

Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Jane Eyre

by Charlotte Brontë

Written by Kelly Stewart McConathy

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Jane Eyre

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. analyze the characters of Jane, Mrs. Reed, Bessie, Helen Burns, Miss Temple, Mr. Brocklehurst, Edward Rochester, St. John Rivers, Mary, and Diana and their relationships to each other.
2. analyze how Brontë creates suspense throughout the novel and explain its effect on the text.
3. identify and analyze how literary techniques and figurative language, such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, connotation, anaphora, polysyndeton, repetition, onomatopoeia, and parallelism, affect the development of the plot and meaning of the text.
4. study how Brontë uses the weather to mirror and contrast characters' moods at pivotal points in the plot.
5. explain the impact of a first person protagonist narrator on the novel.
6. investigate Victorian social class structure, considering social class, wealth, employment, gender, and education.
7. analyze Brontë's use of literary elements, such as foreshadowing and tone, on the overall meaning of the novel.
8. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
9. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
10. offer a close reading of *Jane Eyre* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

Jane Eyre

Lecture Notes

CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S LIFE

Born in Yorkshire, England in 1816, Charlotte Brontë was the third daughter of Reverend Patrick Brontë and his wife Maria Branwell Brontë. In sum, there were five daughters and one son, Branwell, in the family. Charlotte's mother died of cancer in 1821 when Charlotte was only five years old, and Elizabeth Branwell, Patrick's sister, helped raise the children. Along with three of her sisters, Charlotte was sent to the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, Lancashire. While enduring poor conditions at the school, Charlotte's sisters Maria and Elizabeth became seriously ill. As a result, all of the daughters were removed from the school, but Maria and Elizabeth died of tuberculosis soon after arriving home.

Now spending their time at their home in Haworth, the remaining children—Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne—were active readers. Their father's extensive library contained volumes by Lord Byron and Walter Scott, for example. The siblings spent their time creating imaginary kingdoms using wooden soldiers, given to them by their father, as their inspiration. Charlotte and Branwell teamed to create the kingdom of Angria; Emily and Anne created Gondal. The siblings spent their time writing stories, articles, plays, and poems about their imaginary lands.

Charlotte returned to school in Roe Head, England. After a few years, she became a teacher there, earning money to support her family and finance Branwell's art studies. Charlotte soon resigned from her position at the school, however, to work as a private governess. She acquired a position with the Sidgwick family, but left the position due to her own unhappiness. She then worked for a new family, but found the same disappointment. Charlotte decided she would find happiness by teaming with her sisters to establish their own school for girls.

While their attempt at creating a school failed miserably, the sisters began collaborating on a book of poetry. It sold two copies; the sisters then started writing their own novels. The sisters chose to publish under androgynous pen names: Charlotte, Anne, and Emily used the names Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell, respectively. Charlotte's first novel, *The Professor*, was a failure; it was not published until after her death. She continued to use her pen name when she published her second novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1847, and it was an immediate bestseller, earning Charlotte 500 pounds, which was much more than her salary as a governess. Near the same time, Emily published *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne published *Agnes Grey*, both under pen names.

Charlotte's brother Branwell, an alcoholic and drug addict, died in 1848. It was also in 1848 that the sisters revealed their true identities to their publisher. The sisters Emily and Ann soon followed Branwell in death. Left alone with only her father, Charlotte became an accepted member of the literary society, spending time with William Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, and G. H. Lewes, for example.

Jane Eyre

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. A Bildungsroman is a novel that traces a character's development from childhood to adulthood. Explain how *Jane Eyre* is a clear example of a Bildungsroman.
2. Consider how Brontë employs the themes of sanity and madness, sight and blindness, or fire and ice throughout the novel.
3. Compare and contrast the religious characters that Brontë includes in the novel: Mr. Brocklehurst, Helen Burns, and St. John Rivers.
4. Jane searches for autonomy throughout the novel. How is this important for her character, the novel, and for Brontë's Victorian readers?
5. Discuss how Brontë weaves elements of the supernatural throughout the novel, especially within Rochester and Jane's relationship.
6. Brontë toys with the motifs of equality and social status throughout the novel. Analyze incidents in the novel where equality and social status are imperative.
7. Romantic literature includes human passion, belief in the supernatural, and individuality. Another philosophy altogether, the Transcendentalists found God within themselves and in nature and strived to be self-reliant. Trace the philosophy of Romanticism or Transcendentalism in the novel.
8. Discuss the role of each of the female influences in Jane's life: Mrs. Reed, Bessie, Helen Burns, Miss Temple, and Diana and Mary Rivers.
9. List and explain at least five instances in which Brontë foreshadows the revelation of Rochester's first marriage to Bertha Mason.
10. Explain how Brontë makes character reappearances important to the structure of the novel and to the novel as a whole. Consider the absence and reappearance of these characters: Helen Burns, Bessie Leaven, Mrs. Reed, Edward Rochester, and St. John Rivers.
11. Explain the importance of the five places Jane lives (Gateshead Hall, Lowood Institution, Thornfield, Moor House/Marsh End, and Ferndean), the significance of each place name, and how each place name represents the quality of Jane's life at each home.
12. Discuss Brontë's ideas regarding Colonialism and the introduction of foreigners into the novel, such as Celine and Adele Varens and Richard and Bertha Mason.
13. For much of the novel, Jane Eyre holds an ambiguous role in society—not fitting in a specific social class. Discuss at least two instances where this is pertinent to Jane's development as a character.

Jane Eyre

Chapter I

1. What narrative point of view does Brontë use for this novel?

2. What can the reader expect in a story told from this point of view?

3. How does Brontë create sympathy for Jane in the first chapter?

4. Describe the exposition of the novel.

Chapter X

1. An aporia occurs when a character speaks directly to oneself or to the reader, especially when a character is trying to solve a dilemma or decide on a plan. Explain when and why Brontë uses aporia in this chapter.

2. Explain the device that Brontë uses in this quotation: “I had had no communication by letter or message with the outer world: school rules, school duties, school habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies: such was what I knew of existence.” What effect does the device produce?

3. How does Miss Temple’s marriage affect Jane?

4. Discuss Jane’s one real concern about venturing away from Lowood.

5. Bessie notes that Jane is “quite a lady.” On what does Bessie base her opinion?

6. Explain how Brontë uses the supernatural in this chapter.

Chapter XX

1. How does Brontë effectively use Gothic elements in Chapter 20?

2. What effect does Brontë create in having Mr. Rochester refer to Jane as his “little friend” multiple times in this chapter?

3. Contrast how Mr. Rochester and Jane view Thornfield in different ways.

4. Explain the comparison Brontë makes here: “Why had the mere name of this unresisting individual—whom his word now sufficed to control like a child—fallen on him, a few hours since, as a thunder-bolt might fall on an oak?”

5. Mr. Mason has been seriously injured by the woman locked in the third story room. However, he obviously cares for her: “Let her be taken care of; let her be treated as tenderly as may be: let her—” he stopped and burst into tears.” What can readers infer from his words and actions?

6. Consider Mr. Rochester’s comments at the end of Chapter 20. What statement does he make about class and society?

Chapter XXX

1. Why does Jane find happiness and comfort at Moor House?

2. How does the weather mirror Jane's mood in this chapter?

3. Contrast St. John's personality with that of his sisters, Diana and Mary.

4. Why does St. John delay in informing Jane of the position he finds for her?

5. How is St. John a hypocrite?

6. Explain the significance in the fact that St. John's uncle is named "John."

Chapter XXXVIII: Conclusion

1. Explain what Brontë means by: “a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects.”

2. Conclude St. John’s and Jane’s ideas of home.
