especially upset about her father's marriage. Because she doesn't like living in the city, she and her husband start living in a house just outside New York—a house very close to Charlotte's. It isn't long before Mrs. Beauchamp notices Charlotte and takes pity on her obvious sorrow. She wishes she could help Charlotte, especially since she suspects the young woman would quickly undo her mistakes if someone helped her. And yet, helping Charlotte would put Mrs. Beauchamp's own reputation in jeopardy.

Mrs. Beauchamp's inclination to help Charlotte is notable, mainly because nobody else is willing to show Charlotte any compassion. Although Mrs. Beauchamp still weighs whether or not being kind to Charlotte is worth risking her own reputation, the mere fact that she wants to extend her empathy to a disgraced young woman highlights her own selflessness. Simply put, Mrs. Beauchamp cares about other people and is exactly the sort of person that has been sorely lacking from Charlotte's life ever since Charlotte started spending time with the likes of La Rue.

One day, Mrs. Beauchamp walks by Charlotte's house and hears her singing about how much she yearns for death. Overcome with pity, Mrs. Beauchamp asks her husband if he'd hold it against her if she were to help Charlotte. Admiring her compassion, he says he wouldn't, so she readies herself to pay Charlotte a visit.

When Mrs. Beauchamp's husband says he would admire her for treating Charlotte with compassion, the novel implies that practicing empathy will rarely ruin a person's image. Instead, it's common for others to look up to people who behave selflessly, so there's actually good reason to move through life with empathy and kindness.

CHAPTER 21

Charlotte can hardly believe it when Mrs. Beauchamp pays her a visit and asks to spend the day with her. Trying to say how honored she would be to accept Mrs. Beauchamp's friendship, she bursts into tears, prompting Mrs. Beauchamp to ask why she's so sad—she wants to know the whole story so that she can help in whatever way she can. To give Charlotte time to collect herself, she invites the young woman to dinner, where Charlotte tells her the entire tale of how she ended up alone outside New York. Mrs. Beauchamp is appalled by Mademoiselle La Rue's behavior, clearly seeing that her new mother-in-law helped manipulate Charlotte into making a terrible mistake.

By highlighting how shocked Charlotte is by Mrs. Beauchamp's kindness, the novel calls attention to just how badly the young woman yearns for companionship and compassion. It's worth remembering that she's still quite young, at only 16. She therefore needs guidance and direction from somebody who has her best interests in mind. The people she has been spending time with, though, only care about themselves and have led her astray for their own benefit. Mrs. Beauchamp's presence in her life therefore comes at an important time, as she desperately needs a virtuous friend's help.

Mrs. Beauchamp asks Charlotte if she has written to her family to ask forgiveness. Charlotte says that she has written them many times but has never received a response, prompting Mrs. Beauchamp to speculate that the letters probably never even reached them. She thus tells Charlotte to write a new letter explaining her situation and then give it to her, promising to mail it herself. If she does this, she says, would Charlotte want to return to her family? Charlotte says yes and emphatically thanks her new friend.

Mrs. Beauchamp is eager to know if Charlotte would return to her family if given the chance. The reason she asks this question is that she wants to confirm that Charlotte is, at heart, an honorable person. The implication here is that Mrs. Beauchamp understands that Montraville and Mademoiselle La Rue simply led Charlotte astray. But being led astray doesn't make a person unredeemable, so Mrs. Beauchamp gives Charlotte the chance to remedy the mistakes she has made.

CHAPTER 22

After leaving Mrs. Beauchamp's house, Charlotte writes a letter to her parents. She immediately recognizes her mistake and shows them that she's regretful. She notes that she mistakenly placed her trust in Mademoiselle La Rue, who ended up pushing her toward misery and disgrace. She also says that she thought Montraville would marry her but that he has failed to do so, making her regret her decision all the more. To add to everything, she has become pregnant and is due in just a few months. If her parents can't bring themselves to forgive her, she at least implores them to offer their help to her child, who—despite Charlotte's own mistakes—is innocent.

In her letter to her parents, Charlotte doesn't shy away from owning up to her mistakes. Once again, then, it's clear that she feels an enormous amount of regret for eloping with Montraville and, in that way, disgracing her family. At the same time, she makes an appeal to her parents' inherent kindness by asking for their help in raising her baby, whose future is—as of now—quite uncertain, given that Montraville is so undependable, and that Charlotte has so few resources in America. Without their help, it's unlikely that Charlotte's child will be able to lead a very good life.

CHAPTER 23

Montraville grows even closer to Julia, and it becomes clear to him that she would most likely accept a marriage proposal. However, he feels guilty about leaving Charlotte, especially because he knows she's pregnant. He expresses his concerns to Belcour, but his friend has been waiting for this kind of opportunity: he tells him not to think about Charlotte, whom he suggests is deceitful and unworthy of his friend's attention. Belcour then lies and claims that Charlotte has been making advances on other men—including Belcour himself. Belcour encourages him to forget all about Charlotte, urging him to go visit Julia instead.

Belcour has found a chance to come between Charlotte and Montraville once and for all. Of course, it's completely untrue that Charlotte has been unfaithful to Montraville, but this lie is the perfect way for Belcour to convince Montraville to move forward in his relationship with Julia. Whereas Montraville has until now felt too guilty to fully commit to courting Julia, Belcour has now given him a way to justify abandoning Charlotte.

Montraville is too troubled to visit Julia. The next morning, he goes to Charlotte's house and is shocked to find her sleeping next to Belcour. He screams at them, and Charlotte tries in vain to convince him that she has no idea why Belcour is beside her. But he won't listen. He tells her that they will never speak again. He agrees to financially support her in the moment of her childbirth, but after that she will never receive anything from him.

It's highly unlikely that Charlotte had anything to do with the fact that Belcour is in her bed—after all, she has never expressed interest in anyone other than Montraville, nor has she ever paid much mind to Belcour in particular. What's more, she already regrets having embraced a dishonorable lifestyle by eloping with Montraville, so it's improbable that she'd further risk her reputation by cheating on him with Belcour.

CHAPTER 24

The reason Belcour was in Charlotte's bed was that he paid her a visit and found her asleep. He then heard Montraville coming down the road, so he jumped into bed with Charlotte in the hopes of stirring up trouble. After Montraville renounces Charlotte and leaves the house, Belcour acts like a compassionate friend, but she asks him to leave because he got her into such a terrible situation. Before he goes, though, he bribes the servant and instructs her not to send any mail Charlotte might try to send out, thus making it impossible for her to win back Montraville's good graces.

As if Charlotte's predicament in America isn't already so challenging, Belcour's deception only adds to her misery. As a pregnant single woman who has been scorned by the rest of society, Charlotte can't afford to have a conniving man like Belcour in her life. And yet, she doesn't even know that he's scheming against her. As her life gets progressively worse, the book implies that succumbing to temptation and vice leads to unhappiness, which in turn creates more and more misery as time passes.

Belcour goes to see Montraville. He defends his actions by saying that Charlotte made strong sexual advances on him and that he was unable to resist. Montraville seems to accept this excuse, though he blames himself for Charlotte's behavior—he, after all, is the one who ruined her "virtuous" nature. But Belcour insists that somebody else would have done the same if Montraville hadn't seduced Charlotte. When he tries to bring up Julia Franklin as a way of cheering up Montraville, his friend responds poorly. Montraville tells Belcour not to speak his name in the same sentence as Julia's, since he's a bad man who doesn't deserve her. He's nothing but an "ungenerous seducer of unsuspecting innocence," he says.

Strangely enough, Montraville appears capable of genuine self-reflection in this moment. Something about seeing Charlotte and Belcour in bed together made him consider the extent to which he derailed Charlotte's life. After all, if it weren't for Montraville, Charlotte would still be living the innocent life of a young student in England. Instead, though, she's a pregnant outcast living alone in a place where she has no means of supporting herself and her unborn child. When Montraville calls himself an "ungenerous seducer of unsuspecting innocence," then, he makes a fairly accurate self-assessment of his tendency to prioritize his own desires over all else.

Montraville sees Julia walking by outside. He joins her and admits that he's upset about something. She's concerned and wants to know what's troubling him, but he can't bring himself to tell her, since he knows it might lower her opinion of him. When they part ways, he feels terrible because he can tell how much she likes and respects him—an honor he knows he doesn't deserve.

To Montraville's credit, he appears to feel genuine shame about how he has treated Charlotte. At the same time, though, his shame doesn't stop him from continuing to pursue Julia, making it clear that he still prioritizes his own wants over what's best for other people—even as he feels guilty about doing so.

CHAPTER 25

Meanwhile, Charlotte's parents talk about her, wishing they would hear from her. They're upset about what she did, but not so upset that they couldn't find it within themselves to forgive her. Just as they're having this conversation, the letter from Charlotte finally arrives. They immediately decide to accept her back into the family, and though Lucy Temple wants to go to America to fetch her, Mr. Temple tells her that she should stay home—he will go by himself and find their daughter.

Mrs. Beauchamp's kindness, it seems, might end up making a profound impact on Charlotte's life. Until now, she has had no way of contacting her parents, since Montraville has been intercepting her letters. She has thus had no way of expressing her remorse and voicing her desire to return to her old life of innocence. Now, though, Mrs. Beauchamp has made it possible for her to send a letter to her parents, and they ultimately decide to accept her back into the family instead of disowning her. In turn, it's feasible that Charlotte will be able to escape the misery of her current circumstances.

CHAPTER 26

Montraville finally decides to marry Julia. Just before their wedding, he gives Belcour money and tells him to pass it along to Charlotte. He wants to help support her and the unborn child. He also says that, if Charlotte wants to live with Belcour, then his friend should treat her well. He writes a letter to Charlotte, acknowledging that he enticed her to indulge in "guilty pleasure[s]," and he urges her to seek her parents' forgiveness. He gives the letter to Belcour, who promises to carry out his wishes. But Belcour has no intention of doing anything to help Charlotte—he wants her to become so desperate that she has no choice but to seek his comfort and protection.

Montraville has once again decided to pursue his own satisfaction even though doing so will negatively impact Charlotte. This time, though, he actually feels guilty about what he's doing, recognizing that he has clearly mistreated her. Although he's under the false impression that Charlotte cheated on him, he still has trouble justifying his decision to abandon her for Julia—an indication that he understands how unfairly he has treated her, especially since she's pregnant. Weighed down by his conscience, then, he gives Belcour money to make sure Charlotte has some means of financial support. Unfortunately, though, it's highly unlikely that Belcour will give Charlotte the money or, for that matter, the letter Montraville has written.

CHAPTER 27

Belcour visits Charlotte, who is still distraught by Montraville's anger. She has nobody to turn to, since Mrs. Beauchamp is out of town. Wanting to ruin any affection Charlotte still has for Montraville, Belcour informs her that Montraville married Julia Franklin and left town. Charlotte is so upset that she faints. When she comes to, she faints again—a pattern that lasts almost throughout the night. Belcour stays with her, tending to her high fever. But her sickness frightens him, and he no longer finds himself attracted to her now that she's so frail. He leaves but continues to check in on her for the next few days. Eventually, though, he loses interest in her and stops coming, leaving her alone without even giving her the money from Montraville.

Belcour's interest in Charlotte is extremely superficial: he only likes the idea of being with her. He doesn't actually care about her as a person, which is why he finds himself unwilling to care for her after only a few days. He therefore abandons her after having ruined her life even more than Montraville did, since the consequences are now much higher. After all, Charlotte is pregnant and now has no way of supporting herself and her future child, so the fact that Belcour leaves her and doesn't even give her the money from Montraville is especially cruel.

CHAPTER 28

The author acknowledges that some of her younger female readers might not want to read more of this tale, which is full of "fainting, tears, and distress." She reminds these readers that she's composing a "tale of truth" that isn't intended to bring pleasure. Instead, it's supposed to teach an important lesson. At the same time, the author recognizes that the lesson might seem imperfect, since Mademoiselle La Rue seems to have found success by indulging immoral behavior. But this isn't necessarily the case: La Rue (now known as Mrs. Crayton) will surely get her due. For now, her new husband has tired of her and lets her do whatever she wants, so she has taken a side lover named Mr. Corydon. She rarely thinks about Charlotte except to laugh at her misfortune.

The author doesn't miss a single opportunity to remind readers that Charlotte Temple *is a cautionary tale. To that end, Rowson implies that Mademoiselle La Rue—now Mrs. Crayton—will eventually meet an unfortunate end. This hints at one of the novel's primary messages, which is that indulging in vice might seem rewarding at first but later leads to disaster and unhappiness.*

CHAPTER 29

Charlotte gradually recovers from her illness, but she has no way of supporting herself. She went into debt while she was sick because of the medical attention she needed. She's now so sad and destitute that she yearns for death, though she would never commit suicide because that would go against her Christian values. One day, her landlord's wife visits her and asks how she will pay the rent, which is long overdue. Charlotte tells her the truth about her situation, but this is a mistake: the woman now knows for sure that Charlotte has no way of paying, so she makes a point of saying that she won't "give away [her] property to a nasty, impudent hussy, to maintain her and her bastard." Having said this, she tells Charlotte to move out that very night.

The fact that the landlord's wife calls Charlotte an "impudent hussy"—an irreverent, immoral woman—is a good indication of just how harshly people in the surrounding society have judged her for being Montraville's mistress. Instead of extending empathy to Charlotte, the landlord's wife focuses on the fact that she can't pay rent, prioritizing money over human compassion.

CHAPTER 30

With nowhere else to go, Charlotte decides she'll head to New York so that she can implore Mrs. Crayton to help her. Before collecting her things, she writes a brief note reminding her old acquaintance that she played a major role in convincing Charlotte to come to America. Charlotte says she doesn't want much. She doesn't need Mrs. Crayton to accept her as a friend—she just needs a place to stay. Having finished the letter, she sets out for New York, trekking through heavy snowfall in very thin clothes.

Charlotte's decision to ask Mrs. Crayton—previously Mademoiselle La Rue—for help underscores her desperation. She seems to recognize that Mrs. Crayton pushed her into eloping with Montraville in the first place, which is ultimately what led her to these terrible circumstances. And yet, she has nobody else to turn to for help, so she tries to subtly guilt Mrs. Crayton into showing her compassion—an attempt that is unlikely to succeed, considering how selfish Mrs. Crayton has already proved herself to be.

CHAPTER 31

When Charlotte finally finds Mrs. Crayton's home, she asks the servant to give Mrs. Crayton the letter and tell her that she's outside. The servant interrupts Mrs. Crayton as she plays cards with her lover, Mr. Corydon, but Mrs. Crayton doesn't care—she skims the letter and claims not to know a Charlotte. When the servant comes back, Charlotte can't believe her ears.

In keeping with her selfish attitude, Mrs. Crayton refuses to help Charlotte. In fact, she pretends to not even know *the young woman, perhaps because she doesn't want to jeopardize her high position in society by associating with an unwed pregnant woman. Her behavior stands in stark contrast to Mrs. Beauchamp, who is much more respectable than Mrs. Crayton but still shows people like Charlotte compassion and kindness.*

Charlotte begs the servant to try once more, following him inside. Mrs. Crayton again refuses to let Charlotte in, but Charlotte overhears and bursts into the room. She kneels on the floor and begs for shelter from the frigid night, but Mrs. Crayton refuses, ordering the servant to drag her away. Struck by his employer's cruelty, the servant takes her to his own home and calls for a doctor, who attends to her as she gives birth in the early hours of morning.

Mrs. Crayton's cruelty is somewhat shocking, since even the most coldhearted person would most likely feel moved by seeing a pregnant woman who has just nearly frozen to death—even if that woman is a stranger. But Mrs. Crayton is motivated to turn Charlotte away, since she wants to preserve her status in society and thus fears associating with the likes of Charlotte. The irony, though, is that her cruelty most likely attracts more criticism from her servants (or even her lover) than simply helping Charlotte would. To that end, Crayton's servant kindly steps in to make up for her heartlessness, suggesting that he disapproves of his employer's behavior.

CHAPTER 32

Mrs. Crayton has always known that Charlotte is more virtuous and respectable than her. And yet, Mrs. Crayton found a way to rise above her station in life by marrying Mr. Crayton, and now she worries that admitting her past acquaintance with Charlotte would bring her own unsavory history to light, potentially prompting her husband to renounce her. But such cruelty usually has consequences, and all of Mrs. Crayton's servants make a point of talking about how unkind she was to a poor, destitute woman.

Susanna Rowson makes it quite clear that Mrs. Crayton's unkindness isn't the sort of thing that goes unnoticed. Once she treats Charlotte so poorly, her servants start talking about her lack of empathy, making her look terrible and, in that way, slowly chipping away at the reputation she's so eager to protect. Behaving unkindly, the author therefore suggests, only works against people.

Charlotte has now been with the servant and his family for three days. They live in poverty, but their home is still preferable to the frigid streets. Ever since giving birth, though, she has been speaking nonsense and experiencing extreme mental distress. The kind doctor attending to her visits Mrs. Beauchamp for an unrelated matter, and while he's there he tells her about Charlotte, though not by name. Moved by what he says, Mrs. Beauchamp makes her way to the servant's house to do what she can to help.

Unlike Mrs. Crayton (La Rue), Mrs. Beauchamp is eager to help people in need. In fact, she actively goes out of her way to extend empathy to others, which is exactly what she does when she visits Charlotte at the servant's house. Once again, she demonstrates her capacity to move through life with kindness, which she doesn't reserve for people within her own societal class—rather, she shows everyone *compassion, which the novel implies is one of the most virtuous things a person can do.*

CHAPTER 33

Mrs. Beauchamp is taken aback by Charlotte's haggard appearance, unable to recognize her. Charlotte, for her part, is too unwell to identify Mrs. Beauchamp, but she does perk up at the sound of her voice. She insists that she must know Mrs. Beauchamp, and as she speaks, Mrs. Beauchamp herself realizes that she's looking at Charlotte. Once they've identified each other, Charlotte excitedly remembers that Mrs. Beauchamp promised to mail her letter to her parents, so she tries to get out of bed—but she's unable, and her frantic and disoriented mental state returns. Mrs. Beauchamp does what she can to make the small apartment more suitable for Charlotte and pays the servant for his great deed.

The sudden improvement to Charlotte's health upon Mrs. Beauchamp's arrival suggests that the fond memory of a caring friend can go a long way toward making people feel better. Charlotte has gone through quite a lot since she last saw Mrs. Beauchamp: Belcour tricked Montraville into thinking they were having an affair, Montraville abandoned her while she was pregnant, she got evicted during a snowstorm, and Mrs. Crayton (La Rue) refused to give her shelter even though she was freezing and about to give birth. Needless to say, then, the arrival of a compassionate soul is undoubtedly a welcome development for Charlotte.

The next day, Mrs. Beauchamp returns and is encouraged to see that Charlotte is in a better state. Charlotte is even able to have a coherent conversation and hold her baby for the first time. When the doctor arrives, however, he says that Charlotte will most likely die very soon. Charlotte, for her part, admits that she's ready to die and that she only fears what will become of her newborn child. A priest comes to administer Charlotte's last rites, but then a knock sounds on the door. Mrs. Beauchamp opens it to find Mr. Temple. He demands to see his daughter, saying that he needs to bless her so that he can then "lie down and die." Hearing his voice, Charlotte jumps out of bed and rushes into his arms. As soon as they embrace, they both collapse.

Mrs. Beauchamp's initial kindness toward Charlotte comes to fruition in this scene, as it becomes clear that her offer to send Charlotte's letter to her parents worked. Mrs. Beauchamp is therefore responsible for reuniting Charlotte and her father—something that has seemed discouragingly impossible to Charlotte ever since Montraville convinced her to elope. Although she's in such poor health that the doctor says she'll soon die, she at least has a final chance to reunite with her father, thus adding a little bit of happiness to what has become an otherwise tragic existence.

Mr. Temple regains consciousness and finds Charlotte in bed once more. She looks affectionately at him and puts her newborn daughter into his arms. "Protect her," she says, "and bless your dying—," but she perishes before she can finish the sentence.

Charlotte's life comes to an end before she can regain the happiness of her youth. Since the novel is a cautionary tale, the fact that she dies sends a rather strong message: namely, that succumbing to temptation and vice can completely ruin an otherwise innocent person's life and even lead to death.

CHAPTER 34

Visiting New York, Montraville decides to check in on Charlotte. He has been unable to forget her and still feels awful about what happened. Belcour simply tells him that Charlotte left him, prompting Montraville to vow that he'll avenge Charlotte if he finds out that Belcour wronged her. Unable to find her, he happens to walk by her funeral while strolling through the street one evening. He stops someone and asks who they're burying, and he learns that the dead person was an unfortunate soul who followed a "cruel man" to America only to be abandoned when she was pregnant. As the man continues to describe the dead person, Montraville realizes he's talking about Charlotte Temple.

Montraville is selfish and unkind, but he still has a conscience, as made evident by his inability to simply forget about Charlotte. Instead of disappearing into his happy new life with Julia Franklin, Montraville has clearly been mulling over how he treated Charlotte. He has thought about it so much, it seems, that he felt the need to check on her, perhaps hoping that she's happy and well, since then he would be able to stop worrying about how he treated her. To his horror, though, he learns that she's certainly not *happy and well, thus forcing him to truly face the consequences of his selfish behavior.*

Montraville fights his way through the crowd and stops the funeral, saying that Charlotte can't be buried until he takes revenge on her "murderer." Mr. Temple tells him to stop holding up the service, revealing himself as Charlotte's father and demanding to know who Montraville is. Getting on his knees, Montraville reveals his identity and tells Mr. Temple to kill him and, in doing so, save him from "the misery of reflexion." But Mr. Temple refuses: if Montraville truly is the man who seduced Charlotte, then his guilt will be his God-given punishment, and Mr. Temple will not interfere with that.

When Montraville refers to Charlotte's "murderer," he's talking about Belcour, apparently believing that Belcour is to blame for her death. In a certain way, he might be right, since Belcour did *withhold the money Montraville had intended for her, thus forcing her to trek all the way to New York in a snowstorm right before giving birth. And yet, it's obvious that Montraville himself is to blame for Charlotte's demise, since he's the one who lured her away from the safety of Madame Du Pont's boarding school in the first place. In fact, even Montraville recognizes his own culpability in this scene, as he feels so guilty that he wishes he were dead. If Mr. Temple were to kill him, he thinks, it would even the scales. But Mr. Temple is a virtuous man who would never commit murder—plus, forcing Montraville to live with his mistakes is perhaps the most effective way to punish him.*

Montraville gets up and immediately seeks out Belcour. They fight, but Montraville ends up killing his former friend. Seriously wounded, he goes home to Julia and succumbs to a terrible illness. Because of Julia's love and care, though, he survives—and yet, he lives the rest of his life battling fits of depression, and he often goes to the graveyard where Charlotte was buried and cries over her grave.

Belcour and Montraville are among the novel's most immoral characters. It's significant, then, that they both meet such terrible ends, ultimately suggesting that selfishness and vice only lead to misery and pain.

CHAPTER 35

Mr. Temple returns to England with his granddaughter, whom he and his wife name Lucy. After they mourn Charlotte, the Temples manage to establish a happy life with Lucy. It almost feels as if they've regained Charlotte. Roughly ten years after Charlotte's death, the family goes to London for some business, and when they return, they find a haggard old woman on their doorstep. They usher her inside and do whatever they can to help her, since she's clearly unwell. When she comes to her senses, the old woman reveals that she's Mademoiselle La Rue. She says that she doesn't deserve their kindness because she refused to help Charlotte, but the Temples let her stay.

Unlike many of the characters in Charlotte Temple, *the Temples are extraordinarily virtuous. They don't let a thirst for revenge ruin the rest of their lives—rather, they focus on raising Charlotte's daughter in a loving and supportive household. Meanwhile, selfish people like La Rue focus only on themselves, but this worldview only leads to unhappiness, as evidenced by La Rue's rapid decline from wealth to destitution.*

La Rue says she has been separated from Mr. Crayton for seven years. In that time, she has lived a life of vice, but now she's impoverished and unwell. She hasn't eaten in two days, and she slept the previous night on the hard ground—an appropriate punishment, she says, for forcing a similar kind of destitution on Charlotte. Mr. Temple has no reason to show La Rue kindness, but he still lets her stay the night and then checks her into a hospital the following day. She dies a few weeks later, providing what the author says is a good example of how vice might seem "prosperous in the beginning" but always ends in "misery and shame."

Mr. Temple's kindness is presented as an admirable thing. Instead of taking revenge on La Rue, he and Lucy show her the compassion that she herself failed to extend to Charlotte. But they don't do this to make a point—rather, they simply do it because they believe in the value of kindness. It is morally right, the novel implies, to treat others well, even when that means forgiving people who have done terrible things. In a sense, then, the novel ends with a very Christian message about practicing forgiveness and compassion in a "turn the other cheek" kind of way. Even more prominent, though, is the author's final message about vice, which clearly spells out her idea that certain forms of misbehavior often seem rewarding at first but really just lead to tragedy and suffering.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Lannamann, Taylor. "*Charlotte Temple*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 23 Jan 2022. Web. 23 Jan 2022.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Lannamann, Taylor. "*Charlotte Temple*." LitCharts LLC, January 23, 2022. Retrieved January 23, 2022. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/charlotte-temple.

To cite any of the quotes from *Charlotte Temple* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Rowson, Susanna. Charlotte Temple. Penguin. 1991.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Rowson, Susanna. Charlotte Temple. London: Penguin. 1991.