

Jane Eyre

Study Guide



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For the novel by
Charlotte Brontë



Table of Contents

Note to Instructor	4
Synopsis	5
About the Author	6
Background Information	8
Ideas for Pre-reading Activities	10
Chapters 1–5	12
Chapters 6–10	18
Chapters 11–12	23
Chapters 13–16	28
Chapters 17–20	35
Chapters 21–22	42
Chapters 23–25	48
Chapters 26–27	53
Chapters 28–30	59
Chapters 31–33	63
Chapters 34–35	66
Chapters 36–38	70
Summary Questions and Activities	75
Additional Resources	78
Answer Key	Separate File

Synopsis

Jane Eyre is the story of a mistreated orphan who learns to rise above her adversities by relying on God's grace and the intelligent and independent spirit He has given her. The path of Jane's life is lined with temptations and difficulties: her desires war with her conscience and her faith is sorely tested. But though Jane sorrows, she is not broken. She learns and grows, and she rises above life's storm.

Jane's first ten years are unhappy ones. She is raised in the home of her aunt where she is unloved and despised. After a passionate outcry against her condition, Jane is sent to a charitable institution where she spends eight years. She moves up through the classes and eventually becomes a teacher. At 18, Jane's desire for expansion calls her to move on.

Jane finds a position as governess at Thornfield Hall, where her employer takes a lively interest in her. Jane's vigor and purity answer some yearning of his soul. Just when it seems that bliss is within Jane's reach, a dark secret is uncovered that causes her to flee from the one that is precious to her. It seems Jane is doomed to be forever separated from her love; but, after a year of suffering, God's providence and a familiar voice call her to return to the one she loves.

Jane Eyre Study Guide

6. “You live just below—do you mean at that house with the battlements?”—pointing to Thornfield Hall, on which the moon cast a hoary gleam
7. What good it would have done me at that time to have been tossed in the storms of an uncertain struggling life, and to have been taught by rough and bitter experience to long for the calm amidst which I now repined!

Questions:

1. What assumption does Jane make about Mrs. Fairfax that she later discovers to be false?
2. Who is the owner of the manor? Who is to be Jane’s student? What is the relationship between the student and the owner of the manor?
3. What unsettling noise does Jane hear while touring the manor with Mrs. Fairfax? How does Mrs. Fairfax explain the noise? Is there any evidence to the contrary? If so, explain.

Jane Eyre Study Guide

4. As Jane, walking alone at night, hears something approach, what jumps to her mind?
5. What is it about the stranger that makes Jane bold to approach him? What does Jane discover about the stranger when she reaches Thornfield?
6. During chapters 11 and 12, Mr. Rochester is absent from Thornfield. Yet, his presence, his spirit, dominates. What have we learned about Mr. Rochester before we even meet him?

Analysis:

7. When Jane discovers Mrs. Fairfax's identity, she says, "I felt better pleased than ever. The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part: . . ." Explain what Jane means by this. Why does this mean that Jane's position is, as she says, "all the freer."
8. What things about Thornfield seem strange or unexplained?

Jane Eyre Study Guide

9. An *allusion* is a reference to an historical or literary person, place, or event with which the reader is assumed to be familiar. *Jane Eyre* contains many allusions, some of which will probably be lost on the modern reader.

Jane refers to one corridor in the manor as looking “like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s Castle.” What might the author be suggesting by the use of the allusion to Bluebeard?

10. What things occupy Jane’s thoughts when she is by herself?
11. Summarize Jane’s thoughts about the role of women in English society. Would you agree with Jane? Why or why not?

Dig Deeper:

12. It is obvious even thus far into the book, that Britain, in the 1800s, had a distinct, fairly rigid social structure. What roles have others, thus far, expected Jane to fill?

Jane Eyre Study Guide

13. Read Proverbs 31:10–31. How would the woman described in these verses fit into the social structure of Jane Eyre’s time? Would Jane agree with these verses concerning the roles of women?
14. Read 1 Peter 4:11, Ephesians 6:1–9, Titus 3:1, 2, and Hebrews 13:1–6. What do these verses tell us about how we should fill our roles in society?

Jane Eyre Study Guide Answer Key

commandments, such as “thou shall not commit adultery.” He has not given up his quest for happiness at any price.

Dig Deeper:

14. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and prays for us, “with groans that words cannot express.” When we are grieved and senseless, God is always with us. God guides us, and when our flesh and heart fail, God is our strength. These verses may have comforted Jane, reminding her that when we are too overcome with grief or hardship to pray, God and the Holy Spirit are always with us, providing prayers and strength.

15. Jane speaks to herself, “I will keep the law given by God . . . I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this. . . . If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? . . . preconceived notions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.” Jane relies on what she has always believed *prior* to this hour. Proverbs 16:25 and Psalm 119:25–31 tell us not to rely on what we think is right, but on God’s word, laws, and commands. This is exactly what Jane falls back on when she can no longer trust herself to do the right thing.

Chapters 28–30

Vocabulary:

1. trouble; 2. beggarly; 3. facial features; 4. saturation; 5. harmony; 6. abundance; 7. paradise; 8. current officer

Questions:

1. The mighty milky-way spread above Jane reminds her of God’s omnipotence; He, the Savior of Spirits, will guard Edward Rochester.
2. The servant, Hannah, distrusts Jane and sends her away, but St. John intercedes on Jane’s behalf.
3. Hannah is suspicious and dislikes Jane initially. Mary responds with a gentle reserve. Diana is warm and charming. Both sisters exude a curious sympathy. St. John’s attitude is cold interest and speculation. By the end of chapter 30, Hannah has come to trust Jane. Diana and Mary both exhibit a mutual affection and intimacy with Jane. St. John still seems distant, observing Jane.
4. The death of their father has brought the three Rivers children back to Marsh End.
5. St. John is cool, distant, and uncommunicative. St. John’s sermon reveals to Jane that, although he is pious, and zealous, St. John does not possess the peace which passeth understanding.
6. Their estranged uncle had died and left all his riches to an unknown relative. The siblings’ father had lost his money following the counsel of this uncle. Their father had hoped this man would redeem himself by providing for the children in his will. Mary, Diana, and St. John express a bit of sadness, but Mary says “it makes us no worse off than we were before.” Diana says St. John could have used the money “for the good it would have enabled him to do.”

Analysis:

7. Answers will vary. Jane knew that if she lingered a moment at Thornfield, she would never leave. Still, it seems that it would have been wise of her to take a few articles of jewelry or other valuables Rochester had given her to sell or at least prove that she was no ordinary beggar. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary. A leader of God’s flock should be forgiving and willing to mediate; he should be