

# Pursuit of feminism in the victorian period – jane eyre

Literature



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In the novel *Jane Eyre*, the author Charlotte Brontë advocates the spirit of feminism by illustrating how Jane overcomes the stereotypical belief that many people in the Victorian era holds about women. Women were considered inferior and constricted by the society that they lived in. Brontë firmly conveys the message of feminism by depicting the equal rights women should possess during the particular period of time. Through Jane, Brontë advocates feminism by portraying how Jane successfully resists the belief that people had towards the figure of women, men's oppression, and restrictions of being women.

Jane strives to transform the image that people hold about women. The development of Jane's thoughts and emotions enables Jane to acquire the sense of bravery to fight. She constantly endeavors to fight against the unfair reality to gain the equal rights that women should have. She keeps in mind that women do not have to depend on men mentally, physically nor financially. Blanche Ingram, who hopes to marry Rochester for his money, wants to find a rich man whom she can depend on for the rest of her life. Ingram believes that woman's role is to look beautiful and attractive enough to appeal a man with wealth and look.

Because Jane senses how woman like Ingram is looked upon others, she struggles to alter this image. Jane rejects to marry Rochester when he proposes by stating, "Think of his misery; think of his danger; ... Who in the world cares for you? Or who will be injured by what you do?" (Brontë 342) She implies that she does not want to marry a man due to his absence of wealth. Furthermore, even after Jane accepts to marry Rochester, she asserts " I shall continue to act as Adele's governess... I shall furnish my own <https://assignbuster.com/pursuit-of-feminism-in-the-victorian-period-jane-eyre/>

wardrobe out of that money, and you shall give me nothing but your regard" (Bronte 290).

Although Jane is now an upper class woman, she declares her independence showing that she can be autonomous without men's help. The fact that a woman with a high social status has an occupation shows that Jane strongly believes she is just as equal to Rochester and is able to take care of herself with her own abilities. Furthermore, Mr. Brocklehurst represents a man who strictly believes in the social convention about women. He insults Jane in front of her classmates and teachers claiming that she is a wicked girl.

However, Jane proves him wrong by showing her own deeds that she is not a wicked girl. She asks Miss Tempe for help saying " Because I have been wrongly accused... you, ma'am, and everybody else will now think me wicked" (71) Moreover, male's oppression hinders women from truly being who they are. John Reed is the first male character that oppresses Jane. He is one of the characters that lead Jane to live in fear and shadow. Because of the fact that Jane was a young girl, John Reed abuses Jane, hurting her both physically and mentally.

" He bullied and punished me;... every nerve I had feared him, and very morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near" (4) In addition, St. John believes that women's role is to dedicate their life to men. He constantly pressures Jane to go to India with him. Jane explains his oppression " he did not abstain from conversing with me... all this was a torture to me. " (Bronte 447) However, Jane refuses this marriage because she steadily believes that marriage should be based upon true love with sincere feelings. Rochester

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also attempts to control Jane's thoughts and emotions by giving expensive dresses and a necklace that she cannot afford.

Although Jane gives in at first out of love, she eventually realizes that she should be herself and refuses it. " Bronte portrays gender obstacles that women encounter during the Victorian era. Bertha Mason, Rochester's secret wife, symbolizes the limitations that most wives of the nineteenth century face, such as cooking in the kitchen most days. Throughout the novel, however, Jane surmounts this barrier by proving that all women have the same privilege as men do. She accomplishes this by getting away from Thornfield and becoming a teacher who teaches poor children.

In addition, because Jane rejects Rochester's proposal, she becomes indigent. She spends much of her night in prayer and is forced to sleep outside. When she finds a house and asks for a shelter, Hannah rejects her. The misery that she confronts is due to her decision of rejecting Rochester's proposal. " My strength is quite failing me,.... I fell I cannot go much farther" (Bronte 356) Although she had the opportunity to consent the proposal, she took the path to cope with the hindrances she had to face to be independent as a woman.

St. John also constantly insists Jane to marry him. Despite Jane's kind refusal, St. John does not take it seriously because of the fact that she is a woman. However, Jane overcomes this by firmly stating " I broke from St. John, who had followed, and would have detained me. It was my time to assume ascendancy... I desired him to leave me" (Bronte 457) Bronte consistently

advocates feminism by illustrating the hardships that Jane confronts in the Victorian world due to her status as women.

Throughout the novel, Bronte exhibits the image of women, men's subjugation, and limitations of being women. Jane struggles to gain individuality in her society to assure others. She refuses to marry a man because of his wealth or social rank. She endlessly strives to survive from the oppression from men to guide herself into her own desirable life. She breaks the social convention that women cannot have jobs by acquiring an occupation to be independent. Jane's marvelous effort to attain independence blatantly displays Bronte's pursuit of strong support towards feminism.