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Jane Ayre as a Bildungsroman Genre

Bildungsroman is a word that comes from German which has two parts; the first part is Bildung which typically means education, while the other part is roman which means novel. Therefore, the two parts brought together a mean educational novel. Bildungsroman is a novel where the main character is featured growing from a lost youth or from a child to a mature adult. The bildungsroman novel follows a life-changing event and follows a person throughout their life, showing the failures and success, and the struggles they face between personal desires and social norms. Jane Eyre, written by Charlotte Bronte, is an excellent example of Bildungsroman because the journey of Jane starts from an abusive childhood to losing her best friend to tuberculosis and then to a home where she is appreciated. Throughout the novel, Jane experiences love, and loss and the experiences she goes through in her journey molds her into one mature and strong woman who is ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for what she believes.

The novel shows several ways which represent bildungsroman. Jane Eyre is a heroine whose physical appearance is unusual, and she ardent and zealous. The novel carries the reader through Jane's development stages, her healthy self-interest, and how she rebelled by questioning the rules and conventions. Jane is first introduced as a young girl who lived in a manor and an orphan. Jane as a child, was isolated, and she was not loved by anyone, including the family of the house. Lack of love is seen when she is put in the red room and locked inside without anywhere to go (Brontë, 12). The red room is where the blood relatives of Jane had died, so it a haunting chamber for Jane. The cruelty that Jane goes through in the house of Reeds and the difficulties she goes through even with other children mistreating her, left her without any sense of belonging. However, even though the problems she endures, she still shows the necessity for equality regardless of the low status that she is living in. This is seen when Jane is confronted by her cousin known as John and retaliates and strongly stands up for herself even she knew that it would only lead to a worse punishment for herself. Jane also boldly expresses what she feels about the people who make her suffer. For example, she tells her aunt, "I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt as long as I live" (Brontë, 21). The question of belonging connects the novel to bildungsroman since she is lost and cannot find anyone who she can connect to or feel at home.

Jane so much desires to have a better life, and this is fulfilled when she learns that she was to leave Gateshead, where she was staying with the Reed family, to go to Lowood school. However, it is not easy for her, especially because of the abusive and cruel headmaster who leaves Jane wondering whether her difficult situation will ever change. Jane is not aware that Lowood is a shady school where there is no food, harsh living conditions, and inapt clothing. Jane is lucky and gets a friend known as Helen, who was the first person to become a confidant, and someone she could rely on and have a sense of belonging (Brontë, 23-24). Helen shows Jane a new way to see her situation through her deep religious beliefs and how she able to suppress anger. The friendship Jane has with Helen helps her grow mentally and emotionally; however, this does not work for long because her friend dies.

The years' Jane spends at Lowood school prepares Jane to live her life as a woman who is independent and future governess. Jane endures a lot from her childhood, throughout her schooling, and the many circumstances that worked against her, but eventually, she slowly rises from a low and meager orphan to an liberated woman who is mature and earning her living as a teacher and a governess hence making this novel bildungsroman.

Works Cited

Brontë, Charlotte. *jane eyre*. Oxford University Press, 2008.