

LITERARY ANALYSIS DATA SHEET

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| <p>Title: <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>Author: Charlotte Bronte</p> <p>Date of Publication: 1847</p> <p>Sources: <u>The Life of Charlotte Bronte</u> by Elizabeth Gaskell</p> | <p>Significant biographical details about the author:</p> <p>Charlotte Bronte, a native of Yorkshire, England, originally wrote under the pen name of Currer Bell. Her sisters Emily and Anne were also famous English writers of the day. Charlotte Bronte draws on many biographical details from her childhood in the plot of <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Jane's experience at Lowood School, where her dearest friend dies of tuberculosis, recalls the death of Charlotte's sisters at Cowan Bridge. The hypocritical religious fervor of the headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, is based in part on that of the Reverend Carus Wilson, the Evangelical minister who ran Cowan Bridge.</p> |
| <p>Information about the period (literary, historical, artistic, philosophical, etc.):</p> <p>The literary period in which <i>Jane Eyre</i> was written is known as the Victorian era, so-called according to the reign of Queen Victoria. The Victorian era (1837-1901) was the time in which the novel became the leading form of literature in the English language. The Gothic novel was particularly popular during this era. Gothic literature combines romance and horror in an attempt to thrill and terrify the reader, and it always involves the supernatural. Typical features in a gothic novel are foreign monsters, ghosts, curses, hidden rooms and witchcraft. Gothic tales usually take place in locations such as castles, monasteries, and cemeteries. During this time, there was a renewed interest in Gothic architecture.</p> | <p>Identify the genre and specify how this work fits its characteristics:</p> <p><i>Jane Eyre</i> follows the form of a Bildungsroman, which is a novel that tells the story of a child's maturation and focuses on the emotions and experiences that accompany and incite her growth to adulthood. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, there are five distinct stages of development, each linked to a particular place. <i>Jane Eyre</i> is also a Victorian romance novel, which represents the notion of lovers destined for one another. <i>Jane Eyre</i>, although of Bildungsroman romance novel, is filtered through a third literary tradition -- that of the Gothic horror story, which generally describes supernatural experiences, remote landscapes, and mysterious occurrences, all of which are intended to create an atmosphere of suspense and fear.</p> |
| <p>Provide a brief synopsis (include exposition, main conflict(s), climax, resolution, and major plot points):</p> <p>Young Jane Eyre is orphaned and sent to live with her uncle, who dies shortly after her arrival. Her step-aunt despises her and sends her to Lowood School so that she can become a governess. She wins the friendship of everyone there, but her life is difficult because conditions are poor at the school. Not until typhus kills many of the students do conditions improve.</p> <p>Jane completes her education there and obtains a position as governess at a house called Thornfield. Jane's student is Adele Varens, a petulant but loving ward of the master of the house, Edward Rochester (and possibly his illegitimate child). Rochester is rarely at home and Jane spends most of her time with Adele and the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax. When Rochester does come home, he is often moody and imposing.</p> <p>One night, Jane wakes to strange noises and the smell of smoke. She finds Rochester unconscious in his bed, which is on fire. Other odd things happen in the house: Jane often hears strange laughter and thuds. Jane has meanwhile realized that she loves Rochester but in her pride refuses to confess it.</p> <p>When Rochester invites a group of friends to the house, including Blanche Ingram whom he is expected to marry, Jane is treated like a servant by the guests. One of the guests, Mr. Mason, is mysteriously injured. Jane is also troubled when her former guardian, Mrs. Reed, calls her to her death bed and admits that several years earlier she had received a letter from one of Jane's distant relatives, John Eyre, a wealthy man who lives in Madeira. Mr. Eyre had offered to adopt Jane, but Mrs. Reed maliciously told him that Jane had died in the typhus epidemic.</p> <p>When Jane returns from this visit, Rochester asks her to marry him and Jane joyfully assents. Two nights before their wedding, she wakes to find someone in her room, wearing her wedding veil. She faints in fear, but Rochester convinces her it is her imagination. At the wedding, a man interrupts the service, saying Rochester is already married. Rochester admits it and takes the wedding party to the attic. His wife is a Creole, Bertha Mason, who went mad immediately after their wedding fifteen years before. Now she is imprisoned in the attic.</p> <p>Jane decides she must run away. Penniless, she becomes a beggar until Reverend St. John Rivers and his two sisters generously take her in. She lives with them under an assumed name, and it is only by accident that she learns simultaneously that John Eyre has died and left her his fortune and that the Rivers are her cousins. They share the fortune. Rivers presses her to marry him and join him as a missionary. He admits that he does not love her, but he thinks Jane smart and useful. Jane feels she must do her duty, but she does not want to marry Rivers. One night, Jane hears Rochester's voice calling to her. She returns to Thornfield and finds the house burned to the ground. Bertha had set fire to it, and Rochester became blinded in his unsuccessful attempt to save her life. Jane and Rochester marry. It is intimated that Rivers will die gloriously for his cause.</p> | |

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| <p>Identify and explain the use and effect of three literary techniques:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreshadowing of Jane's eventual inheritance. 2. Foreshadowing of strife for Jane and Rochester. 3. Jane describes the Madwoman in the Attic with a literary allusion to the vampire. <p>Jane Eyre also includes literary allusions from the Bible, fairy tales, <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>, <u>Paradise Lost</u>, and the novels and poetry of Sir Walter Scott.</p> | <p>Cite and quote one example of each:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jane first receives hints of her uncle's existence in Chapter 10 when Bessie visits her at Lowood and mentions that her father's brother went away to Madeira in search of wealth. 2. The chestnut tree under which Rochester proposes to Jane. Before they leave, Jane mentions that it "writhed and groaned," and that night it splits in two, forecasting complications for Jane and Rochester's relationship (Chapter 23). 3. Jane says Bertha resembles "the foul German spectre—the vampire" (Chapter 25) and who attacks her brother in a distinctly vampiric way: "She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart." |
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Significant Quotes

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| <p>Cite and quote three significant passages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to visit you when I am grown up; and if any one asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty... You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back... into the red-room..." 2. Feeling . . . clamoured wildly. "Oh, comply!" it said. ". . . soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for you? or who will be injured by what you do?" Still indomitable was the reply: "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unstained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation." 3. "I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character—perfect concord is the result." | <p>Explain the significance of each passage or explain how it relates to the work as a whole:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Jane's outburst to her aunt just prior to her departure from Gateshead for Lowood School, Jane solidifies her own orphanhood, severing her ties to the little semblance of family that remained to her. Jane asserts her fiery spirit in her tirade, and she displays a keen sense of justice and a recognition of her need for love. Along with familial liberation, the passage marks Jane's emotional liberation. Jane's imprisonment in the red-room has its psychological counterpart in her emotional suppression, and it is not until she speaks these words to Mrs. Reed that she feels her "soul begin to expand." 2. Jane here asserts her strong sense of moral integrity over and against her intense immediate feelings. Rochester has been trying to convince her to stay with him despite the fact that he is still legally married to Bertha Mason. His argument almost persuades Jane: Rochester is the first person who has ever truly loved her. Yet she knows that staying with him would mean compromising herself, because she would be Rochester's mistress rather than his wife. Not only would she lose her self-respect, she would probably lose Rochester's, too, in the end. Thus Jane asserts her worth and her ability to love herself regardless of how others treat her. The passage also sheds light upon Jane's understanding of religion. She sees God as the giver of the laws by which she must live. When she can no longer trust herself to exercise good judgment, she looks to these principles as an objective point of reference. 3. This, one of the final passages of Jane Eyre, summarizes the novel's "happy ending." This is Jane's affirmation of the equality between her and Rochester, as testimony that she has not "given up" anything. Rochester has lost his house, his hand, and his eyesight to a fire, and the revelation of his youthful debaucheries has shown him to be Jane's moral inferior. Rochester can no longer presume to be Jane's "master" in any sense. Moreover, Jane has come to Rochester this second time in economic independence and by free choice. By entering into marriage, Jane enters into a unique "bond"; yet in many ways this "bond" is the "escape" that she has sought all along. Jane's closing words celebrate her attainment of freedom in this way. |
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| Characters | | | |
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| Record information for each significant major character in the work | | | |
| Name | Role in the story | Significance or Purpose | Adjectives |
| 1. Jane Eyre | 1. Protagonist, heroine, and narrator | 1. Jane is forced to contend with oppression, inequality, and hardship. Although she meets with a series of individuals who threaten her autonomy, Jane repeatedly succeeds at asserting herself and maintains her principles of justice, human dignity, and morality. | 1. intelligent, honest, plain-featured, just, orphaned |
| 2. Edward Rochester | 2. Jane's employer and ultimate love interest | 2. The master of Thornfield has a dark secret that provides much of the novel's suspense. His problems are partly the result of his own recklessness, but he is a sympathetic figure because he has suffered for so long as a result of his early marriage to Bertha. | 2. wealthy, passionate, unconventional, secretive, rash, impetuous, handsome |
| 3. St. John Rivers | 3. Serves as Jane's benefactor after she runs away from Thornfield, giving her food and shelter | 3. Foil: Because he is entirely alienated from his feelings and devoted solely to an austere ambition, St. John serves as a foil to Edward Rochester. | 3. cold, reserved, and often controlling |
| 4. Mrs. Reed | 4. Jane's cruel aunt, who raises her at Gateshead Hall until Jane is sent away to school at age ten | 4. Antagonist: Later in her life, Jane attempts reconciliation with her aunt, but the old woman continues to resent her because her husband had always loved Jane more than his own children. | 4. cruel |
| 5. Helen Burns | 5. Jane's close friend at the Lowood School | 5. She endures her miserable life at Lowood School with a passive dignity that Jane cannot understand. Helen dies of consumption in Jane's arms. | 5. passive, angelic, stoic, consumptive, Christian |
| 6. Mr. Brocklehurst | 6. The master of the Lowood School | 6. Mr. Brocklehurst preaches a doctrine of privation, while stealing from the school to support his luxurious lifestyle. | 6. cruel, hypocritical |
| 7. Bertha Mason | 7. The "mad woman in the attic" - Rochester's clandestine wife | 7. Her insanity manifests itself in a few years after marrying Rochester, who resorts to imprisoning her in the attic of Thornfield Manor. But she escapes four times and wreaks havoc in the house, the fourth time actually burning it down and taking her own life. | 7. violent, insane, formerly beautiful, Creole, wealthy |
| 8. Celine and Adèle Varens | 8. French opera dancer who is Rochester's former mistress and her daughter | 8. Although Rochester does not believe Celine's claims that he fathered her daughter Adèle, he nonetheless brought the girl to England when Celine abandoned her. | 8. Adèle: spoiled, naïve, vivacious |
| 9. Richard Mason | 9. Bertha's brother | 9. After learning of Rochester's intent to marry Jane, Mason arrives with the solicitor Briggs in order to thwart the wedding and reveal the truth of Rochester's prior marriage. | 9. strangely blank-eyed, handsome |
| 10. John Eyre | 10. Jane's paternal uncle | 10. Leaves Jane his vast fortune of 20,000 pounds. He never appears as a character. | 10. (not described) |

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| <p>Describe the setting(s) and explain its/their significance:</p> <p>The story takes place in the early decades of the 19th century and is structured around five separate locations, all (we assume) in northern England: the Reed family's home at Gateshead, the wretched Lowood School, Rochester's manor house Thornfield, the Rivers family's home at Moor House, and Rochester's rural retreat at Ferndean. Each of these locations corresponds with a particular stage of Jane's maturation.</p> | <p>Identify and explain the theme(s) of the work:</p> <p>Morality: Jane refuses to become Rochester's paramour because of her "impassioned self-respect and moral conviction." She rejects St. John Rivers's puritanism as much as Rochester's libertinism. Instead, she works out a morality expressed in love, independence, and forgiveness. Specifically, she forgives her cruel aunt and loves her husband, but never surrenders her independence to him, even after they are married - in the end he is blind, more dependent on her than she on him.</p> <p>Religion: Throughout the novel, Jane tries to attain a balance between moral duty and earthly happiness. She despises the hypocritical puritanism of Mr. Brocklehurst, and rejects St. John Rivers' cold devotion to his perceived Christian duty, but neither can she bring herself to emulate Helen Burns' turning the other cheek, although she admires Helen for it. Ultimately, she rejects these three extremes and finds a middle ground in which religion serves to curb her immoderate passions but does not repress her true self as Puritanism surely would.</p> <p>Social Class: Jane's ambiguous social position—a penniless yet learned orphan from a good family—leads her to criticize discrimination based on class. Although she is educated, well-mannered, and relatively sophisticated, she is still a governess, a paid servant of low social standing, and therefore powerless. Nevertheless, Jane has to remind herself that her unsophisticated village pupils at Morton "are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy."</p> <p>Misogyny: Jane struggles continually to achieve equality and to overcome oppression. In addition to class hierarchy, she must fight against certain male characters who believe women to be inferior to men and try to treat them as such. Three central male figures threaten her desire for equality and dignity: Mr. Brocklehurst, Edward Rochester, and St. John Rivers. All three are misogynistic on some level. Each tries to keep Jane in a submissive position, where she is unable to express her own thoughts and feelings. In her quest for independence and self-knowledge, Jane must escape Brocklehurst, reject St. John, and come to Rochester only after ensuring that they may marry as equals. This last condition is met once Jane proves herself able to function, through the time she spends at Moor House, in a community and in a family. Rochester is blind at the novel's end and thus dependent upon Jane to be his "prop and guide."</p> |
| <p>Identify and explain key metaphors, symbols, or motifs:</p> <p>Fire and ice (motif) appear throughout <u>Jane Eyre</u>. The former represents Jane's passions, anger, and spirit, while the latter symbolizes the oppressive forces trying to extinguish Jane's vitality. Fire is also a metaphor for Jane, as the narrative repeatedly associates her with images of fire, brightness, and warmth. In Chapter 4, she likens her mind to "a ridge of lighted heath, alive, glancing, devouring." We can recognize Jane's kindred spirits by their similar links to fire; thus we read of Rochester's "flaming and flashing" eyes (Chapter 25). After he has been blinded, his face is compared to "a lamp quenched, waiting to be relit" (Chapter 37).</p> <p>The moon (symbol): After Jane and Rochester's wedding is cancelled, Jane finds comfort in the moon, which appears to her in a dream as a symbol of the matriarchal spirit. Jane sees the moon as "a white human form" shining in the sky, "inclining a glorious brow earthward." She tells us: "It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—"My daughter, flee temptation." Jane answers, "Mother, I will" (Chapter 27). Waking from the dream, Jane leaves Thornfield.</p> <p>The red-room is a symbol of what Jane must overcome in her struggles to find freedom, happiness, and a sense of belonging. In the red-room, Jane's position of exile and imprisonment first becomes clear. Although Jane is eventually freed from the room, she continues to be socially ostracized, financially strapped, and excluded from love; her sense of independence and her freedom of self-expression are constantly threatened. The red-room's importance as a symbol continues throughout the novel. It reappears as a memory whenever Jane makes a connection between her current situation and that first feeling of being ridiculed.</p> | <p>Write at least three questions or topics for class discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there any significance to the names Bronte choice for the characters and places in <u>Jane Eyre</u> - and if so, What do the names mean - like Jane Eyre, Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Reed, Rivers, Miss Temple, and Ferndean? 2. How does <u>Jane Eyre</u> treat the subject of marriage, and what significance might that have? Was Bronte making some statement about marriage? 3. In light of the fact that people who treat Jane cruelly (John Reed, Mrs. Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst) all seem to come to unhappy ends, what role does Jane play as the novel's moral center? |