

# How and why bronte uses the gothic conventions essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Jane Eyre does not fall under any one genre of writing; it is instead a combination of several different literary genres containing elements from bildungsroman, romance, tragedy, gothic and even some historical undertones. This is one of the main merits of the book, it appeals to a wide variety of audiences. However, this essay will be mainly focussing on the gothic conventions in Jane Eyre and in particular those within chapter 23 (volume II chapter 8). Throughout the novel, Jane Eyre contains many Gothic motifs all of which play a part in the drawing in and maintaining of the reader's attention and interest.

One such motif that is used throughout the book is setting. The book contains many references to gothic setting from very early on. One of which would be the Red Room with its links to blood and strange mythical creatures like ghosts " I thought the swift darting beam was the herald of some coming vision form another world" along with its gothic furnishings " It was one of the largest stateliest chambers in the mansion. A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany" and dark atmosphere " daylight began to forsake the red room".

The overall atmosphere created by this gothic setting gives the text more depth and therefore exerts a greater pull on the reader. Bronte would have wanted to draw her readers in as early as possible and adding this particular device so early on ensures this. Other examples of gothic setting include the " white, broad, lonely" moors " where the heather grows deep and wild to their very verge" when Jane runs away from Thornfield to the manor itself the most stereotypical gothic setting, the dark and mysterious castle.

Jane's first view of Thornfield " candle light gleamed from one curtain bow window; all the rest were dark" sets a very gothic scene straight away which is clearly used by Bronte to create a sense of mystery and suspense in the reader. Candle light is often used by gothic writers as it gives a very mysterious atmosphere, candles give only a limited sphere of light past which nothing can be seen.

It is the darkness just beyond their reach that creates the sense of mystery and suspense. Bronte uses the candle light in Jane's first view of the manor combined with the other dark rooms to give a sense of mystery, why are the other rooms dark? And what is going on in the candle lit room? The "clashing" of the gates as she first enters its boundary also adds a gothic element, they symbolise Jane becoming trapped in this strange new gothic environment.

Setting plays a major role in chapter 23. The chapter opens with a description of the pleasant weather " a splendid midsummer shone over England: skies so pure suns so radiant" this sets the scene with pathetic fallacy for a pleasant happy exchange or event. Mr Rochester proposing to Jane seems to go along with this theory however very soon after his proposal " the weather changes" and lightning splits a tree in two " a vivid spark leapt out of a cloud".

This is highly symbolic; the storm represents holy disapproval of the marriage, as God does not approve of marriage when there is already another wife. As well as this the lightning suggests that Rochester's secrets will split up their marriage, just as lightning split the tree. Another gothic

element that Bronte uses in Jane Eyre is the use of monsters and supernatural occurrences both subtle and explicit. Throughout the book there are references to various “fairies, goblins, imps and elves” as well as the mythical “Gytrash”.

When Jane meets Mr Rochester she herself is also regularly referred to as a “witch or imp” by Mr Rochester although this could just be ironic as she is very plain. In addition, there is the most obvious monster, Bertha Mason “In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly on all fours: it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair wild as a mane”.

She is clearly represented as another worldly creature and strikes fear into the heart of the reader. These explicit supernatural creatures add a sense of mystery and confusion to the book, the reader knows that for example the noise is not created by a goblin and so questions what in fact did cause it, as the supernatural when explained often turns out to be even more dark and mysterious.

As well as the obvious supernatural creatures, Bronte also uses more subtle ones for example Mr Rivers has many of the characteristics of a vampire, he is beautiful, cold with a stone heart and sucks the life out of Jane, he is the opposite of Mr Rochester the fiery passionate man who invigorates Jane. This links in to one of the themes within Jane Eyre, fire and ice. Several characters are represented as either fire or ice for example Mr Rochester

clearly comes under fire and Mr Rivers as ice although some however like Jane and Helen Burns come under both.

This can be seen in chapter 23 when Jane abruptly goes from ice to fire with Mr Rochester's comments about her moving to Ireland she gives a passionate speech about how she is his equal " I have as much soul as you - and full as much heart". The lightning in this chapter is another example of the supernatural the violence and shock created by this sudden event brings the reader back into the story and focuses them on the deeper messages within , for example the wrongness of Jane and Mr Rochester's marriage.

The characters also play a part in the gothic conventions within Jane Eyre, Mr Rochester fulfils the role of both a tragic and Byronic hero with his gloomy nature and dark secrets. An example of his secrets can be found in chapter 23 where even when he proposed to Jane he made it seem as though he was going to in fact marry Blanche not Jane. He is still not telling her the whole truth it is ironic that the quote " your bride stands between us" where Jane is of course referring to Blanche in fact foreshadows the problems with Bertha Mason.

Other characters that can be seen as gothic include the vampiric Bertha and the mysterious Grace Poole. The gothic nature of these characters brings more excitement and mystery to the novel. Bronte uses the gothic conventions within Jane Eyre in variety of ways, with the scenery and setting, the use of monsters and supernatural and the characters themselves to both intrigue and excite the reader making them look deeper into the text and question the events and actions within.