

Jane eyre by charlotte bronte



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I would be using the novel, Jane Eyre as a device to illustrate Charlotte Bronte's view of the nineteenth century system of education. This novel was published by Bronte in 1847 under the false name Currer Bell. I think this alone is a good evidence of the social and cultural background that prevailed in the nineteenth century. It was a male dominant world. Girls from upper class families were taught by a governess. Boys were often sent to public schools like Eton.

Middle class boys went to grammar schools while the middle class girls went to private schools. The poor went to a village school where they were taught a little reading, writing, needle work and arithmetic. The education was very basic. In fact one's wealth decided on the quality of education that they might receive. This novel is basically a reflection of Bronte's view of the nineteenth century system of education. Bronte's has made up the fictional character Jane Eyre to depict her views of education that prevailed at that time.

In fact Jane's thoughts, words and actions are all Bronte's thoughts, words and actions. In this novel, Jane Eyre, the main character is an orphan who is looked after by her aunt, Mrs. Reeds. One day, as punishment for fighting with her cousin John Reed, Mrs. Reeds imprisons Jane in the red-room, the room in which Mr. Reeds, her uncle died. While locked in, Jane, believing that she sees her uncle's ghost, screams and faints.

She wakes to find herself in the care of Bessie and the kindly apothecary Mr. Lloyd, who suggests to Mrs. Reed that Jane be sent away to school. To Jane's delight Mrs. Reed concurs and she's sent to Lowood Charitable Institution.

According to Bronte's biographers she's been to a similar school namely, Cowan Bridge School. She has used Lowood as a means to describe the education that was given or available rather as it's the only place that the poor could study in order to get a good education. Lowood was a boarding school. Children were expected to be grateful to what they received.

This was partly a charity-school and children's parents or relations paid £15 a year although the children were called charity children. This is well illustrated when Jane asks " Then why do they call us charity-children? " to which Helen replies, " Because fifteen pounds is not enough for board and teaching and the deficiency is supplied by subscription. " There a question as to whether it's fair to call the children charity-children when they pay £15 a year. Lowood is a very strict and disciplined school. Everything is done in order.

Whenever the loud bell is heard these children begin to do something or finish doing something- " When I again unclosed my eyes, a loud bell was ringing, the girls were up and dressing..... and again the bell rang, all formed in file, two and three, and in that order descended the stairs and entered the cold dimly lit school room: her prayers were read by Miss Miller afterwards. " Day begins with prayers "... the long hour and a half of prayers and Bible-reading..... " Then breakfast, lesson-time, lunch, lesson-time, tea-time, lesson-time, dinner and then sleep.

If you have a close look at their daily routine, you may notice that lesson time is occupying most of their time. There rises a question whether these children live happily. Jane describes " The play hour in the evening thought

the pleasantest fraction of the day at Lowood. " If we take away 8 hours for sleep and 4 hours for meals out of the 24 hours, yet 12 hours remain. Is it fair for the children to be allowed to play only for one hour? And study all the 11 hours that remain? Jane soon finds that the conditions at Lowood are unforgiving. It's extremely cold there.

Jane says " I too rose reluctantly; it was bitter cold, and I dressed as well as I could for shivering, and washed when there was a basin at liberty, which did not occur soon, as there was but one basin to six girls, on the stands down the middle of the room. " Jane begins to realize that life is so hard at Lowood. She further describes its coldness " A change had taken place in the weather the preceding evening and a keen north-east wind, whistling through the crevices of our bedroom windows all night long had made us shiver in our heads and turned the contents into ice. " Jane might feel that cold as she's come from Mrs. Reeds' house which is very rich house where it's well heated. Despite its coldness, children are not dressed properly.

This is well described by Jane when she says, " Our clothes was not sufficient to protect us from severe cold: we had no boots, the snow got into our shoes and melted there; our ungloved hands became numbed and covered with chilblains as were our feet. " She further says " I remember well the distracting irritation I endured from this cause every evening, when my feet inflamed; and the torture of every thrusting the swelled, raw and stiff toes into my shoes in t morning. A bitter cold winter neither with boots nor gloves cannot be imagined.

How did these little ones survive? I think this alone is a good incident to describe the hardships that prevailed in such boarding schools during the 19th century. The clothes were made by the children themselves. Hair was supposed to be combed from their faces and not a curl was visible. All wore gloomy brown dresses, made high and surrounded by a narrow tucker about the throat, with little Holland pockets and they wore woolen stockings and country-made shoes fastened with brass buckles.

Jane explains, " Above twenty of those clad in this costume were full-grown girls, or rather young women; it suited them ill, and gave an air of oddity even to the prettiest. " This shows how well the children were looked after with no proper clothing. The food given at Lowood was awful. It was insufficient for the growing children. In chapter 5 Jane says to herself, " The tall girls went out and returned presently, each bearing a tray, with portions of something, I knew not what arranged thereon and a pitcher of water and a mug in the middle of each tray.

The portions were handed round; those who liked took a draught of the water, the mug been common to all. When it came to my turn, I drank for I was thirsty, for I was thirsty, but did not touch the food, excitement and fatigue rendering me incapable of eating; I now saw, however that it was thin oaten cake shared into fragments. " This was a typical dinner that the children had. Is this really sufficient for these small children? Once Jane says ".... we had scarcely sufficient to keep alive a delicate invalid.

This proves that the food that was given was not enough for growing children. Consequently the bigger children coaxed the little ones out of their

portion whenever they had an opportunity. This well illustrated when Jane says, " Many a times I have share between two claimants the precious morsel of brown bread distributed at teatime; and after relinquishing to a third half of the contents of my coffee, I have swallowed with an accompaniment of secret tears, forced from me by the exigency of hunger. " Once she also says "..... ut I've been glad of as much more- I was still hungry. "

Even the insufficient food was not edible on some days. There was no option left. They had to eat or else, they would starve which is so pathetic. This is well portrayed when Jane says, " I ate what I could and wondered within myself whether everydays fare would be like this. " She also hears a tall girl whispering, " Disgusting! The porridge is burnt again. " The word ' again' implies us that this is not the first time that the porridge had been burnt. Was this seldom or something that happened frequently?

Despite these hardships, the superintendent of the school is kindly, providing the girls with bread and cheese after their inedible porridge. " You had this morning a breakfast which you could not eat; you must be hungry: - I have ordered that lunch of bread and cheese shall be served to all. " Bronte has used Miss. Temple as a device to show weaknesses of other characters. Semi-starvation and neglected colds had caused tuberculosis to spread across the whole Lowood. Jane explain this condition as "..... forty five out of the eighty girls lay ill at one time....."

Many, already smitten, went home only to die: some died at school, and were buried quickly, the nature of the malady forbidding delay. " This is all

due to the ignorance of the administration. They cared less of the poor children. Only Miss. Temple cared them. " Miss Temple's whole attention was absorbed by the patients: she lived in the sick room, never quitting from it except to snatch a few hours at rest. " This shows how neglected these innocent children were. The education provided by Lowood was of a good standard.

Grammar, arithmetic, history, geography and music are taught. The superintendent of Lowood having taken her seat before globes placed on one of the tables, summoned the first class round her, and commenced giving for lesson on geography the lower classes were called by the teachers: repetitions in history, grammar, etc. , went on for an hour; writing arithmetic succeeded, and music lessons were given by Miss. Temple to some of the elder girl. " She further says " I was promoted to a higher class; in less than two months I was allowed to commence French and drawing. " So, only clever children were allowed to learn French and drawing.

Is this fair? There are loads of fabulous painters in the world who've been bad at other subjects. Miss. Smith attends to all the work, Miss. Scatcherd teaches history and grammar and hears the second class repetitions, Madame Pierrot teaches French and Miss. Temple teaches geography and music. At Lowood learning new stuff is basically by hearting the stuff. Jane says " At first, being little accustomed to learn, by heart the lessons appeared to me both long and difficult; the frequent change from task to task..... " So there lies a big question whether the children enjoy the lessons.

The only words that roar round the Lowood buildings are “ Form Classes! Silence! Order! ” No love is shown towards children. This is well illustrated when Miss. Scatcherd “ Girls don’t slouch, keep in line, or my nerves will snap: do not whisper or breathe or I’ll show you the strap. ” Is this good for the mentality of the children? The word ‘ breathe’ itself tells us about the attitude that the teachers had towards the little ones. Breathing is essential for all humans but yet these children were asked not to. What does this implies?

It’s none other than to say that children should be grateful and therefore do whatever the teachers say. Obedience is a good quality that should be developed among children but ‘ do not breath’ goes beyond obedience. This illustrates that children are treated more like robots. No human rights are observed. Children are never admired by most of the teachers. This is well illustrated when Jane says, “ I kept expecting Miss. Scatcherd would praise her attention; but instead of that, she suddenly cried out- You dirty, disagreeable girl! You have never cleaned your nails this morning. Children are told off whenever they do a simple mistake (they consider as if they have committed a crime) but never praise. Jane thinks, “ Why does she not explain that she could neither clean her nails nor wash her face, as the water was frozen. ” This describes how helpless the children were. There’s no room for reasoning.

All the decisions are taken by the teachers. Punishments given to these innocent children are so weird. This is well described when Mrs. Scatcherd canes Helen for not cleaning her nails that morning- an issue which is almost negligible as this was due to the frozen water supplied to them.

This ominous tool she presented to Miss. Scatcherd with respectful courtesy; then she quietly and without being told, unclosed her pinafore, and the teacher instantly and sharply inflicted on her neck a dozen strokes with the bunch of twigs. Not a tear rose from Burns eye..... ” ‘ Without been told’ and ‘ Not a tear rose from Burns eye’ suggest us that this was very frequent and Helen was very familiar with these kinds of incidents. This is a good evidence of how well the children were treated. Children are treated like animals.

People beat the animals to make them do something as they cannot understand what people say, but these little ones are humans who can very well understand what other people say. Children are not given a chance to correct their mistakes. Religion plays a big role in Lowood school life- “ The meal over, prayers were read by Miss. Miller, and the classes filed off two and two upstairs. ” The teachers didn’t enjoy teaching religion. This is well explained during Sunday evenings- “ The Sunday evening was spent in repeating by heart, the Church Catechism, and the 5th, 6th and 7th read by Miss.

Miller whose irrepressible yawns attested her weariness. ” If the teachers do not enjoy, how can you expect the children to enjoy? Children are forced to believe in God. Their thoughts evolve around God. This is well portrayed when Helen says “ Read the New Testament, and observe what Christ says and how He acts; make word your rule, and His conduct your example. ” According to Bronte’s biographers, the fictional character Mr. Brocklehurst the treasurer and the manager of the establishment (Lowood) is a portray of William Carus Wilson at Cowan Bridge.

Mr. Brocklehurst appears very little in the whole novel but his words illustrate us a lot about his cruelty towards the little ones. This is well shown when he says " I have again and again intimated that I desire the hair to be arranged closely, modestly and plainly. Miss. Temple that girl's hair must be cut off entirely; I will send a barber tomorrow. " He wants Miss.

Temple to cut the little girl's hair because her hair is naturally curled. He is so cruel that he doesn't wishes to see a poor girl having such a wonderful hair. He further says "... y mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel; and each of the young persons before us has a string of twisted in plaits with vanity itself have woven.... " Jane's thoughts regarding this issue are revealed when Mr. Brocklehurst's two daughters arrive into the scene; Jane thinks " They ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress. "

They were dressed in velvet, silk and furs. Jane further says "... nd from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled..... She wore a false front of French curls. " There's nothing wrong with Mr. Brocklehurst's daughters having their hair curled but what's wrong here is that Mr. Brocklehurst requests Miss. Temple to cut off Julia Severn's naturally curled hair. Is this fair? Does wealth decides your beauty or what is the correlation between wealth and beauty? Mr. Brocklehurst cruelty is further illustrated when Jane broke her slate by accident. He considers it as a crime.

He says, " A careless girl..... Let that child who broke her slate come forward! " Meanwhile Miss. Temple whispers to Jane " Don't be afraid Jane, I saw it was an accident, you shall not be punished. " Here Bronte has used Miss. Temple in contrast to Mr. Brocklehurst. Mr. Brocklehurst makes Jane stand on a stool all day " Let her stand half an hour longer on that stool, and let no one speaks to her during the remainder of the day. " He even says, "..... this girl is- a liar" How can he accuse someone so firmly without actually knowing her? (All what he knows is what Mrs.

Reeds told him. He doesn't bother to think whether it's Jane or Mrs. Reeds lying) Even if a child is a liar, is he as the manager of the establishment to announce it to everybody or is he to correct the child by talking to her personally and reasoning why she lied? This is really not good for the mentality of the child. If Helen and Mrs. Temple hadn't been there, the children would have kept not talking to Jane. The teachers will look at her in a bad angle. Luckily Miss. Temple asks Mr. Lloyds about this and informs everybody at Lowood that Jane is not a liar.

When Miss Temple leaves to get married, Jane decides it is time for a change (after spending 8 years at Lowood, 6 years as a student and 2 years as a teacher), and her decision to place an advert in the paper and travel alone to work for a new employer marks the next chapter in Jane's life: thanks to Lowood, she is now an educated and confident young woman. Soon Jane gets a job in Thornfield as governess to a little French girl, Adele who is under ten years of age. Here Bronte uses Thornfield as device to illustrate the education that a child of a rich family might receive.

According to her biographers Bronte herself has been a governess which leaves us no doubt that Jane's view of education here is exactly of Bronte's. She teaches there geography, English, arithmetic, music and art. The ways in which Jane teaches Adele is to be admired. She says " I felt it would be injudicious to confine her too much at first, so, when I talked to her great deal, and got to learn a little, and when the morning had advanced to noon, I allowed her to return to her nurse. I then proposed to occupy myself till dinner-time in drawing some little sketches for her use. Bronte very successfully shows how Jane makes Adele love learning.

She doesn't ask Adele to by heart everything as she was taught in Lowood. She draws some sketches, so that she really can understand what she teaches. She makes sure that Adele would not become a parrot who by hearts and repeat everything, as done in Lowood. She even lets Adele to enjoy her life. She doesn't let Adele to sit and study all day although she and friends played only an hour a day at Lowood when she was a child. She encourages Adele to learn by promising her to teach to play the piano. Jane has a good understanding of her student.

First she had observed Adele well. Jane describes Adele as " lively child who had been spoiled and indulged..... no injudicious interference from any quarter thwarted my plans for her improvements..... " This suggests how well Jane prepares to her lessons. She further describes, " No peculiar development of feeling or taste which raise one inch above the ordinary level of childhood. " She understands the ordinary level of childhood- the very basic thing that the teachers at Lowood didn't understand.

Now Jane's matured ideas are revealed. " Women are supposed to be very calm generally but women feel just as men feel..... and it is narrow minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing the piano and embroidering bags. " She further says " It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. " Bronte questions the society why women are not equally treated. Bronte uses the Ingrams to show the view of the rich people towards the governesses.

Blanche Ingram views governesses with condescension and superiority. I have just one word to say of the whole tribe: they are a nuisance..... half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous..... and the poor sickly thing used to cry. " Her comment leaves no doubt about her views as she uses the words, detestable and ridiculous with no word which describes them favourably. As Jane's and Mr. Rochester's marriage is arranged, Adele is planned to be sent away to a school. Jane says Adele that there's nothing to be afraid and they would be sending Adele to a very good school. She always makes sure that Adele is very comfortable which is quite the opposite with the teachers at Lowood.