

Jane eyre, male charaters

Literature, British Literature



In Charlotte Bronte's, "Jane Eyre" the concept of the ideal Victorian male is severely challenged. Characteristics of loyalty, honour, wealth, moral uprightness, and intelligence are seen to be a part of an equation that equals the ideal Victorian male. However, these distinctive characteristics are deemed unrealistic and through Jane's narration questions can be raised as to if any of the male characters in Jane Eyre match the "ideal Victorian male". Male characters depicted in the novel such as John Reed, Rochester and St John Rivers appear to be greedy, dishonest, hypocritical and inconsistent within their ways. They break the ideal Victorian male characteristics and by the end of the novel the characteristics of a feminine hero outshines the male characteristics to create a new type hero for the time period. However, all three male characters in the novel contribute in Jane's journey from childhood to adulthood and her transformation into a strong, heroic woman. A child, who is raised within a family that caters for their every need and want, can often struggle to gain compassion, maturity and self worth. Master John Reed is the first domineering male character presented in Jane Eyre and it is clear that he is not the ideal Victorian male. After the loss of his father nine years before, John indulges in continually tormenting and bullying his cousin Jane. He is described as "disgustingly ugly" and having "heavy limbs and large extremities" and his behaviour is violent and aggressive. John is spoilt and strives off people's weaknesses to make him feel powerful and intimidating "Now I'll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me". John shows how he thrives on a woman's vulnerability and his overbearing gestures make him unlike the ideal Victorian male. Jane is powerless to stop the

violence “ every nerve I had feared him” and her growing sense of injustice is emphasised by the constant use of rhetorical questions. She exclaims “ Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for every condemned”, the repetition of “ always” depicts her constant anguish over the cruelty she receives and also questions her sense of worth. Through John, Jane gains an understanding of what she deserves out of life, a sense of self worth and an understanding of justice; which may not have occurred if she was treated fairly by John. The two characters, John and Jane, have contrasting endings. John dies in shame of alcoholism and his gambling pleasures leave him owing debts. His life has nothing honourable to be remembered by but Jane on the other hand marries her true love after years of being humble and true to herself. A powerful grown man who becomes involved with an equally powerful woman, often uses intelligence to control situations where he becomes weak. Rochester abuses his privileges, as a young man he married for money and used women for sex and wished to possess them exclusively with no obligations in return. But when Rochester and Jane become acquaintances, Rochester comes to realise Jane is not a dependent woman. In fact her witty, prickly responses and her refusal of gifts, establishes power as an issue between the two characters. When Jane decides to leave, Rochester vigorously tries to make her stay “ Oh Jane, this is bitter, this- this is wicked”. The use of emotive language is able to portray his heart breaking over Jane’s decision. But when Jane continues to stay strong in her decision, Rochester becomes forceful and critical, portraying his authority and place as a man. He exclaims “ You make me a liar by such language: you sully my honour”. The use of legal jargon depicts Rochester’s

weakness and abuse of intelligence in wooing Jane to stay. Jane continues to “ plant her foot down” and leaves which is able to show Jane transforming into an assertive, strong and independent woman.