

Why might Charlotte Brontë have chosen to use her male pseudonym for the preface she wrote for the second edition of *Jane Eyre*?

Perhaps, in addition to her other reasons for writing under a false name, Brontë thought her social critiques would be more effective coming from what seemed to be a male voice. Her critiques were strongly worded. She uses part of the preface to respond to critics who claim that the novel insults piety, morality, and religion and counters by saying, "Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last." She defends herself by saying that, in distinguishing between these false ideals and the enduring values of piety, morality, and religion, she is rendering a service. Her explanation of why she has dedicated the second edition to William Thackeray, whom she calls a "social regenerator," is also strongly worded and might have been better received by readers who thought she was a man. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* explores themes of society, ambition, love, and morality. Its two principal female characters are the virtuous Amelia Sedley and the amoral social climber Becky Sharp, though Becky reforms by the end of the book. In associating her novel with *Vanity Fair* and its powerful critique of what she calls "the warped system of things," Brontë hopes to strengthen her own claim to be writing a fundamental moral work.

What is significant about the narrative voice in *Jane Eyre*?

*Jane Eyre* is told by a first-person narrator, as indicated by the subtitle "An Autobiography." Readers see everything through the eyes of the story's protagonist, Jane, who looks back on her life from a vantage point of nearly 20 years. First-person narration has the advantage of allowing the reader to closely identify with the narrator, in this case the protagonist. Because the reader can only view the story through the narrator's eyes, the more trustworthy or reliable the narrator seems, the more the reader can identify with that character. Jane is established fairly early as a reliable narrator. At the beginning of Chapter 2, she says that resisting punishment is a "new thing" for her, a statement soon backed up by Bessie's comment that "she never did so before." The trustworthiness of Jane as narrator is reinforced by her frank criticism of her own behavior—she hardly goes easy on herself. The reader's willingness to identify with her is strengthened by her frequent use of direct address. Jane wins readers by taking them into her confidence. As someone who does not fit neatly into the social class structure of 19th-century Britain, Jane provides something of an outsider's view of the society in which she lives. As an intelligent and sensitive woman, Jane provides a thoughtful and emotionally tuned perspective on other characters and the events of the story.

Consider the comparison Jane uses in describing her first sight of Mr. Brocklehurst in Chapter 4 of *Jane Eyre*. What does this suggest about him and about Lowood school?

Jane describes Mr. Brocklehurst as a "black pillar" topped by a grim-faced, "carved mask." Thus she compares him to a statue rather than a living, breathing human being. The comparison to this

imposing, threatening image fits Mr. Brocklehurst's hard, unbending approach to religious observance. His comments reveal that he is focused on instilling humility in the Lowood students—a humility he himself does not show—and he attempts to teach this lesson by using deprivation, unthinking obedience to his rules, and threats of punishment. This negative impression of Mr. Brocklehurst suggests that Jane's time at Lowood will be just as challenging to her spirit and her sensibility as was living with her aunt and Reed cousins

In Chapter 1 of *Jane Eyre*, what does Jane's choice of reading material reveal about her state of mind and her situation in life?

Jane chooses a book that contains images of cold, lonely, desolate landscapes and sinking ships. She skips over the text and concentrates on these images, which seem to reflect her own gloomy, hopeless feelings of loneliness and isolation. At the same time, she finds them "profoundly interesting" and relates that she was happy. That she could choose a book for herself—that she could exercise some will of her own—is something to be treasured. Readers quickly see that Jane has the power to make few choices and has little independence. In this small gesture of autonomy, she gains pleasure.

In Chapter 7 of *Jane Eyre*, what does the appearance of his wife and daughters reveal about Mr. Brocklehurst's character?

Mr. Brocklehurst's family enters the room as he is ranting that it is his mission to prevent Lowood students from indulging in "the lusts of the flesh" by making them wear plain, cheap clothing and cutting their hair short. It is obvious that Mr. Brocklehurst doesn't think his ideas about the moral value of self-denial and modesty apply to his own family, evidence of his religious hypocrisy. His wife and daughters are wearing furs and expensive clothing made of velvet and silk. Fashionable ostrich plumes adorn his daughters' hats, and they have long, "elaborately curled" hair; some of his wife's curls are "false." Their hair also underscores Mr. Brocklehurst's hypocrisy, as they enter the room just after he has instructed Miss Temple to cut off the hair of any student with curls or topknots.

What is the significance of Jane's thoughts about the role of women in society in Chapter 12 of *Jane Eyre*?

Jane has been at Thornfield for a few months, and she's feeling restless because she hasn't found the intellectual stimulation and excitement she had hoped to find in her new situation. She's feeling defensive about wanting to expand her horizons and resentful because society confines

women to such limited roles. Jane's ideas about gender equality are not unique for her time, but they are rarely expressed because many people in her society, particularly men, disapprove of women acquiring formal university education or achieving success on their own. In this context it is worth remembering that Brontë chose to publish her novel under a male pseudonym because she expected the work to then be taken more seriously.

In Chapter 13 of *Jane Eyre*, Mrs. Fairfax tells Jane some of Mr. Rochester's history. What remains unknown to Jane, and why do these unknown points matter to the narrative?

Mrs. Fairfax tells Jane that, when Rochester was a young man, his father and brother did something unfair that put Rochester in a "painful position." Overcome with anger, Rochester broke with his family and began to live an "unsettled" life. Since inheriting Thornfield, he has rarely spent more than two weeks there. She does not, however, say exactly what wrong. She also, of course, does not tell about the presence of Bertha on the third floor. The partial truth about Rochester and the absence of truth about Bertha contribute to the mood of mystery about the man and Thornfield and set up the dramatic scene when the secret is revealed and Jane's wedding to Rochester must be called off.

Does Jane Eyre come to accept the vision of death that Helen Burns imparts to her in Chapter 10?

Helen Burns's death is the first experience Jane has with death within the narrative—both her parents died before the story's beginning. It is thus the first time readers see her grappling with the reality and the meaning of death. She is still young and innocent enough at first that she does not understand fully what is happening. When she arrives in the room where Helen is staying and Helen tells her she came just in time, she is innocent enough to say, "Are you going somewhere, Helen? Are you going home?" Helen then explains that she will die and speaks of how happy she will be in heaven. Jane is full of questions, some of which she asks Helen and some of which she asks only of herself. She is clearly unfamiliar with the ideas Helen is discussing and not yet able to accept Helen's certainty about life after death. Over the course of the book, Jane gains experience and wisdom, including experiencing the death of Mrs. Reed, facing the possibility of Rochester's death, and deliberately choosing to separate herself from Rochester despite the wrenching heartbreak it causes. These experiences mature her and move her toward Helen's view. Thus she ends the book quoting without question St. John Rivers's easy acceptance of his own pending death. In doing so she signals that she agrees with this view.

What is the significance of Jane's dreams in *Jane Eyre*?

Dreams figure in *Jane Eyre* several times, on each occasion reflecting Jane's present concerns or hopes and fears about the future. In Chapter 15, after she saves Rochester from the fire and he indicates he has strong feelings for her, she dreams of an "unquiet sea where billows of trouble rolled under surges of joy." This dream reveals that she feels hopeful yet anxious—she is unable to reach the shore that she is aiming for. The dream foreshadows trouble in her relationship with Rochester. The "counteracting breeze" that keeps her from reaching land could represent the differences in their status, which makes a marriage between the two problematic. It could also represent the unknown obstacle that torments Rochester. In Chapter 25, after Jane and Rochester are engaged, she has two disturbing dreams of children. In one she is holding a child as she and Rochester walk, but he walks ahead and she can never catch up. In the second she is clutching a baby while walking in the ruins of Thornfield and again sees Rochester in the distance. These dreams show her continued uncertainty about the future and anxiety that she will lose Rochester. In Chapter 32, when Jane is living in her cottage, she continues to dream of Rochester from time to time, but these dreams are more hopeful, even though her situation then seems hopeless. These dreams show that Jane longs for the emotional attachment she felt with Rochester and does not feel with St. John Rivers.

In *Jane Eyre* why does Rochester often refer to Jane as an elf or another unearthly creature?

Elves and other unearthly creatures often have powers they can use to change people's lives by granting wishes. Rochester begins to use these pet names for Jane perhaps because of her appearance; she's small and slightly built. Later on he continues to use these names because he sees Jane as the agent of change who will help him achieve his dream of a better life. These comments also contrast Jane with Bertha Mason in terms of how he sees and feels about them both. Jane is elvish—small, light, and charming—in contrast to Bertha, who is dark, violent, and portrayed as looking and behaving like an animal in more than one scene. He has pet names for Jane; he has no pet names for Bertha. Rather, he calls her a "demon."

In *Jane Eyre* what is the symbolic significance of the old chestnut tree at Thornfield?

Jane and Rochester become engaged while sitting under the chestnut tree. That night the tree is struck by lightning and split in two. This is both an omen that foreshadows the rift between Jane and Rochester and a symbol that represents growth, destruction, and regeneration. The day before her wedding, Jane sees that, although the tree is split down the middle, the two halves are still joined at the base and by the roots. Jane says to the tree: "the time of pleasure and love is over with you: but you are not desolate: each of you has a comrade to sympathize with him in his decay." This statement foreshadows her coming separation from, and reunion with, Rochester. At the end of the novel, when Jane goes to Rochester at Ferndean, he laments that with his injuries he's no better than the old chestnut tree at Thornfield. Jane disagrees, saying he is still "green and vigorous." This more positive image suggests the happy ending that they will enjoy.

How does Brontë use supernatural elements in *Jane Eyre*?

Brontë uses supernatural elements throughout *Jane Eyre* to add excitement and heighten suspense. In the red-room at Gateshead, Jane sees a light and thinks it's a ghost; at Thornfield she hears unearthly screams and "demoniacal laughter" and sees a vampire-like figure in her room. Although all of these are explained in the novel as having natural causes, that does not occur until well after the fact. The mystery that clings to them in the interim adds to the dramatic tension of the novel. The most fantastical element—and the only one that is unexplained—is Jane and Rochester hearing each other's voices calling when they are actually far away from each other. Were these events the blessing of God? Were they the inexplicable work of nature, sympathetic to the two separated lovers? That question remains a mystery; readers must answer it for themselves.

What emotional struggle does Jane experience after her marriage is halted in *Jane Eyre*?

Immediately after the marriage is halted, Jane is brokenhearted, overwhelmed by feelings of loss and grief. Rochester's deception has shattered her faith in him, yet she doesn't think he is evil or that he has betrayed her. She doubts that he really loves her. Instead she thinks all he felt for her was passion, and now that his plan has been halted, he won't want her. She feels devastated and alone. The only thing that sustains her is "a remembrance of God," and she whispers a prayer asking God to stay with and support her, as "trouble is near" and "there is none to help." Her impulse is to flee, and for a time her physical needs are more pressing than her emotional ones. As she begins to find a new sense of self as a teacher in Morton, however, she remains in love with Mr. Rochester. Her cousin St. John's campaign to make her marry him and go with him to India as a missionary cannot stamp out her love; instead she resents St. John's pressure. When she miraculously hears Mr. Rochester calling to her, she seeks him out and finds him. Her emotional struggle ends when they are reunited.

In *Jane Eyre* what does Rochester's decision to keep Bertha at Thornfield rather than at a more remote location say about his character?

Rochester didn't want to send her to Ferndean, a remote house in the woods, because he thought it would be damp and unhealthy. Mental institutions, called lunatic asylums at that time, were horrible, chaotic places, so he did not want to place her in one, indicating some compassion for her condition. At the same time, he wanted to hide the fact that he had a wife, and committing her to an asylum might have risked exposure. Thornfield offered a more controlled environment. The few servants who suspected there may have been someone on the third floor may well have

believed the rumors that she was an insane mistress or half-sister. Rochester seems to have tried to be as responsible as possible about Bertha's care and comfort.

In Chapter 28 of *Jane Eyre*, Jane refers to Nature as her mother. How does Nature bring her comfort?

In Chapter 28 Jane says that she has "no relative but the universal mother, Nature." She has spent all of her money on coach fare, so she decides to sleep on the moors. Unable to sleep because of her worry about Mr. Rochester, she rises to her knees to pray for him. Looking up she is stunned by the beauty of the Milky Way and she feels "the might and strength of God." Echoing an idea that Helen Burns had said many years ago at Lowood school, when Helen was dying, Jane is sure that God will save and protect the souls of all humans. She feels sure that God will guard Rochester. Nature brings Jane comfort by bringing her closer to God. Her sense of religious faith is spurred by her connection to nature. In Chapter 35, when Jane thinks she hears Rochester's voice, she concludes it is nature that is communicating with her. She senses that the voice comes from something sympathetic to them, not the work of an evil force.

How does Brontë use descriptions of nature in *Jane Eyre* to set mood?

Brontë uses descriptions of the natural world to mirror Jane's emotional state at various points of *Jane Eyre*. The first instance comes in Chapter 1, when "the cold winter wind" and "penetrating" rain forced the Reeds and Jane to remain indoors rather than walk outside. The dismal weather reflects Jane's isolation and also the turmoil that she feels at her position in the Reed household. In Chapter 9 mood contrasts with the natural world. Jane describes a beautiful and vibrant spring at Lowood. But spring in the school still overseen by Mr. Brocklehurst can hardly be healthy, and typhus enters the school, making many of the girls sick. It is in this hopeful spring that Helen Burns dies. In Chapter 23 the hopefulness of Jane's engagement with Rochester is counteracted by the storm that comes to Thornfield. The storm drives the two of them indoors and includes the lightning bolt that destroys the chestnut tree. In Chapter 30 the natural setting around Marsh End is described in positive, restful terms: "purple moors," "a hollow vale," "fern-banks," "flower-sprinkled turf," and "soft breezes." Jane feels the "consecration of its loneliness" as it becomes a place of respite for her, full of "so many pure and sweet sources of pleasure." Jane is at peace at this point of the novel, accepting her decision to leave Thornfield and ready to move on from the emotional turmoil of having to leave Rochester.

Considering the various times the moon appears, what is the significance of the moon motif in *Jane Eyre*?

The moon often serves as a guiding light for Jane. If she's outdoors, she looks for the moon in the sky; indoors, it may shine through the windows. Its light helps her find her way to Helen Burns as the latter lays dying in Miss Temple's room. The night Jane first meets Rochester on the road, she watches the moon rise. The moon shining through her bedroom window awakens her the night Mr. Mason is attacked by Bertha, and she watches it set as she sits with him while waiting for Rochester to return with the surgeon. The moon is shining on the garden the night that Rochester proposes, and Rochester later makes up a fantasy story for Adèle about taking Jane to the moon, linking it to a hopeful future. When Jane looks at the split chestnut tree the day before her wedding to Rochester, a blood-red moon seems to fill the fissure. The most dramatic appearance of the moon is in the dream she has just before she flees Thornfield. The moon takes on a female "human form" and tells her to flee temptation, reinforcing her resolve. The night Rochester calls out Jane's name to finally bring her to him, he is aware of the moon shining on him. The moon motif seems to convey the feeling that Jane's way is lighted and indicated by a benevolent guardian spirit

In Chapters 31 and 32 of *Jane Eyre*, how does Jane's attitude toward her poor students reflect the theme of class?

At first Jane feels "desolate" and "degraded" when she thinks of the low literacy levels and lack of accomplishments of the poor village and farm girls in her school. She reminds herself that her feelings are wrong, and she vows to overcome them by trying to take satisfaction from helping them make progress. However, the language Jane uses to describe her pupils reveals class prejudice. She refers to them as "coarsely-clad little peasants," and she is "dismayed at the ignorance, the poverty, the coarseness of all I heard and saw." In the following chapter, after she has taught them for some time, she finds that many of the "heavy-looking, gaping rustics" are actually fairly intelligent. Eventually she begins to take pride in their work and take on more of a mentor role with them. She even spends time with their families. Still, she continues to reveal class bias when she says she enjoys having the families' and students' "general regard, even though it be but the regard of working people."

How is Bertha Mason both a symbol of passion and a foil, or contrasting character, to Jane Eyre?

The madwoman in *Jane Eyre*, as represented by Bertha Mason, symbolizes uncontrolled passion. Bertha is given no redeeming qualities; Rochester says that, before she became insane, she was debauched, lewd, and a drunkard, so she gets no sympathy for being a victim of fate or bad luck. Rochester even suggests that she brought on her own early insanity through her debauchery. In a society that valued adherence to social conventions, the madwoman served as a kind of warning to women who might be tempted to step outside the lines. She also serves as a foil and cautionary tale for Jane. She is, in many respects, Jane's opposite: foreign, not British; out of control rather than self-controlled; animalistic rather than civilized; vengeful rather than forgiving. She is also similar to Jane in some ways. Bertha is locked in the third-floor room as

Jane was locked in the red-room in the opening scenes of the book. Indeed, in those early scenes, Jane considers going mad as a option for dealing with the stress of her situation. Bertha Mason reflects the fate she avoided. She may reflect Jane's better fortune in another way. Bertha is stuck in a loveless marriage with Rochester. Jane escapes a loveless marriage with St. John Rivers.

What meanings are associated with the uses of the recurring symbol of fire in *Jane Eyre*?

In *Jane Eyre* fire is used as a symbol of passion. Bertha Mason expresses her hatred for Rochester by setting his bed on fire. Later she sets Jane's bed on fire and burns down Thornfield Hall as a result. In this case fire is a destructive symbol: fire eventually destroys Thornfield, maims Rochester, and results in Bertha's death. Fire in the form of lightning splits the old chestnut tree, foreshadowing the obstacle to Jane and Rochester's marriage and their forced separation. In this case, too, fire is destructive; lightning kills the tree. In a more benign form, a fire in the drawing room or library fireplace is often a backdrop to Jane and Rochester's courtship. The final fire at Thornfield, while it destroys the home, also functions to free Rochester from his marriage and provides an impetus for him to rethink his life, thus making his and Jane's eventual happiness possible. This outcome suggests that even the destructive force of fire can be positive, burning away Rochester's corrupt old life and making possible a better, more moral one

In *Jane Eyre* what characters serve as mother figures to Jane as she travels through life?

Orphaned as a child, Jane Eyre must find substitutes for the mother she lost. Mrs. Reed is, of course, no mother to Jane. She abuses her emotionally and acts to thwart a possibility of future happiness when she tells John Eyre that Jane is dead. At Gateshead the servant Bessie provides comfort and advice to Jane; her role as a surrogate mother is reinforced by the fact that, when Bessie has a daughter, she names the girl Jane. She is also the source of many of the folk tales that Jane remembers and that influence her throughout her life. In this way she is Jane's first teacher. At Lowood school Miss Temple serves first as a mother figure, then as a mentor, and finally as a good friend to Jane. At Thornfield Jane is less in need of a mother, as she has matured by this time. Nevertheless, Mrs. Fairfax looks out for Jane's welfare and gives her advice and companionship.

How is the theme of gender and class amplified in Mr. Rochester's party in Chapter 18 of *Jane Eyre*?

In Chapter 18 Rochester entertains a party of gentry at Thornfield. New servants are hired to tend to the guests, who arrive with their own servants as well, and lavish meals are prepared for them, indicating the kind of deference and privilege that members of the upper class are accustomed to.

After one dinner the men and women first go to separate rooms. When they rejoin some of the men talk politics, and their wives listen, showing the sharp distinctions of gender roles within the upper class. Then the younger women talk jokingly about how they tormented their governesses and tried to get them fired. Blanche Ingram says that, while ugly women are "a blot on the fair face of creation," men need only to be strong and brave, another gender difference. Meanwhile, the female servants work to keep the members of the upper class satisfied. Jane watches and listens to the conversations and does not comment, but she leaves the room as soon as she can, indicating her rejection of the wealthy guests' attitudes and her acceptance of the social distance between them. She is reminded of that distance by Lady Ingram's supercilious dismissal of the possibility of Jane playing charades. Though Lady Ingram says that Jane doesn't look intelligent enough to play, she probably thinks this because Jane is only a governess

In *Jane Eyre* how is the obstacle of unequal status between Jane and Rochester resolved?

The unequal status of Jane and Rochester is resolved when Jane inherits a fortune from her uncle. This puts her on a more equal financial footing with Rochester, helping her overcome her discomfort at feeling that she would be giving up her independence. Also, Rochester's physical disability after the fire puts him in a somewhat dependent position with Jane. As she relates in the last chapter, when he was blind, she was "his vision," and even after he recovered sight in one eye, "I am still his right hand." It is a measure of the great gap in genders in Victorian society that a man has to be disabled for a husband and wife to be nearly equal.

What is the metaphorical meaning of the names of the different houses in *Jane Eyre*?

The Reeds' home is Gateshead Hall. The word *gate* suggests the image of an enclosure, but one that can be opened and used to pass through to another place. The word *head* is used to describe the beginning of a river, stream, or trail. Jane lives a restricted existence in the Reeds' home until the gates open for her and she begins her journey through life. Rochester's home is Thornfield Hall. Just as the word *field* is associated with pleasant feelings, the home and grounds are beautiful, pleasant places. The word *thorn* is associated with sharp pain, however, and the presence of Bertha in the third floor of the manor is a constant reminder of Rochester's grief. The name *Thornfield* thus reflects Rochester's mixed feelings about the manor. The Rivers siblings' home is Marsh End, or Moor House. "Some calls it Marsh End, and some calls it Moor House." A marsh is a dark, wet, boggy place, an unpleasant and unwelcome place to be. Being at Marsh End puts one beyond that undesirable location. The moor is a natural setting where Jane finds comfort. Both names seem to signal that Jane is at a place of respite, where she might find some calm. Ferndean is deep in the woods; ferns grow in shady, tree-sheltered areas. The name suggests lush growth, a positive association that is undercut by Rochester's explanation that he couldn't have Bertha live there because the home is damp and she would become ill and die. How, then, is it a suitable home for the happy-ever-after new Mr. and Mrs. Rochester? The house set in the woods is also isolated from the rest of society. Jane and Rochester are content with

each other's company; they do not need social gatherings to be happy. In addition, Brontë may be suggesting that their married life—any human's life—is going to be beset with trials. While Jane and Rochester are happily married, life is not perfect. There are always burdens to bear.

Source:- <https://www.coursehero.com/>

Collected by AH