

# Social class – jane eyre pride and prejudice assignment

[Sociology](#)



Charlotte Bronze's own social background was that of being relatively middle class as she was the daughter of a allergen, which may have impacted on Cane's attitude towards the ranks of society: it is shown at many points in the novel that social classes are unfair and prejudiced. Austin presents a similar view in 'Pride and Prejudice', though eventually her novel's outcome shows that love is more powerful than rank. Whereas Cane's happy ending is not so simply achieved. The opening chapters of 'Jane Rye' introduce the importance of class and its position in Victorian society.

Jane explains to the reader how she was "humbled by the consciousness of [her] physical inferiority", demonstrating how even as a child Jane was made aware of her low rank. By saying physical inferiority Bronze implies that if she were more handsome, her social standing would have been more openly accepted - a point that is later voiced by the servants at Sheathed Hall. This is an example of how a person's appearance was valued more highly than their intelligence or kindness, both of which young Jane possesses, but which are ignored due to her lack of handsomeness.

This opinion is mirrored by Jane Austin in *Pride and Prejudice* when Elizabeth Bennett is describing the ladies of the De Bourgh family: she ascribes them as "very fine ladies" for they were "rather handsome" and "educated" with a considerable "fortune". This demonstrates how it is the material, superficial attributes that make a 'fine lady' - there is no mention of kindness, charity, or other honorable traits. Merely their appearance and wealth makes them fine' in social class. Later in these opening chapters it is shown how John Reed dominates Jane and bullies her.

He says she cannot “ rummage through the bookshelves for they are John Reed’s]”, an opinion of society that has been enforced onto him and, in return, he is forcing onto Jane. As he is the only male heir, he will inherit the entire Reed family estate, for they lived in a patriarchal society. Jane is an orphan with nothing to her name and her cousin has no sympathy for her. This, within Victorian society, would position Jane far lower than John Reed in terms of social ranking.

By including this in the novel, Bronzwe has demonstrated to the reader how deeply imprinted the Ideas of society are on youngsters and adults alike. One of the ways in which Bronzwe presents class in a negative light is through the character of Mr. Brochures. He is considered middle-class as he is “ charitable” and clergyman, though it is clear to the audience that he is a hypocritical Christian. By including the character of Brochures, Bronzwe has highlighted how being a part of a character of pompous character of William Collins whose offer of marriage is rejected by Elizabeth Bennett.

It is acknowledged in the novel that Collins is a character created to be repulsed, for Mr. Bennett agrees with Elizabethan decision to decline his hand in marriage despite it being a good financial fit for them. Both Bronzwe and Austen have used these seemingly respectable, middle-class gentlemen to give an example of those who are bad people despite their social background. Jane is affected by the prejudice against her social class, though not necessarily in a negative light.

In chapter ten, once Jane has become a young woman, working as a teacher and thus in a higher class than before, we see a moment of independence

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that was ahead of its time in terms of feminism. Whilst looking out of the window, Jane narrates, " I desired liberty, for liberty I gasped. " She desires liberty from the former oppression that class and her orphaned state has given her. She rebels against the opinions society has tried to enforce, desiring more, showing early feminist views. Becoming a governess in a stately manor home does little for Cane's social standing.

Though she now has a respectable job and behaves exactly as a lady should, for this was a key part of being a governess, she is treated appallingly by people who are in a ' better' class, such as Miss Ingram. Miss Ingram is continually rude to Jane, at one point calling her a ' creeping creature' which shows how she considers Jane to be a lesser-being due to her class. By using the word ' creature' it is implied that she is amongst the same class as animals: the word ' creeping attaches connotations of Jane being sly and untrustworthy.

When this is said, Jane does not say anything in return which implies that she, too, believes she is a lesser-being. This is also replicated by the use of Jane continually referring to Mr. Rochester being at ' Miss Anagram's side'. Clearly, Jane believes that Miss Ingram has a better social standing and therefore she is more suited to Mr. Rochester, another point that is repeated throughout the novel. Just like Miss Ingram, Austin wrote the character of Lady Catherine De Borough who possesses great wealth and social superiority.

It is said that Lady Catherine ' likes to have the distinction of rank preserved'. Through this quote we can see how Austin was trying to

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demonstrate the prejudice of society and how the social classes were divided, which is exactly what Bronze did with Miss Ingram. As the novel progresses it becomes clear that not only does Cane's social standing cause her to be an outsider at Threefold Hall, but it becomes an issue in terms of romance. As her relationship with Rochester develops Jane says, " I have something in y brain and heart... That assimilates me mentally to him...

I must, then, repeat continually that we are for ever sundered: and yet I must love him". At this point it becomes clear to a reader that Jane has fallen for Rochester but that, in doing so, has come to the conclusion that they must be for ever sundered [parted]' due to her social representation. Her lack of wealth denotes that she is unfit to marry Rochester. Resultantly, Jane convinces herself that her feelings, however strong, must be pushed aside. Likewise, in ' Pride and Prejudice' Jane Austin demonstrates how the difference of lath between Diary and Elizabeth presents impediments in their relationship. Gradation - of [her family] obstacles', validating the same theory that Bronze was putting forth with Cane's insecure beliefs: that one's position in the social order influenced whether or not one was suitable for marriage. In spite of the complications presented to their protagonists and their love lives, both Bronze and Austin eventually gave their characters a happy ending, though the means through which they achieved them differed greatly. In ' Pride and Prejudice', Mr. Diary proposes to Elizabeth not once but twice, despite the vast difference twine their social standings which does not change throughout the novel.

The same cannot be said for 'Jane Eyre' where Brontë does not supply Jane her happy ending so simply. Initially, upon his first proposal, Mr. Rochester says to Jane, "my equal is here... Will you marry me?" and, though he says that they are 'equal', he means on a level of emotion, character and intellect. Jane is still considered low-class at this point in the novel and is therefore not Mr. Rochester's equal: ultimately, when this engagement fails and Jane leaves, this is a reflection on their inequality and the inability for a cross-ranking relationship to work.

Brontë's reluctance to have Jane and Rochester marry during this period of the novel is not only a reflection of her literary direction, but a reflection of the society in which she was writing. It would not have been deemed prudent to publish a novel where a low-ranking woman married a higher-ranking man with all of the complications associated with Jane and Rochester, therefore allowing the two characters to become more evenly ranked would have provided Brontë with better reviews and less backlash from the Victorian public.

Jane finally returns to marry the man she loves when she has inherited money from her uncle's will, automatically making her wealthier and therefore of a more esteemed rank. Upon meeting him again Jane sees that Rochester is no longer the upper-class man she once knew, for his injuries in the fire have left him blind. When addressing the audience, Jane says, "Reader, I married him.", an example of how Brontë demonstrates Jane's superiority over Rochester at this point in the novel. By stating that she

married him, it is implied that Jane now holds the power in the relationship and therefore the dominance.

Bronze only allows this happy ending when it is clear to the reader that Jane is no longer Rochester's inferior, but rather that he may even be inferior to her. All is not left this way, however. Bronze eventually writes that Rochester regains a degree of his sight, repairing the imbalance between their ranks. The novel ends with the image of Jane and Edward Rochester living contently with their children, moderately wealthy and happy with their lives. What has Bronze demonstrated about social class in 'Jane Eyre' and how, precisely, is that reflected with the reading of 'Pride and Prejudice'?

She exhibits the hardships of a Victorian woman climbing her way through rank, having to suffer at the hand of prejudice and lose love due to social bigotry. What Austen illuminates alongside this is the way that the same form of social ignorance existed in the Regency period and that two individuals can perhaps overcome these hurdles if their love is strong enough and they so wish to do so. More realistically, Bronze ultimately shows that social class is a hurdle that cannot be overstepped without criticism but that, in the name of love, patience is a clear virtue.