

Significance of the characters' names in jane eyre

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Novels become classics when everything within the pages is purposeful. Everything in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* occurs for a reason, from the characters' dialogue right down to the characters' names. Their names clue the reader into their personalities and relationships with others in the story. Brontë showcases her literary genius through the way in which she appropriately names her novels' characters and locations, because those labels add depth to the personalities seen in *Jane Eyre*.

The first name of the novel's protagonist suggests that she is plain and decidedly feminine. In fact, the name Jane is not ostentatious or showy, which is fitting since the novel opens up with Jane as a dependent living with her relatives. In other words, the simplicity of the name Jane suits her circumstances, because she is not of the upper class. Meanwhile, her last name gives the reader a sense of foreshadowing. Even before the plot reveals that Jane receives 20,000 pounds from her uncle upon his death, the reader may realize that the breathy tones of *Eyre* seem to sound like *Heir*. Put Jane and *Eyre* together, and the gist of the novel is revealed. On the outside, Jane is an unnoticeable girl of low status in society, but the mysteries of her life allow her to rise above her status and be more complex than her first name suggests. Meanwhile, the surname Rochester means stone fortress, and Mr. Rochester is indeed like a stone fortress physically and mentally. Jane does not think he is handsome, but fortresses are not designed to be beautiful. They are designed to be strong and practical. Jane says, "I am sure most people would have thought him an ugly man; yet there was such a look of complete indifference to his own external appearance; so haughty a reliance on the power of other qualities, intrinsic or adventitious,

to atone for the lack of mere personal attractiveness (Bronte, 155). This shows that Jane loves Mr. Rochester for reasons resting on more solid ground than his looks, such as personality and spirit. Before Jane gets to know him personally, though, Mr. Rochester appears sarcastic, surly, and moody. His emotional barrier is unrelenting, just as the walls of a fortress. He does not allow his secrets to escape easily.

The meanings behind the names of the key locations in Jane Eyre are simpler than the meanings behind the names of the aforementioned main characters. For instance, the novel opens with Jane at her relatives home Gateshead Hall. A gate is a portal to something, and a head can be said to be just the beginning of something. Gateshead is where Jane literally begins her narrative and symbolically begins her journey into the world on her own when she is sent away to school. The name of Jane's school, Lowood, suggests that Jane's time there is a low point of her life. Indeed, Jane loses her best friend while learning there, Mr. Brocklehurst embarrasses her in front of her classmates, and the living conditions are awful little food, little warmth, typhus, and inadequate clothing. Thornfield Hall carries forbidding tones, and thorn in the name suggests a prickly and unsettling time of Jane's life. What with all the secrets surrounding Thornfield and its residents, it is no wonder that Jane is not able to relax completely while there. To moor is the same as to anchor, so it makes sense that Jane finds refuge at Moor House, owned by the Rivers family. After the turmoil of Thornfield, Jane flees, and like a ship out at sea, requires a safe place to throw out an anchor and rest and recover for a while before sailing again.

The names of those whom Jane meets in her childhood describe the people so well that it gives one the sense of a child's innocence and clarity when viewing the world. For instance, Jane spends her childhood with her relatives, the Reeds. Similarly, a reed is a plant that grows rigid and straight near water. To name Jane's relatives Reed is appropriate because their behavior is stiff and inflexible towards Jane, and Mrs. Reed and her children show no love for Jane and are uncaring and cold. Additionally, a much older Mrs. Reed dies never forgiving and loving Jane because her heart cannot deviate from her past feelings. After leaving Gateshead, Helen Burns is Jane's first friend. Helen means bright shining light and her last name Burns also has associations with light. Through the hardship Lowood creates, Helen is a beacon for Jane to follow in the dark. Helen's moral philosophy captivates Jane, while her intellect and kindness opens up to Jane the world of friendship. Even the names of the teachers at Lowood alert the reader to their nature. The name Scatcherd is rough and sharp sounding, and it grates along one's ears. Miss Scatcherd is unkind towards Helen; she points out the insignificant faults of Helen and even beats her unfairly. On the other hand, Miss Temple is especially kind to Helen and Jane. And, in fact, a temple is a place of worship and sanctuary. Indeed, Miss Temple serves as the girls' refuge and companion at Lowood. When Jane mentions Miss Temple, Helen reacts. At the utterance of Miss Temple's name, a soft smile flitted over [Helen's] grave face. (67) This shows just how well her name captures her nature as a person.

As the names of the characters in Jane Eyre become more unique, Jane grows older. Not long after meeting Mr. Rochester, Jane also meets Blanche

Ingram, who she assumes will be marrying Mr. Rochester. The name Blanche comes from the French word blanc which means white. The appropriateness of her name may be the fact that the color white could be seen as lacking substance. Blanche shows she is shallow when it is clear that she is only interested in Mr. Rochester for his money or when she treats Jane as an inferior because she is a governess. Blanches conversations and thoughts are not as interesting to Mr. Rochester as Janes conversations and thoughts are. Overall, Jane appears to be more colorful and lively than Blanche. During her stay at Moor House, Jane meets St. John Rivers. As a clergyman, it is appropriate that his first name has religious connotations. He follows God and his ambition, just as a river follows its course.