

Write your response
to the opening
chapter of the novel
jane eyre by charlotte
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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The opening chapter of Jane Eyre very effectively draws you into the plot of the story and tempts you to read on. It does this by making you empathise with the main character, the little girl Jane Eyre, with whom you feel very sorry for by the end of this passage. The story is told in first person by the older Jane looking back on her childhood. The fact that she is so involved in the tale allows readers to feel closer to the character and it brings you into the book.

The problems with first person narration are that we are given no physical description of the persona telling the story and no objectivity is given as it is told from Jane's point of view. The book opens with Jane Eyre, a ten year old orphan, describing her homelife to us. The first line enters straight into the character's thoughts although we are inside her head. " There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. " The weather is described as grey, dank and cold. We later realise that this not only symbolises the appearance of outside but her current emotions too.

All the thoughts seem ordinary and we get to know the child a little better finding out that she doesn't enjoy walks and is obviously not fond of the outdoors. " I was glad of it: I never liked long walks. " The text suddenly jumps into the surroundings of the character. You are seeing it from her eyes and she describes the situation she is trapped in. She has been forced to live with her rich Aunt Reed and three cousins Eliza, John and Georgiana and we discover throughout this chapter that she is very much excluded from this family.

She is not treated equally in relation to her cousins and she is told by her Aunt that until she develops a more sociable and childlike disposition that she will be excluded from privileges intended for contented children. We soon find that Jane is very different to the well bred Victorian child. She answers back to her aunt directly and would have been seen as rude and insolent to her elders. "What does Bessie say I have done?" Jane retreats from her relatives to the library where she seems to spend a lot of her time. She is a girl who enjoys her own company and we soon discover that she is very well read for such a young child.

We are again drawn into her imagination and into the book that she finds her escape from reality in. "With a book on my knee I was happy: happy at least in my own way." After a long description of the words and pictures we are jolted back into the real world with Jane as her cousins disturb her hiding place. John, whose established nickname is Jack, begins to call for Jane. "I trembled at the thought of being dragged forth by the said Jack." She is terrified of him and we soon realise why; "He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week nor once or twice in the day, but continually. John throws a book at her hitting her on the head.

The injury appears to be quite serious and on this particular occasion Jane fights back against the cruel bullying. "Wicked and cruel boy!" I said. "You are like a murderer - you are like a slave-driver - you are like Roman Emperors!" John is shocked by her outburst and very surprised when she lunges on him in a physical attack. The servants rush into the scene and immediately take their masters side even though he often taunts her in front

of them and his mama who turns a blind eye to it. " Mrs Reed was blind and deaf to the subject.

They pull Jane from him and drag her to the spare bedroom known as " The Redroom". Charlotte Bronte encourages the reader to empathise with Jane throughout the chapter. She separates her from the rest of the family and focuses on the unfairness of her treatment. The age difference between John, 14 and Jane, 10 persuades the reader to feel sorry for the younger girl being mistreated by her older cousin. Also she shows the injustice of the household when Jane stands up for herself at the end of the passage and still gets the blame for the argument.

The Reed family are very rich and in an upper social class. They look down on Jane and Mrs Reed only cares of her because she sees it as her duty as the only living relative of the girl. She treats her very differently to the way she treats her own children and inadvertently influences her children's attitudes of cruelty towards Jane. We get a very clear description of John in this short introductory chapter. All John's faults are described by Jane and although it is a very bias view she is a very observant child and has reasoning behind every point she makes.

He is physical form is described as overweight and very ugly; " with dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage and heavy limbs and large extremities. " He is a very spoilt child and because he is the only son of the family he has complete control over his mother and everyone else in the household. Eliza and Georgiana are not really focused on during this passage although it is obvious that they look up to their older brother

and they participate in taunting their cousin Jane. Charlotte Bronte's characteristic use of language persuades the reader to become very involved in the story.

She uses direct language and sharp statements and sentences to begin with bringing the reader into the story before drawing you into the characters thoughts and then into the environment around her. The descriptive words used sometimes have multiple meanings. For example the words used to describe the weather not only show the outside appearance but also give an account of Jane's feelings at the time. When Jane reads her book detail of the imagery and words chosen take you into the escape with the character.

You begin to relax just as Jane would and then you are suddenly taken out of the imaginary world into the reality and violence of her reality. Some of the phrases used make you afraid with her; " every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near. " Some of Jane Eyre is said to be semi autobiographical as many of Charlotte Bronte's childhood incidents feature in the plot. Charlotte Bronte was born in Thornton, Yorkshire in 1816. Shortly after she moved to Howarth where she spent the rest of her life.

She was the third daughter of her well educated father and motherless from an early age. When her father was left a widower he arranged for his dead wife's sister to act as housekeeper. She brought up the six children because it was her duty but never became a warm and loving substitute for their mother. Her character may have influenced that of Mrs Reed in the novel. She takes in Jane because it is the respectful thing to do not because she

wanted to. While her elder sisters were boarding at Cowan Bridge school they contracted TB and their premature deaths left her in charge of her younger siblings Emily, Branwell and Anne.

All four children were very intelligent and they began writing from an early age encouraged by their father. Her suffering during childhood was probably the first stimulus in her development as a creative writer and Jane Eyre's pain as a young child probably reflects Charlotte's own feelings. In 1847 Jane Eyre was published under the suitable masculine pseudonym of Currer Bell. It was immediately popular becoming and remaining one of the most loved English novels. England was ready for 'Jane Eyre's' rapid growth and Charlotte fed of the determination to be the first woman to succeed in writing an acknowledged novel.

In the two years that followed Branwell, Emily and Anne all died leaving Charlotte, 30, the only surviving Bronte. She eventually married but experienced no more than a few months of happiness with her husband before dying herself in 1855 at the age of 38. By the end of the first chapter the reader is left wanting to know what happens to the character they have learnt about throughout the passage. Her situation seems helpless and they want to experience her life and see if she discovers any kind of hope in her future.

The first chapter leaves the reader feeling like they are Jane on a personal level. They have thought her thoughts, felt her feelings and been in her environment and they want to continue the journey with her to discover the ending. This novel does appeal to me. It may be because the implied

audience is females from adolescent upwards and I fit this description but Charlotte Bronte's writing is powerful and it draws you into the plot feeding your imagination with descriptive images and emotions of characters.