

Mr rochester and jane
are equals, if not in
social status,
certainly in intellect...

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



I agree that Jane and Mr Rochester are suited to one another, not in most of the novel, but at the end when they become of equal social status. At the time the novel was written, the difference in social status between Jane and Mr Rochester would have meant that they were not suited to one another and people at that time would not have accepted their relationship. Jane is considered to have a lower social status than Mr Rochester because she is only a governess that works for him and is supported by him. Mr Rochester is clearly of a higher social status because he had lots of money and land.

This shows that they were at opposite ends of the social ladder, which means therefore that any relationship that they had with each other wouldn't be accepted by the Victorian society. Charlotte Bronte is telling us that their relationship wouldn't have been accepted and that it never would be as long as the social status between them differed. It is a message to the reader that no matter how much Jane loves him, she knows it won't work which is probably why later on in the novel she feels very uncomfortable with her trying to be of equal status.

Although they are not of equal social status, they are certainly equal in intellect, spirit and temperament from the very beginning. An example of this is how Jane seems to take his comments well and always has something to reply with. This is shown when Mr Rochester says ' you are not so unsophisticated... ' and Jane replies ' Oh, don't fall back on over-modesty! ' It shows she is very intelligent as she can think of quick come backs to his comments. Their temperaments are the same as they both don't want to

show their feelings for one another when it becomes apparent to us that they are fond of each other.

They have both got strong spirits as they are both very opinionated and determined. This is shown in the discussions they have together as they both have very strong opinions and won't back down. Mr Rochester encourages discussion with Jane to develop her sense of equality with him and develop a good friendship throughout the novel. When Mr Rochester tells Jane about his past it shows that he is very open and at ease with her, like a friend, even though that hadn't known each other that long.

When he is telling Jane about his affair with Celine Varens and of the time when she found out he was married which lead to the end of the affair, this would appeal to Jane because it shows he was a man of morals like her. This again shows that they are of equal spirit and temperament. After the fire, even though Mr Rochester was the one in the fire, he was looking after Jane and making sure she was alright. This shows that he is superior to her and more masterful. This also shows his feelings for her in that he wanted to take care of her and protect her.

He seemed very masterful when he told Jane to ' just be still..... remain here until I return. ' This also tells us about Jane because she didn't want to ' risk Mr Rochester's displeasure by disobeying his orders' which illustrates again the difference in social status affecting the relationship they have.

When Mr Rochester returned he was very grateful to Jane and gave her a higher status in his eyes because she saved his life. He also puts himself in '

immense debt' to her. Jane however doesn't like this because she feels it is her duty to him as she works for him.

This shows that Jane likes Mr Rochester to be more powerful than her because that was the way it was meant to be in the Victorian times with the men looking after the women and being more powerful. When Blanche Ingram enters the novel with Mr Rochester, Jane feels immediately threatened and jealous. This is because Blanche is an elegant woman who is 'tall, has a fine bust, sloping shoulders; long graceful neck...' Jane decides that she was foolish to think that Mr Rochester would ever be interested in a girl like her.

When Jane finds out that Mr Rochester intends to marry Blanche Ingram, Jane feels her world has ended because she now realises that she loves him. Jane draws two portraits of herself and Blanche, and compares the two. She sees that their physical appearances are very different with Jane looking like a plain governess and Blanche looking like an elegant lady. Blanche is also a talented lady which also shows she is a lady and of a higher social class. Jane feels that she isn't worthy of Mr Rochester because of the social difference which also means that Blanche would be better for Mr Rochester and he is more likely to want her.

Jane thinks that the only possible reason for marriage between Mr Rochester and Blanche would be the class of her family. This shows how aware of the social status gap between her and Mr Rochester she is. When Jane returns from Gateshead she is greeted kindly by Mr Rochester suggesting that he

missed her. Jane thinks she was 'nothing to him' which shows that she doesn't think she is important enough to him because of the difference in social status. Although, Mr Rochester values her opinion because he wanted to know her thoughts on the carriage which shows they have a good friendship.

They have a good friendship because they are both honest people meaning that their temperament and spirits are the same. Mr Rochester tells Jane that he thinks that Blanche is beautiful as he says 'I wish, Jane, I were a trifle better adapted to match her externally' which again makes Jane feel inferior to Blanche, not only in social status but in beauty too. Mr Rochester shows his power over Jane again when he tells her to 'go up home and stay your weary little wandering feet at a friend's threshold.' He is telling her to do it which would seem normal and acceptable to Jane and the Victorian audience because he is her employer.

He belittles her when he says 'weary little wandering feet.' He seems to be patronising. In the section where Mr Rochester proposes to Jane, there is a change in power between Jane and Mr Rochester as near the end, it is Jane that has the power. At the beginning of this section, Mr Rochester's social status is shown again when he says 'I shall myself look out for employment and asylum for you' because he is saying that he will do it for her as she is incapable. He also refers to Jane as a 'dependant' which she is but he deliberately says this to emphasise this fact.

Although, he does think she is intelligent because he says ‘ a girl of your sense will not object the voyage or the distance. ‘ It is in this section that Jane totally acknowledges the difference in social status between her and Mr Rochester. She does this by saying ‘ wealth, estate, custom intervened between me and what I naturally and inevitably loved. ‘ Jane’s status is shown again when Mr Rochester uses the word ‘ little’ to describe Jane as he calls her his ‘ little friend. ‘

Another example of Jane’s status is when she refers to herself as ‘ poor, obscure, plain and little. Later on in the section she starts to say that she and Mr Rochester are equal because she says she has as much soul as Mr Rochester and ‘ full as much heart. ‘ She then clearly declares them equal by saying ‘ we stood at God’s feet, equal – as we are! ‘ Eventually, Jane says that she is better than Mr Rochester because she would never marry someone she didn’t really love or respect. Mr Rochester is being hypocritical because he would be saying he loved Blanche in front of God when he didn’t really and he openly admitted that fact.

Jane didn’t like this and lost respect for Mr Rochester because in her eyes it was a terrible thing to do. Mr Rochester begins to beg Jane be his wife by offering to make her of equal social status by offering her ‘ a share of all his possessions’ and calls Jane his ‘ equal’ and his ‘ likeness. ‘ This is showing that Jane now has the power to say yes or no which is why Mr Rochester lowers himself further by begging. He knows Jane is more powerful at this time because he says ‘ oh, Jane, you torture me! ‘ When Jane and Mr

Rochester start preparing for the wedding, the social status difference between them starts to show again.

This is because Mr Rochester spoils Jane which makes her feel uncomfortable because she is not used to having money herself or having any spent on her and she doesn't want to be treated differently by Mr Rochester. Mr Rochester behaves as if he is still superior to Jane because he flaunts his financial power and tells her what she wants.

An example of this is when they go shopping for Jane's wedding dress and she says ' the more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation... it would, indeed, be a relief, if I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester... I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched,'.. He also starts choosing for her because Mr Rochester tells Jane to ' choose half a dozen silk dresses. '

He then chooses a dress that is made of ' rich silk of the most brilliant amethyst dye, and superb pink satin. ' Jane refuses this saying that she ' should certainly never venture to wear his choice. ' Mr Rochester also showers Jane with expensive gifts which again make Jane feel uncomfortable.

All this shows that Jane and Mr Rochester are not ready to marry because Jane is not comfortable with the difference in social status which we can see as Jane exaggerates both the situation and her feelings about it but, it is a

true summation of how she feels. She thinks of herself as still his governess; worries that he sees her only as an employee that has caught his eye, to be showered with gifts and romance for a time. When the wedding is interrupted by Mr Briggs because Mr Rochester is married to Bertha and later cancelled because it could not legally happen, it created suspense and excitement.

It is an important narrative device. I think Charlotte Bronte is supporting the social view against endogamy at the time and was proving that it wouldn't work because of the difference in social status despite their love for each other. It wouldn't have been an acceptable marriage for the Victorian audience which is why Charlotte Bronte couldn't let the marriage go ahead. When Jane returned from the Rivers' house, she had formed her own values, and gained her own set of morals by learning from the people she met.

She had matured, become content with herself, her position and became what she views as an equal to Mr. Rochester as she now has money of her own which she inherited from her uncle. It establishes Jane's position as a self-sufficient young woman, wealthy enough to support herself as long as she needs to. She is no longer dependant on Mr. Rochester. This means that Jane's social status had elevated although not to the extent of Mr Rochester's. When we find out that Mr Rochester is blind and one arm had become a stump because of a fire at Thornfield, this means that Mr Rochester had been physically lowered in social status.

Therefore, with Jane's rise in social status and Mr Rochester's fall in social status the two become of equal social status. Although, Jane still refers to Mr Rochester as 'master' which is emotionally revealing because it shows that in her eyes he will always be her master and more superior to her. Jane tries to give Mr Rochester back some of his superiority because he is physically inferior to her because he feels that he can't marry her as he isn't worthy of her.

Jane also tries to elevate his self-esteem by saying that she wants to be with him and help him. She says she will do anything for him. Over time Jane works on Mr Rochester's self-esteem and their trust and friendship with one another by telling each other what happened while they were apart. This builds up to their marriage which would be acceptable because they are of equal social status and Bertha died in the fire so they are free to marry. We are told this by Jane with the quote 'Reader, I married him!'

Through most of the novel Jane is of a lower social status than Mr Rochester which is illustrated by Jane's job as a governess for Mr Rochester who has much money. Jane seems to want it to be this way until she comes into money of her own which elevated her to a higher level of social class and Mr Rochester is physically lowered in status due to blindness. This makes them of equal status and therefore a suited couple. Their intellect, spirit and temperament have always been alike throughout the novel and it was simply a matter of the social status and Mr Rochester's marital status that kept them apart.