

Jane eyre essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Jane Eyre” is a passionate story following the development of a young girl from childhood at Gateshead to adulthood at Ferndean. Charlotte Bronte takes on the persona of Jane and gives us a retrospective account, focusing on key points of Jane’s life in order to manipulate our sympathy for Jane. The novel is divided into definitive sections that correspond to Jane’s moral development, and through analysis of her time at Gateshead, we can see that this is a character forming period in her life. By the end of the opening section Jane is fully established as a vulnerable orphan child and through the use of various narrative devices Bronte ensures our continued sympathy for her heroine. The writer uses a number of narrative techniques throughout the novel to create and sustain our sympathy for Jane. Within the opening paragraphs of the novel the use of the first person narrative is evident: “ I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight.

“ The use of the first person narrative is very effective in evoking sympathy as it enables us to enter Jane’s stream of consciousness and creates empathy between the reader and Jane. Bronte’s employment of sympathetic background further sustains our sympathy for Jane as the use of nature reflects Jane’s feelings of desolation and the hostility she is shown at Gateshead. The bleak winter setting for example, “ cold winter winds”, “ clouds so sombre” and “ a rain so penetrating” convey a sense of the coldness and desolation of Jane’s life at Gateshead. When Jane hides away in the library we are told that it was a “ drear November day” and the scene outside of a “ wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long lamentable blast. ” The harshness and hostility of

nature seems to reflect the unwelcoming atmosphere that Jane is experiencing at Gateshead and further arouses our sympathy for her.

In addition to this, the harsh winter conditions are very ominous and in many ways prophetic as we are being prepared for the cruel and hostile treatment of Jane later in the novel. This again creates and sustains sympathy for Jane as the reader is constantly reminded of her uncomfortable situation, but it is Jane's establishment as a misfit and an outsider within Gateshead Hall that evokes greatest sympathy for the ten year old. Bronte achieves this by drawing a stark contrast between the domesticity of the Reed family and the isolation of Jane: "The said Eliza, John, and Georgiana were now clustered round their mama", "Me, she had dispensed from joining the group." Her isolation and unhappiness is again underlined to us when Jane says: I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage.

"Bronte further sustains our sympathy for Jane by expressing a sharp contrast between Jane and her cousins. We are told that Jane was conscious of her "physical inferiority" and feels that if she had been "a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child - though equally dependent and friendless - Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently." This acceptance of her own defects from a ten year old evokes pity in the reader and furthers our dislike of Mrs. Reed.

Even the servants openly criticise her; for example Abott remarks: "If she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that." The use of dialogue gives

immediacy and drama to the situation, evoking our sympathy for Jane as it reveals exactly what is said and how she is treated unfairly. We learn for example, that throughout her time at Gateshead, Jane is subjected to physical and verbal abuse from her cousin, John Reed. John Reed verbally taunts Jane calling her "rat" and "bad animal. He also treats her as an inferior, humiliating her by reminding her of her lowly social status: " Say, ' What do you want, Master Reed? '", " you are a dependant. " When John Reed called her name she tells us: " I came out immediately; for I trembled at the idea of being dragged forth by the said Jack.

" Such is the terror John Reed instilled in Jane that she recalled: " Every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near. " Our sympathy is most certainly with Jane when we hear of the severity, intensity and regularity of her abuse. Bronte further sustains our sympathy for Jane by revealing that Mrs. Reed was complicit in John's cruel treatment and bullying of Jane. We are told, " she was blind and deaf on the subject" and her failure to reprimand him for his actions evokes a deep sense of injustice as we are reminded Jane had " no appeal".

This also underlines how alone and isolated Jane felt with no one whom to confide or act on her behalf. The reader admires and supports Jane as her passion erupts when she retaliates for the first time. At last she has the courage to defend herself but she is met with the injustice of the adult world siding with the bully, denouncing her with, " What a fury to fly at Master John! This heightens our sympathy for Jane as no explanation is required for her actions and Mrs. Reed is revealed to be very biased and unjust when dealing with the situation. The act of banishing Jane to the Red-Room further

evokes our sympathy, as Jane is not given the opportunity to defend herself and again her vulnerability and intense isolation is reinforced. Jane's choice of reading material has already established her as an imaginative child with an extremely active mind so we feel it was very cruel to lock away a girl with such a vivid imagination, especially in a room with a notorious reputation.

In fact Bronte's description of the Red-Room as a very dark, cold and isolated room with opulent furniture and a sinister atmosphere, where even Bessie and Abbot fear to enter. This fuels our dislike and criticism of Mrs. Reed and proves to heighten our sympathy for Jane. Whilst in the Red-Room our sympathy is evoked by the harsh comments of the servants as they, too, see Jane as inferior and constantly remind her of her lowly dependant status: "You are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep.

She is reminded of the precariousness of her position and threatened with the poor-house: "You are under obligations to Mrs. Reed: she keeps you; if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poor-house." We feel particularly sympathetic here as this reminds us that Jane has no alternative but to stay at Gateshead Hall but Bronte goes further to compound the misery of Jane's existence when Jane informs us: "My very first recollections of existence included hints of the same kind." The writer is unrelenting in her efforts to elicit sympathy for Jane during the Red-Room incident for example we learn of her low self-esteem as she refers to herself as a "thing": "A heterogeneous thing", "a useless thing", "a noxious thing.

" Her sadness is described and we are told: "My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my

decaying ire. " Our sympathy is sustained throughout the Red-Room section as Jane's vivid imagination compounds the situation and makes her punishment worse: I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. " This intense fear elicits our pity for the lonely child. When Mrs. Reed arrived on the scene after Jane released a loud scream we pity her further.

Mrs. Reed's harsh tone reflects her resentment and hostility towards Jane, and we feel sympathetic as she has no desire to understand the situation and automatically assumes Jane is being deceitful, calling her a " precocious actress". As Jane was " abruptly thrust" back into the Red-Room we further sympathise with her as we are again reminded of her vulnerability and the injustice of the adults' treatment of her. Bronte effectively evokes our sympathy when we are told that Jane had " a species of fit". The sparseness of detail in the narration here is very important as the facts are given and Jane does not wallow in self-pity.

This is effective in sustaining our sympathy for we are left to imagine the child's fear and suffering once the door is locked. When we are first introduced to Mr. Lloyd, the apothecary, we immediately pity Jane as instead of being seen to by a physician, she has to be treated by an apothecary, just like the servants. This is indicative of Jane's inferior status and the lack of concern that Mrs. Reed has for her.

We are told Jane: " felt an inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security. " Here our sympathy is heightened as it underlines how unhappy her life is at Gateshead Hall and that she has to deal with great

cruelty and fear, constantly. We are surprised by the effect of Mr. Lloyd's exit: " my heart again sank: inexpressible sadness weighed it down. " I think it is a very effective device to ensure the reader's sympathy to present Mr. Lloyd, a stranger, as the only person to be gentle and show compassion to her.

Bronte, again, effectively maintains our sympathy for Jane during Bessie's ballad. Bessie's song inadvertently makes Jane cry as the lyrics reflect her sadness, loneliness and isolation, and ironically epitomize Jane's situation: " God, in His mercy, protection is showing, Comfort and hope to the poor orphan child. " The section concludes with Jane revealing to Mr. Lloyd how unhappy she is at Gateshead Hall and that she would like to leave, embracing the idea of school saying, " I should indeed like to go to school. " For Jane, school represented a form of escapism and her ready acceptance of the idea is an indication of her utter misery at Gateshead. We feel sympathetic towards Jane here, as she is willing to embrace an opportunity in order to leave Gateshead Hall behind and distance herself from it.

Throughout the opening section of this novel, Charlotte Bronte gradually exposes Jane's tragic and pitiful background and effectively evokes our sympathy for Jane as she is firmly established as an unwanted, vulnerable orphan. By the end of chapter three, Bronte has fully revealed Jane's sad situation exposing her details gradually; for example her father and mother's deaths: " my mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month of each other. " This ending of chapter three compounds our sympathy for Jane and it prepares us for the unhappy events that follow in Jane's life.