

The prevailing 19th century views on education and religion in the first nine cha...



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Imagine a girl growing up around the turn of the nineteenth century. An orphan, she has no family or friends, no wealth or position. Misunderstood and mistreated by the relatives she does have, she is sent away to a school where the cycle of cruelty continues. All alone in the world, she seems doomed to a life of failure. What's a girl to do? I think that Jane's later life is how Charlotte would have liked her own to be. It is like many stories, even those written in the present day, which is the author's fantasy. The fairytale-like ending resembles not just any fairytale, but one in particular, Cinderella. Jane Eyre' is set in the early to mid nineteenth century and we see how different life today is, compared with the time which Jane lived. Immediately we see that Lowood's religious education does not necessarily mean the orphans are treated well. Their food is basically inedible, their lodgings are cramped, and some of the teachers are cruel. Bronte drops a few hints about the suspicious goings-on when Helen reveals that "benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen" make up the tuition and that Mr. Brocklehurst is the treasurer of the house.

Today, men and women are treated equally, which was certainly not the case in the nineteenth century. Women, in the nineteenth century were treated as if they were inferior to men. Poor women were expected to work as well as look after their husbands i. e. cook, clean and serve their husband like a slave to his master. Rich women were basically just there to be wives. Still rich women were to please their husband, but not by cooking and cleaning etc. , as servants would be employed to do this. The country was definitely male dominated. Charlotte Bronte is attacking the social injustices that were present in the C19th.

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Bronte successfully does this and vividly portrays what life was like at the time the book is set. Jane wanted to go to school because it would at least get her away from Gateshead Hall. ' If I had anywhere else to go, I should be glad to leave it. Jane's only knowledge of school is life is from John Reed and Bessie. John does not like school and this makes Jane think that she might because John and her are in no way alike. Jane knows that she is intelligent and probably also knows that John is not so, another reason she thinks that she might enjoy school.

Bessie tells Jane about school and that the girls have to sit up straight and wear backboards that make them keep their back straight. Jane does not particularly relish the thought of this, but she longs to be able to paint pictures and speak French, sew and play the piano, which Bessie had told her about. Lowood Institution was set up for girls that had lost one or both of their parents. These girls' parents would have come from a professional background but lacked the money to send their daughters to a fee-paying school.

The hypocritical Mr Brocklehurst ensured that these girls were plain and humble, while his own wife and daughters dressed in fine, expensive clothes. The red-room has deathly associations (red as the colour of blood, the room's containing a miniature version of the dead Mr. Reed, and Jane's belief that she sees a ghost in it) and is a clear symbol of imprisonment. Throughout the novel, Jane is imprisoned in more metaphorical ways, particularly relating to class, gender, and religion. ' Jane Eyre' also introduces Gothic details with the ghost Jane thinks she sees and the revelation that Mr.

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Reed's body lies beneath the church. The Gothic novel, popularized in the 18th-century, utilizes supernatural, suspenseful, and mysterious settings and events to create an atmosphere of horror and morbidity. The Gothic novel is also characterized by damsels in distress (and women are frequently the protagonists); though Jane faints here, common for Gothic women, she proves herself strong-willed and determined to fight back against her oppressors. Helen was a strong role model in Jane's life and when she died, Jane had then become emotionally able to deal with this, ironically through Helen's influence.

Helen brought Jane down to earth and made her realise that she needed more self-control and needed to think before making doing anything. The passionate, highly-strung child we were first acquainted with matured into a much more admirable adult. Miss Temple was a mother figure for Jane, one that Jane actually admired and respected unlike the cold-hearted Mrs Reed whom Jane had no respect or admiration for at all. A rich girl living in the nineteenth century was expected to be 'seen and not heard'. These model girls would read the bible, obey their elders, act happy and contented at all times and never argue or answer back.

Their childhood was just full of acting how it was seen fit to act at that time, much like their womanhood would be. Rich girls also would be pretty and be artistic, showing this by singing, playing the piano and painting. A rich boy living in the nineteenth century was supposed to be quite the opposite of what was expected of a girl. Boys should have physically strong and active.

They were also expected to be naughty and loud and of course dominant, as they would be in later life. Unlike today, in the C19th there was a very

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definite set of what one would almost call 'rules' of how and how not to behave.

Until she could discover by her own observations that I was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner - something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were - she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy little children. It would be rather frowned upon for an adult not to 'obey' these expectations but for a child, totally unacceptable, in the eyes of rich people, certainly. The first adult male Jane meets is Mr Lloyd, a kind, understanding man who somehow knows Jane's feelings and what would be best for her.

Mr Lloyd is good with children, and not just those who meet society's expectations. Jane then meets Mr Brocklehurst, a tall, daunting man who Jane, like most children was fearful of. Jane however, did not respect Mr Brocklehurst. Jane is a very clever girl and she can see through the act that Mr Brocklehurst's children put on to please him, which he is proud of. Mr Brocklehurst tells children that they are naughty if they don't act how he thinks they should and tells them they will go to Hell. Mr Brocklehurst is a cruel man particularly so to children and poor people. This is not very good considering he is a school superintendent.

He is a cold hearted, possibly intelligent man whose intelligence is masked by what he has been taught about society. For example, he tells the girls at Lowood that they must dress plainly and be humble, the complete opposite to his wife and daughters. Surely if Mr Brocklehurst had never been taught

about society's expectations he would clearly see that the girls at Lowood were no less a person than himself and his family. Bronte proved to the world of the 1800's that the idea of a woman beating the odds to become independent and successful on her own was not as far-fetched as it may have seemed.

Jane goes against the expected type by refusing subservience, disagreeing with her superiors, standing up for her rights, and venturing creative thoughts". With such determination, Jane is able to emerge victorious over all that has threatened to stand in her way. She is not only successful in terms of wealth and position, but more importantly, in terms of family and love. These two needs, which have evaded Jane for so long, are finally hers; adding to her victory is her ability to enjoy both without losing her hard-won independence. As Jane was a role model for women in the nineteenth century, she is also a role model for women today.

Her legacy lives on in the belief that as long as there are hopes and dreams, nothing is impossible. Jane meets Mr Rochester, a complex man, when she is a mature young woman. Mr Rochester treated Jane equally to himself. Instead of treating her politely and formally, he treated her as a friend, so his contrasting bad temper that had a tendency to flare up unexpectedly was not as much of a shock as it would have been if all she had heard from him was polite words. Also, the fact that Jane had had an unkind childhood helped her to deal with Mr Rochester's temper. Mr Rochester admired Jane for her courage and inner strength.

Then Mr. Rochester fell in love with this passionate yet plain girl and the book conveniently ends in a marriage of the two, as it would also happen in a Bollywood movie. I think that Jane's later life is how Charlotte would have liked her own to be. It is like many stories, even those written in the present day, which is the author's fantasy. The fairytale-like ending resembles not just any fairytale, but one in particular, Cinderella. The reason why Charlotte wrote this book was to show people how unfair the world is and it's not usually noticed, so people need to think about what is happening in the world and try to stop the injustices.