



JANE EYRE

JANE'S ROLE IN THE NOVEL

Jane's search for true love and happiness forms the story of the novel. During the novel, she:

- is first seen as a young orphan living with the Reed family at Gateshead Hall, where she is unhappy and treated badly by her aunt and cousins.
- is sent away to Lowood School at the age of ten. Here she meets Helen Burns and the teacher Maria Temple, both of whom she admires.
- leaves Lowood after eight years as a student and teacher to become a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she meets and falls in love with Mr Rochester.
- accepts Rochester's proposal of marriage but leaves Thornfield when it is discovered that Rochester is already married.
- finds the house of the Rivers family at Marsh End. She settles into life here and becomes a teacher at a local school. She rejects St John Rivers' proposal of marriage and life as a missionary.
- is delighted to find that the Rivers family are long-lost cousins and also that she is an heiress. She shares this fortune with them. Rivers proposes again and she almost accepts but decides to return to Thornfield.
- discovers Rochester living alone at Ferndean after Bertha has destroyed Thornfield in a fire and died. Jane and Rochester marry.

TOP TIP

A02

Look carefully at the way in which the older Jane narrates her story with clarity and honesty, and is mindful of the flaws in the behaviour and character traits of her younger self.

JANE'S IMPORTANCE TO THE NOVEL AS A WHOLE

Jane Eyre is the **eponymous** central figure of the novel and it is her journey to adulthood that forms its focus. As the novel is narrated through Jane's eyes, the reader is close to Jane and sees her perspective on the world around her. Charlotte Brontë uses Jane to highlight her views on women, society and what it means to lead a moral and happy life.

TOP TIP: WRITING ABOUT JANE

A01

When you are writing about Jane, make sure you focus on her character and how Charlotte Brontë presents it to us. Focus on how we are shown: her well-developed sense of right and wrong from an early age (her relationship with the Reed family); her ability as a good judge of character as a child (warming instantly to Miss Temple and Helen Burns, whilst loathing Mr Brocklehurst); her ability to be independent and look after herself in spite of her naivety (finding a job, leaving Thornfield); her strength of will (standing up to Mrs Reed, leaving Rochester, refusing St John Rivers).

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT JANE

A01



Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane is strong willed even as a child, and will assert herself when she believes she is in the right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'How dare I, Mrs Reed? How dare I? Because it is the <i>truth</i>.' (Ch. 4, p. 44) • She is prepared to argue with an adult and defend herself, even as a dependent child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In spite of being financially dependent, Jane is independent of spirit and has confidence in her own views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '<i>I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.</i>' (Ch. 27, p. 365) • This highlights Jane's awareness, but also her determination to look after herself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane trusts her instincts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She rushes back to Thornfield in spite of only 'hearing' Rochester's voice in her mind. She is shown to be right to do this, as Rochester is now free to marry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her moral principles are very strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '<i>My spirit ... is willing to do what is right</i>' (Ch. 36, p. 485) • This demonstrates Jane's determination to follow a moral path.

AIMING HIGH: JANE'S SOCIAL STATUS



Jane's speech to Rochester highlights that, in spite of their enormous difference in social and economic status and power, she believes that they are 'equal' – '*I have as much soul as you – and full as much heart!*' (Ch. 23, p. 292) She brushes aside '*custom*' and '*conventionalities*' as if they were not important, and instead speaks of the importance of the '*spirit*' (Ch. 23, p. 292). When assessing Jane's attitude to social status, it is important to think about Jane as a product of the society in which she lives. Consider the opportunities open to women of Jane's class and circumstances, and the expectations that would have been held for them. Having a clear understanding of the world that Jane inhabits makes it easier to understand what Charlotte Brontë is suggesting about her as a woman and as a human being.

TOP TIP

A01

It is important to focus on Jane as a construct rather than a real person. Jane seems like a real person, but you need to think about what deliberate choices Charlotte Brontë has made regarding her actions and how she is described to make us believe in the character.

KEY QUOTATION: JANE'S CHARACTER

A01

When St John tells Jane that she is their cousin and an heiress, she is far more interested in the former than the latter: '*This was wealth indeed! – wealth to the heart!*' (Ch. 33, p. 444). She calls the news of the fortune '*ponderous*' and '*sobering*' and is much more excited for the '*blessing, bright, vivid, and exhilarating*' news that she finally has a family of her own (Ch. 33, p. 444).

RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2**. They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation), and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
<p>Read, understand and respond to texts.</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response ● Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations 	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use some of the literary terms you have learned (correctly!) ● Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way) ● Show you have thought for yourself ● Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations 	<p>Don't write ...</p> <p><i>Jane is a strong character. Charlotte Brontë uses lots of words that shows that she is strong. She says 'you are passionate' in Chapter 4.</i></p> <p>Do write ...</p> <p><i>Charlotte Brontë presents Jane as a strong, determined character, for example in her exchange with Mrs Reed where she is criticised for being 'passionate'. Brontë's use of the adjective suggests that the young Jane must learn to hide her feelings in order to gain the approval of others.</i></p>

IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words and phrases to show effects. For example:

Charlotte Brontë suggests ..., conveys ..., implies ..., presents how ..., explores ..., demonstrates ..., describes how ..., shows how ...

I/we (as readers) infer ..., recognise ..., understand ..., question ..., see ..., are given ..., reflect ...

For example, look at these two alternative paragraphs by different students about Jane. Note the difference in the quality of expression.

Student A:

This sounds as if Charlotte Brontë is speaking

Charlotte Brontë says that Jane is very angry and cross when she talks to Mrs Reed when they have the argument in Chapter 4. She says 'I am glad you are no relation of mine'. This shows that she is brave because she stands up to Mrs Reed and is very rude to her. This shows that Jane is a passionate character and brave because she is standing up to an adult.

This is one possible interpretation but there are others as well

This is a bit descriptive

Seems to be repeating the same ideas

Not really explaining much about Jane or her relationship with Mrs Reed

Student B:

Focus on what the writer is doing

Charlotte Brontë presents Jane as a strong character in Chapter 4 where she confronts Mrs Reed for the last time as a child. She highlights Jane's strength of character with the bravery with which she asserts that she 'dares' to speak out 'because it is the truth'. She describes Mrs Reed as 'bad, hard-hearted' which not only demonstrates her ability to stand up to an authority figure but also seems to suggest that she is already a good judge of character.

'confronts' is a good choice of word as it accurately expresses the situation

Good use of embedded evidence

Considering more than one interpretation

Using 'seems to suggest' indicates that the student is thinking and weighing up more subtle meanings

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
<p>Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.</p>	<p>'Analyse' – comment in detail on particular aspects of the text or language</p> <p>'language' – vocabulary, imagery, variety of sentences, dialogue/speech, etc.</p> <p>'form' – how the story is told (e.g. first person narrative, letters, diaries, chapter by chapter?)</p> <p>'structure' – the order in which events are revealed, or in which characters appear, or descriptions are presented</p> <p>'create meanings' – what can we, as readers, infer from what the writer tells us? What is implied by particular descriptions, or events?</p> <p>'subject terminology' – words you should use when writing about novels, such as 'character', 'protagonist', 'imagery', 'setting', etc.</p>	<p>Don't write:</p> <p><i>The opening of the novel is really good because it describes what Jane can see and sets the scene for the reader.</i></p> <p>Do write:</p> <p><i>Charlotte Brontë highlights Jane's isolation and misery with the use of weather symbolism in the first chapter of the novel: the 'drear November day' suggests a dark mood, reinforced with 'pale blank mist and cloud', not only intensifying the gloomy tone but also linking to Jane's circumstances at Gateshead.</i></p>

THE THREE 'I'S

- The best analysis focuses on specific ideas, events or uses of language and thinks about what is **implied**.
- This means drawing **inferences**. On the surface, Jane standing up to Mrs Reed when she is a child shows us that she is strong-willed and not afraid to say what she thinks – but what deeper ideas might it signify about her character, her bravery and her principles?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own **interpretation** – a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a person, relationship or idea.