

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of Instructor]

[Subject]

[Date]

## Jane Eyre; Literary Analysis

### **Introduction**

*Jane Eyre* published as *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* is a novel that is written by an English writer Charlotte Bronte. The novel was published under the pen name "Currel Bell" in 1847. The novel is a Bildungsroman that is considered to be both, an autobiography as well as prose fiction that shares or reflects the experiences of the eponymous heroine. The novel is divided into 38 chapters and it was published in three different volumes comprising different chapters. Charlottes Bronte the writer of the novel belongs to the Victorian Era, deemed as a prolific poet also but she is known for her novels specifically. It is read that that writer abandoned poetry so that she can write novels and it exemplifies the literary shift that was dominant in the 1830s and 1840s (Brontë). 19<sup>th</sup> century being an epitome of the industrial revolution makes *Jane Eyre* a novel that can be analyzed from the perspectives of psychology, social structure, history as well as literary aspects because the readings offer insight into the contemporary issues, the shifting trends, rise in women empowerment, and diversity in employment opportunities that not only affected the protagonist but also the society at length.

### **Discussion**

*Jane Eyre* is a first person narrative that is written from the perspective of a title character. The novel is set in the reign of George III in the north of England. The novel is a

description of different life stages of the protagonist such as childhood when Jane is abused physically as well as emotionally by her cousins and her aunt, the education at Lowood School where she suffers oppression and deprivations. Then, there is information related to her time as a governess in the Thornfield Hall and there she falls in love with her employer who has a very mysterious nature named, Edward Fairfax Rochester. The novel then reveals Jane Eyre in the Moor House where her cold clergymen cousin, St. John Rivers proposes to her, and in the end, there is her reunion with Mr. Rochester (Brontë). Different themes are reflected in the different time periods and it makes the novel one of the best pieces of art that is serving as both, insights into morality as well as aesthetics (Latumeten).

The most dominant theme in the novel is that of social construction and class difference. Jane's first introduction is as a little orphan who is brought up by her wealthy aunt Mrs. Reed. Although Mrs. Reed is very rich she rarely offers help to Jane, infact she is treated in a bad manner by her aunt. She is imprisoned in the red room of Uncle Reed, depicting her difference from the other members in the house. Jane knew that, "she was a discord in Gateshead Hall: [she] was like nobody there; [she] had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children" (Brontë). This difference is also revealed by John who addresses Jane as a lowly orphan who is living on the charity of his mother. The life of the protagonist was in a clear comparison with her surroundings and it is one of the reasons that the protagonist grows into a diamond while fighting all the oppressions (Latumeten). Then, while working in Mr. Rochester's house as well as staying with the old clergyman cousin, the character of Jane seems to be an opposite to the traditions as well as the dominant approach of the life of people. Thus, the novel is a clear reflection of the social standings of that time. The class consciousness and subjectivity of the particular class is highlighted where the derogative attitudes of wealthy people made Jane suffer

horrible treatment from John Reed (Latumeten). Then, Mr. Brocklehurst's attitude is also linked with the unfair dominance of the opposing class. He calls Mrs. Reed charitable and kind because of her status. Although Jane received an education of a high standard to become a governess but she belonged to the lower class so she lacks better opportunities, she lived the life shifting between classes (Latumeten).

Bronte has changed the restrictions of the social class system in her novel and ceases situations that can help to understand events that decipher the social pressure for conformity that is inflicted on women during that time. Jane pushes the boundaries that were created for both, lower classes as well as women by creating a character that is in clear opposition to the norm. Here Jane maintains her feminine strength by refusing to marry Mr. Rochester after knowing the truth of his marriage (Shah). The antithesis of herself in the form of Blanche Ingram pushes Jane to search for her identity and it made Jane gain a clear perspective on the reality of her social class and the dream that she is living. Jane Eyre expresses that self-realization as, "That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar"(Brontë). Reflecting on herself as a third person, Jane Eyre expresses both loathe as well as self-pity, and this realization invites new struggle for Jane. The interaction with Hannah is another reelection into her social class where Hannah treats her as a worthless orphan. So, till the end of the novel, the protagonist is seen seeking her identity which was perceived as well as reinforced only by her class status that was a dominant feature of the Victorian Era or the 19<sup>th</sup> century(Shah).

The nonconformity of Jane Eyre with her society can also be considered as critical insight into the dominant theme of "feminism". The very first tint of Feminism is seen in the argument Jane had with her aunt where she described her aunt as cruel and ruthless. As Jane says, "How

dare I, Mrs. Reed? How dare I? Because it is the truth. You think I had no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness, but I can't live so, and you have no pity. I shall remember how you push me back-roughly and violently pushed me back into the red room, and locked me up there-to my dying day. Though I was in pain, though I cried out, have mercy! Have mercy, Aunt Reed!" (Brontë). This shows her rebelliousness towards Mrs. Reed, yet a feminist consciousness. Then, another aspect of feminism is, falling in love with Mr. Rochester knowing that it is not all about class, but about emotions as well. Then, the pursuit of self-esteem merged with feminism is depicted in the decision of Jane to leave Mr. Rochester knowing that he is already married. Jane could have compromised because of the status of Mr. Rochester but she prefers her self-esteem over the world's desires and leaves. Later when John a decent and handsome guy offered her the missionary life, Jane denied the offer and she asserts that true love should be based on mutual understanding love, and respect, and with these motifs, she refused John's proposal (Spears and Pittman).

Along with the themes that are related to the social life of an individual, the novel offers some deep insights into history as well. During the time, the novel was written, it was the first half of the nineteenth century, and it was the time when British society was undergoing some major changes and among them the transition from rural to an industrial economy is significant. In the time of the novel's plot, the Industrial Revolution was running at its full steam, some major ideas are reflected in the novel as well (Marc) . The industrial revolution brought with it some major changes in the ideals of the society, such as women's employment, marriage, and education. There was a time when education and schooling were associated with social status only but with the industrial revolution, education became homogenous and common. Then, women were also allowed to have access to education much like boys and it brought a major

change in the society in terms of the priorities that are set for women. Then, with the education of the women, there were allowed to avail the opportunities for employment (Spears and Pittman).

One of the most common and honorable professions was of a governess where women were hired to serve as live-in tutors. Although the profession was not highly paid, but it was deemed to be respectable. However, there were different conditions for the women who were working as a governess at different places such as, pay, environment, and the duties that were to be performed. In the traditional curriculum, girls were not taught serious subjects such as science, mathematics, or classic. Instead, they were taught history, French, art, grammar, and music along with sewing. With Industrial Revolution, a change was observed in the trends and the traditions and it was one of the reasons that the female population was taught different subjects and the governesses were assigned the task to teach the complex or difficult subjects to the students (Marc).

With the Industrial Revolution, the constitution of marriage was also modified. It is highlighted that the marriage of Bertha with Rochester was more like an expectation and in the other way, the marriage of Jane with Rochester is also no less than an exception. For the Victorian period, it was crucial for the people getting married to be from the same class but it did not happen in the novel. Then, the marriage between St. John Rivers and Jane would also not be usual because a husband such as Rivers will secure the "helpmeet" to share the burdens while a woman such as Jane will be one of the opportunities to establish a home and family with same better standards (Chiachen and Wang). However, they never believed in a marriage that was driven by love and true compassion rather than social status as well as materialistic preferences were considered. So, the novel brings the readers closer to the views about marriage by affirming

that a true marriage and connectivity cannot be associated with social status or materialistic possession but it is all based on emotion and feelings (Chiachen and Wang).

The psychological analysis of the novel shows that the novel is a clear insight into human psychology that is influenced by external factors. In addition, it is proposed that the protagonist of the novel is more like a creation inside the creation. Jane Eyre is a creation but there is another creation in the character and it is the product of the society and the external factors that influenced her life. The dominant self-esteem and the essence of empowered women is another creation that is born out of the fears of the world and the hatred she experienced as a child. The birth of the creation within the creation started from childhood when she was locked in the room and the Red Room made her furious from inside along with blessing her with the light that will guide her for her future (Chiachen and Wang). Then, the excellence she attained at the school is another example of this essence. It was the influence of the creation within the creation that the protagonist, unlike other women, stood for her rights and position and she acted as a strong woman who was neither driven by materialistic desires nor the class complexity fancy her. Instead, Jane Eyre listened to the voice of her heart and it led her to a more beautiful destination than the options that she was given during her life or working with different people at different stages of life (Chiachen and Wang).

In addition to the psychological and social aspects, the gothic elements are crucial to count on. There are different gothic elements in the novel, but the elements were used to create a "female language" rather than induce horror to scare people. These gothic elements create the personality of the heroine while motivating her to search for her identity. The very first depiction is the Red Room, where imagery represents the room as a prison (Hirst). The Red Room that was assumed to be haunted by the spirit of Uncle Reed is considered as an insight as well as the birth-

point of aggressiveness of Jane as an empowered woman. The features of Mr. Rochester also depicts gothic elements. The hero is defined as a proud man who is quite moody, as well as cynical but he was miserable at heart. The lunatic wife of Mr. Rochester in the form of Bertha Rochester is another gothic description. The ravings by Bertha adds to the underlying sense of misery and suspense in the novel (Hirst). There are many other gothic descriptions that make the novel a gothic story such as the splitting of the chestnut, Bertha tearing and turning the wedding veil, and then the telepathy communication between Mr. Rochester and Jane Eyre. However, a critical analysis of the gothic elements shows that all these elements constructed the character of Jane (Hirst). Collectively, the novel has multi-dimensional perspectives such as, feminism, women empowerment, social class difference, historical interferences along with gothic elements that make this novel an evergreen master-piece.

### **Conclusion**

The novel, *Jane Eyre* being set in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, connects Industrial Revolution with that time by offering insights into the changes that are brought accordingly. Additionally, the novel helps to understand the stagnant nature of society in terms of strong dependency on the social class structure and its dominance along with the major shift in the society such as women empowerment and the positive role of women. The strength of Jane both, as a character as well as a strong woman, helps the readers inspire from her struggles. The core constructs of the novel amalgamated with gothic elements help to realize the changing trends in the writing style and the mentality of the people as well who had a strong belief in supernatural beings. In a nutshell, *Jane Eyre* is one of the novels that offer critical insight into the era of a revolution by reinforcing some struggle and conveying a central message of belief in cognitive abstracts of staying true to oneself and one's emotions rather than being driven by materialistic

possession and the high social status of others. Thus, the novel is both, a source of learning, a piece of art to gain inspiration from as well as a multi-dimensional platform that can be assessed from different social, cultural, political and psychological perspectives.

## Works Cited

- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Chiachen, Yao, and Ya-huei Wang. "Using Language to Rage against Victorian Hierarchy: Self-Constructed Feminist Identity in Jane Eyre." *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–10.
- Hirst, Holly. "The Gothic Romance." *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic*, Springer, 2020, pp. 357–72.
- Latumeten, Anna Anganita Theresia. "Woman's Resistance as Seen in Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea." *Prologue: Journal on Language and Literature*, vol. 7, no. 1-March, 2021, pp. 1–9.
- Marc, Daiana Larisa. *Becoming Jane Eyre in Charlotte Brontë's Novel: A Study of Middle-Class Women in Nineteenth Century Victorian Society*. Universitat Jaume I, 2020.
- Shah, Mehrunissa. "'It Was a Pleasure to Read with Them': Reflecting on Jane Eyre as a Class Reader." *Changing English*, vol. 27, no. 4, Taylor & Francis, 2020, pp. 393–407.
- Spears, Amber, and Ciara Pittman. "Exploring Feminist Themes in Jane Eyre and Dark Companion." *Young Adult and Canonical Literature: Pairing and Teaching*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021, p. 19.