

Charlotte Brontë JANE EYRE

Jane Eyre is an orphan, and all alone in the world. But she's no ordinary young woman; despite her lonely and unhappy childhood, she does everything to succeed at a time when women had little freedom. When she meets the mysterious Mr Rochester, however, her free spirit is put to the test.

Will Jane ever find the happiness she wishes for so much?

In this reader you will find:

- Background information about this novel
- A short biography of Charlotte Brontë
- Glossary of difficult words
- Comprehension activities
- B1 Preliminary-style activities
- Exit test

Tag

Love Society

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Charlotte Brontë

JANE EYRE

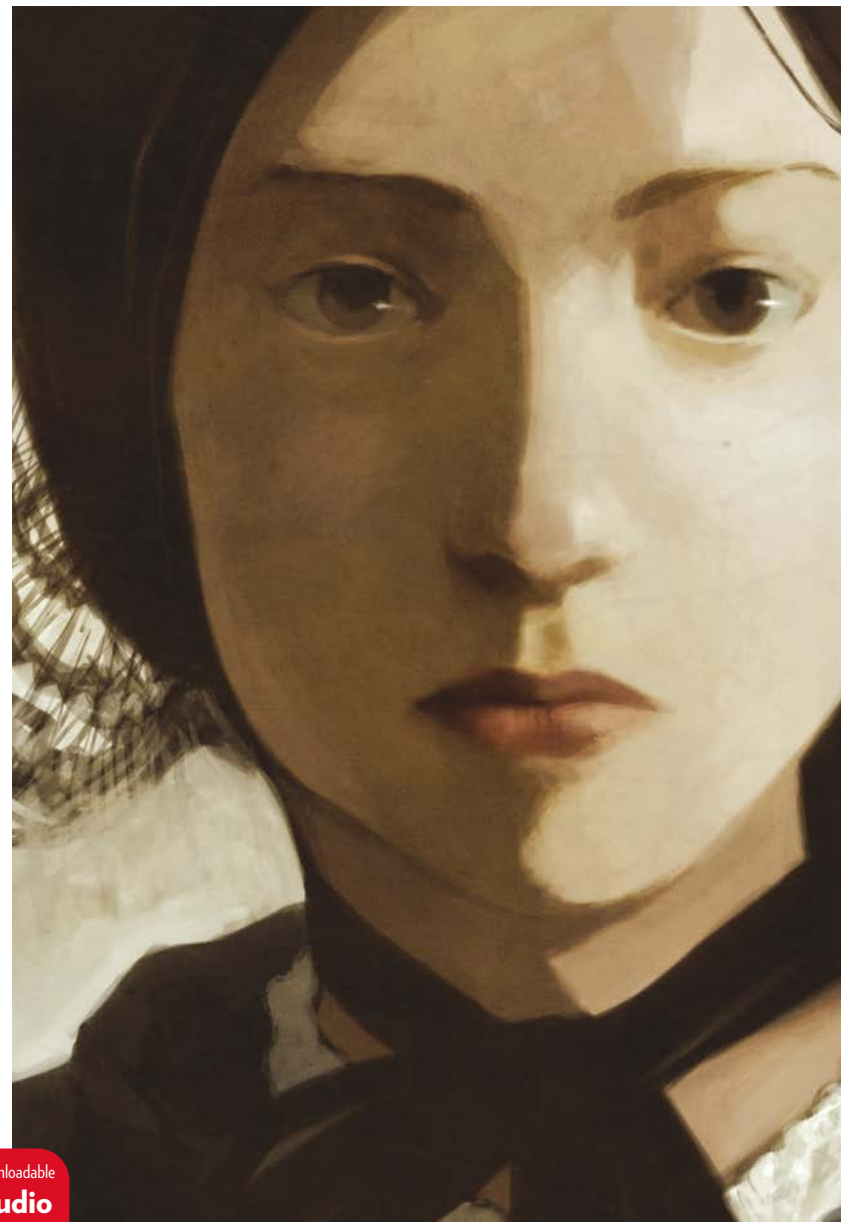
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Charlotte Brontë JANE EYRE



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Book brief

- 1 *Jane Eyre* is a novel written by Charlotte Brontë, which was an immediate success after it was first published in 1847.
- 2 Set in the first part of the 19th century in five different places in the north of England, the story starts with Jane describing her difficult childhood as an orphan.
- 3 Jane grows up, becomes a governess, and falls in love with her employer, Mr Rochester, who has a dark secret.
- 4 The whole story is told from Jane's point of view.
- 5 Main themes include love, family and independence.

Charlotte Brontë

Jane Eyre

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For Review Only

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Main Characters



JANE
EYRE

The protagonist, she tells us her story starting from her unhappy childhood.



EDWARD
FAIRFAX
ROCHESTER

Jane's employer and the owner of Thornfield, he's a man with strong feelings and a dark secret.

BERTHA
MASON

Once beautiful, she's now mad.





BLANCHE
INGRAM

*A beautiful
woman who
hopes to marry
Rochester.*



BROCKLEHURST

The cruel head of Lowood School.



ADELE
VARENS

*Jane's pupil
at Thornfield.*



MARIA
TEMPLE

*A kind
teacher at
Lowood
School.*

Before you Read

Writing and Speaking

21st Century Skills

- 1 A** *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, when Victoria had been queen for ten years. Search on the Internet and answer the following questions about what life was like in a rich house in Victorian England.

- 1 How did rich people keep their houses warm?
.....
- 2 What was life like for children of rich families?
.....
- 3 What could these children do for entertainment?
.....
- 4 Who did the cooking, cleaning and washing in a rich house?
.....
- 5 How did people travel long distances?
.....
- 6 What did Victorian boys and girls learn?
.....



- 1 B** Discuss the following in pairs.

- How was life in Victorian times different from now?
- What was life like for a poor person in those times?

Vocabulary

- 2 A** Read this short summary of Chapter 1, then decide which adjectives might best describe Jane.

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ☐ excited | ☐ unhappy | ☐ lonely | ☐ shy | ☐ angry |
| ☐ friendly | ☐ charming | ☐ clever | ☐ afraid | ☐ brave |

Jane Eyre is sent to live with her aunt and uncle after her parents die, when she's only a few months old. About a year later, her uncle also dies and life becomes more difficult for her. Her aunt doesn't want her in the house and her cousins treat her badly. She has no one to protect her. She's often punished for what her aunt sees as bad behaviour.

2 B Jane lives in a very big house. Match each room with its definition and what you might find in it.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 ☐ ☐ drawing room | a small room for eating the first meal of the day | d bed; wardrobe; mirror; fireplace; chairs and other furniture for keeping clothes in |
| 2 ☐ ☐ bedroom | b large, formal room for relaxing and seeing visitors | e small table and chairs; fireplace |
| 3 ☐ ☐ breakfast room | c room for sleeping and where you keep clothes and other belongings | f sofas and chairs; large fireplace |

Grammar

2 3 Use the prompts below to make questions. Then listen out for them in the first chapter of *Jane Eyre*.

- 1 where / she / go (*present perfect*)
.....
- 2 what / you / want (*present simple*)
.....
- 3 what / you / do / behind the curtain (*past continuous*)
.....
- 4 you / hear / her (*simple past*)
.....
- 5 how / you can / hit your young master (*simple past*)
.....
- 6 why / I / suffer in this way (*simple past*)
.....
- 7 Miss Eyre / you / be / ill? (*present simple*)
.....
- 8 you / like / go to school (*present conditional*)
.....

‘Unjust! – Unjust!’

- 2 There was no possibility of going for a walk that dark, November afternoon, there was a cold wind and it was raining heavily. I was glad – I never liked long walks. I hated going back into the house feeling cold to my bones, back to the house where Bessie, the nurse always shouted at me, and where I felt so inferior* to my cousins Eliza, John and Georgiana Reed.

That afternoon I went into the drawing room*. There, lying on a sofa was my aunt, Mrs Reed, surrounded by my cousins, her three ‘little darlings’. A bright fire was burning in the fireplace, and the children, who were not arguing or crying, seemed perfectly happy. She looked up when she saw me but didn’t ask me to join them. ‘Until I’ve heard from Bessie, and seen with my own eyes, that you’re learning to be a more sociable*, more likeable child, Jane,’ she said, ‘then you’ll have none of the nice things that contented*, happy little children are allowed to have.’

I started to ask what I had done wrong, but my aunt told me to be silent and to go somewhere out of the way. I went into the next room, a small breakfast room, which I liked because it had a bookcase. I took out one of my favourite books, *A History of British Birds*, climbed onto the window seat*, closed the curtain behind me and opened the

inferior lower, less important
drawing room (old fashioned) living room
with chairs and sofas

sociable friendly
contented satisfied
window seat a place to sit under a window

Jane Eyre

book. The pictures were beautiful and mysterious; each one told a story. I was fascinated by* descriptions of Iceland and Greenland and other wild lands. I tried to imagine what these icy places would look like. I was happy for a few moments, lost in my book. The only thing I was afraid of was being interrupted. After a short time, the door opened and I heard the voice of John Reed, 'Where has she gone?'

'I'm sure she's hiding in the window seat,' said his sister, Eliza.

I came out of my hiding place. I didn't want John to pull me out, 'What do you want?' I asked, trying to sound* as if I didn't care*.

John Reed was fourteen years old, four years older than me, and he was horrible to me. He hurt and bullied me not two or three times a week, or even once or twice a day, but every time he saw me. Every nerve* in my body feared him, my body shrank* whenever he came near me and I had no one to defend me. The servants* said nothing because they didn't want to go against their young master*, and my aunt was blind and deaf to what he did, even though she saw him hit me often.

He told me to come to the chair where he was sitting. I knew he'd hit me, he always did. I looked at him and thought how ugly he looked, and that was when he hit me, suddenly and so hard that I nearly fell over.

'That was for being rude to Mama, for hiding behind the curtain, and for that look in your eye, you rat!'

I knew I mustn't answer, so I stood in silence.

'What were you doing behind the curtain?' he asked.

I held out the book and he took it, 'You mustn't read our books. Mama says you have no money because your father left you with

fascinated by very interested in

sound give the idea that

I didn't care it wasn't important to me

nerve part of body which sends signals (eg pain) to brain

shrink (here) become smaller

servant a person who works in someone's house doing things like cleaning or cooking

master a man who has people working for him, especially servants

nothing. You should be out on the streets, not living with a gentleman's children like us, eating with us and wearing clothes that Mama has paid for. Stand by that door and I'll teach you a lesson.'

When I reached the door, I turned round to look at him, and then he threw the book at me. I tried to get out of the way but didn't move quickly enough. The corner of the book hit me above the eye and made me bleed*. Now, instead of feeling scared, I felt angry, 'Wicked* and cruel boy!' I said. 'You're like a murderer.'

'What did you say?' he cried. 'Did you hear her, Eliza and Georgiana? Wait till Mama hears about this.'

Then he ran straight at me and began to attack me, pulling my hair and shouting 'Rat!, Rat!' In came Mrs Reed, followed by Bessie and Mrs Reed's personal servant, Abbot, who pulled us apart.

'Take her to the Red Room and lock her in there,' said Mrs Reed.

The servants took hold of me and I was carried upstairs, but for the first time in my life I fought them all the way. I was so furious*, I hardly knew what I was doing.

'Hold her arms, Miss Abbot,' said Bessie, 'she's like a mad cat!'

'Why did you hit your young master?' cried Miss Abbot.

'Master! How's he my master? I'm not a servant!' I cried.

'No, you're less than a servant because you don't even work for your food and clothes,' Abbot said. They took me into the Red Room and were going to tie me to a chair, but I cried out, 'No! Don't tie me to the chair, I'll sit still*, I promise,' and I became calm.

Bessie stood in front of me. 'You should remember that your aunt keeps you here out of kindness. If she sent you away, you'd have to go to the poor house.'

In Victorian England, they made poor houses as horrible as possible so that poor people would do any job rather than going there.

bleed lose blood
wicked very bad

furious very angry
still without moving

Jane Eyre

I had heard these words for as long as I could remember. Indeed, I had heard them so often that I didn't really hear the words anymore, though they still hurt.

'You must not ever think of yourself as the same as your cousins just because Mrs Reed is kind enough to let you live here,' Miss Abbot added.

Bessie's voice became a little kinder, 'You should try to make yourself useful and pleasant, then perhaps you'd have a home here. But if you get angry and rude then Mrs Reed will send you away.'

'Perhaps God will punish the child,' said Abbot. 'He'll strike her dead* while she's angry and then where would he send her but to hell*. Say your prayers Miss Eyre, because if you aren't sorry, then something bad might come down the chimney* and take you away.'

They went, shutting the door and locking it behind them.

The Red Room was one of the largest and most frightening rooms in the whole house, but it was almost never used. In fact, hardly anyone went into the room, except some of the servants to clean, and the fire was never lit. Sometimes, Mrs Reed went in as this was where she kept some of her jewels and letters, as well as a miniature of her deceased* husband. My uncle, Mr Reed, had been dead for nine years. It was in this room that he had died and here that his body had lain in its coffin* before they buried him. They never used this room in respect of his memory. The large bed where my uncle had died sat at the centre of the room as if it were an altar*. There were heavy curtains all around it. There was a huge wardrobe with a full-length

A miniature is a tiny, painted picture of a person. They were very popular in Victorian times.

strike her dead kill her

hell where they say you go when you die if you've been very bad

chimney the part of a fire where the smoke goes up and out of the house

deceased (formal) dead

coffin wooden box for putting a dead body in

altar where the priest stands in a church



mirror, there were red chairs and other heavy pieces of furniture made from shiny dark wood.

After a few minutes, I found the courage to get up and try the door, but it was locked. As I turned back to my seat I saw myself in the mirror. It was almost dark, and with my white arms and my eyes shining with fear, I looked like a ghost. I was frightened, but I was angry. The violent* cruelty of John Reed, his sisters' selfishness, my aunt's coldness towards me and the servants never defending me, were all too much for me.

'Unjust*! – Unjust!' I cried.

There was a question that I kept coming back to, but of course there was no answer to it – why did I have to suffer in this way? All these thoughts went round and round in my head, until, as it became completely dark and I was as cold as stone, I lost my courage. Perhaps I was as wicked as they said, they didn't love me because I was unloveable. Then I had a new thought. Before my uncle died he made my aunt promise to look after me as one of her children. I knew that if he were still alive, they wouldn't treat* me so badly. I had heard stories that ghosts came back if promises weren't kept. I quickly stopped crying, I certainly didn't want my uncle's ghost to be called back because I was suffering.

Just at that moment a streak* of light suddenly lit up the wall. It was probably only the moon or a light from the garden, but I thought it was a ghost. My heart beat hard, my head was hot and I heard a sound like wings* beating. I ran over to the door and shook the handle*, desperately* trying to get out. Steps came running

violent that hurts or damages

unjust not fair

treat behave towards

streak line

wing birds use these to fly

handle what you hold to open a door

desperately feeling afraid and as if there's no hope



along the corridor*, the key turned, and Bessie and Miss Abbot came in.

‘Miss Eyre, are you ill?’ asked Bessie.

‘Take me out!’ I cried, reaching for Bessie’s hand. ‘I thought a ghost was coming.’

At that moment, Mrs Reed arrived.

‘Oh Aunt! Please, help me! Forgive me! I’d rather die than be in that room!’ I cried.

‘Silence!’ my aunt said. ‘That’s enough!’ And with that she took hold of me and, without listening to me, she pushed me back into the room and locked the door. I don’t know what happened then, but next thing, I was in my own bed, as if I was waking up from a terrible nightmare*. I could hear two people talking quietly in the room. One was Bessie, the other was Mr Lloyd, the apothecary*, who looked after the servants if they were ill. When he saw I was awake, he came over and told me kindly he’d come back the next day.

When Mr Lloyd came he asked what I thought had made me ill. I told him about the Red Room and described my life with the Reeds. Then he asked, ‘Would you like to go to school?’

I wasn’t sure what a school was, but I said yes.

‘Well, well! Who knows what might happen,’ he said.

One day in January, a carriage* arrived and I was called to the drawing room to see my aunt. When I got there, I saw a tall, harsh*-looking man dressed in black.

corridor a long room with doors to other rooms

nightmare a bad dream

apothecary (old word) chemist

carriage 
harsh cruel and hard

Jane Eyre

‘This is Mr Brocklehurst, Jane, of Lowood School,’ said my aunt, ‘where you’ll go soon. Though, Mr Brocklehurst, as I told you, she’s a deceitful* child.’

‘Don’t worry Ma’am, at Lowood we don’t tolerate* liars*.’ Then the man turned to me.

‘Do you know where wicked people go after death?’

‘They go to hell,’ I said.

‘And what must you do to avoid going there?’

‘Well, Sir, I must keep in good health and make sure I don’t die.’

After he left, I found the courage to speak to my aunt, ‘I’m not a liar. If I were, I’d say that I loved you; but I don’t, I dislike you. When I’m grown up I’ll say that even thinking about you makes me sick and that you treated me with miserable cruelty.’

‘How dare* you, Jane Eyre!’ said my aunt, astonished*.

‘I dare because it’s the truth and when I get to Lowood School I’ll tell everyone what you’re like,’ I said.

When my aunt heard that she looked frightened. She picked up her things and left. I had won my first argument.

deceitful someone who hides the truth

tolerate allow something that you don’t agree with to exist

liar someone who doesn’t tell the truth

How dare you we say this when we’re shocked or angry about something that someone has done

astonished very surprised

Reading Comprehension

1 Choose the correct answer.

- 1 What time of year does the story start?
☐ A Spring; the days are warm and bright.
☐ B Summer; it's hot and sunny.
☐ C Autumn; it's cold, windy and raining heavily.
- 2 Why is Jane pleased that she can't go for a walk?
☐ A She doesn't like to be away from her nurse.
☐ B She doesn't like going into the garden.
☐ C She hates getting cold.
- 3 When she goes into the drawing room, what does she see?
☐ A A small cold room with the curtains closed.
☐ B Mrs Reed and her three children sitting happily in front of a fire.
☐ C The servants cleaning the room.
- 4 How does Jane feel when she first sees John Reed in the breakfast room?
☐ A Terrified – he hits her and bullies her every day.
☐ B Strong – she won't let him bully her.
☐ C Shy – she thinks he's wonderful.
- 5 What does she do when John Reed hits her with the book?
☐ A She starts to cry and goes to hide in a corner.
☐ B She gets angry and starts to shout at him.
☐ C She hits John Reed on the head.
- 6 In Bessie's opinion, how should Jane make her life better?
☐ A Work as a servant to repay her aunt.
☐ B Leave the house and go to live somewhere else.
☐ C Try to be more pleasant and less angry.



2 Who is who? Match each person to the correct definition.

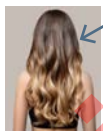
- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 ☐ Bessie | a Jane's male cousin |
| 2 ☐ Jane Eyre | b Mrs Reed's personal servant |
| 3 ☐ Mrs Reed | c nurse |
| 4 ☐ John Reed | d Jane's dead uncle |
| 5 ☐ Eliza and Georgiana | e the apothecary |
| 6 ☐ Miss Abbot | f the protagonist of the story |
| 7 ☐ Mr Reed | g runs Lowood school |
| 8 ☐ Mr Lloyd | h Jane's aunt |
| 9 ☐ Mr Brocklehurst | i Jane's female cousins |

Grammar and Vocabulary

3 Complete the sentences about Chapter 1 using the pictures and the verbs in the box in the past simple.



light - be - keep - lock - throw - look - pull



- There a in the breakfast room.
- John Reed a at Jane.
- John Reed Jane's
- They never the in the Red Room.
- Mrs Reed some of her in the Red Room.
- Jane like a
- Jane's aunt the of the Red Room.

Writing

4 Write a short description of how Jane is treated by Mrs Reed.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....