

# Jane eyre study essay sample



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During the early 18th century there were many changes in society which meant people were drifting away from the strict norm of neoclassicism and conforming to the Romantic and the Gothic movements. These movements were reflected in the publications of novels such as *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen which broke the male stronghold of neoclassicism in literature. Times were tough for women, for example they could inherit no money and they had to dress appropriately with no ankles exposed as well as expressing no sexuality.

Jane Austen pioneered the struggle against male supremacy in literature. Other authors followed such as Charlotte Bronte who wrote *Jane Eyre* although she used the pseudonym of Currer Bell. *Jane Eyre* contains elements of Romanticism and The Gothic throughout and also reflects Charlotte Bronte 's own life. The Gothic elements exploit the mystery, supernatural and the fear felt by the main characters and the Romantic (which is commonly misunderstood to show love, romance and passion) shows the rebellion against neoclassicism and its strict norms.

*Jane Eyre* is also written as a Bildungsroman which illustrates a person's development through life; in this case the main character Jane Eyre herself, the strong female protagonist. The first location in the story is Gateshead where Jane lives until she is around ten years old. She lives there with her aunt and her cousins who view her as inferior and label her as "deceitful" which creates a bitter atmosphere for Jane to grow up in. This makes her depressed and unhappy, feeling trapped, oppressed and is targeted by her cousin John Reed.

After a fight with him Jane is locked into the red room where her feelings are reflected by the strong decor of the room: “ A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with deep red damask... the two large windows, with their blinds always drawn down... the carpet was red... the table at the foot of the bed was covered in a crimson cloth... out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared white, the piled up mattresses and pillows of the bed,” The deep dark colours such as the mahogany, the red damask and the crimson, a blood red colour, convey her feelings towards her hellish surroundings.

The mahogany is also a very overpowering wood that symbolises Jane has no control of her life at this time. The windows covered with the blinds show the idea that Jane is trapped in a prison with no way out. However the glaring white bed covers can be interpreted as showing Jane’s personality in these evil, dark surrounding where a glimpse of white would be lost. This strong use of colour association put the message across to the reader clearly as the red can be associated with anger and frustration where as the white can be associated with calmness and a sense of heaven.

Her depression is also shown by her bland surroundings of the northern countryside where she wants to escape momentarily from her anger but instead finds loneliness. “ I found no pleasure in the silent trees... russet leaves swept by past winds in heaps and now stiffened together... and looked into an empty field where no sheep were feeding... it was a very grey day: a most opaque sky... canopied all,” The silence and emptiness show her loneliness and her mood in which she feels she has no friends or people she can trust.

The russet leaves sweeping by the wind in heaps give the reader an image of a desert where nothing lives. The grey sky shows no light which again shows the idea that Jane is trapped and the words “canopied all” depict the meaning there is a sense of something overpowering Jane from above which she can’t control. Jane is soon forced into a gruelling education at Lowood where she discovers the harsh routine endured by her new classmates, where after Jane herself is put down and persecuted while being humiliated when Mr. Brockelhurst forces her to stand on the chair for the rest of the day and tells her fellow pupils she is not to be socialised with and yet again labelled “deceitful.”

As she enters the garden her feelings are reflected: “Rain, wind and darkness filled the air... the garden was a wide enclosure surrounded with walls so high as to exclude every glimpse of prospect... I looked around the convent like garden... which had a church like aspect... a stone tablet over the door bore this inscription: Lowood institution,” The use of religious imagery that Charlotte Brontë as used here in the words “convent like” and “church like aspect” convey a sense of control and power that has engulfed Jane’s life so far.

The high walls and the words “to exclude every glimpse of prospect” show there is no way out for Jane to escape, there is no future for her as she can’t see past the overpowering walls. Lowood being described as an institution rather than a school suggests the school is a place where the children who attend need to be locked up and isolated from the outside world, which is the same case in Jane’s feelings.

Things soon start to brighten up for Jane as spring draws on. She gains the affection of Helen Burns and Miss Temple showing she is breaking free from the overpowering misery that controls her life and also comes as a shock to the reader as Jane gains trust in an adult for the first time in her life: “ The hardships of Lowood lessened... began to heal under the gentler breath of April... a greenness grew over those brown beds which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night... they let us ramble in the woods like gypsies... e did what we liked when we liked,” The sense that spring is drawing on and Jane is healing puts across her feelings that life is getting better and a new beginning is starting for her. This is backed up by the strong use of the word Hope.

The image of the green growing and engulfing the dull, brown wintry depression is a classic example of romanticism. The idea that Jane is acting as a gypsy while doing what she wants gives a sense of freedom that Jane has not yet experienced. This rebellion against control reflects Jane’s reaction to the harsh routine at Lowood and her fellow pupils.

Jane moves onto Thornfield as an adult after spending eight gruelling years at Lowood. When she arrives as the new governess she is surprised by her luxurious surroundings which she has never experienced with such kindness from the people around her as well: “ The chamber looked like such a bright little place as the sun shone in between the gay blue chintz windows, showing papered walls and a carpeted floor,” This rare setting in Jane’s life comes as a surprise to her and contrasts to the bare rooms at Lowood and the overpowering decor at Gateshead.

The papered walls and the carpeted floor may be simple ideas but to Jane they are new and exciting ideas as well as the windows which she describes as “gay” implying they make her happy while the sun shines a light on her new life. Later Jane discovers the dark side of Thornfield as she ventures through the house she hears a surreal laugh while walking through the dark passages: “I passed the trap door... the attic seemed black as a vault... like a corridor in some Bluebeards castle... a laugh, struck my ear... and terminated in an odd murmur,”

The darkness and trap door gives a spooky image to the reader and the comparison Jane makes between the corridor at Thornfield and one at Bluebeards castle suggests she feels like she is in some fantasy world full of pirates. The mysterious laugh described as striking her ear climaxes this eerie feeling Jane feels. These deep dark feeling Jane is experiencing is a clear example of the Gothic which is used here to spook and confuse the reader. There is a sense of darkness to come after Rochester has proposed to Jane: “And what ailed the chestnut tree?

It writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel walk and came sweeping over us. A livid, vivid spark leapt out of a cloud... there was a crack, a crash and a close... thunder crashed fierce and frequent as the lightning gleamed... the great horse-chestnut at the bottom of the orchard had been struck by lightning and half of it split away,” This extract is a strong example of egoistical sublime, the use of weather to convey the mood of a character or the current plot. Here it is used not to convey Jane’s feelings but to foreshadow what will happen next in the story.

The fact that the great horse-chestnut tree that Rochester proposed to Jane under was struck by lightening cannot be linked to the romantic, content feel that Jane is experiencing. Instead it puts across a message to the reader that something bad is going to happen from the outcome of this marriage. After the abrupt ending of the marriage Jane leaves Thornfield where she takes a coach to Whitcross before wandering over the desolate moors: The roads stretch out east, west, north, and south—white, broad, lonely... what a golden desert this spreading moor!... everywhere sunshine.

I wish I could live in it and on it... I saw a bee busy among the sweet bilberries... I would fain at the moment have become bee or lizard... decay quietly and mingle in peace with the soil," Jane's confusion is conveyed with the various roads stretching out in different directions which all lead to a different point in her life. The moors are described as a desert so once again Jane is lonely and deserted. Jane says she wants to live in and on the sunshine so she wants to be the sun and be happy.

She wants to be in harmony with nature when she says she wants to become a bee or a lizard and wander free to do what she wished. Ultimately she wants to decay and mingle with the soil implying she wants to give up and simply die to stop her suffering. After returning to Thornfield and finding a ruin Jane tracks down Mr. Rochester at Ferndean where she is nervous of seeing Mr. Rochester again as she doesn't know what to expect at the sight of him.

" To this house I came, just ere dark, on an evening marked by the characteristics of a sad sky... you could see nothing of the house, so thick and

dark grew the timber of the gloomy wood about it... the windows were latticed and narrow, the front door was narrow too... it was as still as a church on a week day: the pattering rain on the forest leaves was the only sound audible in its vicinage," The house seems to be closed off from the outside world, located in a wood with narrow doors and small windows giving a feeling of isolation and secrecy. Jane must be feeling nervous here as she doesn't know what to expect, she describes the gloomy wood about the house which depresses her and makes her sad.

Jane describes the house as a lonely place using the image of a church on a week-day, obviously a lonely place and the only sound audible was the rain. Mixed emotions are felt here by Jane so that she ends up fearing what to expect from seeing Rochester once again after hearing so many rumours about how he's crippled. To summarise, throughout Jane Eyre there are frequent examples of a setting used to put across the main characters moods and feelings and express the key themes such as romanticism and the Gothic.

When Jane is locked in the red room at Gateshead, her feelings of anger and frustration are represented by the comparison of the red and the crimson decor to hell. Later on in the novel at Lowood Jane observes the pupils hard routine and sees herself developing physically and mentally as she starts to see the brighter side of life as she discovers affection and develops trust in other people as well as being set free like a " gypsy" to explore her external surroundings, an example of romanticism but also reflects to the reader that Jane is growing more confident, more ambitious and more independent.



As Jane proceeds to the Gothic setting at Thornfield, the key theme of the Gothic is explored using the image of the dark chambers and the trapdoors, the sounds of Grace Pool's eerie laugh and the secrecy in which Thornfield is consumed. Jane's feelings are evoked through her surrisement and content as she discovers her luxurious surroundings. Later foreshadowing is mixed with egoistical sublime to give the reader a hint as to what will happen next after Jane agreed to marry Rochester.

After the disastrous wedding ceremony Jane storms out of Thornfield she travels by coach before starving and wandering across the moors trapped at the crossroads which point to different directions in her life. After recovering at Moor House and receiving a fortune from her deceased uncle she returns to Thornfield only to find a ruin and to hear rumours that Rochester has been crippled. Fearful of how she will react to seeing him in this state her dark, gloomy and isolated setting of Ferndean puts across her feeling of sadness and nervousness.

I personally found it interesting to learn of the themes of Romanticism and the Gothic within the text and learn of example of these. I also liked the way Charlotte Bronte used specific reference to objects in comparison to people in plot. Overall I found it rather interesting to discover such creativity in which Charlotte Bronte has used the setting to convey the characters emotions and feelings.