

JANE EYRE OVERVIEW: THEMES

Central concern: An individual negotiating her way through a society with values that occasionally conflict with/affirm her own, and how she eventually carves her life

- How Jane's attitudes/choices contrast against those of other characters/social norms
- How Jane's attitudes/choices are ultimately framed as the ideal

Characters

**Wide range of characters, each emblematic of a certain stance/values*

- Themes they stand for, choices made, attitudes embodied
- Key pronouncements on issues (e.g. religion)
- Posture (i.e. relationship with Jane in larger context)
- Context/setting in which they are seen (e.g. Roch and West Indies – exotic + wild)
- Attitudes in relation to Jane's

Themes

- Class/social position
- Love and marriage
- Spirituality: Religion, morality, supernatural
- Reason and passion
- Morality, duty and temptation
- Individual in society
 - > Self and the Other
 - > Education and accomplishments
- Social/superficial appearances + reality
- Women, childhood, orphans
- Identity

Genre

- Bildungsroman
- Gothic
 - > Emotional, extraordinary experience, reflecting isolation/ vulnerability
- Romantic
 - > Emotion, individualism, glorification of nature
- Fairy tale/'rags to riches'
- Quest narrative
- Social condition novel
 - > Turning social convention on its head + undercutting them
 - > Condition of governesses
- Morality tale
- 'Dramatic' quality

**Look at 1x01 Thematic Overview for questions purely on Jane Eyre*

- Unpacking key quotes, if given in question: Dissect into different segment and evaluate separately

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

EXAMPLES (Chronological)

- Jane and Roch at Thornfield
- Blanche and Roch
- Jane and SJR
- Roch and Bertha
- SJR and Rosamond
- Jane and Roch at Ferndean

Significance: Jane's union with Roch (and reasons for doing so) a test case to negotiate what love can be, and accurate measures for indivs' compatibility in a relationship

MARRIAGE

- Formal institution operating in clear bounds of religion + soc

LOVE

- Deep affection + personal compatibility based on understanding + admiration of qualities of character
- Personal attraction + sensual desire

Key Links: Class, spirituality, morality

1. Social institutions and convention as a valid basis for marriage

- Marriage must take place within sanctity of social institutions – an important social contract that cannot solely be based on personal relationships

- Jane's 'forbidden' love for Roch + ready assumptions about Roch's courtship of Blanche both rest on same understanding of generally accepted + clearly comprehended social institutions

- Mrs Fairfax's judgment: A barometer for 'world's judgment' + 'man's opinion'
 - Informed by usual measures of compatibility
 - Relationship bound by conventions/duties tied to their social class/position: Hence outrageous in the world where marriages are socially sanctioned

C.F. MWP: Implications of a transactional world

- Unsuitability of F and V's suitor because he has no money
- On the same basis, suitability of C to V due to his abundance of wealth
 - Through this, revealing flawed social assumptions

- Most clearly seen in: **Why Jane must leave Rochester at Thornfield**
- Personal obstacles prevail even if social judgment is ignored

A. [J&R] Social and financial incompatibility

- Jane herself cannot deny truth of their social + financial incompatibility
- Rejection of an unequal partnership: A negotiation with Jane's values
 - No desire to join R in an unequal partnership; declines to be treated on social level she has no pretense to; deems financial dependence an indignity + degradation
 - > All of which compromise her sense of autonomy + independence

B. [B&R] Potential infringement into pre-existing contract

- Shows how socially acceptable + morally sanctioned institutions surrounding marriage *cannot be discarded* as Roch argues he has the right to
- Marriage as a social + religious contract Jane cannot enter into as Roch and Bertha are married, even if not in any personal/spiritual sense
- Only alternative would be to be a Celine Varens – a role Jane resolutely rejects

C. [J&R] Spiritual and moral incompatibility

- Jane's steadfast adherence to her values: Is decidedly against Roch's contravention of religious morality revealing the spiritual incompatibility of the two
- Roch's refusal to repent and reform incompatible with Jane's unwavering religious stance

2. Yet social institutions alone are inadequate determinants of individual compatibility

- Bronte condemns the limitation of social judgment through universally sanctioned marriages based upon nothing but superficial measures of social equality
- Examination of socially sanctioned Marriages (and reasons behind them):

A. Roch and Blanche

- A social contract and relationship based off prestige, wealth and position
- At the same time, Jane's contempt at the poverty of B's spirit + selfish inability to offer Roch true devotion and love; Roch himself derides B's mercenary intentions
- While Jane points out their incompatibility, neither Roch nor B are culpable for acting in 'conformity to ideas + principles instilled into them [since] childhood'

B. Roch and Bertha

- Bertha: Conventional, practical, mercenary and socially acceptable intentions
- Roch's actions: Actuated by sensual, sexual attraction and pleasure for Bertha's charms (c.f. Celine Varens) – inadequate basis for 'love' and marriage

> SJR and Rosamond

- How does this (if at all) parallel Roch and Bertha – is it love, or infatuation?
 - Rosamond as the 'fruition' of earthly beauty
- Is it an e.g. of an incompatible union, or a compatible one that SJR rejects, believing in delayed gratification at the expense of earthly beauty and pleasure?

C. Jane and St John

- While SJR offers Jane a marriage that seems to approximate an earthly ideal (useful partnership in service of fellow man + additional benediction of divine + moral sanction)
- SJR's separation of love (an irrational delusion - earthly happiness and pleasure) and marriage (fulfillment of ambition and duty) as mutually exclusive
- An arid, loveless union: Based only on Jane's usefulness to SJR's life ambition
 - Practicality + spirituality, but ignoring the personal, emotional aspect of r/s

3. Jane and Roch's eventual marriage is presented as the perfect union – beyond previous benchmarks of compatibility, there is also the stamp of divine sanction

- Complete compatibility: Bases of love beyond superficial appreciation for social class and prestige, based on personal, emotional, spiritual understanding of each other
 - Bertha's death and Rochester's reformation
 - Jane and Roch's clear compatibility challenges + eventually overturns limitations placed on them by socially accepted definitions of marriage
 - Addition of divine sanction in blessings of a child
 - Centrality of marriage based on love, spirituality and social class:
 - A socially + divinely sanctioned union that presents the epitome of earthly + personal fulfillment
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SOCIAL CLASS

- JE presenting a moral society where everyone has her place: Assumptions + values + indicators which help to codify relationships and which are overturned as Jane challenges them

- Acknowledgment of assumptions and their value
- Even as the novel overturns some unjustifiable prejudices associated with class system

1. Class is first established as a pervasive social reality that informs social norms and interactions

- Importance of class in arbiting interpersonal interactions in a hierarchical society
- Individuals automatically looking for certain cues that regulate and govern their behaviour
 - When Roch meets Jane/when Rivers meet Jane for the first time
- Jane's own awareness over how she is viewed as she moves through different social circumstances: Her constant search for kinship and family shows the need to strike an equality and forge a sense of belonging
- Conventional Mrs Fairfax demonstrates importance of keeping to one's place
 - Wider social reality in play even within servant class
 - Jane's experiences in Gateshead and Thornfield (where she re-enters wider society, with its own indications of beyond personal worth, which was the case in Lowood)

A. The very real barriers of class

- Jane's rejection of Roch at Thornfield demonstrating the danger of breaching these boundaries
- Need for socially sanctioned marriage, on the basis of social compatibility
 - R/s with Roch initially predicated on his wealth/social position, and Jane's dependence
 - Jane's self-reproach: Frequently admonishes herself to accept her inferiority + accusations of presumptuousness and transgression (of social barriers) that she levels against herself
- Jane's physical positioning in the servant's quarters vs the drawing room, where she does not fully belong and retires to the shadows

B. Perceptions and prejudices

- Jane's assertions that individual behaviour is based on assumptions + principles instilled in childhood, which have never been challenged/thought through

- Jane's own perceptions change throughout the novel:

- As a child (under Reeds' influence): Thinking poverty synonymous with degradation
- A sense of identity ingrained rather than only formal or conventional (echoes automatic, unthinking assumptions of everyone else— attitudes later shown to be childlike later on)

2. JE draws attention to how class is incorrectly invoked as a basis for respect and a measure of individual worth. In doing so, it highlights the injustice of being subjected to such flawed benchmarks

A. Reeds' treatment of Jane

- Reed children, clearly unworthy of their mother's affection, and even Bessie and Abbott claim superiority over Jane

- Traits such as refinement, aesthetic sensibilities and education, which are prized in society, are incorrectly measured through external indicators/social labels – such as dress, manners, accent, accomplishments and family, which those of higher classes naturally possess

- These indicators are dangerously seen as indicators of superiority + worth
 - Allows for individuals to establish their position in relation to each other

B. Party at Thornfield

- Arrival of Roch's entourage: Initial importance of their appearance, affecting an image of highborn elegance associated with the ephemeral later revealed as falsely exaggerated

C. Blanche Ingram and Jane

- Jane's fierce admission and acknowledgement of her own clear inferiority to Blanche
- At the same time, qualities Jane lacks appropriately captured in an image – as they are only superficial, external indicators

> Reveals that socially accepted measures can only be external indicators which, while useful, cannot tell the absolute truth

D. On the portrayal of Governesses

- Rivers sisters and Jane all indivs of impeccable antecedents, manners + education of a gentlewoman; all 3 possess refined tastes + capacity for self-improvement which place them above the haughty, dignified Ingrams. Yet, they are never considered their equal

3. Through the novel, Jane is seen challenging and overturning these assumptions

- Bronte placing Jane in series of liminal positions as an orphan, governess, charity student and 'beggar woman'. Yet, Jane's clear individual worth in spite of being placeless, origin-less, adrift and uncertain further reinforce the limitations of class as a signal of individual worth

The barriers of class (again)

CHARACTER ANALYSIS: Jane and Class

- Jane moving through different social circumstances, often being placed in liminal positions: Through this we examine the stratification that organizes society

- Fluidity of Jane's identity as other characters attempt to 'place' her an important index of other characters, as we note their ('society's') response to her

A. [Gateshead] An orphan

- Jane's suffering a function of her lack of wealth, position and family
- Vocab employed by Reeds + Brocklehurst make clear her worthlessness
- Her oppressive + limiting experience exposes baselessness of one class' cruel treatment of another
- > Clear awareness of the injustice of her situation

B. [Lowood] A charity student

- Asserts importance of self-endeavour

C. [Thornfield] A governess

- C.f. Diana and Mary: Governesses as indivs of impeccable antecedents, manners + education of a gentlewoman but is never considered their equal
 - All 3 with refined tastes + capacity for self-improvement which place them above the Ingrams
 - Spirit of independence compare favourably to other more privileged women in novel
- > Recognises her self-reliance and independence; no longer reliant on others' opinion of her
> Independence from society's opinions

B. A beggar-woman

- Seen as a degradation to Jane: A complete inability to maintain self-respect as she is not self-sufficient and entitled to nothing
- Almost a validation of her early, childish definitions of poverty

- Eventually, Jane's ultimate recognition that while important, these considerations of class are inconsequential when measured against more fundamental realities of love and equality in God's eye

- Jane asserts her equality to Roch, refusing to assume indicators of 'higher' class lady – desire for equality only before God, being led away from any indicators of class in marriage
- Jane does not need Roch's accouterments to make them equal, as long as she is freed from burden of financial dependence – class no longer becomes a point of contention

Perceptions and prejudices (again)

- Presence of unjustifiable prejudices stemming from a pervasive social reality obsessed with class – Jane's ability to recognize and overcome class assumptions
- Jane's maturity and awareness of how her prejudices inform the way she sees others

- Morton School: First reveals that Jane is prey to elements of social perception that remain unchangeable. But Jane is ashamed of her own prejudice – resolves to overcome them

- Jane's reprimand to Hannah viewing her destitution (as a cause for reproach (echoing her subjugation to the incomprehensible and crushing 'reproach of her dependence'))
> Hannah's prejudices vs Jane's resolve + certainty not to act upon her own

- Jane's awakening sense of the individual worth of her students at Morton vs Ingrams' vicious dismissal of an entire class of people shows the inaccuracy and injustice of imposing prejudices on others. Jane's judgment an individual, not social one:

- c.f. Rivers sisters and Ingrams both of equal refinement, but with clear differences in innate worth and cultivated ability

4. Overall: Jane eventually reaches the conclusion that social class, though important in navigating social relationships, is an unreliable measure of individual worth

- Though the real existence of social barriers must be acknowledged + are useful, judgments solely made through generalities + outward show, instead of indiv observation are superficial and unjust
- Advantages of wealth and family do not always ensure superiority we assume
- Jane's superior powers of application + finely sensitive nature that set her far ahead from extravagantly accomplished Blanche, who does not possess same refinement of sensibility + spirit

FAITH, RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY

Religion: Something institutionalized, concerning forms, indications, behaviours, types of speech, which indicate **spirituality**:

- Idea of a personal reality wrt devotion and humility, Christian charity, personal e.g.
- (Distinct from) Jane's personal guidance in times of crisis: Dreams, visions, signs

C.F. Ideals of religion/faith/spirituality involve being sincere, doing good and benefitting fellow man

- In MWP: There is no such ideal; projecting pretense of morality
- In JE: Lauds Jane for her personal connection to God and receptiveness to divine influence

- Jane as a barometer for the ideal version of faith and religion

*Do we talk of F/R/S all as the same thing>

1. Bronte first ridicules the narrow human doctrines with religious form for form's sake, revealing the shallow limitations of dogma, conventional appearances and behaviour as an indicator of goodness

- Rigid adherence to ritual with no comprehension or humanity

A. Brocklehurst

- A worldly, rather than spiritual, man who plays up his poor religious understanding: Reliance on standard, dogmatic, ritualistic practices and misapplies religious precepts

- Subjugates worldly values under religion

- Speaks in clichés, prizing outward behaviours in accordance to practices of the world. Latches Christian virtues to ideas of class

- Manipulates religion to entrench his own position – Lowood creed a reflection of his self-aggrandisement and self-indulgent perspective

- Hypocritical as he indulges in his own private life

B. Rochester

- Rochester's dry reference to Roman Catholic principle of living his life, believing himself wise enough to have no faith in his sole concession to good principles

- Belief that religious laws cannot be unilaterally applied to all circumstances – abides instead by personal experiences and belief in the righteousness of his own actions
- Bronte (through Jane) reacts to this with cynicism, pointing to system's liability to abuse

- Eliza: Obsessively reads Book of Common Prayer but is materialistic, heartless and mercenary. Unsympathetic towards her own family, severs all ties with Georgiana following MR's death

- Bronte also despises those who have no other resources than the flesh:

- John Reed: Gluttony, corruption and lack of restraint
- Georgiana Reed: Frivolous, vain but empty

- Rochester (in Celine Varen days): Inability to aspire to anything higher and gorges on a life of self-indulgence and moral depravity
- Even Adele and Rosemond: Seen as pretty creatures with nothing much else to them

2. Shows certain religious attitudes which come close to the ideal, but which are ultimately shown to be antithetical to a full and fulfilling life in the world

- While on the surface, Bronte prizes:

- SJR's single-minded dedication and unflinching self-sacrifice
- Helen's humility and patience, gentleness and kindness and an earnest seeking after God

- Jane's admiration but wary incomprehension towards this brand of spirituality that leaves no room/allowance for simple humanity show how they conflict against her own doctrine of human goodness

A. Helen Burns: Paragon of good Christian behaviour

- Helen Burns' teachings of a spiritual reality that supersedes the real world, but is herself unable to navigate the waters of human relationships: Being continually at fault in the world; her death as a welcome reprieve from the throes of everyday life

- Does not think much of everyday life: Is constantly tormented in Lowood for her inability to keep drawers in order, "slatternly" appearances, etc.

B. St John Rivers

- Sincere certainty of his own election in the afterlife
- Elevated view of own role in God's greater plan; disdains pleasures of this world and leaves no room for the consideration of any other human needs – an uncomfortable doctrine projected on a clergyman

- Acting upon spiritual precepts, but Bronte makes clear that SJR is at heart a self-serving man (e.g. in his cruel treatment to Jane, in his self-aggrandising views of the afterlife)

- Dismissal of domestic endearments + household joys – rejecting the world as a place of rest/satisfaction, deeming it trite + transient. Mentions of a glorious reward appear arid to Jane

- C.f. Jane who seeks kinship and a hardy-won family/inheritance
- Though SJR dies unloved and unmourned, believes he will be welcome by God

3. Bronte ultimately applauds those who embody a genuine brand of religion and spirituality and who trust in God's providence, but balance it with a faith in worldly humanity and goodness

A. Miss Temple

- Leading through 'precept and example', taking into consideration worldly reality and recognition
- Dispenses earthly justice and mercy: Balances spiritual pretensions with beliefs that are rational and accessible, with a warm and genuine concern for her charges

- Influence on Jane: Redeeming herself through human agency and endeavour
- Absolving her of shame and humiliation in Lowood: Temple takes into account earthly reality and need for recognition)

B. Jane Eyre

- Need for a simple and sincere faith, a consistent willingness to pray and search for direction - individual reason and conscience are seen as unreliable guides

- Jane's clouded conscience and reason when she grows to idolize Roch, and subsequently when she is racked by grief and unable to discern her path having left Roch
- Entreating divine providence for direction and guidance in moments of despair

- Jane's ability to steadfastly refuse to act in defiance of her religious principles

- Jane's certainty on the supremacy of God's will and sensitive apprehension of how to fulfill it (through seeking divine guidance) eventually save her

- Later revealed through reader's clearer perception that what Roch and SJR claim to be God's authority is nothing more than their human desires:

- Roch: Dismissal of moral conventions as unsuitable, marriage
- SJR: Exhorting Jane to heed his version of God's will

> Jane's rejection of both men who insist that they can interpret God's will > resolves to only act according to what she knows as true > is eventually rewarded when she is directed to a correct choice each time

- Ultimately Jane's keen sensitivity to God's guidance in times of need, a clear-eyed instinct for justice and an absolute reliance on the wisdom and word of God

Jane's Spirituality

Jane's development of her own religion and spirituality the ideal: Elements of Jane's faith is compounded by religion and spirituality (i.e. moral principles she believes in)

Jane's progression throughout the novel

Gateshead - Lowood

- Jane's instinctive comprehension of earthly injustice, declaring herself to hate Mrs Reed forever

Return to Gateshead

- Viewing Mrs Reed with ruth and forgiveness: An indication of her spiritual growth and maturity
- While Jane undergoes human reactions when Mrs Reed shuns her, she is slowly freed from earthly conventions of vengeance and greed

- Vs. Mrs Reed: An expiation of forgiveness, though she could not let go of vengeance – a earthly, bitter, elemental, troubled deathbed

EDUCATION

1. Schools and institutions of education project the purpose of education as the cultivation and refinement of individuals' faculties and identities, though with differing emphases

- While at Lowood: A place reinforcing class structures and societal positions – bringing students up 'in a manner suiting [their] prospects', ridding them of 'the worldly sentiment of pride'

- Education is largely seen as the hope for progress and improvement:

- Morton school: Jane testifies to the power of education to develop 'wholly untaught' faculties into 'innate self-respect' and 'excellent capacity', admiring the 'rapidity' of her students' progress. Role of education to cultivate 'germs of excellence' and to 'elevate' [students] in their own eyes'

- Schooling Adele: Education correcting 'in a great measure her French defects', having made much improvement though 'she is not bright [and] has no talents'

2. Significantly for Jane, education has helped to:

A. Confer Jane with due acceptance and regard

- Education having honed Jane's tangible skills in terms of painting and playing the piano
- Jane's awareness of her acceptance and accreditation: Confirmed by Bessie
- Through her cultivated external accomplishments, earns the very acceptance she desires

- Especially in a society which takes its social cues and interactions from outward displays of education

B. Schooled her in managing extremities of her character

- Through exposing her to various sources of authority and influences

- Helen Burns: Cultivating in Jane a gentleness of spirit and forgiveness, learning to master her emotions and let go worldly judgment

- Impact on how she later treats Mrs Reed; later counsel's Roch in his bitterness and pride to trust not in fallible human reason but providence and God's will

- Ms Temple: 'Harmonious thoughts' and 'better regulated feelings', 'allegiance to duty and order', a conscious tempering of her wildly passionate nature with reason and constraint

C. Secure her independence

- Entering into governess-ing and her ability to fend for herself financially, gaining self-respect

- Ability to earn her own keep, no longer being at the mercy of others: Enhanced prospects

- Freedom from a lifetime of subjugation and class oppression (i.e. upward mobility)

3. Moreover, education is used as a signal of character

- A love for learning a good indicator of a character's willingness to improve oneself, and self-awareness – converse indicates indolence and a false sense of self-satisfaction

- Characters who visibly fail to benefit from any institution they attend (e.g. John Reed and his disdain for school a signal for his eventual path to ruin; Georgiana and her vanity/frivolity)

- Compare to accomplished women of the novel: Rivers sisters, Jane ('an eagerness [they] followed in the path of knowledge') and their humility + virtue

4. However, while education and refinement are valued, they are falsely measured in terms of external appearances and outward show – thereby distorting the notion of an educated individual

- Context of a society here individuals govern their own actions through social cues, and discern the educational attainment of characters through outward indications such as accents and aesthetic capabilities

- While this has allowed Jane to improve her standing in Thornfield, where her external accomplishments are a reflection of her internal refinement of character and true intellect

- But the same cannot be said for other accomplished women such as Blanche – seen as far more educated than Jane for her 'brilliant accomplishments', but possesses hollow character. 'Showy' and 'not original', never offering nor having 'an opinion of her own'

> Overall: Education central to Jane Eyre for Jane's own capacity for self-improvement and self-awareness seeing her develop throughout the novel

- In many ways, education is a refinement of both outward habits and inner sensitivities

- Pragmatically, also a form of social mobility. Yet, its benefits and significance distorted by a society that falsely credits external attainments to education level.

IDENTITY

- Broad contexts: Social, religious, gendered

**Questions need not focus solely on identity; usually have links to other key themes/characters*

1. In a clearly stratified society, an individual's external identity is based upon a hierarchical understanding of society, hence the importance of thinking + behaving in conformity with these implicit social rules

- Jane herself consistently invokes her own understanding of her 'position and prospects' when deciding her desired behaviour. In each case her 'position and prospects' are clear:

- To Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst: Honing the key elements of Jane's 'dependent' character:

- Gateshead: A dependent, less than a servant; a deceitful, disagreeable, unchildlike child > need to be humble and agreeable towards that Reeds

- Lowood: A wicked girl, condemned to hell; an orphan
- Being kept humble, and not being educated/equipped beyond her own station

- Thornfield: An incubus, insignificant governess
- Where Jane tells herself it does no good to be flattered by Roch, her superior/master, due to the very real barriers of class that exist between them

> In many of these cases, unfairness and inaccuracy of these expectations set against a society predominantly concerned with outward show shows how external actions and behaviours are inadequate markers of identity

- Often, characters themselves fail to see why these expectations are unfair and limiting

> Consider also: Religion as an inseparable part of an individual's identity?

2. Yet in spite of the pervasiveness of socially sanctioned roles and rules, Jane rejects the inaccuracy of identities placed on her, and will not sacrifice her own principles for their sake

- Jane negotiates assumptions + expectations placed upon her in different situations, by characters she encounters

- Thornfield: Rochester's savior and angel; his social equal (a 'peer's daughter'); his mistress

> Jane's principled rejection of his original proposal – troubled reaction to his early revelations + spiritual beliefs that are incompatible with her own (wrt reformation and sinning)

> Refusing to acknowledge herself as anything but Roch's 'plain, quakerish governess'

- Moor House: 'Docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant, and courageous; very gentle, and very heroic'; a missionary and SJR's self-declared helpmeet (c.f. language of certainty)

> Jane's belief in earthly happiness, love and kinship

- Jane's love for Roch is based off her own identification with it, rather than the labels conferred on her: Will not sacrifice her own ideals and principles

3. When it comes to matters of personal worth, ultimately Jane's identity is based on personal and divine, rather than externally imposed standards

- Jane advocates the need to look beyond socially sanctioned labels. Assertions of self-worth:

- Gateshead: Against Reed children, and Mrs Reed
- Thornfield: Against Blanche Ingram ('she could not please him')

- Eventual union with Roch: Equality before God – rejecting 'custom, conventionalities, mortal flesh'

PASSION VS REASON

- Manifest most clearly in terms of Jane's struggle for peace and happiness

Location	Key Experiences
Gateshead	Extremes of passions, justice and love
Lowood	(Student years) Soothing her need for justice, quieting her passionate heart, offering her needed affection (Later years) Extremes of duty, rigidity of decorum – the 'Lowood constraint' of demeanour/behaviour, Jane being schooled to be dutiful and decorous despite her passions and wild emotions
Thornfield	(Love for Roch) Passion asserts its right to 'live, to rise, to reign, and at last, to speak' (Lead-up to marriage) Moral blindness and human judgment, divine will obscured by idolization of Roch
Moor House	(From Whitcross to Moor House) Spiritual guidance and intervention (SJR's proposal) A life governed by the abstract call of religious + moral duty, at the expense of all earthly happiness and fulfillment
Ferndean	Living entirely for and with what she loves best, earthly union (the epitome of earthly joy/fulfillment) with a divine sanction

- Embodied through parallels between Jane and Bertha:
- Alternative considerations beyond passion-reason: Passion vs morality/duty, justice vs compassion

FEMALES (AND FEMINISM)

- Central idea of JE: Arguing for equality of women with men in feelings, faculties and effort – minds and spirits are equal, irrespective of custom, conventionalities and mortal flesh

1. Bronte sets up conventional Victorian femininities, only to expose them for the empty and dangerous standards that they hold women to

A. Physical beauty

- Emptiness of Georgiana's frivolity and vanity + Blanche's character; Adele/Rosamond

B. Demure; lack of ambition

- Jane at Lowood: Later exposed by Roch as a 'Lowood constraint'

C. Passive, pious, dutiful virtue

- Brocklehurst's ideal in Lowood + SJR's prescriptive rules
- Hypocritical nature of B's standards; inaccuracy of SJR's judgment of Jane's character

D. Decorous and conspicuous accomplishments

- Blanche Ingram and the party at Thornfield

E. As a lover

- Madness of Roch's love; coldness of SJR's – both trying to exhort Jane into following their human desires, threatening to detract Jane from her unwavering adherence to spiritual precepts

- Emptiness and injustice of a society who prize women like Blanche Ingram as the epitome of femininity; Jane's clear-sighted perception of her flaws

2a. Attention drawn to Jane's 'unwomanly' nature as she struggles to cope with this pervasive reality

- Flying at John Reed in an image of sheer passion
- Value of physical appearances cannot be ignored, and Jane herself longs for beauty

- Jane's desire for personal autonomy, independence and being self-supporting
- Rejection of SJR's prescriptive rules + hand in marriage
- Blanche Ingram and the party at Thornfield; mirror incident

2b. Jane the heroine fails to answer any social expectations or assumptions, but remains moral, womanly, is loving and deserving of love

- Good physical appearances eventually shown not to need it to merit Roch's love
- Jane is prized for her unconventional morality founded upon a combination of divine principle and earthly notions of justice: Making the moral choice at every turn
- Jane's capacity to love; humility; c.f. other good traits about her (sensitivity, industry, etc.)
- Bronte acknowledges this by rewarding Jane at the very end: In a happy union with Roch and societal conventions no longer weigh her down (they are deemed compatible, and she is self-sufficient)
- > Criticisms of the popular notions of female servitude and passivity as Jane rebels against societal conventions of acceptable, feminine behaviour

3. On a broader level, JE serves as a critical commentary on the injustices and prejudices against marginalized women

As a dependent:

- Jane's worthlessness and vulnerability to structures and events beyond her control
- Gateshead: Imprisonment and oppression; Lowood: Starvation

As a governess:

- The Victorian governess as a twice-marginalised figure, for both her gender and class
- Jane and Rivers sisters portray governesses as indivs of impeccable antecedents, manners + education of a gentlewoman but is never considered their equal
- All 3 with refined tastes + capacity for self-improvement which place them above the Ingrams
 - Spirit of independence compare favourably to other more privileged women in novel
 - For accomplished women such as Blanche – seen as far more educated than Jane for her 'brilliant accomplishments', but possesses hollow character. 'Showy' and 'not original', never offering nor having 'an opinion of her own'
- Shedding light on the inherent prejudices against the 'anathematised race'

As a beggar woman:

> *Need for women to negotiate demands of a lover with strict societal expectations*

4. In light of all these, JE is in many ways about Jane's pilgrimage towards selfhood

- As she is slowly freed from her positions of dependence and burdens of her past, Jane awakens to herself and her desired means of living – by her own uncompromising principles, guided by God
- Rebellion against certain confines of society; rejects empty the standards she does not live up to but is assured of her self-worth

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

- Questions asking for the effect of any literary techniques, reference against:
- Use + effect in novel, wrt ways in which it illuminates key considerations/central concerns
- Using at least 3 different and distinct examples

Location	Key Characteristics	Images	Symbols
Gateshead	Oppression and subjugation	Claustrophobia in breakfast room; Red Room	
Lowood	Bodily privations		
Thornfield		Gothic; secluded	Fire (and Jane's relative position to it)
Moor House			
Ferndean		Deep within the forest	

Character	Key Characteristics	Images	Symbols
Brocklehurst		Black pillar	
SJR		Rock/marble	
Ms Temple		Light	
Jane		Mirror	

KEY THREADS: SIGHT AND SEEING

- JE making clear that physical appearance/superficial observation an unreliable basis for judgment:

1. Images and descriptions anchored against external benchmarks E.g. Beauty/demeanour/outward appearances

- Basis for social cues

- At the same time, the failure of these images as measure of accurate worth is exposed. As one of the most clear-sighted indivs in novel, Jane is never deceived by superficial indicators of worth

- Moreover, we are repeatedly reminded of contrast between Jane's plain, quiet appearances and ardent inner life – reminded not to adopt limited vision of other self-absorbed characters that dismiss Jane's worth based on her external appearances (e.g. Blanche's lack of sensitivity)

2. Notion of reflection and self-examination as Jane progresses through different social circumstances: Jane constantly looking at images of her own reflection, which provide an idea of her self-perceptions

- Jane's awareness of how she is being seen fro the outside – wrt how this influences her behaviour and dress. Constantly being evaluated by others and assessed based on her self worth (e.g. Roch, Bessie) - Jane's desire to be worthy and to be looked upon with approval

- In her lowest moments of self-questioning, doubt and uncertainty: Does not recognize her reflection

KEY THREADS: WINDOWS AND CURTAINS

1. Windows as images of longing

- Jane's restlessness in Gateshead and Lowood:

- Desire for excitement, peering outside into the howling wind (c.f. romantic sublime) – to go beyond what she knew and saw of her existence
- Calls for liberty and unlimited vision; seeing the Thornfield party from the outside, awaiting Roch's arrival, etc.

2. Curtains as images of concealment

- How Jane positions herself;
- Escape from the realities of Gateshead
- Discomfort in social situations; marginalization and negotiating between distinct social spheres

Image/Symbol (Significance)	As seen in
Otherworldly, supernatural, mythological	- [Thornfield] Bluebeard's castle, Garden of Eden
- Use of the Gothic elements (with human explanations) to incite horror and fear, bringing it into the confines of domesticity. A psychological examination of common cultural anxieties which, like the Gothic, incite very real feelings of fear	- [Roch] Gytrash
	- [Bertha] 'ghost of Thornfield', vampire, scream
	- [Jane] Elf, angel, spirit, voices, good fairies
- In characterization: Roch as a mystical, otherworldly force introduced into Jane's life; Jane's moments of dissociation	
- Manifestations of divine and spiritual guidance	
Warmth and lack thereof:	
- Cold, fire, ice	
Journeys and voyages; travellers and wanderers	
Animals and creatures	
- Carnal and bestial; nature and freedom	
Crag and rock, gem and stone	
Natural landscapes	As a conduit for divine intervention and clarity
Jane's dreams/pictures	

SETTING

- Weather/seasonal changes; natural landscape (vocabulary of description); features which:
 - Contribute to Jane's devt
 - Highlight key themes
 - Foreshadow developments of story
 - Mirror key traits of characters

5-HOUSE STRUCTURE

Location	Significance
Gateshead <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fireplace- Red Room <u>Key characteristics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Manor houseJane never gets toA perpetual winter	<u>As a child</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Jane's isolation and bleak existenceIndoors: An oppressive finery of which Jane has no part; Outdoors: Bleakness, bitterness and coldRed Room: Claustrophobic injustice of childhood <u>As an adult</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Return to familiar setting; different responses to it emphasise extent of devt and maturity (self-mastery)- Returns to instances of former oppression and injustice, Jane finds she is no longer susceptible of the same dread/ resentment she had as a child
Lowood <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ms Temple's room- Dormitory- Long hall <u>Key characteristics</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Winter to spring	<u>Initial impressions</u> : Uncertainty. Institutional life which Jane finds suffocating + drearily uniform Oppressiveness and confinement Image of starvation and deprivation to Jane's new beginning and fresh start Later on: Transformation of physical landscape mirrors Jane's changing

Dominant impression of bodily privation	<p>responses to Lowood – changing condition and personal growth (being restored in eyes of teachers and peers – Lowood no longer a place of privation but where human endeavours will take fruit)</p> <p>As a teacher: Jane's changing perception – horizons which previously bounded her pleasures, dismissed in light of her hunger to move beyond and her restlessness</p>
<p>Thornfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Library - Drawing room - 3rd floor - Garden - Kitchen <p><u>Key characteristics</u></p> <p>Manor house</p> <p>Gothic and isolated</p> <p>Furnishings and stately interior</p> <p>Transition from autumn > winter > summer > midsummer</p> <p>Chestnut tree</p> <p>Subsequent lightning</p>	<p><u>Initial impression</u>: Domesticity (candles; Fairfax)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isolation initially a source of serenity; indoor grandeur mixed with natural elements <p>> <i>Foreshadows Jane's new surroundings and unknown employer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jane's delight in furnishings/ stately interior indicate her aesthetic sensibilities are encouraged + indulged – foreshadowing compatibility with Roch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3rd floor: Attic with 'ghost of Thornfield' – suggestion of dark pasts, Bluebeard's secrets suggesting secrets > all of which indicate mystery and danger. Also: Old furniture relegated upstairs – makes it a symbol of the past <p><u>Subsequently</u>: Roch's isolation from all social convention and notions of acceptability, wayward and severed from society > danger of leading Jane astray</p> <p><u>Seasons</u></p> <p>Capacity for change and progress, in line with the natural cycle of seasons</p> <p>Stillness and suspension before Roch's arrival (autumn) > Summer symbolic of Jane's r/s with Roch bearing fruit when she returns from Gateshead > Proposal in the middle of summer > Lightning storm right after proposal</p>
<p>Moor House</p> <p>Cold and snow</p> <p>Natural landscape</p> <p>Jane's role in furnishing its interior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jane is both frustrated and fulfilled - Natural landscape feeds the clarity with which she obtains divine inspiration and hope - Jane's love for natural beauty mirrors sisters' deep love for landscape of their home - Reveals Jane's delight in domestic joys and fulfillments coming with first realization of family, kinship and home <p><u>SJR's proposal</u>: Moving past soft beauty of landscape (standing for all that is earthly beauty and domestic joys) to a battalion of rocks – hard, unfeeling, devoid of any sentimentality and love</p>
Ferndean	<p>Isolated; no possibility of human habitation</p> <p>Jane leading Roch out from the wet and wild wood into cheerful fields</p>

COUNTRIES AND NATIONALITIES

Europe and France – places of luxury and sin (Rochester's Celine days)

West Indies – Reminder of Roch's younger ventures, and a dark past he wishes to conceal

India – A place of no earthly joy or happiness; of constant toil and suffering

England -

Near East – brigands and corsairs, sultans and harems

SPECIFICALLY: THE GOTHIC

- Influence in terms of: Atmosphere and setting/plot device:
- Used as a thematic underscoring of central concerns

1. Gothic elements inciting horror and fear, guide readers towards adequate responses to common cultural anxieties

- Red Room: Emphasis of child Jane's solitude, vulnerability, mortal danger, though it is dismissed as an adult
- 3rd floor and attic: Indicating mystery and danger, possibility of revelation of something
- [...] See below and extrapolate

2. Gothic elements as a forewarning for deeper physical and psychological threats

- Veiled warning of transgression and danger. In chronological order:

1st instance of Grace's laugh	Following Jane's musings about her inability to live life of a domesticated woman and her desire for something dangerous and exhilarating > asking if there were any ghosts/secrets - 1 st experience of 3 rd floor: Jane points to suitability of surroundings for ultimate, awful revelation
Fire in Roch's room	Following Jane's meditation on Roch's destiny, allowing herself to fall in love Followed by Jane's discovery that her love for Roch is foolish and forbidden
Recurrence of Grace's laugh	(After the fire) When Jane longs to see Roch again - Again before arrival of house party, during preparation
Gypsy fortune teller (Roch)	Hints and half-truths surrounding his person + history Mystery and bewilderment surrounding initial r/s with Roch
Cry in the night; Mason and his wounds	- Wrt oppressive surroundings, ghoulish sponging of rMason's wound, nature of his injury hint at the bestial, monstrous and demonic appearance of Bertha
Jane's mysterious presentiments + prophetic dreams: Dreaming of a baby	Precedes news of John Reed's disaster, Mrs Reed's death
Dreaming of a baby, with Thornfield in ruins and Roch's departure	Prior to wedding w Roch: Foreshadowing disaster
Vampire image	Buildup to final confrontation with Bertha

3. Ultimately, Bronte draws a distinct line between what is spiritual and supernatural – the latter is always sidelined through logical human actions that explain allegedly supernatural occurrences