

# How bronte evokes the reader's sympathy for jane in chapter one



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Jane Eyre is a classic romance novel by Charlotte Bronte based on part of the author's own days in a brutal boarding school. Jane Eyre was published in 1847 under the male pen name Currer bell, during the Victorian era when males dominated the household and society.

Charlotte Bronte was brought up in Yorkshire at the time of the Industrial Revolution. The compassion of society was changing and a lot of the population was becoming urbanised. The status of women was very different from nowadays. Women had very little power in society and their education was limited. Nowadays, women are given an equal right to play an active role in society.

The novel is written in the first person, narrative voice of Jane Eyre looking back on her childhood. This enables the reader to see things through her eyes and from her perspective. The effect is that, even if we see her behaving in a way we do not like, a person can understand why she behaves as she does, and share her feelings.

The opening sentence of the novel starts with a pessimistic tone and introduces Jane as a depressed child, when she says " There was no possibility of taking a walk that day". The use of pathetic fallacy can help us identify Jane's emotional state. " Leafless shrubbery" is an example of this; it portrays Jane as a bare and exposed individual who feels unloved in her family environment. Bronte also uses depressing adjectives such as" wet lawn" and " cold winter wind". This reflects the chill that Jane feels about the lack of emotional warmth given from her family. Here, we are shown early in

the novel that Jane is unloved. Therefore this presents her as a sensitive and vulnerable child.

“ Eliza, John, Georgina now clustered around their mama in the drawing room”. This suggests that Jane was isolated from her family and from this we can understand that Jane is trapped. She is neither drawn to the outside nor fits in the inside.

Bronte makes many references to Jane's books. She reads a book called “ Bewicks history of British birds”. The bird symbolises her way of escaping from reality. Jane is shown to love reading more than anything else; she finds comfort in literature as it allows her imagination to wander, disregarding everything else.

“ The two ships becalmed on a torpid sea”. The word “ torpid” suggests that Jane is not moving on. She is making no progress in escaping the reality of how insignificant she is to her family, and is feeling like she is getting nowhere.

“ Protecting, but not separating me” implies that Jane withdraws herself from her family. She cuts herself off from everyone by sitting away but this to her is not a complete escape. However, she does not wish to withdraw entirely. She wants to feel a sense of belonging and have closeness with her family, but she is finding this difficult as there is no response.

Bronte then uses expressions such as “ lamentable blast”, which are expressions of grief and mourning. This shows that Jane has finally realised that there is no solution to her problem and that there is no escape from

reality. Jane is shown to be feeling emotionally battered, which makes readers feel sympathetic towards her.

The novel makes much use of symbolism to express Jane's emotions. There are patterns of references to cold, ice and a solitary rock. This emphasises how detached she is from her family and how she is left with no support. She is a neglected child.

Bronte also uses words such as " windows" which portray the feeling of Jane wanting to escape. She is looking out the window, but is finding nothing and deep down she knows that the future will also be cold and frightening. Jane finally accepts that there is no way of escape. She feels exposed and unprotected.

A major tactic Bronte uses in this chapter is contrast between Jane and John. The two have completely different personalities and do not have a good relationship. Bronte uses images such as " fiend" and " black horned thing" as a preface to John's entrance which shows that Jane associates him with the devilish images she reads about in her book.

Jane is bullied by John, physically and emotionally and is treated unjustly because of her financial status. John refers to her as " Jone" which shows his lack of concern for her identity. He has no respect for Jane and has no sympathy towards her, so he therefore continues to bully her by insulting her and calling her a " bad animal" and " you rat". These bestial metonyms perhaps influence the reader to think of Jane as wild. She is treated as if she is not an individual human being and is made to feel inferior.

There are a number of characters in the novel that Jane has to “overcome”. There are simple bullies like John Reed, and people in a position of greater authority, such as Mrs Reed. Jane is not always outspoken, yet she demonstrates to us, through her thoughts, that while she may be upset she is not defeated.

Jane finally defends herself, being unable to conceal her feelings after she is hit by John. She uses her historical knowledge to undermine him. “You are like a murderer – you are like a slave driver – you are like the Roman emperors” This sentence tells us how Jane expresses her opinion and it shows her intelligence as she uses information from the books that she has read. We feel sympathy towards her as she has nobody to appreciate her intelligence.

Bronte goes into graphic detail when Jane is hit by John. “The cut bled, the pain was sharp, and my terror had passed its climax.” This helps readers understand the pain and suffering that she goes through her everyday life. The fact that Jane is hit by John shows that the male had a dominant role in the household, as it was a patriarchal society. John had a physical and status advantage over Jane, meaning that he gets away with all the things he does, which makes Jane an easy target for him and she is used to make him powerful.

The novel explores moral themes, one of which is the difference between real faith and moral hypocrisy. John makes Jane feel inferior by telling her that she is dependant and says that he is a “gentlemen children”, when he is in fact the complete opposite. He is ignorant, abusive and unintelligent.

Another example of this is Jane's aunt. To the outside, she is portrayed as a kind, charitable lady, but this is a complete performance as behind close doors, she is aware that Jane is being bullied but does nothing to prevent it from happening and instead, isolates her from the family.

The moral message of the book is the theme of injustice, which Jane is constantly subjected to. Jane is treated badly and unfairly by maids and family because she is thought of as a second class citizen who is dependent on family for survival. Jane is unprotected and cannot be defended by anyone, even by the maids who are also not given an opinion in anything as they are on a lower social class. She is socially inferior and can not be given an identity because of her financial status. This is shown by the way John is treated in contrast to how Jane is treated because of the class difference. John is only fourteen years old but is called " master" by everyone. He bullies Jane and it is accepted and is shown to be arrogant when he says " one day this will all be mine". The fact that inheritance usually went through the male line shows that a man's position in the household was top.

The first chapter of the novel concludes with Jane defending herself when John has been hitting her. She is not given a voice by her aunt and is immediately locked up in a room. Jane is presented as powerless and has no control whatsoever because she is outnumbered by the " four hands" which were on her. We feel sympathetic towards her because she is immediately seen as the problematic one in the situation when in fact she is the victim, but is not given the voice to explain herself. Instead, she has to accept the punishment she has been given, even if she has done nothing wrong, because she will never win.

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