

Analyse the role of childhood in jane eyre essay sample



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The novel "Jane Eyre" is a fictional biography by Charlotte Bronte. Its main character, the orphaned Jane Eyre begins the story as a little girl growing up unloved & abused in her aunt's house. She is then packed off to a boarding school, where she is initially forced to endure unpleasant conditions. She makes a great success of it though eventually & becomes a teacher at the school. She later gets a job teaching a young girl & falls in love with her employer Mr Rochester. After quite a few up's and downs they eventually marry & live happily ever after. I have decided to do my essay on the early stages of the story.

I believe this is the most interesting part of the book. I found the later love story to be a little bit silly and boring! However, the early stages as Jane was growing up & the kind of person this made her become were very interesting in my opinion. The story begins with Jane as an obviously unhappy child living with her aunt Reed & her three cousins the bully that is Master John and the spoiled little girls Eliza and Georgina. It is made quite clear by the Author that Jane does not feel part of the family as she hides away behind the curtains to read a book about birds.

Jane is portrayed as a quiet little girl, who is not particularly pretty, but a nice girl minding her own business. Then Master John finds her and is very spiteful. When Jane retaliates she is not believed by her aunt & is very severely punished. This particular section gives the setting for the entire first two chapters. It tells the reader that Jane is an outsider in the Reed household. She is bullied & unloved. During this time Bronte is trying to build a sense of sympathy for Jane that will carry through with the reader for the whole story.

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Another interesting tool that Bronte uses to create mood and sympathy throughout the book is the weather. This is evident in chapter one as we are told about how miserable the weather is outside “near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast” This language not only gives us a sense of the cold miserable day, but could also describe symbolically Jane’s feelings of loneliness and victimisation. As the second chapter goes on we see Jane’s punishment of being locked o her own in the red room, where her uncle had died.

Whether we believe that she had an experience with the supernatural or not, it is easily possible for the reader to understand what a traumatic experience this could be for a little girl. This is yet another tool to evoke sympathy for Jane & her plight. It is interesting to note however, that Jane does not blame herself. Even though she has grown up in this unloving atmosphere, she still has the strength of mind to see that it is not her fault that she is being punished. She blames her aunt and cousins for resenting her and is very angry.

Even at this early stage we are being shown that Jane Eyre is an intelligent young girl. Again this is setting up the story for later on. It is also interesting to not the name “Red Room”. In my case this colour created a sense of anger. There could be some symbolism in this in my opinion. It is very interesting at this stage to see how Jane’s character begins to develop. She decides that she very much wants to go to school. This gives us the impression that she is a very independent young lady. Some young people in such a situation may seek the approval of their tormentors.

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Jane Eyre however, seems very aware that she would be better away from them. This shows a remarkable maturity and perhaps an unrealistic one. Despite her desire to go to school and its suggestion by Mr Lloyd, nothing seems to come of it. Jane hits her master John when he attempts to bully her. From this moment her aunt makes Jane take her meals alone & her sense of isolation grows. Finally Mr Brocklehurst appears. But immediately we find him not to be what Jane had hoped for. He is described as a "Black Pillar" which immediately casts a dark light on him.

Again Bronte has used colour to convey a mood or feeling. He expresses rather ridiculous ideas about religion that show him to be something of a zealot. Jane compares him in her mind to the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood "What a great nose! And what a mouth! And what large prominent teeth" His threat is lessened by Jane as she turns him into a figure of amusement. All this shows a pattern of behaviour emerging that Jane will not allow herself to be bullied or easily put down. It shows a remarkable strength and it makes the character very endearing.

This growth is finally underlined in Jane's final encounter with her aunt Reed. She again shows remarkable maturity, conviction and courage as she gives an honest account of her treatment at Gateshead. Her aunt is shocked and her authority is undermined. I almost felt a sense of Aunt Reed acknowledging her shortcomings to herself at least, which diminishes her power over Jane considerably. As Jane starts school she is thrust into an entirely new world. This is one of communal washing, hunger and regimented discipline.

We are soon introduced to Helen Burns, who Jane is to befriend. Helen is unjustly punished for a small mistake despite being one of the brightest students. Jane seems to be drawn to somebody else who is treated unjustly as she has been. However, Helen is accepting of her punishment which confuses Jane. After this initial shock Jane settles into a fairly nice routine, until her friend Helen dies. It is again interesting how the author approaches this subject. There seems to be no real emotion in the description of Helens death. It is a part of the story that I found very sad.

I would have liked to have known what Jane's feelings were, but we never find out. I would have thought that such an event would stay with someone and play a big role later in the story, but we never really hear much more. Another interesting factor about this part of the story is Jane's new found relationship with the headmistress, Miss Temple. She seems to be the first real role model for Jane in the story and becomes somebody that the reader is encouraged to admire. It is interesting for the time of the book writing to have such a positive female role model.

In today's day and age it seems entirely normal, but put into context with the time which the book is based it makes for a very interesting character. She becomes somebody that Jane aspires to imitate and to a degree, finally does as she eventually graduates to the role of teacher at the school. She has matured into an intelligent young lady. In conclusion, Jane's childhood sets the mood for the whole story. In these early stages the author fosters a sense of sympathy toward Jane. However, we also see that Jane is a fighter and is not prepared to just accept her lot.

This endears us to her. You feel that despite all her knocks and bad luck that she has triumphed over adversity. She has been built up as a girl with an incredible spirit and somebody that could really go places in life. This was the point where I became a little disappointed in the novel. I had hoped that Jane may have gone and achieved something great with her life. I hoped that maybe she would travel the world or start her own school. I found the Love story that followed rather trivial and boring in comparison to the emotional roller coaster of her childhood.

On reflection however, the book must again be put into the context of its time of writing. Perhaps the world then was not ready for women that were too successful. In terms of the later part of the book, we see that Jane's character that is formed so young is carried through in the latter parts of her life. She has a strong belief that she should not stay with St John Rivers that she does not love truly. She also shows her passionate side with her undying Love for Rochester. Ultimately, it is pleasing that Jane eventually ends up with the man she truly loves and lives a happy life after the hard upbringing that she has had to endure.