

# The Novel of Werther (1938)

Max Ophüls (1902-1957)

## OVERVIEW

**Auteur:** Maximilian Oppenheimer, known as Max Ophüls, was a German-born film director. He was born in Saarbrücken, the son of Leopold Oppenheimer, a Jewish textile manufacturer, and his wife Helene Oppenheimer (née Bamberger). He took the pseudonym Ophüls during the early part of his theatrical career so that, should he fail, it wouldn't embarrass his father. Initially envisioning an acting career, he started as a stage actor in 1919. He became creative director of the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1926. He turned to film production in 1929. He worked in Germany (1931–1933), France (1933–1940 and 1950–1957), and the United States (1947–1950). He made nearly 30 films, with the most notable ones being: *La Ronde* (1950), *Le Plaisir* (1952), *The Earrings of Madame de...* (1953), and *Lola Montès* (1955). Ophüls died from rheumatic heart disease on 26 March 1957 in Hamburg, while shooting interiors on *The Lovers of Montparnasse*, and was buried in Paris. The annual film festival Max Ophüls Preis in Saarbrücken is named after him.

**Film:** *The Novel of Werther* (French: *Le Roman de Werther*) is a 1938 French historical drama film. It stars Pierre Richard-Wilm, Annie Vernay, Jean Galland, and Jean Périer. It is based on the 1774 novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang Goethe. The screenplay is written by Hans Wilhelm, Fernand Crommelynck, and Max Ophüls. The cinematography is by Fédote Bourgasoff, Paul Portier, and Eugen Schüfftan. The music is by Paul Dessau. The story of the film follows Goethe's original. The plot is about Werther, a sensitive young man, who has fallen madly in love with Charlotte who is the fiancée of Werther's best friend Albert. The film received little attention and is not exactly considered Ophüls' main work. According to his statement, the director did not know how to deal with the legendary Goethe material properly. *The Lexicon of International Film* wrote: 'The romantic story based on Goethe's novel is staged with perfect taste, at the same time poetic and tender, pathetic and delicate. With *Werther*, the director for the first time derived the impressionistic effect of his film not from the artificial studio buildings, but from the charm of the natural landscape of the Upper Rhine.'

**Historical background:** The film was made by Nero Film which was a company run by German exiles who had left following the Nazi rise to power. It was filmed in Alsace, exterior shots were taken in Riquewihr/Reichenweier and Ammerschwihr/Ammerschweier, and studio shots were taken in Paris. *The Novel of Werther* was released on 14 December 1938. The film is based on *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (German: *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*), or simply *Werther*, a 1774 epistolary novel by Johann Wolfgang Goethe. It was one of the main novels in the *Sturm und Drang* period in German literature and influenced the later Romantic movement. Goethe who was aged 24 at the time finished the novel in five and a half weeks of intensive writing from January to March 1774.

## CHARACTERS

**Werther:** A young and sentimental man who falls in love with Charlotte

**Charlotte:** A young woman engaged to Albert, has feelings for Werther, but cannot commit to him

**Albert:** A judge at the Palace of Justice, fiancé of Charlotte, a rational person

**Aunt Emma:** Charlotte's aunt who is very protective of her and keeps guarding her

**President:** The president of the Palace of Justice, an old man who is fond of music and singing

**Murderer:** 'Marienhof murderer', a man who kills the woman he loves

**Portraitist:** An artist who paints silhouette portraits of Aunt Emma and Charlotte

**Franz:** Werther's valet who helps him with daily duties

**little Gustave:** Charlotte's little brother who meets Werther in a carriage and is gifted a hat by him

**Grand Duke:** The Duke of Walheim who receives a petition from Werther and agrees to sign it

**Werther's colleagues:** Colleagues of Werther who work in the Palace of Justice

**Servants:** Servants of the houses of Albert and Charlotte's father

## SYNOPSIS

A boy called Gustav meets a young man called Werther in a carriage on the way to Walheim. Werther gifts a hat to the boy. Werther starts working as a referendary at the Palace of Justice. There he meets a judge called Albert who is Charlotte's fiancé. As Albert plans to go away for two or three months, he borrows Werther's pistols. At a fair, Gustav sees Werther and makes him meet his big sister Charlotte. Werther believes they are a predestined couple. In the following weeks, Charlotte and Werther start taking walks in the forest. Werther is deeply in love and finally proposes to Charlotte. However, Charlotte confesses that she is engaged to Albert which crushes Werther's spirits. Albert and Charlotte eventually get married while Werther falls into self-imposed isolation, distracts himself with alcohol, and his work quality deteriorates drastically. Charlotte also falls into a depression. The two still see each other on the days when the President of the Palace of Justice sings once a week and they play instruments. One night, the President tells Albert and Charlotte that Werther is in despair because the woman he loves is not free. Soon, Albert gets suspicious of Charlotte and Werther. Later, Werther writes a letter to Charlotte in which he expresses that he cannot live without her. Charlotte goes to the church to seek advice and the priest tells her not to abandon her husband. Meanwhile, Albert and Werther meet at the Palace of Justice to discuss the Marienhof murderer who killed the woman he loved so that she couldn't be with anyone else. Werther pities and sympathizes with the murderer's passion while Albert defends the moral pillars of society. Charlotte cannot bear the weight of her feelings anymore and has an emotional breakdown. Werther decides to leave Walheim permanently and sends his valet Franz to Albert's house to ask for his pistols. Charlotte intuitively feels that Werther will commit suicide and prays ardently to God. Werther rides his horse to the meadows where Charlotte and he used to meet and kills himself. While the workmen carry the body of Werther, not one priest accompanies them. After the news of Werther's death, Albert is consternated and Charlotte is desolate.

## SCENES

### **A boy meets a young man in a carriage who gifts him a hat**

We see a carriage traveling on the earthy roads. A child standing on the road asks the driver whether he can take him and the driver tells the boy to climb in. After the boy gets in the carriage, he meets a young man who talks to him enthusiastically. The young man asks the child what his name is. The child says his name is Gustav. The young man in turn introduces himself as Werther. Werther playfully gives his hat to the child which is too big for the child's head. Then he fixes it so that it fits the child. They continue their journey in joy.



### **Referendary Werther arrives in the town**

When Werther gets off the carriage, a man greets him and asks whether he is referendary Werther. Werther answers in the affirmative. The man says he has reserved the best rooms for him.



### **Mr. President and Albert talk about Werther**

Mr. President and Albert look out from the window and see Werther who is carrying a music stand. Mr. President notes that Werther doesn't look very steady on his legs.



### **Gustav's father rebukes Gustav for being late**

The child who was in the carriage enters his home. However, his father angrily asks him to go to bed as he is late. He also tells him to take off his 'ridiculous' hat. After their meal is over, the father gives a blessing to God and leaves the house.



### **Gustav talks to his big sister Charlotte about Werther**

Charlotte, the big sister of Gustav, gives him food after their father has left the house. While he is eating, he tells Charlotte about how a young man in the carriage gave the hat to him. He says to his sister that the man was kind and played with him. Charlotte remarks he sounds original.



### **Albert and Werther meet and Albert reads Werther's introduction letter**

Albert and Werther meet. Albert tells him that the president has been expecting his arrival at the Palace of Justice. At this point, Werther hands his letter of introduction to Albert. Albert starts reading a poetic piece: 'On the shore where scattered flux exhausts itself, here the pensive, solitary conqueror awaits tomorrow.' Then Werther shows him his introduction letter. After reading his letter, Albert asks him when he can begin his functions. Werther is joyful and tells him that he can begin right away. Then he explains how he drank too much with his friends the other night as he was going to depart from them. Albert responds that he understands and will give his excuses to the president. He says he expects Werther to come to his office at 9 the next day and leaves.



### **Albert will be away for two or three months and borrows Werther's pistols**

On the next morning, Albert introduces Werther to the staff. Albert informs Werther that he will be away for two or three months. Then Albert says to him that he has noticed Werther has two pistols and asks him whether he can borrow them. Werther replies he will gladly send them to him. Later, Werther remarks that the atmosphere of the room is not very gay, so he wishes to bring flowers to decorate the room. He also recounts how he was discharged from his work because he used to wear flowers on him and was regularly late.



### **Albert and Werther both have the same book by Jean Jacques Rousseau**

Albert wishes to give a piece of advice to Werther before he leaves for his trip. He tells Werther to be prudent while he takes out from Werther's jacket Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. He warns him that that sort of subversive literature is forbidden in the Grand Duchy. Then he goes to show Werther that he guards his books under key. It turns out Albert reads the same book as Werther. Then a man enters the room they are in and Albert changes the subject to music. Werther says to him that he plays the violin. Albert replies that they need a violin for the concerts their president has each week. Then Werther sees him off as Albert leaves the town.



### **Charlotte shows her new dress to Albert, and later she sees him off**

Charlotte shows her new dress which she plans to wear at the fair to Albert. Albert says to her that there will be no-one prettier at the fair. Charlotte wants him to promise that he will be back for the fair. After Albert promises, they start dancing in the room. Then Charlotte's father wishes Albert a good trip. As Charlotte sees Albert off, she says to him that she will pray for him every evening.



### **Charlotte hears her little brothers reciting a poem from a piece of paper**

As Charlotte goes upstairs, she hears her little brothers reciting a poem: 'I am the singing bird. I fly toward her.' She enters the room and asks the children what is going on. She further asks them where they found the paper on which the poem is written. The children tell her that they found the paper in the hat lining. She says the poem



is not for children, wishes them good night, and leaves the room. In the corridor, she starts reading the poem out loud: 'Fatal star, hear my song of love...'

#### **Gustav talks to Werther and wants him to meet his sister**

It is fair time. Gustav looks through a telescope and sees a young man looking at him. He soon recognizes him as Werther. He starts running toward Werther and Charlotte follows him. Gustav talks to Werther about how he gave him the hat that Werther had slept on in the stagecoach. Then he wants him to meet his big sister Charlotte.



#### **Werther dances with Charlotte and tells her they are a predestined couple**

Werther meets Charlotte and explains to her how he gave his hat to Gustav a few weeks ago. Then they start dancing. Werther asks Charlotte whether she doesn't recognize him. Charlotte is surprised and says: 'How could I? I'm meeting you for the first time.' Werther asks: 'Do you think people can't recognize each other without having seen each other? I was watching you with the children. I recognized you. Don't we move as though we've always danced together?' When Charlotte answers in the affirmative, Werther says he believes they are a predestined couple. Charlotte's countenance changes all of a sudden and she says she doesn't believe it. Aunt Emma shouts for Charlotte one more time and tells her that she should not dance with other men.



#### **Charlotte and Werther both participate in a game that the townspeople organize**

In the evening, there is a game that the townspeople organize. A man tells the audience that whoever owns the item in his hand will go to the next room to await their destiny. Then he asks everyone who owns the fan in his hand. Charlotte steps forward as she is the owner of the fan. Next, the man says the next item belongs to a man and he must go kiss the lady as though her heart is to woo. Werther steps forward to say he owns the game. The man tells them to go to the next room and stay there as they count to 10.

#### **Charlotte and Werther wait and talk in the room until the people count to ten**

In the room, Werther tells Charlotte that he arranged all this. Meanwhile, the people in the main room count to 10. Charlotte tells Werther that he won and waits for him to kiss her. But Werther says that even if they had counted to 20, he wouldn't have kissed her. Charlotte asks for the reason and Werther replies that it'd be too soon.



#### **Werther buys a silhouette painting of Charlotte and Aunt Emma from an artist**

As Charlotte and Aunt Emma enter the carriage, Aunt Emma asks him thus: 'Mr. Werther, if you look where we were sitting, there's an ivory fan.' Werther says he will bring it. As Werther goes to search for the fan, an artist stops him and tells him that he has a silhouette of someone who seems to interest him very much. He tells Werther that he saw them dancing and hands him a silhouette of Charlotte and Aunt Emma. Werther gives the artist three thalers and buys the painting.



#### **Aunt Emma becomes anxious as she cannot find Charlotte near her**

Aunt Emma wakes up in the coach, but Charlotte is not present. She asks the coachman anxiously where Charlotte and Werther are. The driver tells her that they got out two minutes ago.

#### **Charlotte and Werther walk in the forest and recite poems**

As Charlotte and Werther walk in the forest, he tells her that he wrote a poem just for her: 'I am the singing bird...' Charlotte completes his recitation: 'I fly toward her. Under leaves already dark...' Werther cannot



believe she knows his poem. She replies that it is no more unbelievable than to be recognized without having been seen: 'When meeting is fatal, even hats get involved.'

#### **Charlotte asks Werther not to show her portrait to anyone**

As they keep walking, Charlotte asks Werther how he has her portrait. Werther says it is providence just like she has his poem. She tells him that he cannot keep her portrait and wants it back. Werther replies that he wants to keep her portrait. She makes him promise not to show her portrait to anyone.



#### **Charlotte talks to Werther about how she runs the house and her devotion to singing and music**

Later, she asks him whether he is a poet. Werther replies that he never pleased his publishers, so he is a magistrate. Charlotte tells him that since her mother died, she runs the house. With what time remains, she devotes herself to music, sings, and transcribes folk songs. They listen to the sounds of the carillon. Next, she sings a song for Werther. Werther wishes to see Charlotte in the following weeks on Sundays, but she says she cannot and must not.

#### **The President and Werther talk about the tune of the carillon and Werther wishes to make a petition to the Grand Duke**

The President encounters Werther who is standing and singing to himself in the corner of the street. The President asks him about the girl he is singing for and says to him that his situation is dangerous. As they walk on the streets, they hear the sound of the carillon. Werther asks the President whether he knows the origin of the melody and he wonders why the people of Walheim chose a foreign tune for their carillon. The President confirms Werther that the composer Redel was born in Walheim. Later, Werther asks the President whether they can make a petition to the Grand Duke. The President thinks it is not a bad idea.



#### **The Grand Duke agrees to sign the petition of Werther**

The Grand Duke listens to a man playing music. He finds the tune melancholic and wants to hear the lyrics. A man reads: 'You only have my heart, Be it folly or reason. Your soul is my prison. Heart of my heart, I can't forget you.' The Duke says he does not find those words passionate. He further asks whose idea the petition was. His assistant replies that it was Referendary Werther's idea. It has been doing the rounds for 4 weeks, signed by everyone in the city. When the Grand Duke finds out that the new mechanism will be financed by the citizens of the city, he agrees to sign the petition.



#### **Albert returns to Walheim and is greeted by Charlotte's father**

Albert returns to Walheim. Charlotte's father congratulates Albert for his success in his exams. He asks Albert whether he is coming to the mass. Albert answers in the affirmative. The father shouts Charlotte's name. A servant tells him that Charlotte went out and she would meet them at the church.



#### **Werther proposes to Charlotte but she confesses she is promised to Albert and leaves Werther**

Charlotte and Werther meet in the woods while her family is at the church. Werther says to her that it is the last time they meet in the woods and hide. Then he holds her hand and asks her to say yes to each sentence he utters. Then he talks about how they'll go back together on foot and cross the city hand in hand to her father's house. Werther says that he will explain to Charlotte's father about how they meet every Sunday under a big tree and will confess his love for her: 'And it's true as God is my witness that I'll never love another.' But Charlotte withdraws her hand and says it is the last time they meet: 'I know I should've told you, I wanted to every Sunday, I didn't dare.' Then she confesses that she is promised to Albert. She says farewell and goes away.



**Charlotte faints because of her emotional overwhelm**

As Charlotte comes back to the town, she hears the sounds of the carillon. She closes her ears and starts running away from the sounds. However, she cannot take it anymore and faints. A child finds her and she is taken to a place to rest as she has a fever. Albert comes near her and Charlotte is happy to see him when she opens her eyes.

**The employees talk about the upcoming marriage between Charlotte and Albert**

The employees at the Palace of Justice talk about the upcoming marriage between Charlotte and Albert. One of the men comments that it is natural to marry. The other one surprisedly asks: 'Yes, but the judge?' The man replies: 'Which proves a judge too can lack judgment.' Then the others start laughing. They still think they should congratulate them. They decide to buy a big bouquet.

**Werther congratulates Albert's engagement in a formal fashion and Albert praises him for his work**

Werther enters Albert's room and wishes him happiness on the occasion of his engagement while addressing him as 'Herr Judge'. Albert is surprised at his formality. When Albert mentions that he is sure he will be very happy, Werther comments that Charlotte is a sincere and modest young lady. Albert tells him that Charlotte told him about how Werther danced with her at the fair. Later, he praises Werther on how he won the admiration of all their colleagues. He further adds that the President wishes to have a music evening each week at Albert's house after his marriage and invites Werther to these events.

**Albert and Charlotte promise to always tell the truth to each other**

On the occasion of the wedding, the townspeople wish a long life for the bride. It turns out Charlotte has drunk alcohol too and feels giddy. Albert wants that they will always tell each other the truth and they will not hide secrets from each other.

**Werther distracts himself with alcohol to forget about Charlotte**

Werther starts frequenting taverns and distracting himself with alcohol. Men working at the tavern talk among themselves about how Werther has the face of death. As he is about to crush the glass he is holding in his hand, the tavern keeper stops him.

**Albert rebukes Werther for his inappropriate behavior and deteriorating work quality while Werther remains silent**

In the next scene, we see Albert asking him to defend himself. He asks Werther for the reason for his out-of-character behavior. He tells him that the report is odious and grotesque. Further, he mentions that Werther has been seen delirious at the church, banging on the door, and threatening God. Albert states that the affair will go to the President. He also adds that Werther has neglected the President's concerts for the last two weeks and asks him to come to his house that night and believes that maybe it would be easier for him to talk in an atmosphere of friendship.

**Gustav asks Charlotte why she has cried, Charlotte asks him not to tell anyone about her crying**

As Charlotte talks to the children, Gustav comes near her and tells her that he wants to say something to her. They go inside the house. Gustav asks her why she was crying before. Charlotte denies having cried. But Gustav insists that he saw her crying all alone and that he is going to tell papa. Charlotte gets defensive and angry all of a sudden and speaks in a loud



voice to Gustav that he won't tell anyone. Gustav tries to run to his papa, but Charlotte stops him. She tries to assure Gustav that she cries because of happiness.

### **Mr. President sings while Charlotte and Werther play instruments**

In the next scene, we see Mr. President singing while Charlotte is playing the piano and Werther the violin. As the music ends, Charlotte and Werther look at each other. The President notices Charlotte got emotional and wipes tears from her eyes: 'You're moved? But it's youth's privilege to be so inspired.' He talks about how he was also young once and admired: 'One speaks of the past, one dreams, and suddenly reality recalls you.' Then he asks Albert to come to the next room with him to discuss the Marienhof affair.



### **Charlotte and Werther talk about the impossibility of their relationship**

Charlotte and Werther are alone in the music room and she starts crying. Werther says to her: 'You mustn't cry, Charlotte.' Charlotte asks Werther whether it is true that he drinks so much every night. Werther says that it is hard to forget what is and what will always be. Charlotte adds: '...and what cannot be, Werther.' Werther says that he shouldn't have come and asks her to forgive him.



### **Werther wishes to leave, Charlotte gives him poem back to him as she believes she shouldn't keep it**

Albert and the President come back to the music room. Werther wishes to be excused. Albert asks Charlotte to bring the book he'd promised Werther. Werther goes near Charlotte. She says to him that she has found his poem. Werther calls it 'childishness', but Charlotte says she reads it often and always finds it beautiful. But she believes she shouldn't keep it and gives it back to Werther. Werther replies that belongs to her. She tells him it mustn't belong to her and asks him to understand. Werther is dispirited: 'As if understanding could help!' As he leaves, she tells him to put on his coat as autumn is beginning. Werther replies: 'Autumn is beginning. There has been no summer.'



### **The President tells Albert that Werther is deeply troubled because of a woman**

After Werther leaves, The President says Werther started to talk to him when he was faced with the possibility of having to leave the city and confessed that his problem was about a woman he loved who was not free. At this point, Albert notices that Charlotte has started to tremble. Then she excuses herself. The President says he feels sorry for the poor fellow. He says that at his age, he's seen many things, but not passion and despair to such an extent. When Albert notices that Charlotte is standing by the window, he notices that something is amiss. He asks the President whether the woman Werther loves is married. The President says all he knows is that she is not free.



### **Albert does not let Charlotte talk to Werther, Charlotte locks herself up in her room**

Albert comes near Charlotte and asks her if she heard their conversation. Then he says that Werther is going to be forced to ask for a change of residence. Charlotte replies that she could talk to and help him. Albert rejects her idea. Charlotte goes to her room and locks the door. Albert asks her to open the door and tell him everything.



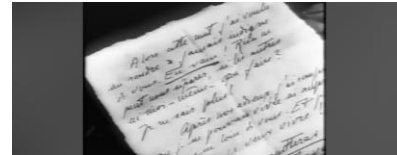
### People at the tavern mock Werther's poem

While Werther is in a tavern, one woman searches the pockets of his jacket and finds the poem he wrote. The woman and her friend start laughing frantically about the poem. They go to the main hall, read it aloud to everyone, and laugh mockingly. Werther shouts and tells them to stop, but his wish is ignored as they keep laughing at him.



### Charlotte reads Werther's love letter and rushes out

In the next scene, we see Werther's letter in which he writes: 'Nothing can separate us, not others, not I. What to do? I don't know. After our confessions, I've understood I can live neither near you, nor away and yet I want to live! I'll not leave my room until I hear from you.' After reading the letter, Charlotte rushes out.



### Werther waits for a message from Charlotte

Meanwhile, Werther waits in his room impatiently. He asks his valet Franz whether any message has arrived or anyone has come. He further tells him that he is waiting for a letter, or maybe a visitor and asks him to not make them wait.



### Albert learns that Charlotte has left the house after receiving Werther's message

Albert arrives home and asks about Charlotte's whereabouts. His servants tell him that Charlotte went out about a quarter-hour ago after Herr Werther's valet brought a message for her.



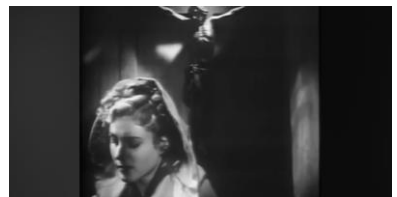
### Werther is called to the Palace of Justice to attend to the case of the Marienhof murder

Franz informs Werther that a court employee has come: 'They say the murderer from Marienhof has just given himself up.' So, they ask Werther to come to the Palace of Justice. Werther replies that he will come.



### Charlotte confesses her feelings to the priest, the priest tells her to not abandon her husband

Charlotte is at the church and confesses to the priest. She says: 'Not a day of rest, not an hour, since I met him. I think of him despite myself. I must love my husband, and I always feel the other one looking at me. I want to love only my husband. And I always hear the other's voice speaking. I should have told him right away that I was engaged. I wanted to...but the words didn't come. I did not lie and I did not tell the truth. Is there a lie in me? Today I received a terrible letter from him...This letter, must I destroy it and keep quiet? Will my silence be another lie?' The priest tells her not to abandon her husband nor hide anything from him and that this is her path.



### Werther interrogates the Marienhof murderer

In the next scene, we see the Marienhof murderer who wishes to die in peace. He says that now she is dead, he can die, too. Werther asks him: 'You loved her and you killed her?' The murderer replies that he murdered her with his two hands: 'And I loved her. Can you understand that, you? I didn't want her to be with another. With me, with me alone.' After this conversation, Werther orders that the irons be taken off the man.





**Werther and Albert discuss the murder case and Werther pities the murderer**

Albert arrives at the scene. After greeting Werther, he sees the murderer is not in chains and asks the reason for it. Werther says that he is the one who had his chains removed. He explains to Albert that the murderer did not kill to steal. Rather he was sick and insane with love. The fact that the woman was not free is what made the murderer lose his head.

**Albert believes that the facts must be judged coldly**

Albert doesn't share Werther's pity: 'There are facts which must be judged coldly.' Werther finds Albert's attitude strange and tells him that it is as if he's hearing him for the first time. Albert thinks Werther was against eternal rights sacred to him: 'You say love's a natural right. And you say a murderer has it. But the victim? And what about the husband from whom the crime takes the creature he loved?' Werther gets angry and asks about which man loved more: 'Hasn't the murderer destroyed his happiness forever by killing her?'

**Albert thinks there must be limits to passion**

Albert retorts that there are limits to passion and it is the judge who defines them. There are principles to insure family and society against the excess of existence: '...a society cannot be established except on moral tradition.' Werther says that he has no wish to offend him but he doesn't know if Albert has ever suffered: 'I don't wish it on you, not on anyone. But if you'd known the bitterness of solitude and disappointment...' Albert asks with a self-righteous tone: 'As terrible as it may be, does bitterness justify the crime? Reply, does it?'

**Werther says he wouldn't give up his feelings in order to judge, Albert wishes him to resign from his role**

Werther's answer is thus: 'If I must divide my life in two and denude myself of feelings each morning like cast-offs left home when one goes to court and dons a judge's robe, then I'd rather renounce it.' Albert thinks Werther is not a judge and he will be asked to resign. Werther's opinions and ethics scare him. He fears for himself and his family. Werther assures him he has nothing to be afraid of as he will leave Walheim that day. Albert advises him to do so despite regretting having lost a friend.

**Werther talks to Franz and watches the rain**

Werther sits by the window and watches the rain. He asks Franz whether he has left the house after him. He answers that he hasn't. Then he finds the old portrait and gives it to Werther. He further asks Werther whether he will leave during the bad weather. Werther says he will pay him the half-month and two months in advance. After Franz leaves, Werther keeps looking out the window.

**Charlotte screams in agony as she cannot bear the weight of her situation anymore**

Charlotte watches the rain by looking out the window while the carillon of the church is heard. She closes her ears with her hands and starts screaming in agony in her room. Two servants run into her room and try to calm her down by giving her a glass of water. Charlotte tells the servant not to say one word to Albert as she does not want him to worry.



**Albert and Charlotte talk about Werther, Charlotte gives Werther's letter to Albert, but he tears it**

When Albert comes near Charlotte, she notices how cold his hands are. Albert says he is just tired and talks about how the murderer from Marienhof was arrested. Later, he explains that he had a serious argument with Werther about the murder case. When Charlotte comes near him, he asks her where she has been all afternoon. Charlotte replies that she was at the church. She adds that she also received a letter from Werther and asks Albert whether he wants to read it. Albert tears the letter apart.



**Franz informs Albert that Herr Werther wants his pistols back**

Franz goes to Albert's house. He informs Albert that Werther leaves that night on a long trip, sends his respects, and requests the return of the pistols which he lent to Herr Judge.



**Charlotte finds the pistols but tells Albert she couldn't find them**

Albert goes to search for Werther's pistols and asks Charlotte whether she knows where they are. He tells her to go to the attic and says maybe she will see them in the trunk. Charlotte hesitates as she intuits that Werther might take his own life. She finds the pistols in the trunk but closes the trunk at once. She lies to Albert that she hasn't found them.



**Albert finds the pistols and gives them to Franz**

Albert goes to look for them himself. After he finds the pistols, he says to Charlotte that she didn't want to find them. He gives the pistols to Franz and says to him: 'Tell your master I hope he has a good trip.'



**Charlotte prays ardently as she knows that Werther will commit suicide**

Charlotte starts praying ardently: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come... Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.' Albert hears her voice, comes near her, and has a shocked look on his face as he witnesses her fervent prayer.



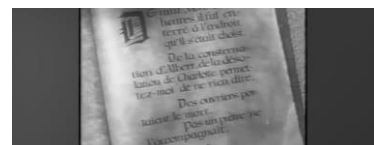
**Werther leaves his horse and kills himself with the pistol**

Werther rides his horse to the meadows where he and Charlotte used to spend time. He looks at his horse for the last time and leaves. A few moments later, the sound of a pistol is heard and the horse moves away with haste.



**Charlotte is desolated by the death of Werther, no priest takes part in Werther's funeral**

In the last scene, we see a page of a book on which it is written thus: 'One night, toward 11, he was buried in the place he had chosen. Of Albert's consternation, of Charlotte's desolation, permit me to say nothing. Some workmen carried the dead man. Not one priest accompanied them.'



## CHARACTERS ANALYSIS

**Werther:** Werther is the protagonist of the film. He works as a referendary at the Palace of Justice in Walheim. He is also a violin player. He falls in love with Charlotte at first sight. However, their relationship is ill-fated as Charlotte is already engaged to Albert. After facing rejection from Charlotte, Werther falls into a deep depression. His character can be described as sentimental, artistic, melancholic, and passionate.

*Sentimental:* Werther is a sentimental character, that is; he is someone who is strongly influenced by emotional feelings, especially about memories of past events or relationships with other people, rather than by careful thought and judgment based on facts. Werther's sentimentality lies in the fact that he is easily swayed by his feelings for Charlotte to such an extent that he cannot accept the reality that she decided to marry Albert. When Charlotte asks him to understand her situation, he replies with: 'Understand. As if understanding would help.' His reply shows us that he is more focused on his own perspective, thus self-absorbed and indulgent in his emotional state, and not necessarily interested in hearing Charlotte's perspective.

*Artistic:* Werther's artistic side can be seen in the poetry he writes and the violin he plays. Despite being a referendary and thus being involved in a rational occupation, his emotional and artistic sides are much more prominent. His poems also help him connect with Charlotte on a deeper level as she understands the depth of Werther's emotions through these poems.

*Passionate:* Werther is a person who is ruled by his passion for Charlotte. After finding out that Charlotte is engaged to be married to Albert, he cannot cope with the reality of the situation and engages in self-harming behavior such as trying to numb his pain by drinking alcohol or disorderly behavior such as acting delirious at the church, banging on the door, and threatening God. All these passionate behaviors culminate in his ultimate self-destructive act of suicide.

**Charlotte:** Charlotte is a young lady who takes care of her sisters and brothers after her mother's death. In her spare time, she transcribes folk songs and sings. Even though she is engaged to Albert, she keeps seeing Werther on Sundays in secret. However, she ultimately rejects him and gets married to Albert. Nevertheless, her conscience is not clear as she struggles with guilt about Werther's depression and despair.

*Sensitive:* Charlotte's sensitivity can be seen in the way she enjoys and appreciates the deep and emotional poems of Werther. She also has an artistic side similar to Werther as she plays the piano and is sensitive to various kinds of music, such as the carillon sounds of the church. Later on in the film, after she tells the truth to Werther about her engagement to Albert and gets married to him; she falls into a depression. She cries on her own which her little brother Gustav notices. Approaching the end of the film, she also has an emotional breakdown which once again shows us her sensitive nature.

*Dutiful:* Being dutiful refers to conscientiously or obediently fulfilling one's duty. Charlotte is highly aware of her social roles and responsibilities in running the house. She assumes the role of a mother as she takes care of all her little sisters and brothers. Moreover, the reason why she rejects Werther is because her being promised to and duty to Albert weigh more heavily than her feelings for Werther. She is also a devout Christian and heeds the advice of the priest who tells her to not abandon her husband.

*Conflicted:* Charlotte's inner conflict stems from her being torn between her fiancé Albert and her lover Werther. As she is already engaged to Albert at the time she meets Werther, she has a sense of duty that she should stay loyal to her fiancé. However, she also has strong feelings for Werther as can be observed in her interactions with him: she appreciates his poems, meets with him every Sunday, and cannot let him out of her mind even after marrying Albert. Thus, she is torn between her duty to her husband, religious, and societal obligations on the one hand; and her feelings, compassion, and sympathy she has for Werther.

**Albert:** Albert works as a judge at the Palace of Justice. He is engaged to Charlotte at the beginning of the film. He and Werther are colleagues. Albert's character can be described as rational, dutiful, and conventional as he represents a calmer and more logical counterpart to Werther. Throughout the film, he reflects a stable and steady personality which builds a contrast to Werther's inconstant and unbalanced psyche.

*Rational:* Albert is guided by reason and logic in his endeavors and way of life. His profession of being a judge matches his calm-headed and sensible personality. His rational character can be most distinctly observed in the scene where he and Werther discuss the case of the Marienhof murderer. While Werther sympathizes with and defends the murderer because he thinks the murderer is sick and insane with love, Albert unequivocally condemns the murderer's behavior. He believes that even though the feelings of solitude and disappointment may be tragic for the one who experiences them, these feelings of despair do not justify killing in the name of love. Here, we thus see how Albert acts based on reason rather than emotions.

*Dutiful:* Albert's dutifulness can be seen in his approach both to his work and personal life. He is a successful judge and also holds Werther to the similar high standards he set for himself. When Albert comes back from his trip, he commends Werther for his high-quality work and how he won the admiration of all his colleagues. However, when Albert soon notices Werther acting in a self-destructive fashion and neglecting his work, he rebukes him for his out-of-character behavior. Thus, we can assert that the way Albert evaluates Werther is closely bound up with his high levels of conscientiousness or dutifulness.

*Conventional:* In contrast to Werther, Albert is a rather conventional character who might be said to follow societal norms and expectations. He is calm, clear-headed, and obeys the morals and etiquette laid out by society. As pointed out by Werther, his conventionality may also be rooted in pragmatism as he seems to have benefitted from leading a conventional way of life and not suffered from the vicissitudes of fortune or passions like Werther or the Marienhof murderer did.

**The President:** The President is the head of the Palace of Justice. He is an old and sensible man who also has an artistic side. In the latter half of the film, he shares the secret of Werther with both Albert and Charlotte as he tells them that Werther suffers tremendously because of loving a woman who is not free.

*Artistic:* The President gives concerts every week at Albert's house. Thus, he has artistic sensibilities. In one of the scenes, we see him singing while Charlotte plays the piano and Werther the violin.

**Aunt Emma:** Aunt Emma is a middle-aged woman who guards Charlotte. She plays a rather minor role in the film, but she can be characterized as very protective of her.

*Protective:* Aunt Emma's protective nature can be seen in the way she attends to Charlotte. One of the scenes where her protectiveness comes to the forefront is when she admonishes Charlotte to not dance with other men at the fair. Another scene which reflects her protectiveness is when she wakes up in the carriage and looks anxiously for Charlotte who is absent and searches for her.

**Charlotte's father:** Charlotte's father plays a minor role, but he can be characterized as strict based on how he behaves toward his little son Gustav.

*Strict:* Charlotte's father strictness is observable when Gustav comes home late for the afternoon meal. The father angrily asks the little boy to go to bed as he is late. He also tells him to take off his 'ridiculous' hat which shows us that he is not kind in his behavior toward his children.

**Gustav:** Gustav is Charlotte's little brother. He is first seen at the very beginning of the film where he meets Werther in a carriage on the way to Walheim. He likes Werther as he plays with him and gifts him his hat. He is also a rather sensitive character.

**Sensitive:** Gustav's sensitiveness is seen when he tells Charlotte that he has seen her crying on her own and asks her why she cries. We can thus say that his attunement to Charlotte's emotions reflects his sensitivity.

## THEMES

### SOCIETY

**Religion** Religion plays a significant role in *The Novel of Werther*. The major religion practiced in Walheim is Christianity. Both Albert, Charlotte, and Charlotte's family are devout followers of the religion. Their devoutness can be seen in their attending of masses which are liturgical services. However, their religiousness goes beyond the formalities of visiting churches. Their life choices are also shaped by Christianity. For instance, when Charlotte is torn between Albert and Werther, she chooses to be with Albert in the end, because her religion dictates that she should uphold societal obligations and norms. On the other hand, Werther does not seem to be an earnest Christian. His weak faith or even lack of faith can be seen when he acts deliriously at the church, banging on the door, and threatening God. His rebellion may reflect the sense of *injustice* he feels when he considers his solitude, disappointment, and despair and why such a fate would be allotted to him by an apparently benevolent god. Later on in the film, Charlotte visits the priest to take advice from him regarding her tangled situation which once again communicates to us viewers her devotion to Christianity. Near the end of the film, when Charlotte intuits that Werther is going to commit suicide, she starts praying ardently to god to be forgiven for their trespasses. She further prays that they not be led into temptation and be delivered from evil. Her prayer can be interpreted as her way of coping with the tragedy she finds herself in. All in all, religion shapes the lives of the major characters in the film.

**Illustrative moment:** Charlotte is at the church and confesses to the priest. She says: 'Not a day of rest, not an hour, since I met him. I think of him despite myself. I must love my husband, and I always feel the other one looking at me. I want to love only my husband. And I always hear the other's voice speaking. I should have told him right away that I was engaged. I wanted to...but the words didn't come. I did not lie and I did not tell the truth. Is there a lie in me? Today I received a terrible letter from him. I no longer what direction to take, how to save myself. This letter, must I destroy it and keep quiet? Will my silence be another lie?' The priest utters the words of the Lord: 'Woman, do not abandon the man you are united to.' He further tells her not to hide anything from him and that this is her path. This scene shows us that in her tangled condition, Charlotte seeks refuge in the church and her religion. She wants to abide by the moral principles of Christianity and shape her existence in accordance with its mandates.



### PSYCHOLOGY

**Sadness** As *The Novel of Werther* is predominantly a tragedy, there are various scenes which reflect the feelings of sadness and despair of the characters, in particular, those of Charlotte and Werther. One of these scenes is when Charlotte finally tells the truth to Werther about her engagement to Albert. After discovering the truth about Charlotte, Werther succumbs into a deep despair. His methods of coping with the situation such as drinking excessive amounts of alcohol are destructive and make his emotional state even worse. Charlotte is also in a similar situation as she also becomes depressed and starts crying on her own which is noticed by Gustav. Later on in the film, Charlotte and Werther meet during the weekly concerts of the President. We can observe Charlotte's sadness when she and Werther look at each other while playing their instruments and she starts crying after finishing playing. In the following scenes, Charlotte's despair reaches to such an extent that she has an emotional breakdown as she screams in agony. At the very end of the film, after hearing the news of Werther's suicide, Charlotte is once again cast down.

**Illustrative moment:** Charlotte watches the rain by looking out the window while the carillon of the church is heard. She closes her ears with her hands and starts screaming in agony in her room. Two servants run into her room and try to calm her down by giving her a glass of water. Charlotte tells the

servant not to say one word to Albert as she does not want him to worry. In this scene, we witness the depth of Charlotte's sadness as she cannot bear the weight of her situation anymore. The fact that she doesn't want the servants to say anything to Albert shows us how she hides her true feelings from her husband.

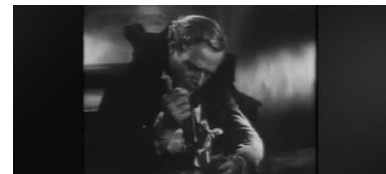


**Anger** The feelings of anger can be observed in Charlotte's father and Albert. In the scene where Gustav comes home late for the afternoon meal, his father gets angry and rebukes him. Other than this scene, we see that Albert has an angry attitude toward Werther when Werther starts to neglect his work, frequents taverns, and drinks excessive amounts of alcohol. As Albert questions Werther's out-of-character behavior, we witness a judgmental and angry look on his face which reflects his disappointment in Werther. Another scene where Albert's angry and condemnatory attitude comes to the forefront is when they discuss the Marienhof murder case. Werther pities and sympathizes with the murderer. The reason for that is he understands the motivations of the murderer and the prior conditions that led him to kill the woman he loved. However, Albert is of the view that the murderer's condition, no matter how terrible it might be, does not justify his crime. Thus, he becomes angry toward Werther for defending the murderer.

*Illustrative moment:* Albert retorts that there are limits to passion and it is the judge who defines them. There are principles to insure family and society against the excess of existence: '...a society cannot be established except on moral tradition.' Werther says that he has no wish to offend him but he doesn't know if Albert has ever suffered: 'I don't wish it on you, not on anyone. But if you'd known the bitterness of solitude and disappointment...' Albert asks with a self-righteous tone: 'As terrible as it may be, does bitterness justify the crime? Reply, does it?' In this scene, we see not only Albert's anger directed toward Werther's views, but also his self-righteousness. His accusatory and angry tone can be observed in his gestures as well, in particular when he points his finger toward Werther. His anger stems from the fact that he finds Werther's views abominable.



**Isolation** Werther isolates himself from society to some extent after he is faced with rejection from Charlotte. Knowing that he will not be able to find happiness in his life in the absence of Charlotte, he starts frequenting taverns and other places where people of his rank and prestige usually do not go to. He tries to numb himself with alcohol. However, his self-isolating behavior does not solve the root of his issues, but only acts as a distraction from facing his reality. In the end, his behavior is noticed by Albert who rebukes him for his inappropriate actions and points out that he has been neglecting the weekly concerts of the President. After this criticism, Werther starts participating in the President's weekly concerts once again which puts an end to his self-imposed isolation.

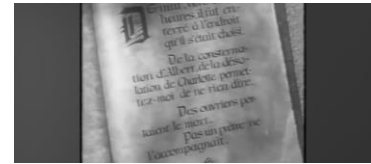


*Illustrative moment:* Werther distracts himself with alcohol to forget about Charlotte. Werther starts frequenting taverns and distracting himself with alcohol. Men working at the tavern talk among themselves about how Werther has the face of death. As he is about to crush the glass he is holding in his hand, the tavern keeper stops him. In this scene, Werther's isolation and despair are reflected as he tries to numb his pain through consumption of alcohol. He withdraws from society and becomes more and more absorbed in his pain.

**Loss** Charlotte experiences a great loss when she hears the news of Werther's suicide. We can assert that she knew beforehand that Werther would commit suicide because she had already understood something was amiss when Werther sent his valet Franz to ask Albert to return his pistols. Her ardent prayers in the following scenes show us how much she cares for Werther. In the last scene after Werther's death, we do not see the characters anymore but are shown only a page of a novel where we learn about the aftermath of the events. We find out that Charlotte is desolated because of Werther's death and she is the one who is the most affected by this loss. However, his taking his own life is

disapproved of by the priests and Christians in general such that only some workmen carry his dead body.

*Illustrative moment:* Charlotte is desolated by the death of Werther, no priest takes part in Werther's funeral. At the last scene, we see a page of a book on which it is written thus: 'One night, toward 11, he was buried in the place he had chosen. Of Albert's consternation, of Charlotte's desolation, permit me to say nothing. Some workmen carried the dead man. Not one priest accompanied them.' In this last scene of the film, we learn about how the loss of Werther affected Charlotte, Albert, and the community in general.



## FLAW

**Passion** Werther's flaw is that his passions and fluctuating emotions rule his mind more than they should. Thus, his passions make him unstable and prevent him from getting a fresh perspective, and seeing the bigger picture. He is consumed by his idealized love for Charlotte so much that Werther cannot entertain the possibility that he might try to stay friends with Charlotte even though she is married. He also does not take into account the possibility that he might one day fall in love with someone else and still lead a happy life. Thus, his passionate and sensitive nature causes him to catastrophize his situation such that he sees everything in black-and-white terms. The question that the viewers might ask themselves is whether Werther could have prevented himself from falling into this web of passions and emotions that led him to his downfall.



*Illustrative moment:* Albert and the President come back to the music room. Werther wishes to be excused. Albert is surprised to see he wants to leave early and asks Charlotte to bring the book he'd promised Werther. After wishing goodnight to the President and Albert, Werther goes near Charlotte. She says to him that she has found his poem. Werther calls it 'childishness', but Charlotte says she reads it often and always finds it beautiful. But she believes she shouldn't keep it and gives it back to Werther. Werther replies that belongs to her. She tells him it mustn't belong to her and asks him to understand. Werther is dispirited: 'As if understanding could help!' As he leaves, she tells him to put on his coat as autumn is beginning. Werther replies: 'Autumn is beginning. There has been no summer.' In this scene, we witness the passion of Werther as he cannot deal with the reality of his situation. He tells Charlotte that understanding cannot help him which implies that he is ruled by his passions so much that he cannot contemplate the situation from a rational perspective.

## RELATIONSHIP

**Marriage** The marriage of Albert and Charlotte is characterized not only by love but also by respect and feelings of duty toward one another. Charlotte decides to marry Albert rather than Werther as she was already engaged to Albert when she met Werther. She does not break off her engagement for Werther which shows us the viewers that her feelings for Werther are not as strong as Werther's feelings for her. Thus, Charlotte makes a decision based on practical considerations and societal norms. On the occasion of their wedding, Albert and Charlotte promise to always tell the truth to each other. However, Charlotte does not tell Albert about how she used to meet with Werther every Sunday during Albert's absence. This means that she omits the truth about her situation. We can interpret her hiding this truth from her husband as an indication of the fact that either she does not completely trust Albert or does not wish to have a conflict with him or upset him. Thus, even though their marriage is a relatively healthy and stable one, the fact that Charlotte cannot fully open up to Albert shows us that it is not as ideal as it seems at first glance.

*Illustrative moment:* Albert and Charlotte promise to always tell the truth to each other. On the occasion of the wedding, the townspeople wish a long life for the bride. It turns out Charlotte has drunk alcohol too and feels giddy. Albert wants that they will always tell each other the truth and they will not hide secrets from each other. In this scene, we see that Albert and Charlotte start off their marriage with an important promise about how they will always be transparent with one another. This scene may seem to underline that their marriage is built on a secure foundation, however, the truth is that even though Charlotte promises to always tell the truth, her behavior throughout the film shows that she does not keep her promise as she hides her feelings and the truth from Albert in several scenes.



**Friendship** At the beginning of the film, Albert and Werther build a good friendship with each other. They seem to enjoy each other's company from the moment they meet. It turns out that they both read the same book by Rousseau which suggests to us viewers that they have common interests and ideas. Moreover, their professions both lead them to search for and maintain justice which acts as another common ground for both. However, their friendship does not last long as Werther starts to keep a distance from Albert when he finds out that Charlotte is engaged to him. Parallel to this, Albert is outraged by Werther's deteriorating work and his inappropriate behavior at the church which damages their friendship further. The differences in their respective views become even more apparent when they discuss the Marienhof murder and they both start to feel more like strangers rather than friends as they used to be once.

*Illustrative moment:* Albert wishes to give a piece of advice to Werther before he leaves for his trip. He tells Werther to be prudent while he takes out from Werther's jacket Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. He warns him that that sort of subversive literature is forbidden in the Grand Duchy. Then he goes to show Werther that he guards his books under key. It turns out Albert reads the same book as Werther. Then a man enters the room they are in and Albert changes the subject to music. Werther says to him that he plays the violin. Albert replies that they need a violin for the concerts their president has each week. Then Werther sees him off as Albert leaves the town. In this scene, we witness the friendship between Albert and Werther as they discover that they have common interests in literature and politics.



**Loyalty** Even though Charlotte has feelings for Werther, she decides not to break off her engagement to Albert and marries him eventually. This shows us that she stays loyal to Albert throughout the film. However, the question that the viewers might have in their minds is why she keeps meeting Werther every Sunday and omits the truth from him regarding her engagement. We might interpret this as being indicative of the fact that her loyalty is not as strong as it seems at first sight. Later on in the film, she receives a letter from Werther about how he cannot live without her. When she receives this letter, she does not visit him but instead goes to the church to listen to the advice of the priest. This act underscores her loyalty as she does not respond to Werther's advances toward her.

*Illustrative moment:* When Albert comes near Charlotte, she notices how cold his hands are. Albert says he is just tired and talks about how the murderer from Marienhof was arrested. Later, he explains that he had a serious argument with Werther about the murder case. When Charlotte comes near him, he asks her where she has been all afternoon. Charlotte replies that she was at the church. She adds that she also received a letter from Werther and asks Albert whether he wants to read it. Albert tears the letter apart. This scene shows us Charlotte's loyalty toward Albert as she shares with him the love letter sent by Werther. This means she does not hide the truth anymore about Werther's love for her.





**Love** Charlotte and Werther both love each other, but their ways of love are different in degree. We can witness Charlotte's love for Werther as she agrees to meet him every Sunday during Albert's absence. They spend their time sharing about their lives. Moreover, they both have an interest in poetry and music which strengthens their bond. Charlotte appreciates Werther's poems and even memorizes them. After Charlotte gets married to Albert, both she and Werther succumb into depression which shows us the viewers that their love was reciprocal. However, Werther's love takes on a self-destructive quality as he becomes more and more consumed by his passions as the film progresses. Thus, Werther's love can be characterized as more idealistic, passionate, and destructive whereas Charlotte's love does not reach such heights. A comparison can be made between the love of Werther and the love of Albert for Charlotte. Albert's love is more grounded, pragmatic, and clear-headed whereas Werther's love causes him to lose his rationality.

*Illustrative moment:* As Charlotte and Werther walk in the forest, he tells her that he wrote a poem just for her: 'I am the singing bird...' Charlotte completes his recitation: 'I fly toward her. Under leaves already dark...' Werther cannot believe she knows his poem. She replies that it is no more unbelievable than to be recognized without having been seen: 'When meeting is fatal, even hats get involved.' In this scene, we witness the love that Charlotte and Werther have for each other. Charlotte even describes their meeting as 'fatal' which shows us the importance she gives to knowing Werther.



## APPEARANCE

**Secrets** Charlotte hides secrets from both Werther and Albert. She keeps meeting Werther even though she knows that she will not commit to him in the future. This might be interpreted as her giving him false promises as she omits the truth. When we consider Charlotte's actions deeply, we might come to see that it is not only Werther's passions that are at fault but also Charlotte's secretive nature. If she had been truthful from the very beginning, Werther might not have had high expectations from her and could have become detached from Charlotte with more ease. Thus, Charlotte's actions cause Werther to become too attached to her which leads to the series of events ultimately causing his downfall. As Charlotte confesses to the priest, she does not openly lie, but her omission of truth can be categorized as a lie as it causes Werther's feelings and passions to be manipulated. Charlotte also hides the truth from her husband Albert as she does not share with him the fact that she met Werther many times in the woods. The fact that she not only hides truths from Werther but also from Albert suggests to us viewers that this might be part of her character as she keeps secrets either to maintain peace or to her own advantage.

*Illustrative moment:* Charlotte and Werther meet in the woods while her family is at the church. Charlotte notes that Werther is in formal dress. Werther says to her that it is the last time they meet in the woods and hide. Then he holds her hand and asks her to say yes to each sentence he utters. Then he talks about how they'll go back together on foot and cross the city hand in hand to her father's house. Werther says that he will explain to Charlotte's father about how they meet every Sunday under a big tree and will confess his love for her: 'And it's true as God is my witness that I'll never love another.' But Charlotte withdraws her hand and says it is the last time they meet: 'I know I should've told you, I wanted to every Sunday, I didn't dare.' Then she confesses that she is promised to Albert. She says farewell and goes away. In this scene, Charlotte finally tells the truth to Werther that she should have told in the beginning. Her behavior can be considered to be self-centered as she does not think in advance about how Werther will be affected by her rejection despite the fact that she met with him many times in the prior weeks and thus gave him false hopes.



## PAST

**Transience** Transience refers to the ephemerality of things in reality. We can observe the theme of transience in *The Novel of Werther* when we consider the change in Werther after he settles in Walheim. At first, he is a happy and contented person who is ready to serve at the Palace of Justice. Then he meets Charlotte, falls in love, and develops expectations regarding his future with her. Soon, however, these expectations are crushed by Charlotte's rejection and Werther's joyful personality gives way to depression and sorrow. All these changes underline the ephemerality of emotions and mood states. At the end of the film, he decides to take his own life which once again emphasizes the theme of mortality and impermanence.

*Illustrative moment:* In the next scene, we see the President singing while Charlotte is playing the piano and Werther the violin. As the music ends, Charlotte and Werther look at each other. The President notices Charlotte got emotional and wipes tears from her eyes: 'You're moved? But it's youth's privilege to be so inspired.' He talks about how he was also young once and admired: 'One speaks of the past, one dreams, and suddenly reality recalls you.' In this scene, we see the theme of transience exemplified in the utterance of the President as he reflects on his youth.



## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO THE READERS AND VIEWERS

- 1) How does the film portray Werther's emotional state, and how does it evolve throughout the narrative? What key moments signify changes in his mental or emotional state?
- 2) How does the character of Charlotte influence Werther's personal journey? What does their relationship say about unrequited love and its effects on an individual's psyche?
- 3) How does Charlotte's emotional journey differ from Werther's? Does she experience similar intensity in her feelings, or is her emotional landscape more restrained?
- 4) At what moments do we see Charlotte struggling with guilt or responsibility, particularly regarding Werther? How does she try to balance her love for him with her loyalty to Albert?
- 5) How does Albert's calm, rational demeanor contrast with Werther's intense emotional turmoil? What might this say about the different ways people approach relationships and emotional conflict?
- 6) How does Albert's relationship with Charlotte serve as a contrast to Charlotte's interactions with Werther? Does Albert truly see Charlotte for who she is or does he also idealize her in a different way?
- 7) What role does fate play in the film in relation to Werther's tragic death? Is he fated to die from the beginning, or does he create his own path to tragedy?
- 8) How does the film explore the conflict between individual desires and societal expectations?
- 9) How do the characters reflect the social and cultural norms of 19th-century Europe, especially regarding class, relationships, and mental health?
- 10) How do the social constraints and expectations placed upon Werther and Charlotte influence the development of their relationship? How is the love between Werther and Charlotte ultimately affected by social expectations?
- 11) How does the film encourage the viewer to reflect on the nature of love and obsession? Is Werther's love for Charlotte truly selfless or is it a destructive obsession?
- 12) What does Werther's tragedy suggest about the human condition and the struggle between passion and reason? Can a balance between the two ever truly be achieved?