**Jane Eyre**

**by Charlotte Brontë**

**Traditional Pathway 4HC**

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**Name:**

**Jane Eyre**

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**Charlotte Brontë**

*Charlotte Brontë was a Victorian novelist and poet best known for her novel ‘Jane Eyre’, written in 1847. She was part of a famous family of writers.*

‘Brontë’ is pronounced ‘*bron-tay*’ and it is written with the two dots above the ‘e’ so that you pronounce the ‘e’ separately.

**Early life**

Charlotte Brontë was born in Yorkshire, in the North of England, in 1816. She was one of six children born to Maria Branwell (who died when Charlotte was five) and Patrick Brontë: Maria (1814), Elizabeth (1815), Charlotte (1816), Branwell (1817), Emily (1818) and Anne (1820).

*A portrait of Charlotte Brontë from 1850*

In April 1820 the family moved to a parsonage (a house where a priest lives) in a small village called Haworth in the North of England because Patrick Brontë had been given a job as the priest at the local church. The surroundings and bleak landscape in Yorkshire had a big influence on Charlotte's writing.

**School life and employment**

In August 1824 Charlotte, aged eight, was sent to the Clergy Daughter’s School in Lancashire along with her sisters Maria, Elizabeth and Emily. Life at this boarding school was grim and tough. Maria and Elizabeth fell gravely ill with a disease called tuberculosis (*tue-ber-cue-low-sis*) and were sent home in February 1825. They died within a few months of each other. Tuberculosis is an airborne bacterial disease that infects your lungs and then spreads to other organs. In the Victorian era, it was deadly.

The boarding school and her sisters' death had a great impact on Charlotte, who drew on the experience of both events for ‘Jane Eyre.'

After Charlotte finished her education, she spent some time as a teacher. This also influenced the story 'Jane Eyre.'

You may remember from Animal Farm that George Orwell was the pen name of Eric Blair. A pen name is a name used by a writer instead of their own name. Charlotte Brontë published her writing under the pen name Currer Bell. There were not many published women writers in the Victorian era so she thought that by having a man’s name her writing would be taken more seriously.

Charlotte's first solo manuscript, ‘The Professor’, did not secure a publisher, although she was heartened by an encouraging response from Smith, Elder & Co. of Cornhill, who expressed an interest in any longer works Currer Bell might wish to send. Charlotte responded by finishing and sending a second manuscript in August 1847. Six weeks later ‘Jane Eyre: An Autobiography’ was published.

‘Jane Eyre’ tells the story of a plain governess (a woman employed to teach children in a private household) called Jane, who, after difficulties in her early life, falls in love with her employer, Mr Rochester. Jane is a strong and independent character which was unusual for a woman character in the Victorian era. 'Jane Eyre' was one of the year's best sellers.

**Death**

All of Charlotte's siblings died of tuberculosis. Left alone with her father, Charlotte continued to write. By 1850, she was by now a well-known author and visited London a number of times. In 1854, Charlotte married her father's assistant, Arthur Nicholls but she died of tuberculosis one year later.

Other than Charlotte's father, Patrick, none of the Brontës of Haworth enjoyed a long life, and none of them had any children to carry on the literary name.

**Miss Abbot’s reaction to Jane’s behaviour**

Bessie and Miss Abbot tell Jane off. They disapprove of her behaviour. They also say what the consequences of Jane’s behaviour will be, and how she will be punished.

Look at what Miss Abbot says to Jane.

1. **What behaviour does Miss Abbot disapprove of?**
2. **What consequences does Miss Abbot say Jane will face?**
* “For shame! for shame!” cried the lady’s-maid. “What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress’s son! Your young master.”
* “But it was always in her,” was the reply. “I’ve told Missis often my opinion about the child, and Missis agreed with me. She’s an underhand little thing: I never saw a girl of her age with so much cover.”
* “Besides,” said Miss Abbot, “God will punish her: He might strike her dead in the midst of her tantrums, and then where would she go? Come, Bessie, we will leave her: I wouldn’t have her heart for anything. Say your prayers, Miss Eyre, when you are by yourself; for if you don’t repent, something bad might be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch you away.”

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I uttered a wild, involuntary cry; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. Steps came running along the outer passage; the key turned, Bessie and Abbot entered. | **endurance** – doing something difficult for a long time**involuntary** – uncontrolled |

**The red-room – close reading**

**‘Jane Eyre’ and punishment**

**Emily**: Hello. my name is Emily Blanchard and I’m a teacher at Ark All Saints Academy, where we’ve been studying ‘Jane Eyre’. We’ve just finished the part where Jane has been locked in the Red Room for hitting her cousin John. We’re joined by Nick Wallace, a Victorian Literature specialist. Nick, Jane was acting in self-defence. Why was she punished?

**Nick**: Well, the reason Jane is punished so severely is for a number of reasons. First of all, she’s not Mrs Reed’s child, so she feels that any misdemeanour or misbehaviour by Jane needs to be stamped out immediately. It’s also to do with expectations of girls in the Victorian era – girls were very much meant to be meek, submissive, and mild, as opposed to boys who could be raucous and rowdy. So the fact that Jane shouts and screams at her cousin, and runs over and hits him, it would be really unacceptable and quite shocking behaviour for a little girl in a Victorian household.

**Emily**: Do you think it’s important that she defied John rather than Eliza or Georgiana?

**Nick:** It is important. I think that the girls would have fought amongst themselves; it’s not a secret in the book that Jane doesn’t get on with her female cousins. But because Mr Reed (Jane’s uncle) has died, that makes John Reed, Jane’s cousin, the ‘man of the house’. The fact that Jane hits the ‘man of the house’ is like a child today hitting their head teacher! He was the most superior member of the household, even though he’s much younger than Mrs Reed. John would still be seen, as the only man, as head of the house. So absolutely, Mrs Reed thinks that Jane deserves punishment.

**Emily**: And it’s a very harsh punishment! Was being locked in the Red Room a typical punishment of the era?

**Nick**: Not at all. And I think that contemporary readers would have found that punishment harrowing, just as we do today. I remember finding the Red Room passage in ‘Jane Eyre’ terrifying when I first read it; putting myself in Jane’s position, it was one of unimaginable terror.

Typical punishments in the Victorian era would have been physical punishments – being whipped with a cane or a stick. Physical punishments were very common – children and students may have been made to stand in awkward positions holding heavy loads to give them aching backs and arms. So physical punishments were common. It wouldn’t be uncommon for a child to be locked away in a room, to go away and think about what they’ve done, but to do so in such a harrowing and terrifying room where a man’s died, the walls are crimson red, the colour of blood, and midnight settles in. And then to be locked in there again by your aunt. That would not have been a typical punishment, and one which Bessie admits later on was overly harsh.

**Emily:** It seems like quite a psychological punishment as well as a physical one.

**Nick:** Absolutely, yes.

**Emily:** I think most of the punishments seemed quite harsh to a modern day reader. Why were the punishments so harsh?

**Nick:** It comes down the influence of the Bible on societyin the Victorian era. The Bible is divided into two main books, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament very much influenced the way in which people thought children should be raised and disciplined in the Victorian era. The God of the Old Testament is a vengeful, spiteful, and unforgiving God. There are instances where he punishes those who break a commandment or wrong him, in the most brutal and violent ways. Take the story of Noah’s Ark: he drowns the entire Earth to right the world’s collective sin. He throws rocks at a city to murder people who idolise another God. He even has a group of children mauled by bears. So the God of the Old Testament was a very spiteful and violent God who saw that sinners can be corrected through violence, and we can really see that in ‘Jane Eyre’. Compare that to today, in the 20th century, and also in more progressive schools in the Victorian era, where the New Testament played a much more active role in determining how children should be disciplined. In the New Testament, Jesus would preach the virtue of forgiving those who wronged you and loving thy neighbour; turning the other cheek to anyone who does you wrong. We see that today, in a much more forgiving and tolerant attitude towards wrongdoing. But in the Victorian era, punishments were harsh and that links into the Christian schools and how much of a role Christianity played in life at the time.

**Emily:** That was very useful. Thank you.

**Helen Burns’s faith**

In the Victorian era, many schools used religion to **control** children. The **fear** of **hell** and **eternal damnation** made students want to behave, and **feel terrified** about doing wrong. The Bible contains a number of descriptions of hell. To see why this is such a terrifying threat, we can look at some passages from the Bible that describe what hell is like.

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| **Matthew 13:49-50** So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, ***And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*****Revelation 14:11** And ***the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever***: and they have ***no rest day nor night***, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.**Revelation 21:8** But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have ***their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone***: which is the second death. |

Helen Burns does not think this is a true reflection of Christianity. She believes that a Christian God is good, fair, and kind. He would be forgiving.

**Match Helen’s belief on the left with the correct quotation on the right.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. She believes that you should forgive those that wrong you, as Jesus preaches in the New Testament.
 |  | 1. “We are, and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world”
 |
| 1. She says that she forgives people that have hurt her, and forgets what they did.
 |  | 1. “only the spark inspire of the spirit will remain,—the impalpable principle of light and thought, pure as when it left the Creator to the creature”
 |
| 1. She says that everyone has their flaws, but these flaws are minor, and only show during our time on Earth.
 |  | 1. “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you.”
 |
| 1. Helen believes that even if our life is imperfect on Earth, our spirit will reveal itself to God when we die.
 |  | 1. “She has been unkind to you, no doubt; because you see, she dislikes your cast of character, as Miss Scatcherd does mine”
 |
| 1. Helen believes that people should not fear death, and God can forgive sinners. This allows her to love the person, but hate their sin.
 |  | 1. “No ill-usage so brands its record on my feelings. Would you not be happier if you tried to forget her severity, together with the passionate emotions it excited?”
 |
|  |  | 1. “I live in calm, looking to the end.”
 |
|  |  | 1. “it makes Eternity a rest—a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss. Besides, with this creed, I can so clearly distinguish between the criminal and his crime; I can so sincerely forgive the first while I abhor the last”
 |

**Jane the liar**

Jane is completely humiliated and shamed in front of everyone at the school. It is one of the worst moments of her childhood.

**Look at the illustration below. Answer the questions on each of the quotations from the passage we have read today.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Jane thought, **‘I was no Helen Burns.’** |
| 1. **How did Helen Burns act when she was in a similar situation?**
 |
|  |
|  |
| 1. **Why does Jane think she is unlike Helen?**
 |
|  |
|  |
| Brocklehurst said, **‘You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example; if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse.’** |
| 1. **Why does Brocklehurst tell the other girls to ‘shun’ and ‘exclude’ Jane?**
 |
|  |
|  |
| 1. **Why would Jane find this a particularly hard thing to hear?**
 |
|  |
|  |
| Brocklehurst said, **‘punish her body to save her soul.’** |
| 1. **How does this statement relate to Brocklehurst’s attitude to childhood?**
 |
|  |
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**How has Jane’s life changed?**

Some parts of Jane’s life at Lowood School is very different to her life at Gateshead Hall. Some parts of her life are quite similar.

Look at each of the statements about Jane’s life at Gateshead Hall and at Lowood School.

**For each of the statements, explain how Jane’s life has changed or has continued in a similar way.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Jane’s life at Gateshead Hall** | **Jane’s life at Lowood School** |
| No one believed Jane when she told everyone that she was only defending herself from John Reed. |  |
|  | Jane received a horrible punishment from Mr Brocklehurst.  |
| Jane spent most of her time alone, and was not allowed to speak to any of the Reed family children.  |  |
| Jane is expected to be quiet and to obey her elders. |  |
| Jane receives no education. She has to teach herself.  |  |
|  | Many of the adult teachers like Jane.  |
| Add in your own examples here |  |
| Add in your own examples here |  |

**Helen Burns**

You are going to write an answer to this question: **How does Charlotte Brontë present Helen Burns in ‘Jane Eyre’?**

Annotate these quotations to help you answer this question.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Burns immediately left the class, and returned in half a minute, carrying in her hand a bundle of twigs tied together at one end.  This ominous tool she presented to Miss Scatcherd with a respectful curtesy; then she quietly, and without being told, unloosed her pinafore, and the teacher instantly and sharply inflicted on her neck a dozen strokes with the bunch of twigs.  Not a tear rose to Burns’ eye; and not a feature of her pensive face altered its ordinary expression. |  | **“It is not violence that best overcomes hate—nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury.”**“What then?”**“Read the New Testament, and observe what Christ says, and how He acts; make His word your rule, and His conduct your example.”**“What does He say?”**“Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you.”** |

**Chapter 10**

We find out about a lot of changes in Chapter 10.

**Explain how each of these things has changed since Jane arrived at Lowood School.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | When Jane arrived at Lowood, **the school was...** |
|  |
| In Chapter 10, **Lowood is...** |
|  |
|  | When Jane arrived at Lowood, **Mr Brocklehurst was...** |
|  |
| In Chapter 10, **Mr Brocklehurst is...** |
|  |
| http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-dZK_Oj9j4UE/UB0nWAVLA8I/AAAAAAAAbX8/jenWMc01T2I/s1600/JaneEyre1983_079Pyxurz.jpg | When Jane arrived at Lowood, **Miss Temple was...** |
|  |
| In Chapter 10, **Miss Temple is...** |
|  |
| http://images1.fanpop.com/images/photos/1600000/Jane-Eyre-1996-film-jane-eyre-1611326-1024-576.jpg | When Jane arrived at Lowood, **Jane was...** |
|  |
|  | In Chapter 10, **Jane is...** |
|  |

**Essay Writing**

**Tone**

These two essays make the same points in different ways. **Which is better? Why?**

1. Mr Brocklehurst is an idiot and he is mean to Jane and he picks on her. When Mr Brocklehurst's daughters walk in and they are wearing silk dresses he was a hypocrite. I didn’t like Mr Brocklehurst very much.
2. Mr Brocklehurst is presented as a foil to Helen Burns. Their juxtaposition reveals differing views of Christianity and Brontë’s own childhood experiences at Cowan Bridge School. Brontë is keen to reveal the hypocrisy of school masters like Brocklehurst and the comeuppance he receives.

