

A comparison
between how growing
up is dealt with in the
go between and jane
eyre...



Both 'The Go Between' and 'Jane Eyre' deal with growing up. Throughout the two books, the main characters experience new feelings and challenges which though they are dealt with differently, we can draw some comparison. Leo Colston looks back over his life before describing his momentous visit to Brandham Hall. Jane Eyre is set out in the stages of the title character's life – from childhood to old age. Both books deal with the changes that are necessary to endure in order to grow, and though each person deals with them differently, I will explore the similarities between Leo and Jane throughout their lives.

Published in 1847, Jane Eyre was a bestseller amongst early Victorian society. Women during this time held a far inferior status to men, which allowed Bronte to stress her theme of female independence. Jane is the eponymous heroine of the novel, experiencing severe hardships and tests throughout her life, so that her eventual happiness can be deserved and just. The novel itself begins at childhood in Gateshead Hall. We immediately become aware of her unhappiness that becomes apparent when she hides behind the thick, red curtains in the deserted room. This image portrays Jane as lonely and isolated.

However, from the way in which she deals with constant cruelty, it is evident that she has a strong personality and at an early age, she refuses to be dominated by her elder, male cousin and stands up to his bullying. She recognises that the punishment from her aunt and cousins is 'unjust – unjust'. At the beginning of the Go Between, Leo is unlocking the diary he wrote in 1900, unlocks the memories of a summer that was to affect the rest

of his life. He remembers his first months at boarding school, alone, as Jane was.

He was bullied, teased and lonely 'are you vanquished Colston, are you vanquished? He has no one to turn to, feelings that Jane shares at the beginning of Jane Eyre – and in desperation confides in his diary. This theme of being judged and consequently rewarded because of physical appearances becomes obvious to Jane from early on in the novel. 'If she were a pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that'. Jane's treatment by her aunt and cousins, without any parents to protect her, is undoubtedly harsh, especially that dealt her by children her own age – Jane's cousins. Leo is himself without parents to help him at boarding school.

His father has recently died and it is this feeling of loneliness and otherness, which leaves him susceptible to bullying and cruel treatment by his peers. At this point in both novels, an element of maturity is unmistakable in both children's character. Both Jane and Leo's acceptance of their respective situations – both bullied and miserable, yet bearing it alone shows off this adult characteristic. The second phase of Jane's life opens with her travelling alone to Lowood School. Here, Jane is faced with the cruel, physical hardship of school. She makes her first friend, Helen.

Yet within a few chapters, Helen dies and no comment is made regarding Jane's feelings, again as if she is bearing this time alone and not wanting to burden anyone with her grief. The mark upon Jane's life made by Helen Burns is, at this significant event immense and makes Jane emotionally

stronger from that point onwards. Another important figure in Jane's life is her teacher, Miss. Temple, who acts as a confidant and the mother figure Jane never had. She and Helen permeate Jane's life and her outlook upon the world. When Miss. Temple departs Lowood, it is clear that there is no need for Jane to stay there, she must move on.

During the summer holidays, a school friend Marcus Maudsley invites Leo to Brandham Hall. Without a father to bring in an income, Leo is not as wealthy as the Maudsleys. He arrives alone, as Jane does, and feels automatically inferior to his friend Marcus, who criticises his knowledge of etiquette and dress code. His self-assurance highlights Leo's sense of inferiority and insecurity, as Helen Burns' confident, almost self-righteous teachings contrast to Jane. ' You will change your mind, I hope, when you grow older; as yet you are but a little untaught girl'. Leo hangs upon Marcus' advice and acts swiftly upon it.

He then meets Marion Maudsley, Marcus' sister who is the first to realise Leo's predicament when he first arrives at Brandham; that he has not packed summer clothes. From the moment she takes him into Norwich to buy an array of garments, she becomes almost divine to young Leo he retains her every word, more than a parental figure. She rescues Leo from the heat by purchasing a summer suit for him the colour of which is quickly dubbed Lincoln green. Immediately the childish naivety is reflected in Leo when he writes of Maid Marion and himself, Robin Hood. When Jane leaves Lowood, she enters the third phase of her life, Thornfield Manor.

Again, in this setting her desire to more physically appealing is made apparent when she feels inferior to the beautiful Blanche Ingram. It is not until later in the novel when the unpleasant, ugly features of Miss. Ingram's nature begin to make themselves known, that we realise she is no equal to Jane's intellect, modesty and morality. The main focus of the plot is found in this phase, as in the Go Between. Jane is now an adult and comes to live at Thornfield. Mr. Rochester is instantly taken with Jane, but her natural innocence and self-deprecation, make her unaware or disbelieving of this fact.

Bronte's theme of inequality is given emphasis in this section of her novel. Both Jane and Mr. Rochester are equally passionate and forceful, which makes their relationship a fiery battle of wills. Mr. Rochester not at all intimidates Jane - we remember her strong personality and unwillingness to be beaten by her cousin in the first chapter as a child. Jane is clearly an equal to Rochester in intellect, sense and feeling regardless of social stature and age. For the first time, everything is going Jane's way, until she finds out Rochester is prepared to make a bigamous marriage, in the full knowledge that he has a living wife.

Jane is distraught. Even though she loved him and he genuinely, I feel, loved her, Jane's strong moral principals, perhaps a characteristic Helen Burn's instilled in her childhood self would never allow her to become his mistress. This is a direct example of Bronte's female equality stance within then novel - Jane does not allow Rochester to make her his mistress - a sexist term in itself, and she in effect, calls the shots. ' I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unstained I am, the more I will respect myself. <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparison-between-how-growing-up-is-dealt-with-in-the-go-between-and-jane-eyre-essay-sample/>

‘ Her fundamental creed is resolutely established, ‘ do as I do: trust in God and yourself’.

At this stage in Leo’s awakening, he delights in Marion’s attention, he feels a valued member of the family. The anxiety and inferiority he felt are dispelled by Marion’s interest. After mass when he realises who Trimingham is and what status he holds, he begins, unwittingly to act as a go between – the main thrust of the novel. Trimingham asks Leo to run in ahead with a message for Marian. Meanwhile the doctor has declared Marcus infectious and Leo has been moved out of their shared bedroom. He now has a room to himself – Leo is now alone, as Jane is, in a strange environment. In the next chapters, Leo’s role as a go between is compounded.

Marion, Ted and Trimingham, all three central characters, ask him to take messages – he is happy and self important by his status and treatment by what he sees as his superiors – Marian and Trimingham. Leo cannot bring himself to be critical of Marion in that he blocks out reality and does not read anything into the situation. He looks only to please his elders and seems to be finding a father figure in Hugh – The character he comes to admire and trust the most during his stay. Leo is starting to mistrust his role but when the annual cricket match is announced and Marion suggests he extent his visit by a week, his initial happiness returns.

The match quickly becomes a contest, not just of cricket but also over Marion. A player is injured and Leo finds himself acting as a substitute fielder, and as the match reaches crisis point with Trimingham bowling to Ted, Leo catches Ted out. Leo is in control of the game – he is once again

important – as Jane is when she refuses Mr. Rochester. After a miserable period at Thornfield in which her ‘mind was impressed with strange fears’, Jane decides to leave – which leads her into the fourth stage of her life Marshend and true adulthood. The next three days within the novel test Jane’s pride.

She resorts to begging for food and several times wishes for her own death, yet the only thing which keeps her alive is the hateful thought of leaving the world with Rochester still living. This demonstrates her will – power and emotional strength gained throughout her journey. After finding shelter and family at Marshend – Jane’s luck at long last appears to be changing. Her uncle has left her twenty thousand pounds and after insisting it should be split amongst her three cousins: Diana, Mary, St. John and herself, explains ‘it could never be mine in justice, though it might be mine in law’.

The refusal to accept the full sum also highlights the aspect of her character which values love, friendship and decency, virtues she has yearned all her life, above finance and its trappings. Leo is elated; he has won the cricket match for his team and as Trimmingham proposes he will see his two idols, parent figures united. He naively assumes he will not need to take any further messages, as Jane believes all her problems are solved once she finds family. Marion cruelly treats Leo in a harsh twist of fate when he blurts out that Hugh might be upset. She accuses him of ingratitude and then of being mercenary.

Leo is deeply affected by Marion’s accusations, much like Jane was affected by Rochester’s assumption that she would indulge his desires by becoming

his mistress. Leo then begs his mother to collect him; he feels that Marion and Ted's illicit relationship is his fault and that if he departs crisis will be averted. Jane also flees calamity when he runs from Rochester's advances. Leo thinks that with his imminent departure, all will be well, however towards the end of the main plot, as in Jane Eyre, there is a sudden disaster, affecting the end result dramatically. Mrs.

Maudsley becomes aware of Marion passing a note to Leo. She presses Leo to tell her what it is about and asks him to walk with her to the garden. He is saved momentarily by a storm and this gives him grace until after dinner. Marion is late to the table and Mrs. Maudsley demands an explanation from Leo who is dragged out to the garden to show her where Marion might be. They eventually arrive at the outhouses where they see Marion and Ted making love. Mrs. Maudsley screams hysterically and Leo remembers nothing more, except Ted's subsequent suicide. A similar climax occurs in Jane Eyre.

With Jane fled from Thornfield, she hears news of a immense fire in which Rochester has been blinded, trying in vain to rescue Grace Poole, his wife. However, both books continue after these disturbing events. Both Jane and Leo's lives are thrown into upheaval and remorse. After several months, Jane is faced with another important decision, a marriage proposal from St. John, a man with whom she shares no true love. She rejects the idea of being 'forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital'.

This portrays well the horror she feels at the prospect of a loveless marriage, again demonstrating her moral views. Jane and Mr. Rochester have an unbreakable love and the calling Jane has ' Jane! Jane! Jane... I am coming! Wait for me! Oh, I will come', suggests the idea of a spiritual communication. Jane's final decision concludes the novel, when she returns to the place where she left her broken heart. She has improved her position since she was last at Thornfield, when she returns to the blind Mr. Rochester she is no longer his equal, but the dominant character.

The novel closes with Jane and Rochester assuring the readers that their life will be a happy one, which they both deserve and have earned. To conclude *The Go Between*, Leo returns to Brandham Hall, a place where he too left a broken heart of sorts. He meets with Marion – a lonely woman and she pretends to have been happy and popular though at this point Leo realises that, like Jane, since his last visit he has risen in stature and is no longer inferior, in fact he has led a far happier, fruitful life than any of the Maudsleys and is the dominant figure for the first time.

We also see that Marion, like Rochester for Jane, holds a special place in Leo's heart after all these years as he prepares to act as a go between once more for her grandson. Growing up is the most important theme in both books. We see Leo grow irrevocably during a short space of time and he becomes conscious of himself for the first time. In *Jane Eyre* we see her whole life as she grows from child to woman.

In both books there is a continual search for parental figures as each child looks for stability and some sense of self. Both characters, Leo and Jane,

start at the end of childhood - nai?? ve, alone and fast becoming the main focus of many people's lives. By the end they have both found happiness through hardship and although not wealthy unlike some people encountered along the way, Marion and Blanche for example, both are happier, more contented and richer in character than those women could ever hope to be.