

# Hard times and first 10 chapters of jane eyre



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

There were many factors that influenced the educational system in Victorian times. They included religious beliefs, gender, class and the industrial revolution. These are explored in Dickens's *Hard Times* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Dickens is particularly critical of the standards of education at the time of the Victorian period and the methods of teaching employed. There were many different types of schools including "ragged schools" which suffered a lack of qualified teaching staff, church schools and middle class fee-paying schools.

It is no wonder the standards varied considerably. The experience of being educated in the Victorian period was also affected by gender. Girls were thought to be less intellectually able than boys. This is reflected in the fact that Charlotte Bronte, like her sisters had to publish their novels under male pen names, such as Currer Bell. The novel *Jane Eyre* begins when Jane is living at Gateshead. In material terms Jane is very well looked after there as she is fed and clothed, however, she is treated separately from the children at Gateshead and is not spoilt.

In fact, Jane is made most unwelcome and made to feel very inferior because of her poor background. Jane must have attained some form of education at Gateshead and although this is not specifically mentioned in the text I think that she must have had a governess. I conclude this because the books that are mentioned when Jane is reading seem very difficult and challenging for a girl of only 10 years. She reads books such as "Bewicks History of British Birds". This book has been written for someone much older than Jane.

Other books she reads include “ Gulliver’s Travels” and “ History of Rome”. Both of these books are demanding in terms of language and subject matter. As she seems able enough to understand these books I would say that Jane is a very intelligent child who is able to learn well. By reading these books Jane is able imaginatively to leave Gateshead and travel to the places where the texts are set. Jane has a very lively imagination. Her mood is reflected in the books she reads. In the period of time in which the novel “ Jane Eyre” is set, there were very few children’s books available.

Jane enjoys Bessie’s tales very much because they stimulate her imagination. Mr Brocklehurst gives Jane the only sort of book specifically written for children. It contains stories that are very moral and are based on a very puritanical view of Christianity in which children were considered sinful. Such stories stressed the fact that children needed strict discipline and should be seen and not heard. As Mr Brocklehurst claims, ‘ Children are wicked and need reformed’. John Reed, Jane’s cousin, has been educated before at a school.

In Victorian England not many lower class children had the chance to go to school; some didn’t even know what school was! Obviously this is not the case with John Reed as he comes from a well off family. He has been sent off to a private boarding school where he does not do well. Education means little to him and he has no self discipline due to being spoilt by his mother. This shows how selfish John Reed really is because many lower class children would have welcomed the opportunity of going to school. Jane has only ever heard of school through what Bessie tells her in stories.

Bessie as a servant in the house at Gateshead has only heard of school from others and can only tell Jane what she has learnt from working for different families in the past. If children in working class families ever got the chance to go to school, generally the schools were of very poor quality, often with teachers who had little or no proper education themselves. Girls or young ladies from the upper and middle classes if they went to school or had a governess were expected to learn how to sew, draw or paint, read and play a musical instrument.

Apart from reading they only learnt the basics in subjects, concentrating on Maths, English, History, Geography and French. Jane is greatly interested in hearing about school and jumps at the offer she is given to go there herself. This is because she is so emotionally neglected at Gateshead and because wants to make a life for herself, one that will give her some degree of independence. Eliza and Georgiana Reed can be superficially polite in company, if not so with Jane.

Their education accomplishments are limited; in fact we learn very little about them. They do not have a thirst for learning like Jane. Georgiana is too vain. We learn this as near beginning of the novel Georgiana is sat on a high stool, dressing her hair at the glass, and interweaving her curls with artificial flowers and faded feathers. Eliza is only interested in making money. We learn this as in chapter four she Jane stats that, “ Eliza would have sold the hair off her head if she could have made a handsome profit”

Higher-class boys were stereotyped to be the ‘ smart’ and well-educated group in society and the well-educated men of the future. They had to take

over the household and manage the finances when their father died. John Reed has none of these qualities and he is a lazy boy for he does not have pride in himself and will not endear himself to anyone. His mother, Mrs Reed, has him spoilt rotten. Look at when she brings him home from boarding school; she claims they were not treating him well and that he needs special attention.

This, in fact, is very untrue as John Reed is quite well and a very robust character. When Jane finally moves to Lowood institution she finds it hard to adjust to the lack of materials there. There are hardships at Lowood. These include the lack of food for the children and lack of clothing and heating in the school. The children also have to abide by a strict routine and be well disciplined. Examples of this are when the porridge is burnt at breakfast. When Jane is sent to Lowood School she is very keen to learn and please Miss Temple whom she admires.

Although the conditions at Lowood are not good ( poor diet, inadequate clothing etc) and discipline is very harsh, Jane still perseveres . All her efforts to become an educated young lady are almost destroyed when Mr Brocklehurst announces to everyone that Jane is a liar and makes her stand on a stool as punishment. It is only through the support of Helen Burns and Miss Temple that Jane survives the humiliation and continues her education. She does in fact become a teacher at the school when she is old enough and later a governess to Mr Rochester's ward, Adele.