

Jane eyre: an unconventional heroine



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The story of a woman who comes from the worst circumstances to grow and prosper by breaking the rules set for her is relevant in many different works of literature. Jane, the endearing heroine in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, breaks through barriers set for women during the Victorian Era. Throughout the novel, Jane shows incredible self-respect and self-esteem, even during the worst of circumstances. After conversing with Mr. Lloyd, Jane says " They are not fit to associate with me" (Bronte 23).

In this quote, Jane refers to John, Eliza, and Georgiana, who are told by Mrs. Reed that they should not associate with her first. The fact that Jane is not impacted by Mrs. Reed's comments shows that she thinks highly of herself, no matter what anyone tells her. While Jane is arguing with Mr. Rochester after she discovers that he is still married, Jane states that she does not need him or anyone else to take care of her, but that she can care for herself (Bronte 342). Jane's statement helps to further convey that Jane is an independent woman who does not need the help of other people, especially men.

This statement also is an example of how Mr. Rochester and Jane are equal, which was a rare occurrence for a Victorian couple. Her passion to stay true to herself and to not change who she is also shown: " It is her grittiness that saves her at Lowood School, where punishments are meted out unfairly and girls are sent to starve and sicken. Helen, who meekly accepts unjust punishments, dies. Jane survives because she does not" (Jong 152). At Lowood, Jane's incredible self-respect allowed her not to become another one of the mistreated girls at the school.

She does not allow cynical people like Mr. Brocklehurst to take advantage of her like Helen Burns did, who calmly lets people step all over her because she practices a Christian doctrine of forgiveness. Although Jane has gone through many treacherous hardships, her unbreakable self-respect is never diminished. In Jane's life, she overcomes many deceitful men who attempt to gain control over her. Because she does not allow the men to manipulate her, she is considered ahead of her time: " But first she must submit to many tests.

She must reject a variety of hypocritical masculine figures who feel it is their right to rule her. She must reject the fate of being a female victim-the only model presented to her by other women" (Jong, 155). This quote shows that Jane is not like every other female, and that she has the audacity to go against the norm of her time. When Mr. Rochester was pretending to be the gypsy woman, Jane scolds him for tricking her and attempting to get information out of Jane (Bronte 215-216).

Jane's cunning wit helps her to not be a victim of Mr. Rochester's deceitful plans to get Jane to reveal her feelings about him. If she did not discover the identity of the gypsy woman sooner, Jane could have made a huge mistake and revealed the feelings she had about Mr. Rochester. While at the Moor house with her cousins, Jane refuses St. John's offer to travel to India with him as his wife, and keeps refusing no matter what he offers (Bronte, 436-437). Jane's resistance of St. John is surprising, knowing how much of an impact he has made on Jane and how much he controls her.

Although St. John is very persistent, Jane never gives into going with St. John to India. With her integrity and self-respect, Jane resists many deceiving men who attempt to gain control over her. One of the most remarkable things about Jane is her relationship with Rochester in which gender and social class are not relevant. Mr. Rochester often disregards Jane's age as he informs her of his troubles: "Other readers felt that the novel was coarse because it addresses issues and incidents that were not proper for a female narrator to discuss."

When Edward Rochester tells Jane of his past history with women, for example, and his possible fathering of Adele Varens, many readers found it highly improper to imagine a man speaking of such matters to a young girl of eighteen" (Markley 1). As stated above, it is highly unusual for a grown man like Mr. Rochester to discuss his past with an eighteen-year-old governess like Jane. The fact that he did discuss these matters shows that Mr. Rochester believes Jane is a very mature individual who is an equal of himself, even though she is considered a "servant".

When Mr. Rochester is telling Jane that he is getting married and that she will be moving away, she begins to sob and say: Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! -I have a much soul as you- and full as much heart! And if god had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me. I am not talking to you through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh, it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and stood at God's feet, equal-as we are!

Jane's courage and audacity in this section shows that she has no fear telling her mind to someone of a higher status and gender, which in this case being Mr. Rochester. As expressed in the section above, Mr. Rochester and Jane are equal, even if she is not as wealthy as Mr. Rochester. In many ways besides intelligence and honor, Mr. Rochester and Jane are equal: " Bronte gives readers a number of glimpses of Jane and Mr. Rochester in various positions that are unusual for literary depictions of Victorian couples.

For example, we frequently see her, a small girl, giving physical support to the older and stalwart Mr. Rochester" (Markley 3). The physical support that Jane gives Mr. Rochester classifies her as a heroine, but the fact that it is during a time where females are considered inferior to males and that she is only a small individual, further proves that Jane is an unconventional heroine. Although they are not of the same social class and gender, the relationship between Mr. Rochester and Jane is one of equality.

Throughout the novel, Jane receives many dreams and visions that can be considered the cause of her actions that break the barriers set for women during the Victorian Era. The dreams and visions that Jane receives help her in many great ways: " To a remarkable extent, the novel relies on the heroine's sensitivity to dreams and visions-as if saying that only a woman in touch with her deepest dreams can be a strong survivor in a world so toxic to women" (Jong 155). Jane's dreams help her make decisions that benefit her and make her prosper in a time period where it was not normal for a woman to be successful like Jane.

After it is discovered that Mr. Rochester is still married to Bertha, Jane dreams that: I lay in the red-room at Gateshead ... The light that long ago had struck me into syncope, recalled in this vision, seemed glidingly to mount the wall ... the gleam was such as the moon imparts to vapours she is about to sever. I watched her come ... She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud; ... then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining glorious brow earthward ... It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart- ' My daughter, flee temptation! ' Mother, I will' (Bronte 345).

This dream causes Jane to leave Thornfield and Mr. Rochester and eventually find her cousins at Moor house. In this situation, the gender roles are swapped in which a woman leaves a man instead of the other way around. While at the Moor house with St. John, Jane believes that she hears Mr. Rochester yelling to her and the very next day, she boards and coach and goes to Thornfield. Jane " hearing" Mr. Rochester's voice causes her to go back to Thornfield and Mr. Rochester, where she finds a charred ruin.

When she receives the inheritance from her uncle John, she becomes an independent woman and because of that, Mr. Rochester and her rekindle their relationship when she returns to Thornfield. Because she received many different dreams and visions, Jane has done different actions that make her an unconventional heroine. Time and time again, Jane Eyre shows her drive and desire to do what is right, even during a period when females were treated unequally. Due to this quality, Jane Eyre is considered to be an unorthodox heroine.