



Jane Eyre

Charlotte Brontë , Kathy Mitchell (Illustrator) , Joyce Carol Oates (Introduction)

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Charlotte Brontë's impassioned novel is the love story of **Jane Eyre**, a plain yet spirited governess, and her employer, the arrogant, brooding Mr. Rochester. Published in 1847 under the pseudonym Currer Bell, the book heralded a new kind of heroine—one whose virtuous integrity, keen intellect, and tireless perseverance broke through class barriers to win equal stature with the man she loved. Hailed by William Makepeace Thackeray as “the masterwork of a great genius,” **Jane Eyre** is still regarded, over a century later, as one of the finest novels in English literature.

Jane Eyre Details

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Author : Charlotte Brontë , Kathy Mitchell (Illustrator) , Joyce Carol Oates (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Jane Eyre for online ebook

Grace Tjan says

Now I know why Charlotte Bronte said this of Jane Austen: "The passions are perfectly unknown to her: she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood". I love Jane, but Charlotte REALLY knows how to write about passion, romantic or otherwise. If Jane's books are stately minuets in which the smallest gesture has its meaning, Charlotte's is a spirited, sweeping tango of duty and desire. A perfect blend of passionate romance, gothic mystery, romantic description of nature, social commentary and humor, all rendered in vivid, gorgeous prose. One cannot help to admire Jane Eyre, the little governess who could. She rises above her harsh upbringing to become a governess, poor but ever fiercely independent. Even the promise of love and comfort with the man that she worships is not enough to sway her from the path of integrity. One cannot help to admire Charlotte, who makes her intensely human; a woman of virtue, yet one who is not above jealousy and doubts, and who constantly struggles with the personal cost of her decisions. A deeply felt, and ultimately moving story of love and redemption that will linger long after the last page is turned.

Hailey (HaileyinBookland) says

Loooooooooove!!!

April (Aprilius Maximus) says

2018 - I highly recommend the audiobook narrated by Thandie Newton! It's beautiful!

2016 - I think this may be my favourite book of all time.

Video Review -> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2E8ys...>

Around the Year in 52 Books Challenge Notes:

- 11. A book from the Rory Gilmore Challenge

Jeffrey Keeten says

“Jane, be still; don't struggle so like a wild, frantic bird, that is rending its own plumage in its desperation.”

‘I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being, with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you.’”

I am glad that in 1847 Charlotte Bronte made the decision to publish her novel under a male pseudonym. Currer Bell had a much better chance of being published than Charlotte Bronte and, with reviewers and readers assuming that she was in fact a male writer, allowed the novel a chance to be weighed properly without prejudice. *Jane Eyre* became a bestseller. The question is, of course, would the novel have been so successful or even published at all if **CHARLOTTE BRONTE** had been emblazoned on the cover? I like to think that some editor would have realized the bloody brilliance of the story and would have published it anyway, even if they didn't spend any money on promoting it. Would readers have bought it? Hopefully, word would have trickled out about how compelling the plot was, and people would have overcome their natural prejudice for reading a novel by a woman.

So isn't it fun that Charlotte tricked everyone, including her own father? She did not confess her efforts to him until she had become successful. Even writing these words, I have a smile on my face thinking of this successful bamboozlement of publishers, editors, and readers.

The story, of course, is larger than the book. Most people with any kind of inquisitive nature have been exposed to the bare bones of this novel without ever reading the book. Maybe they watched a movie based on the book, or maybe they have heard it referenced. Once read, it is impossible for people not to use aspects of this novel as common reference points for other readers.

Take Mr. Edward Fairfax Rochester himself, the master of Thornfield Hall. He is a brooding, complicated, dark, and intelligent creature. He is a force of nature who conforms the world around him with every stride he takes or every word that drops from his lips. He is the embodiment of the Lord Byron character. It doesn't matter that he is not handsome. He is powerful. Women swoon in his presence and, after a carefully administered smelling salt, might start calculating what he is worth a year.

Rochester is completely taken by Jane Eyre, practically from the moment they meet. The drama of their meeting is one of those great cinematic scenes in the history of literature. Bronte incorporates many scenes into the novel that are, frankly, gifts to future movie renditions. Rochester has never met anyone quite like her. He is not alone. Everyone who comes into contact with Jane Eyre knows they have met a unique person. She is a kind and pleasant person, but she will not brook any discriminations against her character.

Mrs. Reed (her aunt), Mr. Brocklehurst (director of Lowood School attended by Jane), Mr. St John Eyre Rivers (minister who asks to marry her), and even Mr. Rochester, all attempt to conform Jane to the acceptable, deferring Victorian woman of the time. To call this a feminist novel does put it in a box which constrains it too tightly. Jane or Charlotte, either one, would loosen those bindings and let it breath as Charlotte's intentions with this novel go well beyond the confines of any specific genre. I found her ideas of female equality, embodied so wonderfully in the character of Jane, inspiring. *"Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their effort, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer, 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 on the piano and embroidering bags. 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."*

I hear you, Charlotte.

Can you imagine the impact of such words on your typical, Victorian housewife? A woman who has lived her whole life being the daughter of her father, the wife of her husband, the mother of her sons. She has been passed from the care of one man after another. If she were fortunate enough to be born pretty, she has that

brief moment of power when suiters contend for her hand, but probably, ultimately, her father would decide who was best for her to marry. How about the impact of reading this novel on the typical, Victorian man? Did he look up from this book and peer over at his wife, she looking rosy in the firelight, knitting away at some frivolous thing, and think...does she want more? Or maybe he sees his pretty daughter enter the room on the verge of womanhood, and does he consider the possibility that she wants or deserves more?

There is no spark of revolution inspired by this book, but I do hope that this book may have chipped away at some of the archaic ideas of inequality. Maybe a few women readers realized that some of those secret desires they have harbored their whole life were not such strange concepts. When Jane stands up to the conformists she encounters, she is willing to take the punishment because she knows in her soul that what she believes about herself is incontestable.

This is no better illustrated than in her interactions with (I'm sorry to say this because it isn't completely fair) the odious St. John Eyre Rivers. He wants to marry her but only for the sake that he believes she will make a wonderful, useful, missionary wife. He doesn't love her. She is willing to go, but only as a "sister," not as a wife. Jane refuses to compromise, but there is this moment where she is teetering in the balance. I'm mentally screaming to her at this point. **"I shuddered as he spoke: I felt his influence in my marrow--his hold on my limbs."** He is a cold man who would have gladly marched **OUR** Jane off to some godforsaken part of the world to die some horrible death from disease or from simple neglect.

I know the plot; and yet, I'm still completely invested in every scene. There is always the possibility that I've fallen into an alternative universe and I am reading some other version of *Jane Eyre* with a completely different ending. I can assure everyone this did not happen.

When Jane is residing with Mrs. Read, she describes her place to sleep as a "small closet." I can't help but think of the closet under the stairs at 4 Privet Drive. Like Harry Potter, she is also an orphan but still with a rebellious streak because she is also sure that she is supposed to be someone other than who she is currently perceived to be. The relief she experiences when she learns she is getting away from the condescending attitude of the Read house and going away to school at Lowood also reminds me of Harry's relief to discover he, too, is escaping to Hogwarts. Though I must say Harry, despite the trials and tribulations he experiences, draws a better straw than Miss Jane.

I really enjoyed the gothic elements; those were, to a degree, completely unexpected. **""Oh sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face--it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!"**

'Ghost are usually pale, Jane.'

'This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?'

'You may.'

'Of the foul German spectre--the Vampyre.'"

There are noises in the night at Thornfield Hall. There is an unknown tenant locked away in the rafters of the house. There are secrets. There are unexpected fires. There are scandals waiting to be known. In fact, the twists of the plot were considered so outrageous for the time that the book acquired a reputation for being **"improper."** This helped to boost sales further.

The Bronte family was very close. They grew up conceiving their own stories and fantasies and acting them out in impromptu plays. All three girls and the brother, Branwell, were writers. Tragically, they all died young. Charlotte outlived them all, dying in 1855 at the age of 38 with her unborn child. Branwell (31) and Emily (30) both passed away in 1848, and Anne died the following year at the age of 29. Can you imagine having to bury all your siblings? It must have felt like the spectre of death was stalking nothing but Brontes.

What makes Rochester unique is that he does eventually see Jane the way she sees herself. **"Fair as a lily, and not only the pride of his life, but the desire of his eyes."** I will remember that line *"desire of his eyes"* for a long time. She is a hidden gem in rooms full of people. Charlotte Bronte makes some good points through Jane's eyes at how unaware wealthy people are of the true natures of those who serve them.

I would talk about the love story, but what is there to say. It is one for the ages. I would say that Charlotte Bronte never found her Rochester in real life, but some letters have come to light, written to a man named Constantin Héger, that suggests that maybe she did. He was married to someone else, and when Elizabeth Gaskell wrote the biography of her friend, she carefully edited out those very revealing letters of a love that could never be.

Jane Eyre, may you always find the readers you deserve.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

[mad wife secretly hidden away in the attic! heroine starving in the wilderness! (hide spoiler)]

Bookdragon Sean says

Reader, I gave it five stars. Please let me tell you why.

Jane Eyre is the quintessential Victorian novel. It literally has everything that was typical of the period, but, unlike other novels, it has all the elements in one story. At the centre is the romance between Jane and Rochester, which is enhanced by gothic elements such as the uncanniness of the doppelganger and the spectre like qualities of Bertha. In addition, it is also a governess novel; these were an incredibly popular type of storytelling in the age and for it to be combined with gothic elements, which are interposed with a dualistic relationship between realism and romance, is really quite unique. The correct term for this is a hybrid, in which no genre voice is dominant; they exist alongside each other creating one rather special book.

And this is so, so, special; it's an excellent piece of literature. Jane's journey is gut wrenching and emotional. Through her life she experiences real sorrow, the kind that would make a lesser person give up. She also experiences real friendship, the type that comes across perhaps once in a lifetime. But, most significantly, she experiences true love and the development of independence to form her own ending. I really do love this book. Bronte utilises the first person narrative, which creates a high degree of intimacy with her character; it makes me feel like I know Jane as well as she comes to know her own self.

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."

Jane's a strong willed individual. From a very young age she had the clarity of intelligence to recognise the injustice that was her life; yes, she is narrating her story retrospectively, though she still had the perceptiveness to realise how mistreated she was. I love the pathetic fallacy Bronte uses at the beginning. The child Jane looks out the window, shielded by the curtain, and witnesses the horrible weather. It is cold and bleak; it is windy and morose; thus, we can immediately see the internal workings of Jane's mind. The weather reflects her feelings throughout the novel, and at the very beginning the situation was at its worse. This can also be seen with the fire imagery that represents her rage when she is shoved in the red room; it later mirrors that of Bertha's fury.

Everybody needs love, children especially so. These early experiences help to define her later character, and, ultimately influence how she sees the world; she still hides behind a curtain in Rochester's house when he flirts with Miss Ingram. These experiences set her on an almost perpetual quest for love, for belonging and for the independence to make her own decisions. She finds friendship in the form of Helen Burns; she gives her some sound advice, but Jane cannot fully accept such religious fatalism. However, it does inspire her, a little, to continue with life; she realises, no matter what happens, she will always have the love of her greatest friend. Jane clings to this idea, but, ultimately, has to seek a more permanent solution to her loneliness. She needs a vocation, one that will fulfil her and give her life meaning; thus, she becomes a governess and crosses paths with the downtrodden, miserable wretch that is Mr Rochester.

Sometimes I feel like Rochester didn't know quite what he wanted. When he sees Jane he sees a woman with strength, blunt honesty and integrity: he sees an emotional equal. This attracts her to him, which develops into love. However, when he tries to express his love he does it through trying to claim her as his own. Through doing so, not only does he show the nature of Victorian marriage, he shows his own deep vulnerability. He loves her mind, her intelligence, and he too wants to be loved. He longs for it with a frightening passion. So, instead of doing things the way Jane would have wanted him to do, he overwhelms her with expensive affection. By doing so he almost loses her. All Jane wanted was his heart, nothing more nothing less.

By showering her with such flattery and expensive items, he insults her independence. He risks destroying the thing that attracted him to her in the first place, their equality; their mutual respect and love. He takes away her dignity. I really don't think the original marriage would have worked. Ignore the existence of the mad woman in the attic; I just think Rochester would have spoiled it. It would have become too awkward. They needed to be on the same societal level as well as one of intellect and character. The ending is touching and a little sad, but it is the only one that could ever have worked for these two characters. Without the tragedy there could never have been rejuvenation and the chance for them to be together on equal terms, no matter what it cost to get there.

If that wasn't enough reason for me to love this book, there are also elements of fantasy and desire. This is a realism novel, it pertains to credible events, but the suggestions of fantasy only add to the strong romantic

notions. Rochester is enamoured by Jane; he cannot believe that a woman like her actually exists. All his misguided notions are brushed away in an instant. Whilst he views Jane as special, it is clear that he realises that other women may also have a similar rebellious voice, only hidden. He considers her an elf, a witch, an improbable woman that has captured his desire, his heart, his soul, his life. He knows he will never be the same again. From Jane's point of view, her first encounter with him is otherworldly. She had grown bored with her governess role, and when she sees the approach of Rochester and his dog Pilot, she sees the gytrash myth; she wants to see something fantastical instead she finds her heart, which is something much rarer.

Then there are also the feminist elements. Jane transgresses the boundary associated with her gender in the Victorian age. For a woman to be recognised as having equal intellect to that of a man was sadly a rare thing. Women could actually attend university, but the downside was they could never get the full degree. They could spend months studying, though never be recognised as actually having gained the qualification. It was just another attempt to keep women under the thumb, so for Brontë to portray the truth of Jane's equal intellect is a great step for the recognition of women, and women writers. This book received a whole host of negative reviews at the time of its publication for this element alone. Stupid really, but that's misogyny for you.

Reader, I love this book. I really could go on, but this is getting kind of long. I hope I've made it clear why I love this story so much. I shall be reading this again later this year to correspond with my exams, which I'm already looking forward to- the reading that is, not the exams. I don't think I will ever have read this story enough though.

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Ellen says

[The picture disappeared which made the comments rather irrelevant.:]

...Oh course, Rush Limbaugh is nuts.

In December 2007, on a radio show with an audience of 14.5 million, Limbaugh asked this question about the former first lady's presidential prospects, after an incredibly unflattering picture of her had surfaced: **"Will Americans want to watch a woman get older before their eyes on a daily basis?** I want you to understand that I'm talking about the evolution of American culture here, and not so much Mrs Clinton," Limbaugh told his audience. "It could be anybody, and it's really not very complicated. Americans are addicted to physical perfection, thanks to Hollywood and thanks to television" (news.com.au).

Interestingly and at the same time, we have John McCain, another presidential prospect, who was 71 years old [11 years older than Hillary Clinton:]. Somehow this is different. Society has agreed that women age, and men grow more distinguished. Ah, bullshit. McCain looked plenty old and acted like an irrational coot.

However, the more important point is how little we've changed. Women still must be beautiful. And, for the most part, beautiful women still populate contemporary fiction. Consider how brave it was, then, for Charlotte Brontë to insist on a "plain" heroine. Brontë emphasizes Eyre's plainness as if challenging the reader to reject her. The impact of presenting such a heroine may be gauged by a male critic (a 19th century

Limbaugh) in the *Westminster Review* (1858), who writes, "Possibly none of the frauds which are now so much the topic of common remark are so irritating, as that to which the purchaser of a novel is a victim on finding he has only to peruse a narrative of the conduct and sentiments of an ugly lady" (Showalter 123).

Despite ignoring the classic paradigm of either having a beautiful heroine or a heroine--ostensibly plain--who later "blooms," Brontë makes us forget that neither Jane nor Rochester are physically attractive. From the opening scene, Jane's personality dominates the horizon. Having endured the young master's abuse for some time, Jane strikes back and, as punishment for her passion, is banished to the red room. The room is chill, garish, and where Mr. Reed died. Jane's cries to be released are ignored, and she falls into unconsciousness.

Although Jane suffers no lasting harm, her thoughts before she is thrust into the room isolate well why her path will be harder than fate had dictated already:

I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child—though equally dependent and friendless—Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling; the servants would have been less prone to make me the scapegoat of the nursery.

While beauty and its attendant charms would have made Jane's life easier, it would have lessened her complexity as a character. Again and again, Jane cannot sit back and depend on the free pass beauty often accords, but must choose to give up or to fight her way through. Jane chooses to fight, and it is her passion, wit, and intelligence that make her an unforgettable heroine.

Steph Sinclair says

I often think of classics as "required reading," usually accompanied by a barely suppressed groan. Because, surely, they can't actually be any good. I'm not sure why I've always associated well-known and well-loved classics as such, but I suppose it must be the expectation to love it just as much as the world. It's silly, I know. A person can't be expected to love all books, classic status or not, but still, I wondered if I would enjoy it.

Jane Eyre is one of those novels that proves me completely wrong and I'm glad of it. It is not beloved simply due to its age or progressiveness or pretentious nature, but because at its heart it's a damn good book. Lyrical, emotional, and captivating, Brontë makes you beg and plead sweet, emotional reprieve. You hunger for it, but she holds on to it ever so slightly -- not to the point of frustration, but instead leaves a trail of bread crumbs to keep you from starving. And the best part is that you delight in every moment. Brontë made my emotions work for that happily ever after with the irresistible OTP: Jane and Mr. Rochester.

At the same time, while I thoroughly enjoyed the romantic aspect, I was also equally intrigued with Jane Eyre's life in general. While at times she lived under horrible circumstances, her resilience was nothing short of admirable. She never let her hardships define her as a person or let it compromise her morals even when she was at her lowest. In the end, her luck does turn around and she finds happiness, which at times I felt was way overdue.

Thandie Newton's narration was even better than I expected. Her voice brought the novel to life and at times, I could have sworn several different people narrated instead of just her. It was very apparent that she had a healthy amount of respect for the novel, and her reading, imparted the same into me. It felt like her voice said, "These words are amazing, this prose is magic, this story enchanting. I'm thrilled to be reading them to you. Let's bask in Brontë's brilliance together." Who could say no to that? I was very impressed and believe listening to this version was the best decision for me. I never was once bored because Newton demanded all my attention.

This is the first time that I've read Jane Eyre and I'm glad I did at this point in my life where I'm fully able to appreciate the various themes conveyed. That's not to say I wouldn't have understood certain things, but I'm sure there are lots of books where we come away thinking, "Wow, this was exactly what I needed right now." It's even more surprising and intriguing that it's a novel written over 100 years ago that appeals to me even now. Ah, the joys and magic of literature!

All the things that I love in a good book was here and more: masterful character development, interesting plot, and OMG, the witty dialogue. I could have read an entire book composed of Jane and Mr. Rochester's banter alone!

This book brought me many happy sighs and I'm thrilled to have found a new all-time favorite in a classic tale. Definitely an oldie, but goodie for sure.

More reviews and other fantastical things at [Cuddlebuggery](#).

Nataliya says

[The guy kept his wife in the attic. Seriously - no. Just no. You don't ge

Cecily says

Child neglect, near death, a dash of magical realism, the power of love, the powerlessness of the poor, sexual rivalry, mystery, madness and more. It is as powerful as ever - but is it really a **love** story, given Rochester's Svengali-tendencies, or is it a **life** story? His downfall and her inheritance make them more equal, but is it really love on his part? I'm not sure, which is what makes it such a good book (just not necessarily a love story). I also like the tension between it being very Victorian in some obvious ways, and yet controversially modern in others: an immoral hero, a fiercely independent and assertive heroine, and some very unpleasant Christians (it's not that I think Christians are bad or like seeing them portrayed in a nasty way - it's Brontë's courage in writing such characters I admire).

CHILDHOOD

About the first quarter of the book concerns the tremendous hardship and abuse that Jane suffers growing up. It's often heavily cut from film, TV and stage adaptations, but despite the fluff about this being a great love story, I think there is merit in paying attention to her formative years as an essential element of explaining what makes Jane the person she becomes.

The Red Room, where young Jane is banished shortly before being sent to Lowood, is a very short episode in the book, but its significance is probably greater than its brevity implies. The trauma of the Red Room is not just because Mr Reed died there, but because of the associations of red = blood = death, compounded by cold, silence, blinds that are always closed and a bed like a sacrificial altar. Is it also some sort of reference to Bertha's attic?

Jane endures dreadful hardships: she is orphaned; her aunt says she is "less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep" and invokes the wrath of God who "might strike her dead in the midst of one of her tantrums"; she endures injustice as she strives to be good, but is always condemned, while the faults of her cousins are indulged or ignored. So, she is sent to Lowood, where she sees the hypocritical tyranny of Brocklehurst, survives cold and near starvation and witnesses her best friend's death. Nevertheless, "I would not have exchanged Lowood with all its privations for Gateshead and its daily luxuries." There is a dreadful irony in the fact that the first time a relative demonstrates any interest in her (John Eyre), it seems to ruin everything.

VILLAINS AND CHRISTIANITY

Who is the worst villain: John Reed, Aunt Reed, Mr Brocklehurst, Blanche Ingram, St John Rivers or even Rochester?

Christianity gets a very mixed press in the book: Mr Brocklehurst is cruel and comically hypocritical (curly hair is evil vanity in poor girls, who "must not conform to nature", but fine for his pampered daughters); St John Rivers thinks his devoutness selfless, but is actually cold and selfish (his motive being to gain glory in Heaven for himself); Helen Burns is a redemptive Christ figure who accepts her punishments as deserved, helps Jane tame herself ("Helen had calmed me") and, of course, dies.

Jane's own beliefs (or lack) are always somewhat vague (though she's very moral) and controversially feisty. When, as a small girl, the nasty Brocklehurst asks her what she should do to avoid going to Hell, she replies, "I must keep in good health, and not die"!

Aspects the way Christianity is portrayed may make it more accessible to modern readers from more secular backgrounds, but might have been shocking to devout Victorians. Perhaps they were placated by the fact that despite the cruelty, Jane forgives Aunt Reed for trying to improve her errant niece, even though "it was in her nature to wound me cruelly".

MALE POWER, FEMINISM, AND RELEVANCE TODAY

Men had most of the power and respect in Bronte's time and often Jane has to go along with that. However, Bronte does subvert that to some extent by making Jane so assertive, determined and independent.

The story of Jane Eyre has parallels with the story of Bluebeard, albeit with a very different ending, in which the woman takes charge of her own destiny. Bluebeard was well-known in Victorian fables as a rich and swarthy man who locked discarded wives in an attic (though he killed them first). He took a new young wife and when she discovered her predecessors, he was about to kill her, but she was rescued by her brothers, rather as Mason wants to rescue Bertha. Jane even likens an attic corridor to one in "some Bluebeard's castle", so Bronte clearly knew the story and assumed her readers did too. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluebeard...>

Despite her minimal contact with men, right from the outset Jane instinctively knows how to respond to the man she describes as "changeable and abrupt". When they first meet in the house and he is quizzing her, she

consciously mirrors his tone ("I, speaking as seriously as he had done") and "His changes of mood did not offend me because I saw I had nothing to do with their alteration". Like many bullies, he enjoys a bit of a fight, rather than the nervous, prompt and unquestioning obedience his manner normally elicits, and Jane isn't afraid to answer him back and speak her mind. It isn't long before she can say "I knew the pleasure of vexing him and soothing him by turns". When Blanche arrives, Jane realises "he had not given her his love" and that "she could not charm him" (as she could). At this point, she realises her self-delusions in overlooking his faults and merely considering them as "keen condiments".

What should modern women make of this book? Bronte is radical in that neither Jane nor Rochester is conventionally attractive (it is personality that matters) and Jane is fiercely independent and assertive, even when she gives the impression of being submissive. She even says, "Women are supposed to feel very calm, generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint... precisely as men would suffer." On the other hand, Rochester's treatment of Jane, Bertha, Blanche and Céline is hard to justify (other than the fact he keeps Bertha alive - why not kill her?). Does disappointment and disability truly changed him, and does that, coupled with her independent wealth make them equals? Will they live happily ever after?

ROCHESTER

What were Rochester's plans and motives for his relationship with Jane? Why does he insist that Jane appears in the drawing room every evening while Blanche and friends are staying, even though he fully understands and comments on how depressed it makes Jane? And would Rochester have married Blanche if Mason hadn't turned up, making a big society wedding impossible? If so, was Jane always in his mind as a mistress and backup in case marriage to Blanche was not possible, or did he only decide to marry her much later? What sort of basis for a happy marriage is that, and can the equalising effect of his later disability and her inheritance really conquer it? It's true that Rochester tells Jane "I feigned courtship of Miss Ingram, because I wished to render you as madly in love with me as I was with you", but that is after Mason's visit, so is it true?

Rochester's treatment of Bertha is even more problematic: divorce wasn't viable, and yet he didn't want to leave her behind in the Caribbean... very odd. In a funny sort of way, he might have felt he was doing the right thing by her, or at least, not the wrong thing.

In a society which condemns divorce and cohabitation, is Rochester's planned bigamy justifiable? As Rochester hints to Jane early on, "Unheard-of combinations of circumstances demand unheard-of rules". He also knows that Jane's integrity means she must be unaware of the details if he is to be with her (he says that if he asked her to do something bad, she would say "no sir... I cannot do it, because it is wrong"), though in fact there is a bigger tussle between her head and heart than he might have expected. Later, he ponders the fact that she is alone in the world as being some sort of justification, "It will atone" and extends to the more blasphemous and deluded "I know my Maker sanctions what I do. For the world's judgement - I wash my hands thereof."

ST JOHN

Jane's bond with St John is very different, and she realises it, "I daily wished more to please him; but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature". His proposal is positively alarming, "You are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must - shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you - not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service"! Under the guise of serving God and man, he is irredeemably self-serving.

MAGIC REALISM?

The strangest element is the small but hugely significant ethereal message from Rochester that might now be called magical realism. It sits oddly with the rest of the book, but I can never decide whether this is it a strength or a weakness.

WHO KNOWS WHAT?

A constant theme is "who knows what?". Is Aunt Reed ignorant of how awful Lowood is and has she truly convinced herself that her treatment of Jane is appropriate? How much does Mrs Fairfax know (and tell) about Rochester's wives, current and intended? Does Rochester know whether or not Adele is really his daughter, and what does Jane believe? Blanche appears to know very little, but is she only seeing what she wants to see?

LOVE?

Overall, there is so much in this book, it is well worth rereading, but I am not convinced that it is a love story. It is the easiest label to apply, and although Jane certainly finds love, I am not sure that love finds her. They're intellectually well-matched, and the sparring and physical attraction bode well. On the other hand, my doubts about his motivations when he was juggling Blanche and Jane make me uneasy.

Incidentally, I first read this book at school (a naive mid-teen enjoys and appreciates it for very different reasons than an adult). One day, we were at a point when Jane was with the Rivers and possibly being courted by St John. We were told to read to page x for homework, so I turned to that page to mark it and saw the famous words (not that I knew they were), "Reader, I married him" and was shocked to assume it referred to St John.

Jane's Place in My Life

There are many reasons I love this book, including - but not limited to:

1. The cliché of first reading this at an impressionable age (15).
2. Coming with no preconceptions, other than knowing it was a classic - so I had a couple of big surprises in the plot.
3. Being at a boarding school myself at the time - though fortunately not (much) like Lowood.
4. Questioning my faith and the role of religion - then and since.
5. Questioning the roles and rights of women - then and since.
6. Jane, herself. That's a major one.
7. The fact the book is daringly subversive for its time (most of the Christians are bad, and Jane is fiercely outspoken and independent - most of the time).
8. I get something new from it each time.

Like many, I first read this at school. I was captivated from the outset. Jane was wild, and brave, and rebellious - all things we weren't supposed to be, and yet we had to read and write about her. I vaguely knew about the wedding scene, but everything about her time with the Rivers was new and unexpected. For all that I had doubts about Rochester, I felt (in a naive, teenage way) I shared a passion for him. When I thought Jane would end up with St John, I was devastated. The actual ending was a happy relief - all the more so because it had been unexpected.

I thought I understood the book, and got good marks for essays about it (apart from the injustice of being deducted marks for a comment a teacher refused to believe I hadn't copied from Brodie's Notes - a brand I'd never actually seen!).

But like all great works of art, it speaks differently on each encounter, and the more I've read it, aided by a bit of maturity along the way, and now discussions with GR friends, the more I've seen in it.

So no, this not a love story - on the pages. But there **is** a love story: between the reader and Jane.

Prequel

I finally read Jean Rhys' prequel "**Wide Sargasso Sea**", reviewed here:

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

Ana says

I, Ana, take you, Mr. Rochester, to be my lawful wedded husband (I'm sure my boyfriend won't mind).
Back off fangirls, he is mine.

I needed something to make me stop thinking about Heathcliff and Catherine and their ~~horror~~ love story. So, naturally, I chose Jane Eyre. Yes, it's dark but nowhere nearly as scary as Wuthering Heights. It's actually quite romantic. Ok, he locked his wife in the attic. In those days people didn't get divorced. If you had a crazy spouse, you locked them in the attic. That's how it was done. Let's cut Mr. Rochester some slack.

"I knew," he continued, "you would do me good in some way, at some time: I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you; their expression and smile did not strike delight to my inmost heart so for nothing."

Melanie says

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."

Okay, so high school Melanie did not appreciate *Jane Eyre*! But thankfully, many years later, and because of a few friend's encouragement, I have seen the light and righted my wrongs, because this reread proved to me how much of a masterpiece *Jane Eyre* truly is.

This is a very beloved book, that stars an orphan girl name Jane that is trying to figure out the world around her. She's searching for worth, for love, and all the middle area in-between. When she is very young, she is forced to live with her not-so-nice aunt, who is absolutely terrible to her. But soon, her aunt sends her off to an all-girls boarding school, but Jane starts to learn who she is and who she wants to be, and after getting her education, she begins to teach at this school that she now considers her home.

But at nineteen, she decides that she would like to try to be a governess so that she can travel and see the world that she has learned so much about. Jane gets a job teaching a young girl at Thornfield Hall, but soon meets the master of Thornfield Hall, none other than Mr. Rochester himself.

Mr. Rochester is distant, and rude, and a bit grumpy, but the more and more time Jane and him spend together, the more and more they realize they have a lot in common. And they develop quite a strange and unconventional relationship, while many spooky and mysterious things are happening at Thornfield Hall.

This book is very protofeminist. Jane has so much rage and anger inside of her, because of the gender roles and expectations that are always set on her. On top of always being sent to places where she is forced to live and be molded into what is expected of her. Jane finally gets to live for herself at Thornfield Hall, and she does so unapologetically. Don't get me wrong, Jane stands up for herself constantly, and at every age, throughout this story, but seeing her come into her own, and never backing down from her beliefs on what is right, is something so very awe-inspiring.

“I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.”

And so many important themes are in this book! From classism, to marriage, to gender roles, to witchcraft, to slavery, to abuse, to power dynamics, and to so much more. And the things brought up in this book? That was first published in 1847? And I stan one feminist icon, and it's Charlotte Brontë. I can't even image what the world thought of this throughout the ages, because it spoke to my very soul in 2018. Seriously, I will forever be in awe of this book and this author, and I truly mean it when I say that she's a new icon for me.

“Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! May your eyes never shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears as poured from mine. May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless and so agised as in that hour left my lips: for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love.”

I ended up being a sucker for the romantic subplot in this book, too, even though I can see how many terrible, wrong, bad choices the love interest made. But Jane always puts herself first, and even though she wants to be loved more than anything, she will constantly fight for her own place in the world where she lives on her own terms for her own beliefs. Jane loves herself, and in turn it made me love Jane, and this masterpiece of a story.

Overall, I fell completely in love with this. This was so intelligently crafted and so expertly woven! And the dark feelings and vibes throughout really makes this such a unique and amazing reading experience. And I think this is a book that I will be able to read and reread over and over for the rest of my life. You also best believe that if I ever have children, this will be required reading once they get a bit older, because this book seriously has an immense amount of power. And I truly believe this is my favorite classic of all-time now. And I never want any woman to feel like a bird trapped in a cage.

Trigger and content warnings for bullying, abuse, abandonment, loss of a friend, and use of the slur g*psy.

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Matthew says

I read this book back in High School. I hated it. I thought it was boring and stupid and all I wanted to do was spread the word that this book was terrible and no one should read it. I had it marked one star on Goodreads and it had a home on my least favorite shelf.

Well, I have been waiting years to find the perfect place to use this gif:

I reread in late August, early September 2017. I have to say that I should probably reread everything I read back in High School to get a better perspective.

I enjoyed the book quite a bit this time. The story is intricate and dark. Jane Eyre is a tragic hero who does her best through the whole book but keeps encountering unfortunate situation after unfortunate situation. The story held my interest a lot more than some other classic novels I have read.

My only complaint was a few times certain plot points were belabored. I found myself saying, "Okay, I get it, let's move on."

So, everyone, if you remember a book from your youth with less than enthusiastic fondness, it might be worth giving it another shot. You never know what you might find!

Cristin says

I could bang Mr. Rochester like a screen door 'till next Tuesday. That's not all I got from this book, honestly...

Vinaya says

FIVE REASONS WHY JANE EYRE WOULD NEVER BE A BESTSELLER IN OUR TIMES:

5. Four hundred-odd pages of purely descriptive writing
4. Overt religious themes and moral preaching
3. A plain-Jane heroine who stays plain. No makeovers to reveal a hitherto hidden prettiness that only needed an application of hydrogen peroxide and some eyebrow plucking to emerge full-blown.
2. The world is not well-lost for love. In the war between self-respect and grand passion, principles win hands down. Rousing, yet tender speeches do not make our heroine forsake her creed to fall swooning and submissive into her alpha's arms.
1. NO SEX!!!

When I was a little girl, I had a doll named Saloni. Now Saloni wasn't a particularly attractive specimen as dolls go, especially since, over the years, I had drilled a hole in her little rosebud mouth in order to 'feed' her,

I had 'brushed' her hair till all the poor synthetic threads had fallen out and I had dragged her around with me so much, one of her big blue eyes had fallen off. But in my eyes, Saloni was the best doll ever created. She was my comfort, my mainstay in a world filled with confusing new things like school and daycare and other little people. Jane Eyre is my grown-up version of Saloni. Comfort food for my brain.

There are two authors I will read over and over and over again, until the day I die. One of them is Charlotte Bronte, the other one is Georgette Heyer. I have read Jane Eyre a million times, but I never tire of the story. Every time I reach the scene where she professes her love to Mr. Rochester, I come out in goosebumps. Every single time. Age and experience have taught me to spot the flaws in the story and the characters. The ineffable belief in English superiority. The condescending attitude towards servants and people of the lower class. The ill-treatment of mentally disabled people. The almost Quaker-ish sentiments of Jane Eyre. But all of this detracts not a whit from one of the greatest love stories ever told.

And there are a lot of things to admire in this book as well. Edward Rochester, ugly as sin, but powerful and dominant and unbelievably attractive in spite of his looks. A love that grows and strengthens on the basis of mutual sympathy, respect and a meeting of the minds, that a lot of our authors would do well to learn from. Jane Eyre, who does not think that her great love excuses acts of selfishness and immorality. Despite being drawn as a somewhat submissive personality, Jane manages to hold her own with quiet fortitude, never loudly asserting her intelligence or talent, but nonetheless displaying a strength of character that would put the Bellas and Noras of our time to shame.

Jane Eyre would never, as I have said above, be a bestseller if it had been written in our times. And that is a loss we must take upon ourselves. That we have put such prime value on lust and looks and power that we have forgotten to be *real* in our writing. There is a reason why millions of people the world over remember and revere a book written a hundred and fifty-odd years ago while the bestsellers of our times slip quickly and quietly from our memories. Jane Eyre is more than just a beautiful book about a love story that transcends all boundaries; it is a testament to the power of pure emotion, that can be felt through the ages and across all barriers of time and culture.
