

In what ways is Jane  
different from the  
other women in the  
novel essay sample



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"Jane Eyre" is a nineteenth century novel, which tells us a lot about the roles women played in a strong patriarchal society of which Jane refuses to conform to entirely. This was the time when women were treated as men's possessions. They were restricted legally, morally and spiritually, with no rights to their property, belongings or children. They were denied many of the things that we take for granted today, such as a wide education on all subjects, the vote and a profession.

Jane Eyre is a very passionate woman, who believes that women are equal to men in every way; these views were quite unconventional for her day. At the very beginning of the book, we can see that Jane is very different from other children. The Victorians believed that children were to be 'seen and not heard' however Jane is not scared to speak her mind. One example of this is when Mr. Brocklehurst comes to Gateshead Hall, about Jane going to Lowood School. Mr. Brocklehurst is a tall man with a grim face and Jane is a small, weak child, but when Mr. Brocklehurst asks, "What must you do to avoid hell?" she replies, "I must keep in good health and not die."

To threaten a small child with the prospect of falling into an eternal pit full of fire was a horrible thing to do, but it did not shake Jane. This immediately tells us that Jane is not the conventional child. This is not the only time that Jane takes courage to stand up to an elder, though, because she also stands up to her Aunt Reed, who tells Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane, 'has a tendency to deceit.'

This arouses great feelings of injustice in Jane, which she cannot contain. She says to her Aunt Reed: "I am not deceitful: if I were I should say I loved you,

but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed. " Mrs. Reed cannot believe her ears; a child is not to quarrel with its elders. I think it takes great courage for Jane to do this: the maid has already told her that she is under an obligation to Mrs.

Reed, " She keeps you: if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poorhouse. " So Jane, as a dependant relative is taking a big risk, but she feels something must be done. This is why Jane's character contrasts so much with Helen Burns. Jane meets Helen, when she is sent to Lowood Institution, a charitable-school. One day Helen is dismissed is from her history class in disgrace and sent to stand in the middle of the large schoolroom. " She neither wept nor blushed, composed, though grave, she stood, the centre mark of all eyes.

This astonishes Jane; she would never let anybody treat her like this. Then, again the next day, Helen was punished by being hit with a bundle of twigs, twelve times on the back of her neck. Later that night, Jane finds Helen at the fireplace. Helen feels that Miss Scratchard is severe, because she dislikes her faults, but not cruel, which astonishes Jane. " If I were in your place I should dislike her: I should resist her; if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose.

Helen is astonished by Jane's passion and simply replies, " It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you- and besides, the bible bids us return good for evil. " This viewpoint tells us that Helen is a religious person and believes that Jane's passionate feelings

are wrong. Helen teaches Jane to control her passion and gives her courage to be brave.

On one occasion Mr. Brocklehurst comes to the school and Jane is made to stand on a high stool in the centre of the room, while Mr. Brocklehurst tells everyone to avoid her company, because she is a 'LIAR!' She could not bear the shame of this, she is looking for a new start at Lowood, where she will be valued and treated as an equal, but now everyone has been told to: "shun her from your converse." While Jane was standing on the stool one girl came up and passed her, in passing her she lifted her eyes up to Jane and later smiled. This girl was Helen and she gave Jane the courage to lift her head and take a firm stand on the stool.

This shows that Helen has helped Jane to hold her passion, because before she would have shouted, "I am not a liar!" just as she had done at Gateshead Hall. Helen is most definitely the most conventional woman in this novel, she is willing to 'turn the other cheek' and I think in doing this she is the most courageous. It is her role in the novel to represent how women were supposed to act and without Helen's conventional ways, I do not think that I would enjoy the book as much. Miss Temple, the superintendent at Lowood later clears Jane's name and they are friends forever after this incident.

Jane continues her schooling at Lowood for another eight years, in which the conditions improve after typhus fever spreads, of which Helen died. Miss Temple, having married, also left Lowood, to go to a distant country with her new husband. Miss Temple and Helen have both taught Jane to control her passion, but I think that because of them Jane wants equality even more.

Women weren't allowed to be independent, it was a society in which, when women married they had to give up their work to look after the house all day and bring up the children.

This is what Miss Temple did and I think that Jane lost some of her respect for her because of this. Jane becomes restless at Lowood, " I desire of liberty, for liberty, I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the mind then faintly blowing. " Jane is now eighteen years old, a woman was not to have freedom, she was to be a possession of her master. Jane advertises for a post as a governess and is required at Thornfield, for an eight-year-old girl, called Adele.

Jane settles well, but soon becomes restless, at times she would go and climb the three staircases, raise the trap door of the attic, and having reached the leads, look out over the sequestered fields. Jane wants to explore the busy world, towns and the regions that she has heard of but never seen. She has led a very sheltered life, because she has only ever mixed with her fellow pupils and teachers at Lowood. However she cannot explore these towns and regions full of life, though, because she is a woman, of an inferior class.

Once, while pacing up and down the third story, to cure her restlessness, she says, " Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer, and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to

confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags.

Charlotte Brontë is saying that women should be allowed profession and shouldn't have to look after the house. However to have a profession women would have to be educated, and at the time all well educated women were known as 'blue stockings'. This was because these educated women also thought that it was wrong that women should have to stay at home to look after the house and I think the thought of women having equal rights scared men. Jane also says, "It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.

This is why one reviewer said that Charlotte Brontë had "forfeited the society of her sex." Women were not supposed to have these feelings, but they did and Charlotte Brontë is speaking out against this patriarchal society. Jane's restlessness soon goes away when Mr. Rochester, the master of Thornfield, arrives. Jane is a poor orphan, who dresses plainly in black, Quaker-like dresses with only a small, discrete, pearl brooch for decoration. However Mr. Rochester knows that there is more to Jane than meets the eye, especially after seeing her paintings.

Mr. Rochester patronises Jane, but whenever she can, she reminds him that she is inferior to him. For example he asks her, "Do you think me handsome?" and Jane replies, "NO!" This was an odd thing to ask of your governess, but she does not feel the need to be polite. One night Jane wakes upon hearing a strange demoniac laugh, "It seemed at the very key-hole of

my chamber door. " Jane quickly got dressed and left her chamber to find the air filled with smoke, which was coming from Mr. Rochester's bedroom.

Jane quickly puts the fire out, saving Mr. Rochester's life. Jane had been told before once before that this laugh belonged to Grace Poole and when she asks, " Was it Grace Poole? " Mr. Rochester says, " Yes. " Mr. Rochester makes Jane promise not to tell anybody else about the fire, making their relationship closer, because not only has she just saved his life, they now share a secret. To ask your governess to keep secrets for you is a very odd thing to do, Mr. Rochester also takes Jane's hand into his own and holds them there for a long time.

It is late at night, Jane is in her master's bedroom, she has just saved his life and now he is standing in front of her holding her hand and this is a romantic thing to do, because if you wanted to thank someone you would shake their hand, but to hold hands was something completely different. I also believe that it is great that, for once, the hero in the story is a woman and this is also something else that makes the book so extraordinary for its day.

Her feelings towards Mr. Rochester have quickly changed, because before she said, " I recognised his decisive nose, more remarkable for character than beauty; his full nostrils, denoting, I thought cholera; his grim mouth, chin, and jaw- yes all three were very grim, and no mistake. " Now, though, " his presence in a room is more cheering than the brightest fire. " Mr.

Rochester's feelings towards Jane have also grown, " Good-night my-" In chapter seventeen, a party of Mr. Rochester's friends arrives, and it is from being among this party that she begins to think rationally.

She is the governess, neither a lady nor a servant, and during the party the feelings towards a governess are really shown. Blanche Ingram says, " Au reste, we all know them: danger of bad example of innocence of childhood; distractions and consequent neglect of duty on the part of the attached-mutual alliance and reliance; confidence thence resulting- insolence accompanying- mutiny and general blow-up. " Jane realises that she cannot marry Mr. Rochester, he is of noble birth and she is his social inferior. Blanche Ingram, one member of the party, is also of noble birth. However, she is comparatively poor and wishes to marry Mr. Rochester to cure this.

She is tall, dark as a Spaniard, with noble bust, sloping shoulders, a graceful neck, dark eyes and black ringlets. She is very different from Jane, because she is willing to marry Mr. Rochester, when she does not love him, but Jane could not live her life with some one, who did not love her. Blanche is a very accomplished woman, who is always the centre of attention, but she does not have a thought of her own, she is also self-centred, vain and arrogant. The growing relationship between Mr. Rochester and Blanche gives Jane pain, because she has a terrible feeling that she won't make Mr. Rochester happy.

Another difference between Jane and Blanche is that Jane has morals and principles because she would never marry any one just for their money, she would only ever marry someone if she loved them. In those times people had to marry other people according to their class and I think that Charlotte Bronte also disagrees with this idea. One evening Mr. Rochester finds Jane in the garden. He tells her that he is to be married and that she must leave Thornfield. Jane's feelings towards Mr. Rochester get the better of her.  
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“ Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? -You think wrong! I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. ” This is a remarkable thing for a woman to say at the time, women were not suppose to stand up to men. This also shows, how that people had to marry into his or her own class. “ I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal- as we are!

It is a patriarchal society, men dominate, but Jane won’t settle for anything less than equality and this is why that one reviewer said that Charlotte Bronte had “ forfeited the society of her sex”, because these views were so different for her day. Jane also talks of her soul; it is as if there is a spiritual level to their relationship. Mr. Rochester asks Jane to marry him and she says, “ You are already married. ” The irony is that she speaks more truth than she knows, but eventually says, “ Yes! ” However, the wedding is aborted: Mr. Mason arrived at the church and told the priest how Mr. Rochester was already married to a Bertha Mason.

Mr. Rochester takes everyone to Bertha. Charlotte Bronte has made you feel compassionate towards Mr. Rochester; by the way that she described Bertha. “ It snatched and growled like some strange wild animal, on all fours;” Bertha is not even a ‘ she’ but an ‘ it’. Before when Mr. Mason was at the house he was attacked. Jane heard him tell the surgeon that, “ She sucked my blood: she said she’d drain my heart. ” However, Jane loved Mr. <https://assignbuster.com/in-what-ways-is-jane-different-from-the-other-women-in-the-novel-essay-sample/>

Rochester so much that she did not question him about this and believed him when he said that she was in no danger.

Bertha and Jane are quite similar, as they are both very passionate. It was Bertha's sexual passions that have changed her, but Jane has learnt to restrain her passions. Mr. Rochester was made to marry Bertha, but he was besotted with her because of her beauty and I think that is why that Mr. Rochester does not mind Jane being plain and little. It was an arranged marriage because she was a wealthy Creole and the late Mr. Rochester wanted his youngest son to have some money. So it was Bertha's fate to be married to Mr. Rochester, just as it was Blanche's fate to marry Mr. Rochester for his money.

Jane decides to leave Thornfield, because she cares for herself, " I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more sustained I am, the more I will respect myself. " It would also go against Jane's morals and Principles to stay. However, Jane is still not quite independent enough though to make the decision herself, as she has a dream in which her mother appears, telling her to leave Thornfield, " My daughter, Flee Temptation! " Jane is taken in by the Rivers family, Diana, Mary and St. John. It is discovered that the Rivers family is Jane's cousins. She has inherited a fortune from her uncle, Mr. Eyre, in Madeira, which she insists on sharing with her new-found cousins.

This alters her position and she is no longer inferior to Mr. Rochester in class. St. John wants to become a missionary and asks Jane to go to with him to India, as his wife. Jane feels that this would be an " error of judgement" and

rejects his proposal. To make the decision to leave Thornfield she needed a dream to tell her that she was doing the right thing. However, now Jane is independent enough to reject St. John and return to Mr. Rochester. She does not know that Bertha has died in the fire at Thornfield, She does not know that Mr. Rochester has lost his sight or his hand either, but she feels that she must see him.

This tells us that Jane is a lot more independent than she used to be and that she still loves Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester and Jane get married and Jane says, " I know what it is to live entirely for one, because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. I am the bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, consequently we are forever together. " Mr. Rochester has lost his sight and one hand, but this doesn't matter to Jane, because at last she has equality, which is all that she had ever wanted.