

Women in literature:
examining oppression
versus independence
in henry v and jane...



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“ In many different societies, women, like colonised subjects, have been relegated to the position of ‘ Other,’ ‘ colonised’ by various forms of patriarchal domination. They thus share with colonised races and cultures an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression.” This statement is valid for Catherine from Henry V whereas Hostess Quickly, Miss Temple and Jane are portrayed as more self-determining and independent than oppressed. Henry V takes place in medieval times, when women were thought of as nothing more than property and their only function was to produce offspring. Catherine, from Henry V is controlled by the male patriarchal figures in her life, like her father King Charles and King Henry and Hostess Quickly has no patriarchal figures, and is very outspoken and self-assured. Jane Eyre took place during the Victorian era, when women were still being treated like property; however, there were some women who had the ability to be independent. Miss Temple and Jane exemplify female independence. Catherine, the princess of France in Henry V is oppressed by first her father and later King Henry. Her function in the play is to unite France and England by marrying Henry and producing an heir who would be both French and English. She is representative of the typical aristocratic female of the time. Her marriage is arranged by her father, not because he thinks Henry would be well suited for her, but for political reasons. He sent the French Ambassador to offer dukedoms and Catherine in marriage to Henry in exchange for his agreement to refrain from attacking France,”... th’ambassador from the French comes back,/tells Harry that the King doth offer him/Catherine his daughter, and with her, to dowry,/Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms./ The offer likes not.” (3. 0. 27-31). Henry does not accept these terms and wages war on France. Henry wins the war, and <https://assignbuster.com/women-in-literature-examining-oppression-versus-independence-in-henry-v-and-jane-eyre/>

becomes King of France and he still wants to marry Catherine, even though she has never shown interest in him. Henry decides to consult Charles about the marriage, "shall Kate be my wife?" (5. 2. 312). Charles replied "so please you" (5. 2. 313), meaning that the decision is left up to Henry, as to whether he wants to marry Catherine, she is never consulted about the marriage. So Catherine must marry Henry. In a rather comical scene, Catherine asks her maid Alice to help her learn English, as she knows she must marry Henry, who is French. Thus Catherine must give up her culture and her way of life in France in order to marry Henry, and unfortunately she is never even asked about what she wants to do with her future. Hostess Quickly, Miss Temple and Jane represent the complete opposite of Catherine. Where she is oppressed by patriarchal figures; they are independent women who shape their own destinies despite patriarchal figures from attempting to control them. In Henry V, after the death of Falstaff, Bardolph and Pistol discuss the fact that in their opinion he will go to hell. Hostess Quickly never hesitated to join in with her opinion, she said "nay, sure he's not in hell. He's in Arthur's bosom. A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child. A parted ev't just between twelve and one, ev'n at the turning o'th' tide-for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with the flowers..." (2. 3. 9-14). She felt no hesitation at forming her own opinion even though it was contradictory to that of the men. Quickly also chose to marry Pistol instead of Nim, even though she had previously been betrothed to him, she made her own decision about her marriage, unlike Catherine. Miss Temple from the novel Jane Eyre is the children's favorite teacher at Lowood School. Her function in the novel is to act as a matriarchal figure to Jane, as she had never had such a role model in her life; Mrs. Reed was cruel <https://assignbuster.com/women-in-literature-examining-oppression-versus-independence-in-henry-v-and-jane-eyre/>

and hated Jane, and her own mother died when Jane was very young. Miss Temple is represented as a woman who is independent and is not afraid to express her opinions despite male authority. When the children's breakfast had been burnt, she organized a lunch of bread and cheese for them. Mr. Brockelhurst, the owner of the school is a miser and was upset to hear that Miss Temple had fed the children an extra meal. He said "...and there is another thing which surprised me; I find, in settling accounts with the housekeeper that a lunch, consisting of bread and cheese has twice been served out to the girls during the past fortnight. How is this? I looked over the regulations and I find no such meal as lunch mentioned. Who introduced this innovation? And by what authority?" (Bront 53). It was Miss Temple who had arranged the lunches, she replied " I must be responsible for the circumstance, sir, the breakfast was so ill prepared that the pupils could not possibly eat it; and I dared not allow them to remain fasting will dinner-time" (Bront, 53). Here, Miss Temple demonstrated her independence and her refusal to be repressed by Mr. Brockelhurst. Miss Temple is indeed an independent woman who speaks her mind and is not afraid to go against the stipulations of her male boss. From an early age Jane is portrayed as rebellious and independent in the face of repression. Jane's function in the novel is to grow and mature because this bildungsroman novel. Jane is the main character and her story begins when she is a young child and progresses through Jane's adulthood. Mrs. Reed, Jane's aunt and unwilling guardian tried to control Jane when she was a child. She once called Jane a liar and Jane retaliated heartily, she said" speak I must: I had been trodden on severely, but how?...I gathered my energies and launched them in this blunt sentence-' I am not deceitful: if I were I should say I loved you; but I

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declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world” (Brontë 29). Jane’s attitude remained with her through adulthood. When she was living at Thornfield Hall she demonstrated her independence, despite Mr. Rochester’s attempts to control her. During one particular night after dinner, Mr. Rochester summoned Jane to keep him company. He insisted that she move her chair closer and converse with him since he had no one else to have an intelligent conversation with. At first Jane obeys only because Mr. Rochester is her boss and she is his paid employee, but after his constant pompous attitude, she retorted “I don’t think, sir, you have the right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience” (Brontë 117). Jane refused to take any kind of repression from Rochester. She further demonstrated her strength when she leaves Rochester because she refuses to become his mistress. She leaves Thornfield on her own accord with nothing more than her meager belongings. Jane’s independence leads her to family, something she had wished for desperately. Her cousin St. John proposes to her, and Jane proves her headstrong ways again by refusing to marry him, even though a marriage would mean security, Jane could not let herself be dependent. Her inheritance, which was beyond her control, further solidified her self-determination. The money allowed Jane to truly have the freedom she always knew she possessed. The only character who is repressed is Catherine, her future was decided for her by her father and even though she did not really want to marry Henry, she said nothing and obeyed her father. Hostess Quickly was in control of her own destiny and married who she wanted. Miss Temple remained self-assured while Mr. Brocklehurst

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reprimanded her and Jane demonstrated independence in every aspect of her life, from her childhood rebellion at Gateshead, to her career choice and marriage. Works Cited
Bront, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Wordsworth Editions Limited. Hertfordshire: 1999. Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Oxford University Press. Oxford: 1982.